

REFLECTIONS-III

A STORY BOOK BY ASIANITES, FOR ASIANITES!





Reflections - III

Books are always a good choice

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



THE ASIAN SCHOOL
DEHRADUN

CONTENT

1	White Roses	6
2	Unknown Mysteries	14
3	Black Suits and Red Ties	18
4	The Midnight Rendezvous	21
5	The Coffee Shop Chronicle	26
6	The Brief Intervention	29
7	An Unknown Imaginary Friend	35
8	Arlo's Odyssey: A Journey of Self-Discovery	40
9	Just a Dream	43
10	Lessons in Love: A Daughter's Journey with Her Mother	45
11	Mischievous John learns a lesson	48
12	My Non-existent Twin Sister	50
13	Reader's Untold Tales	54
14	Saviour's Sin	57
15	A Friend I Once Had	60
16	Aisha's Resolve: Breaking Barriers for Girls' Education	63
17	Ephemeral Impressions	66
18	Fendi: A Tail of Transformation	74
19	Glimpses Through the Veil	76
20	House No. 13	79
21	John's Resilience	91

22	Lyra's Destiny: A Tale of Light and Darkness	94
23	Memories in the Meadow	98
24	The Desert's Blade	100
25	The Haunting Text	113
26	The Upside-Down Optimist	115
27	The Whispering Woods	117
28	Come Back When the Weather Gets Cold	120
29	From Adversity to Triumph: The Journey of Mark's Family	128
30	The Cartographer's Secret	132
31	The Hidden Powers Within	136
32	The Midnight Rule	139
33	Unraveling the Mystery: When Fiction Meets the Streets	144
34	Whispers in the Dark	149
35	The Story That No One Heard Except Me	153
36	Practice the Pause	159
37	Two Hearts, One Dream	161
38	Untitled	164
39	Sam and the Amulet of Unity	172
40	The Good Shepherd	186
41	The Author's Paradox	188
42	The Origin of Life	194

From the Principal's desk



Mrs. Ruchi Pradhan Datta

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

-Toni Morrison

The above quote by one of my favourite writers, serves as the wind beneath the wings of the budding writers of The Asian School. For truly, if there's something that you want to read, then write it yourself is what we tell them.

And our talented Asianites never fall short of our expectations.

It's definitely a matter of great pride for us, that we have been able to roll out the third back to back edition of the Reflections, without even an iota of external help, except of course, the actual final printing. Kudos to my team of teachers and students for this commendable feat.

Students have put pen to paper and given free flow to their creativity, to bring to you these 42 interesting and sometimes intriguing stories and essays.

And I'm sure that they will gain your appreciation too, especially for the fact that most of the authors are first time writers.

The books spans a multitude of genres from self expression and sharing of experiences to absolutely unbridled and wild imagination.

The realisation of this book is always a roller coaster. It starts with a bumpy ride, then some hiccups thrown in for good measure, a few sleepless nights and finally when the first copy arrives, it all seems worth it!

So now, dear readers, I bring to you Reflections III. Hope you too share our spirit.

Happy reading!

Editor's Note



Ms. Namarata Kapoor



Ms. Deepti Gupta

We are delighted to introduce the third edition of Reflections as part of our 25th-anniversary celebration. Storytelling is a profound art that allows students to dive deep into their mind's eye, crafting narratives that not only entertain but also provoke thought and inspire wonder. This collection of short stories captures the essence of imagination, freedom, and self-expression, showcasing the unique perspectives of our talented contributors.

At the heart of this endeavour is the belief that creativity flourishes when barriers are removed. We aim to inspire students to broaden their horizons and embrace the world with fresh perspectives. It is our goal to provide a platform where young minds can tap into their creative instincts, nurturing their imaginations without boundaries. Through these stories, students cultivate not just their creative talents, but also empathy and a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Often, our minds limit creativity by rushing to critique or dismiss unconventional ideas. The Creativity Formula encourages us to nurture ideas with openness, allowing them to flourish without the constraints of early judgement, transforming into innovative and meaningful expressions. This spirit of open-mindedness and exploration is what fuels the stories within this collection.

Our institution has always embraced individuality, encouraging students to carve their own paths. This anthology is a reflection of that ethos. We express our gratitude to our respected Principal, Mrs. Ruchi Pradhan Datta, for her steadfast belief in us and for entrusting us with the responsibility of editing this anthology. Her continuous support and guidance have been instrumental in the success of this initiative.

We hope Reflections resonates with you, our readers, and that you appreciate the stories that are as diverse as the voices behind them, offering a rich blend of drama, reflection, lessons in life, and even spine-chilling horror. We believe this collection will inspire, provoke thought, and perhaps even offer a glimpse into the bright futures of the young minds behind these works.

White Roses

"I picked up flowers for her..." Elias thought to himself as he was walking back home, smiling warmly. He picked those flowers for his roommate, Dia, who he had been living with for over a month. He picked white roses for her as a way to express gratitude for letting him be her roommate. "It was a stormy night..." he continued, "I came to your doorstep to seek shelter for the night, but you let me stay for longer than one night... Maybe because you felt sorry for me when I told you that I was evicted and had nowhere to go, even though that wasn't what happened..." his smile faded away. "I don't want to recall everything that happened that night. I want to move on from my past and start a new life. A new life with you..." He stopped walking, as he had reached his destination. He looked up, shrugged off the feeling of uneasiness, and knocked on the door, but it was unlocked.

"Dia?" He called out for her and walked in. "I thought I told you not to-" he looked around and was horrified. The whole place was trashed. "Dia? Dia??"



He called out for her, again but received no response. He thought maybe it was some kind of prank, so he decided to go and check around. He searched every room in the house, but there was no sign of her. He stood still for a second, wondering where she could be, and then he noticed a strange piece of paper on the living room table. He walked over to it, hoping it was a note left by her to let him know where she was or something like that. When he picked it up, he was left horror-stricken. The note was left by a gang, and it said that if Elias ever wished to see Dia again, he'd have to bring a sum of ₹10 lakh, and if he'd dare to not come alone, they'd kill Dia then and there.

The bouquet fell from his hands. Not only was he troubled because the gang was holding Dia hostage, but also because he recognised the gang. He was very confused as to what he should do, so he called Cyrus, who was one of Dia's close friends and whom he was familiar with too. He called him and explained the situation to him. Cyrus, upon hearing all of this, ensured Elias that he'd be there. Elias asked him to hurry up, and the call ended. Elias was pacing back and forth, waiting for Cyrus. A few minutes later, an

expensive-looking car arrived, and the windows rolled down to reveal Cyrus sitting in the driver's seat, asking Elias to bring the note left behind by the gang and get in the car. Elias, without asking any questions, does as he is told.

Elias sits in the car, and Cyrus picks up the briefcase that was sitting in the back seat and hands it over to Elias. "This is the money, and the briefcase has a mini microphone. I also have a plan, so make sure you do as I say. Understand that?" Cyrus says, and Elias, caught off guard, simply nods in agreement.

Cyrus explains to Elias that after he goes into the building, Cyrus will be able to hear everything in the surrounding area through the mini microphone. He also tells him that all he has to do is make sure Dia is safe, get out of the building, and then he'll ask the policemen to go in and arrest the gang members, and if anything goes wrong, he'll send them in early. Elias asks him why the policemen would trust him at all, and Cyrus reveals that he works part-time as a detective and that he has worked on numerous cases with them.

Elias wanted to know why he wouldn't tell them that before, but before he could say anything, Cyrus asked him why the gang was involved in the first place and if he knew anything about it. Elias told him that he didn't, but he was lying. He knew why they might have been involved, but he didn't want to recall it.

A few hours later, Cyrus drops Elias off a few hundred metres away from the main location and leaves to avoid being noticed. Elias walks to the building alone, as discussed. It was a two-story building located deep inside a forest. It was a dark and unsettling environment, but Elias didn't let it bother him too much.

At the entrance, he was greeted by two guards, one of whom led him inside a room on the 1st floor and then shut the door behind him. The room had an eerie atmosphere with one dim light to illuminate it and a table in the centre with a chair on which the leader of the gang was sitting, with another bandit standing behind him, and there she was, sitting in the corner of the room with her hands tied behind her back, unconscious.

Elias was furious but couldn't take any action considering the situation.

The leader looks at him greedily and says, "The money?"

"I have it here," replies Elias, while trying to mask his anger and frustration and putting the briefcase on the table.

The leader was surprised, "were you really able to get ₹10 lakh just like that? Wow you're really different from your parents--"

"JUST SHUT UP AND-" Elias snapped, but he calmed himself quickly. "Just take the money and let us go, please..."

Seeing Elias' sudden burst of anger gave the leader an excitement that he had longed for.

"Remember what happened a few months ago from today?" he asked Elias.

"I do, but," Elias said, but was interrupted.

"You killed my worker-" the leader continued.

"IT WAS SELF-DEFENCE!" Elias piped up again.

"I don't like to have my patience tested. Don't cut me

off when I am talking.”

Elias grits his teeth in anger, and the leader continues, “A few years ago, your parents borrowed some money from me for whatever reason, but they failed to return it on time. You know the rest, right?”

Elias remembered it. The night when a man came over to his house and killed his parents. What haunts him to this day is the fact that he killed him in order to save himself. The feeling of stabbing someone traumatised him, and after remembering it all again, he could feel the guilt piling over him again and in the spur of the moment his eyes were filled with tears.

“You ran away from there, didn't you? And started living with... her?” the leader questioned.

“I brought your money NOW JUST LET US GO HOME!” Elias exclaimed, enraged.

“You think I am just going to hand her over to you after you killed my worker?”

“What? What are you going to-” Elias questioned him, confused and nervous.

The bandit carries Dia and puts her on the ground

next to Elias.

She started to gain consciousness, opened her eyes, and found Elias looking at her. Seeing Elias made her feel delighted. She tried to say something but was caught off guard when he went in for a hug.

"You're okay... I was so worried." Elias said, burying his head in her shoulder.

"Oh, I... thank you." Dia replied.

Elias lifts his head and says, "I should be the one saying that-"

Bang.

Elias opens his eyes and finds his face covered in blood. Dia was shot in the head and killed.

He reached out to where the blood was, dragged his hand through her face, and stared at it. The blood of his loved one was on his hand, and the body was in his arms. All of a sudden, the door opened, and the policemen came in and arrested the gang members.

Cyrus was the only one who heard that Elias had killed someone. He decided to keep it a secret because it was 'self-defence'.

A few hours later, the scene cleared up. Elias and Cyrus both went back to Dia's house. Cyrus noticed the bouquet on the ground and asked, "White roses?"

Without looking away from them, upset at the death of his best friend, Elias replied, in a shaky voice, "I picked up flowers for her..."



Divya Khanduri

11-B

Unknown Mysteries

1) He Knew Something More

A theft! A robbery! A murder! All this may sound astonishing to one's ears, but to Detective X, these were normal occurrences. Everyone working in the field of crime, whether solving it, stopping it, or perhaps, committing it, knew that X was simply the best in his field. No matter how much the other detectives and officers worked on a case, he seemed to know something more.

On a dull Tuesday morning, as usual, he got up, as usual, he got dressed, and as usual, he got a call from the police. It was a case of homicide, a woman brutally murdered in her own house.

X reached the crime scene. It was a lovely house, with a small garden and peach walls hiding the horrors inside. The scene was very typical, just like every other murder setting. There was blood everywhere, there was a knife piercing the woman's heart, there were two buttons in the woman's hand, there were bloody shoeprints with a very unique sole pattern, things like lamps, flower pots, windows were broken, indicating

struggle, the door seemed as if it's lock was tampered with. Detective X noted everything. It seemed like he knew something more. After five hours worth of investigation, three main suspects were called, the woman's husband, son and maid. With the help of his brilliant observational skills, X conducted an investigation and found a very important clue which led to the killer. He found a coat hidden under the seat of the husband's car and pointed out that the buttons in the woman's hand matched the buttons of the coat. And thus, the husband was arrested.

After solving yet another case, Detective X returned home. He threw a pair of blood-covered gloves in the dustbin. Perhaps they came from the investigation. He then carefully removed his shoes and placed them in his closet. He was always careful about his shoes, after all they were custom made with a custom sole pattern which, somehow, matched the bloody footprints at the crime scene. Hopefully this was a coincidence, hopefully. He really knew something more....

2) Destiny

"Why is it that the saying, 'Good things happen to

good people and bad things to bad people, 'is often proved wrong? Why is it that sometimes good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people? ", this thought often bugged old Vihaan as he lay on his death bed, taking his final breath.

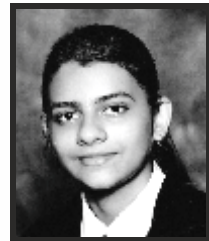
He had lived a humble life when he was young. However, one small incident resulted in him always pondering about destiny. He and his best friend, Sameer, worked at the same office, both were well-to-do and lived a similar life. Vihaan was a very honest worker, and he also helped anyone in need and tried to be nice in general. However, on one unfortunate day, a very, very important file containing some classified information was leaked.

Their boss blamed Vihaan, who was framed by Sameer! Vihaan was fired from his job on the spot. As he was going home in his car, a tree fell on his car. Though he had faced only some minor injuries, his car was completely broken. He tried applying for other jobs, but he was accepted only for a very low-paying work in a small company, his salary was enough to only pay for his basic needs. Meanwhile, Sameer went on to live a much better life than Vihaan. And so they

lived, and so they died.

On his way to heaven, Vihaan met God. He fell on his knees and told him about everything that happened and everything he thought about his destiny. There were tears in his eyes, but God smiled at him. God said, “Vihaan, how talk about destiny, without knowing what it is”.

Remember that car accident? You were supposed to be paralysed for life due to it. But you were not as much injured. On the other hand, Sameer was destined to reap the riches a king would reap, but he went on to live a rather middle-class life. Also, trust me, I was observing you both the whole time, and you were happier than him throughout your life. Both of you changed your destiny, the only difference is you made it better, and he made it worse."



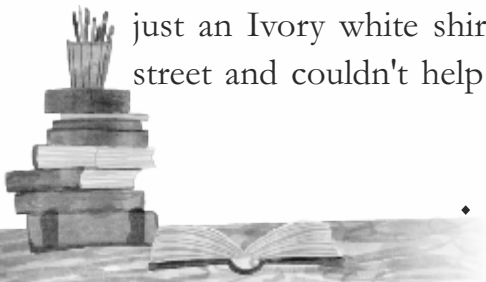
Gargi Singh
10-E

Black suits and Red Ties

I woke up in the apparent middle of nowhere, in an alley, yet the place seemed oddly familiar. The constant sounds of daily life. What wasn't familiar was the people around me, they all wore black suits, white shirts and red ties and as it appeared, they had no facial features.

I started walking towards the road from the alley I woke up in. I had no memory of the previous night and nor did I have anything in my pockets, yet they felt so heavy it was as if I carried something important. As soon as I got out of the alley, I noticed all those 'beings' around me. The Jet-Black suits, Ivory white shirts and Blood Red ties. They all walked in the same posture, with the same frequency of their steps, their heads drooped down and an aura of gloom surrounding them like moths surrounding a light.

They did not seem to notice me at first, out of curiosity I decided to look at what I was wearing, and I was wearing an Ivory white shirt with no Tie or Suit, just an Ivory white shirt. I kept walking along the street and couldn't help but notice the sign boards



around me. It was as if I couldn't read them, not that I forgot English or anything. They just didn't seem to be.....readable.....as if they meant.....nothing.

I couldn't help but notice the odd familiarity of the signboards. They reminded me of my mind and how I'd often get lost in it. I kept walking and soon realized that I was heading towards the city, I started to notice billboards which, again, did not make sense. They were jumbled up colors that were trying to paint a picture but would yield no result. The smaller the board, the clearer it was, I almost saw a rose in one of them, the colors seemed to fit but why a rose?

The billboards seem to be a representation of our promises to ourselves. We often promise to give ourselves so much yet don't really follow through with it. We forget that we live this life for us and get stuck in this loop of negativity. Maybe we should break the cycle and live a positive life where these billboards are masterpieces painted by our accomplishments. As I passed the billboards, they lost vibrance as if I was their only audience and they had served their purpose. I looked around toward the crowd of 'people' and noticed that some heads started turning towards me,

as if they were now aware of my presence. This was a little unsettling because I was being completely ignored by these creatures who were so familiar yet so unfamiliar. I looked down to see that I was now wearing a tie.... a black one. I looked down and realized that I was now wearing a red suit. I was suddenly.....*Different.*

I heard a howl and a swarm of galloping footsteps behind me, I did not turn around rather I racked up all the courage and strength I had and started dashing towards the tallest building I could see. I pushed and shoved anything that was in my way, including those creatures. I dashed into the building which had no doors or windows, just empty spaces. I ran up the stairs as fast as I could and ran into some room on some floor and just hid. I knew if I was found, I would die.....



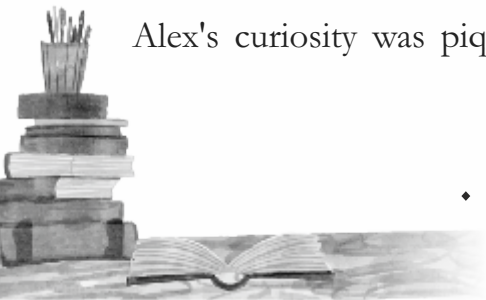
Parth Bhatt
12-A

The Midnight Rendezvous

In the heart of New York City, Alex Turner, a successful lawyer, stood as a paragon of legal brilliance. Despite his professional success, he led a solitary life. The long hours and high stakes of his career left little room for personal connections.

He was married to his work but often wondered if there was more to life than courtrooms and legal briefs.

One crisp autumn evening, Alex attended a charity event hosted by his firm. Amidst the clinking of glasses and murmur of conversations, he spotted a woman who seemed out of place. Her name was Emily, and there was an air of mystery about her that drew him in. They exchanged pleasantries, and Alex found himself captivated by her enigmatic charm. As the night wore on, they shared a dance, a brief but intense connection sparking between them. Before leaving, Emily handed Alex a note. "Meet me at the old clock tower tomorrow at midnight," it read. Alex's curiosity was piqued, and despite his better



judgment, he decided to follow the trail left by this intriguing woman.

The midnight rendezvous at the clock tower marked the beginning of a whirlwind romance. Alex and Emily began seeing each other regularly, their connection deepening with each encounter. Despite the growing intimacy, Emily remained tight-lipped about her past. Her evasiveness only added to her allure, and Alex found himself falling for her. Their time together was a stark contrast to Alex's high-pressure job. Emily's presence was a breath of fresh air, a respite from the relentless demands of his career. They shared stolen moments in the city's hidden corners, their bond growing stronger with each secret shared and kiss stolen.

Just as Alex thought he had found happiness, strange things started happening. He received anonymous threats, warning him to drop a high-profile case he was working on. At first, he dismissed them as the work of disgruntled opponents, but the threats became more sinister and personal.

Emily's behavior grew erratic. She was often distracted, and Alex noticed she was constantly looking over her shoulder. One night, after an unusually tense dinner, Emily abruptly left without explanation. The cryptic nature of her actions and the mounting threats left Alex in a state of unease.

Determined to get to the bottom of the threats, Alex began his own investigation. He discovered a disturbing connection between the threats and Emily's past. She was once involved with a dangerous criminal named Victor, who was now targeting Alex to send a message.

Emily confessed to Alex, revealing that Victor had coerced her into working for him years ago. She had tried to escape his grasp, but he had found her and was using Alex to manipulate her. The revelation shook Alex, but it also steeled his resolve to protect the woman he loved.

Alex confronted Emily, demanding the full truth. She admitted her past mistakes and her fear that Victor would never let her go. Despite the danger, Alex

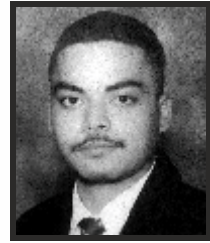
refused to abandon her. They devised a plan to outsmart Victor and gather enough evidence to put him behind bars.

Their plan led to a tense showdown with Victor and his men. In a dilapidated warehouse on the city's outskirts, Alex and Emily faced off against the criminal. The confrontation was intense, filled with the fear of imminent danger. Just when it seemed all was lost, Alex's colleagues, having been alerted to the situation, arrived with the authorities.

The authorities apprehended Victor after a brief but fierce struggle. Alex and Emily were safe, but the ordeal had taken its toll. Emily decided to testify against Victor, hoping to finally free herself from his shadow. Alex stood by her side throughout the process, his love and support unwavering.

With Victor behind bars, Alex's firm supported him, recognizing his bravery and dedication. Emily began to rebuild her life, with Alex by her side. Their relationship, forged in the crucible of danger, grew stronger and more resilient.

In the aftermath of the chaos, Alex and Emily found peace. They moved into a quaint apartment in a quieter part of the city, leaving behind the shadows of their past. Their bond, tested by fear and uncertainty, emerged unbreakable. Together, they looked forward to a future filled with love and hope, grateful for the second chance they had been given.



Raghav Arjun Kaushik

12-A

The Coffee Shop Chronicle

In the bustling metropolis of New York City, three inseparable friends embarked on a day filled with laughter and camaraderie. Peter, the witty inventor, Harry, the charismatic entrepreneur, and Lily, the artistic soul, decided to venture into a newly opened coffee shop, eager to indulge in the aroma of freshly ground coffee beans.

After perusing the menu, they all decided to order three cups of cappuccino. The waitress, a friendly young woman with a bright smile, took their order, told them about the exciting offer- 'With any order of two or more cups of coffee, you'll receive a complimentary fortune cookie that will reveal your future actions' and promised to bring it out shortly. True to her word, the waitress returned with their steaming cups of cappuccino and three delicate fortune cookies. Harry, unable to contain his excitement, immediately reached for one and broke it in half. Inside, he discovered a small slip of paper folded neatly. As he unfolded it, his eyes widened in amazement.



'Listen to this!' he exclaimed. 'It says, 'Your friendship will never end, and you will remain together until the time of death.'

A chorus of laughter erupted from the table as Lily and Peter retrieved their fortune cookies and eagerly opened them. To their astonishment, they both found identical slips of paper with the exact same message: 'Your friendship will never end, and you will remain together until the time of death.'

An uncanny coincidence had brought them together at this moment, and their unbreakable bond was reinforced by the seemingly prophetic words concealed within the fortune cookies. They embraced warmly, expressing their joy and gratitude for the unwavering friendship they shared.

As they continued to chat and enjoy their coffee, the waitress returned with the bill. A playful argument ensued over who would foot the bill, but in the end, they all agreed to split it evenly.

Leaving the cafe with smiles on their faces, the friends

made their way to the remark wall and wrote a heartfelt message about their unforgettable experience at the coffee shop.

As they walked out into the bustling city streets, they knew that their bond was truly unbreakable and that they would always be there for each other, come what may. And so, their friendship endured, stronger than ever, as they set off on more adventures together, their hearts full of love and laughter.



Paridhi Khanduri
7-B

The Brief Intervention

It was the fifth lesson. Mr. Kapoor was explaining something about algebraic expressions and their applications. Agni, who had been trying really hard to concentrate, ultimately dozed off. She jolted awake when the door slammed open, and two burly men appeared in the doorway. Suddenly, Mr Kapoor halted his speech, and an eerie silence spread. By now, Agni, whose stupor had subsided, reassessed her surroundings and the reason of the lull dawned upon her.

The incredibility of the sight compelled her to rub her eyes, but it remained all the same. One of the men was aiming a gun at Mr Kapoor, who looked aghast, and the other one in the direction of the students. The former accosted the students, "Listen carefully. Don't consider this a joke or prank. You all are being held hostage. Any trickery, and you'll end up dead. All the signals are jammed, so trying to call for help won't be helpful, at all. "After saying this he slammed the door shut. The girl at the front desk started panicking and crying, "Have you informed our parents? Will you kill



us? Please let us go!" The hysterics seemed futile to Agni, who knew that it generally doesn't help in such cases, what does is maintaining equanimity. She put her head down.

After a brief period of silence, Agni, being a laidback individual, and being bored on top of that, raised her hand, "Excuse me!" The faces of the whole class, including the teacher, turned pale at her audacity. The girl behind her, pulled at her, as if saying, ' Don't do anything stupid. You'll get us all killed.' One of the men directed his attention at her and gesticulated her to speak up. "Aren't you supposed to hijack a plane or something?" she spoke in a monotonous voice, which didn't match the circumstances. The man replied with annoyance, "Kids are easier to handle".

The government values them far more than the adults, and hijacking planes is more troublesome and trite." "And what about informing the government?" Suddenly, the other man snapped, " Hey girl, don't try to be oversmart! We have already arranged what we had to. Better worry about your own life. Just shut up and sit down, or you'll be the first casualty."

Observing his temper and seeing the gun in his hand, she acquiesced. Suddenly, she remembered something. She tore a page from her notebook, and wrote, "找到火警并触发它" Then on the backside of the page she wrote in large words 'YUKTI'.

She got up and told the man that she had to throw something in the dustbin. The puzzled expression on everyone's face at her behaviour, seemed somewhat amusing to her. The man with the gun at the teacher shouted, "Seems like you really have a death wish. At a time like this, you want to throw something? Is this a joke to you? Just throw it anywhere."

"But we shouldn't litter the class. That's what our teachers teach us. Didn't yours?" She spoke in a sarcastically concerned tone, aware that it would bother him. To dismiss this troublesome girl, the other man spoke, "This is the last time you'll be doing any movement. Throw it quickly before I change my mind." "But the dustbin is outside." "Give me the paper, then." He snatched the paper from her, and after checking it thoroughly, he threw it out of the door.

After about half an hour, there was a piercing alarm. The students began making speculations, and some cacophony was audible from outside too, increasing in decibels, with each passing moment. The two men looked puzzled, and asked Mr. Kapoor, "What is this sound?" To which he replied anxiously, "It's the fire alarm. We need to evacuate the building, or we all could die!" All hell broke loose.

Amongst the hue and cry, where students still couldn't muster courage to move, Agni managed to calm down few students at the back, and explained something to them. As soon as the students began pouring out of the classrooms, a bunch of students, along with Agni, somehow managed to get hold of the fire extinguishers in the corridor, and knocked out the men, with one blow. The other students, who had just come out from the other classrooms, did the same, and then they ran out to the playground. There, Agni found Yukti, who seemed to be waiting for a long time.

"What took you so long?"

"They had guns! How can you be so insensitive? We

could have died!"

"But they would not have the guts to fire the guns in the midst of a crowd. Those kind of people are generally coward. You ought to have known. I know you're not that dumb. By the way, you deserve an applause for managing to slip out the message, 'Find the fire alarm and trigger it.'"

"Ya, it wasn't easy. I almost failed. Fine, now get up. The students seem too hyped up." Till then the teachers had assembled the students and were trying to control them. The head teacher, Ms. Janet addressed them, in her loud voice, "Students, there is no fire and the armed men are no longer a threat. We've called the police. You need to calm down."

Although, it was not before ten to fifteen minutes that they managed to control the boisterous children. And then, Agni, out of euphoria, screamed on the top of her lungs, "We saved the school!" Then she fell down on the grass. Suddenly, she felt a piercing pain. She opened her eyes and saw a few pairs of eyes looking curiously at her, and one specifically with annoyance.

It was Mr. Kapoor. " You should think about saving yourself first. I'm going to deduct your marks for disciplinary breach, and disturbing the class. You'll have detention for one week." With this, he went back to teaching.

Agni discovered that she had fallen out of her seat. She adjusted herself, and learned from Yukti, who was sitting beside her; that she had dozed off, which was fine, until she screamed out of nowhere and fell down. Agni realised that she would now have no way of saving her dignity,... so much for saving the school.



Anjuman Panwar
11-G

An unknown imaginary friend

We have a house in a fairly posh locality of Calcutta. It's owned by my grandmother's sister and her husband. Every few years, the extended family with aunts and uncles and cousins from all around the world meet in Calcutta for Durga Puja and stay in this house. Otherwise, the house is lived in by my dadi, dadu, and their house help.

Though, their children and grandchildren keep visiting them every few days. Basically, my grandmother's sister and her husband's three storied house is huge.

The first floor has a kitchen, a hall, a dining room, and a guest room. The second floor has 2 more bedrooms and a bathroom. The 3rd floor is super strange. It's kind of just there with no rooms, but lots of windows and natural light. So they use it to hang clothes, lay out vegetables and spices for sun drying, stuff like that. Ballroom esque, basically.

My Dadi and Dadu stay on the second floor and the guest room was lived in by my great grandma until she



passed away in 2022.

When I was 9, the whole family, as per usual, met up in the house for Durga Puja, including my 5 years old cousin sister, Alia, who lives in England.

Alia would go up to the 3rd floor all the time that year. Which makes sense because it's a large open space, and she's a child.

In fact, I remember going up there a lot as well when I was around that age. She would tell me about a friend she had made on the 3rd floor, a young girl. This was clearly an imaginary friend. Sometimes I would go up there with her and actually see her talking to thin air. I was creeped out, so I snitched to my mom.

Now my mom has never been a believer of the paranormal, and even when I tell her about animated horror stories I'd watch on YouTube, she would tell me that it's all crap. So when I told her about my sister's imaginary friend, I didn't expect much of a reaction. However, when I mentioned this imaginary friend's name, the color drew on my mom's face. It's an incredibly unique and traditional name of a Bengali

woman "Trishulini " generally unheard of in today's generation.

My mom rushed out to tell every other adult in the family and soon enough they were all gathered and questioning my little sister, Alia.

Her answers were fairly simple. There's a young girl I've made friends with on the 3rd floor. Her name is Trishulini. What else could we expect from a 5 years old? Later that day, my mom finally gave me an explanation that still gives me chills.

When I was 4 I would also go up to the 3rd floor of the house to play. I too had an imaginary friend. Her name was also Trishulini. When it happened to me they let me be as imaginary friends are common with children. They chalked it up to me being a very social child who was in a house with no children of my age, so I made one up.

Again, no one in the family really believed in that stuff. She asked if I had any memories of that friend, but I didn't remember a thing. I have no recollection of

having an imaginary friend whatsoever, which is really weird because I remember other things from that year. That was the year I shifted houses within the city I lived. I remember that.

I even remember the trip I took to Calcutta that year. I even have vivid memories of playing on the 3rd floor alone with no one around but me. That's so weird. But no memory of this friend. Another eerie thought, Alia lives in England and the name, as I mentioned, was an old school Bengali woman's name that you simply just don't hear anymore. Where could this little NRI with a British accent have picked up this name? Somehow through some delusion and denial, the family convinced themselves that this was a coincidence.

That the name was maybe something uttered around the locality or written on a wall somewhere that the both of us just happened to see and pick up when we were little.

Now I'm 16. Alia is 11. She's completely forgotten about her imaginary friend. We mentioned it when she was 10 but even then she had no idea of who or

what we were talking about.

We've all gathered in that house 2 more times over the years with no paranormal experiences.

Last December, we got a call from my dad who went to Calcutta for work and he visited the house again to meet dadi and dadu and my 4 year old nephew who was also there with his parents. While my father was catching up with Dadi and Dadu and my nephew's parents, my nephew went wandering and found the 3rd floor. When it was time to leave, my father called for him and he came downstairs.

He said something that gave everyone present in the room goosebumps. He said " he was playing with a nice girl on the 3rd floor. Her name was "Trishulini "



Vidhi Rana

11-F

Arlo's Odyssey:

A Journey of Self-Discovery

Arlo had always felt like a puzzle missing a few pieces. As an orphan living in the dreary confines of St. Mary's Orphanage, he often dreamt of far-off lands and grand adventures. The other children whispered tales of knights and dragons, pirates and treasures, but Arlo knew deep down that his destiny lay beyond the orphanage walls.

One moonlit night, fuelled by curiosity and courage, Arlo made his daring escape. Slipping past the snoozing matron, he tiptoed through the creaky corridors and out into the cool night air. The stars above seemed to wink at him, encouraging him to follow his heart's desires.

Armed with nothing but determination, Arlo set out on his journey. He wandered through bustling marketplaces, where merchants haggled over exotic wares from distant lands. He climbed towering mountains, feeling the crisp mountain air invigorate his spirit. He sailed on rickety fishing boats, listening to tales of the sea from weathered sailors.



Along the way, Arlo encountered a colourful cast of characters. There was Madame Zara, the fortune-teller with twinkling eyes and a deck of mysterious cards. She told him that his path would be challenging but filled with unexpected blessings. Then there was Captain Jack, a swashbuckling pirate with a heart of gold, who taught Arlo the value of courage and camaraderie.

As Arlo journeyed on, he discovered something magical – not in the distant lands or daring escapades, but within himself. Each encounter, each experience,



revealed a new facet of his character. He found kindness in helping a lost traveller, wisdom in listening to the stories of elders, and joy in sharing laughter with newfound friends.

Eventually, Arlo's wanderlust led him back to St. Mary's Orphanage. But he was no longer the same boy who had escaped under the cover of that night. He had found his true self – a brave, compassionate, and curious soul ready to embrace life's adventures.

Therefrom, Arlo's story became a legend among the orphans of St. Mary's, inspiring generations to dream big, explore fearlessly, and discover the magic that lies within each of us.



Anand Adriel Dey
12-E

Just a Dream

Her legs had started to ache and it was slowing her down.

Adeline couldn't afford to slow down, not now.

He had been chasing her relentlessly. She had no idea why. All she knew was that she was being watched prior to this. The videos of herself sent by unknown numbers made it obvious.

She checked over her shoulder quickly. He wasn't behind her anymore.

Had she lost him?

She heard the crunch of a branch to her right. Turning her head quickly, she saw him gaining ground on her.

No, she thought desperately.

Her feet skid across the mud as she took another turn. Adeline could hear her heart pounding. She couldn't keep running for much longer. Jumping over a fallen branch, she came to a halt.

He was in front of her.

She backed up, colliding with a tree just as the man jumped at her.



Adeline woke up with a start, panting as she tried to calm her racing heart. Confusion overtook her as she looked around her room. _Was it just a dream?_ It had felt so real, she could swear she felt like she had just run a marathon.

Just a dream..? Why was she so tired then? Maybe her mind was just working too fast, she hadn't gotten rest because of the bad dream. _Just a dream....._ She tried to convince herself, lying back down. She's in her room, having just woken up, of course it was only a dream, why would someone be chasing her?

It was just a dream, she repeated in her mind as she closed her eyes, _just a dream._

But was it?

The figure standing outside her window, watching her, would surely disagree.



Maanya Tyagi
10-E



Lessons in Love:

A Daughter's Journey with Her Mother

Mishika was an ordinary eleven-year-old girl, but her mother was anything but ordinary. She effortlessly managed the household and her office duties, always armed with witty comebacks and epitomising the essence of an Indian supermother.

A new girl named Priya moved into Mishika's neighbourhood during summer break. The two quickly became inseparable friends. One evening, Priya invited Mishika over to her house to play. They engaged in rounds of ludo, carrom, chess, and card games, losing track of time as the sun dipped behind the mountains. Hours flew by, and when Mishika finally glanced at the clock, it was already nine in the evening. Darkness had settled outside without them realising it.

Meanwhile, Mishika's mother had grown increasingly anxious about her daughter's whereabouts. She called every friend Mishika had, but there was no trace of her. By 9 pm, her worry peaked. Mishika, who usually returned home by 5 pm sharp, was nowhere to be

found. Her mother couldn't contain her tears. Just as despair was about to engulf her, the doorbell rang. Wiping away her tears hastily, she opened the door to find Mishika standing there.

"Ma, I'm home..." Mishika began. "Where have you been?" Her mother's voice cracked with relief and concern. Mishika flinched under her mother's stern gaze and replied, "Relax, Ma, I was just at Priya's house...". "I've been calling everyone!" Her mother's worry spilled over into frustration. Mishika explained how she had lost track of time playing with Priya, the new neighbour. Her mother was left with no more questions. Mishika knew what was coming next—the dreaded punishment reserved for serious missteps, a 'Brahmastra'. To her surprise, her mother guided her firmly to the living room and sat her down, her expression serious but calm.

"Mishika," her mother began, her voice steady, "I was incredibly worried about you tonight. It's important to let us know where you are, especially when it gets late." Mishika felt a pang of guilt. "I'm sorry, Ma," she murmured, looking down. Her mother sighed softly,

her tone softening. "I know you didn't mean to worry me. But remember, my job is to keep you safe, no matter what." She placed a comforting hand on Mishika's shoulder.

Understanding her mother's concern, Mishika nodded solemnly. "I'll be more careful next time," she promised sincerely. Her mother smiled gently and pulled her into a warm embrace. "I know you will," she murmured, holding Mishika close. From that day forward, Mishika made it a point to communicate openly with her parents about her plans, knowing that her supermother's discipline was always rooted in love and protection.

Years later, Mishika cherished this memory as a testament to her mother's unwavering love and guidance.



Mandakini Rai
8-C

Mischievous John learns a lesson

It was a bright sunny day. Grandpa took John to the beach. Their pet dog, Coco accompanied them. Grandpa had already warned John not to be mischievous. But John, like always did not pay any heed to the warnings. As soon as they reached the beach, John jumped out of the car and ran towards the sea. Grandpa had told him not to go too far in the sea as the waves would engulf him and take him along. But John had something else in his mind this time. He started playing with Coco.

He took Coco's favourite toy and ran away so that Coco would run after him. . For few minutes this continued. By this time Coco had started enjoying this game. As he won Coco's confidence, he ran towards the sea. Coco followed. He went deeper inside with Coco after him. Suddenly, a huge wave hit him. He wanted to scare Coco but instead the waves engulfed him. On the other hand, John did not know that dogs are good at swimming. Coco swam safely towards the coast. But John got trapped. He started screaming for help. Breathing was getting difficult now. At one



movement the waves pushed him upwards, at the very next his head was completely drowned in the sea. A rescuer near the shore saw him screaming for help and waving his hands. He dived into the sea and swam towards John.

He caught hold of John who had almost drowned. He took him to the shore. John lay there struggling for each breath. He was panting heavily. The salty water had blocked his nasal passage. He coughed heavily. Grandpa and Coco ran up to him. By now John had learnt his lesson. A small mischief with Coco would have costed him his life. He apologised to grandpa and promised that he would never be naughty and mischievous and would always listen to what the elders told him.



Akshat Chettri

7-A

My Non-existent Twin Sister

This story changed my whole life and challenged my beliefs. This story is from the previous year, when I was in 10th grade. One day after school, I went out for some snacks with my friends. After that, I went home. It was around 7pm in the evening. I reached home and my dining area comes first to the entrance of the home. As I was opening the main gate, I saw my family having dinner.

I was surprised as I was not there at the table yet. And we as a family always started dinner together. As soon as I moved towards the inside, my heart sank. I couldn't believe what I saw. I was a little tired, so I slapped myself and rubbed my eyes a few times. But what I saw did not change. I saw a young woman having dinner with my family, talking with them, who looked exactly like me. I mean face color exactly like mine. It was like she was my twin sister. But I had no twin sister.

I stood at my main gate in shock, watching a duplicate of mine having dinner with my family. I didn't know

what to do. Should I go inside? Will she be dangerous? After two or three minutes standing there, I ran out of my house towards the main road, confused and terrified. I took an auto from there and checked into a hotel.

I was tired and exhausted, so I went to bed with thousands of questions in my head. So many movies I have seen were why I was too scared. Yet I somehow managed to fall asleep. The following day, I woke up and realized I was in a hotel and what I saw yesterday at my home. I picked up my phone, expecting multiple missed calls and more than 10 or 20 messages from my parents. Like where are you? Why didn't you come back home last night etc. But to my surprise, there were no missed calls or messages which confirmed that I was not hallucinating the previous night. I literally saw a clone of mine.

I realized there was only one person who could answer all of my questions. God, because I don't know who else can answer that question. But only one person who could answer all my questions and that was my clone. So I checked out from the hotel and

went back home. I slowly entered through the main gate, scared. When I entered, I heard a voice from the back. What happened? You're supposed to be in school and why have you changed your clothes? This was my mom standing near the kitchen. I turned around. I wanted to explain everything to her. But then I realized that duplicate had gone to school pretending to be me, she was following my daily routine.

I just made an excuse to my mom and went back to my room. I was relieved that facing that duplicate was postponed until the evening. As I was standing in my room, someone suddenly shook my shoulder and suddenly a bright light came into my eyes and my blurred vision transitioned into reality.

This was all just a dream. I saw my dad opening the curtains, letting in the bright light. I was sweating but relieved that it was all just a dream. That was the only dream of mine that felt so real. It was 23rd November that day. I went back to my daily routine and a few weeks passed. Then one day while having dinner with my family, I started telling the story to them. All of

them made fun of me but only my brother was laughing, not my parents. When I was at that part of the story in which I thought that the clone could be my twin sister. I saw a very serious and a bit sad face of my parents. I asked them what happened. They said nothing but I said something was off.

I asked them again and after insisting a lot, they finally told me that I actually had a twin sister. She died from a very high fever when she was only a few weeks old. No one ever told me this. I realised last month was my birthday and I asked her date of death and they said 23rd November 2008.



Vidhi Rana

11-F

Reader's Untold Tales

On the suburbs of a small town, there sat an old bookstore, fenced by a thick foliage. In its vintage wooden shelf beside the large window, there lay a mysterious book named 'Reader's Untold Tales'.

The book had been known to have an uncanny ability to alter its ending based on the reader's unconscious desires, hopes and their life. Some believed it to be a myth until they read it, while some thought that the book had been enchanted by a spell.

One day, Maria, out of curiosity went to the bookstore and took a seat next to the huge window to read the book. She was a 19 years old vivacious girl who was content with her life. As she dived into the mysterious world of those brown and worn out pages, she felt the story come alive. It was as if the characters could hear her thoughts and feelings, thereby narrating the story further. Towards the end, Maria found herself swept away on an familiar adventure filled with unexpected twists. As she reached the last chapter, her heart raced with excitement. To her



astonishment, the ending was more than satisfactory, fulfilling her deepest desires and hopes from life.

Another day, a 21 years old boy named Jason, was passing through the street across that bookstore, when it started to rain. To seek refuge from the downpour, he decided to go inside and read a book to pass him time.

(Jason has had a very miserable life, filled with hardships and disappointments. He was a pessimist, always stressed and had no hopes from life.)

The title caught his eye and so, he chose the same book and started reading it. As he delved into the story, he found himself confronting his deepest fears and sorrows. Each chapter revealed the complexities of his own journey. The last chapter was full of uncertainty and fear. Jason got very uncomfortable reading the ending....it mirrored his own struggles, insecurities and deepest fears. He thought in his mind that he hated the book and all the characters. With trembling legs, he got up and went on with his day.

The owner of the bookstore observed every single person but he never tried to read 'Reader's Untold Tales'.

On being questioned he always replied- “Its not the book, it is the people and their attitude towards life. One who is lively and optimistic, falls in love with the characters and the ending comforts them, whereas the pessimist is not able to bear the characters and has a disappointing ending as they have no hopes from anyone or anything. How they perceive the story is a reflection of how they perceive their life. And, that's why the positive walks out content and the negative walks out unsatisfied. Life is what you make of it, be it happening or boring....just like 'Reader's Untold Tales'.”



Tiya
12-B

Saviour's Sin

Few months, a microscopic sized new species, unbeknownst to the human race, infiltrated the bodies of humans, deteriorating the health of physically impaired beings. The creature soon transcended its existence to healthy human bodies. The creature grew inside their organs, feeding upon the soft remains of flesh, gradually. Symptoms include, blood vomits, erratic seizures and sore marks.

The creature would devour the human just rightly making them aware of every agonizing part of the pain. To think that there is a creature feasting upon your alive cells slowly striding you to inevitable conclusion of life is a horrifying experience that I, though might have never experienced, but forcibly tied down to notice the ferocity of every day.

Despite the monotonous routine of dealing with the disease, I am inept of weaving a façade of tranquility. My eyes glisten with tears and heart wrenches as my mind drifts back to the inhumanly screams of my dead daughter as she clutches her head and looks at



me with the eyes of terror knowing her death was near, her final minutes of life. My empty thoughts and mind descend to the present cure in my calloused hand.

The two sides of my conscience still disagreeing against each other while I stare at the cure with heavy eyelids contemplating the substances I exploited to successfully invent it, the innocent blood of the people with memories, conscious thoughts, dreams and hopes.

I glance at my one empty hand and back to the cure and, again back to my worn-out hand, repeating until I felt the blood pressure rise in my head wishing to break my skull open to redeem myself from the sin. Who will salvage my mortal sins, not just one, but a hundred? I used to muse deeply upon the dilemma of being the savior for the world alongside introspecting my own decisions to ruin the innocent's lives.

For their kins, they were the loved ones who couldn't beat this cancer but for me they were the antibodies that had created resilience from the disease and grown

immune to creature, now whose blood will bring back humanity. When I intentionally killed my patients who were immune to the disease very secretively, subtly, with each medicine without contaminating their blood, it felt like an illegal, unethical, carnage spree of mine that was driven by the force of momentary madness.

When I think of myself as a savior of humanity, the thought of being the demon clashes just as immediately. The cure convalesced many but had deprived my conscience and cursed me with endless sleepless nights. But now, no longer does my hand carve with numbness nor go blue with cold but I still look at the cure with my broken soul.



Dimpri Nagnyal
10-E

A Friend I Once Had

In a bustling schoolyard, there existed a unique friendship that began unexpectedly. I, a lively and outgoing student, noticed a new boy named Kenji, who had recently moved from Japan. Kenji struggled with English and often sat alone in the corner of the classroom, looking lost amidst the unfamiliar chatter.

One day, spurred by empathy and curiosity, I approached Kenji with a warm greeting, "Hi there! Can I be your first friend?" Kenji's eyes, which had initially held a hint of sadness, lit up with a glimmer of hope. This marked the beginning of a friendship that would defy cultural barriers and language differences.

As days turned into weeks, the two of us became inseparable. We shared laughs over Kenji's attempts at English and bonded over our shared love for video games. Kenji would often visit my home, treating it like his own, much to the delight of my mother who embraced Kenji as her own son.

Our friendship took an adventurous turn when we



started sneaking out to the local arcade, our secret hideout where we spent hours playing games and creating uproariously loud memories. We coined inside jokes, oblivious to the curious stares of arcade patrons.

However, just as our bond deepened, fate intervened. Towards the end of the semester, Kenji announced that he was moving back to Japan. The news hit me hard, but Kenji promised, "I'll meet you tomorrow," leaving a glimmer of hope in my heart.

Days turned into weeks, and silence replaced the daily laughter and adventures. I tried to fill the void, throwing myself into school activities and sports. Yet, the absence of Kenji lingered like an unanswered question.

Then, unexpectedly, a message notification popped up on my phone. "You



never told me your Instagram ID, so I had to look for it. Huh, I'm tired, man. Guess I'll be returning there tomorrow; I have so much pending work!"

My eyes widened in disbelief.

Without hesitation, I called Kenji, ready to unleash a barrage of emotions. Instead, I was met with a familiar chuckle on the other end, followed by Kenji's voice saying, "I'll be returning soon; I can't leave my only best friend behind, right?"



Aditya Sharma
9-C



Aisha's Resolve:

Breaking Barriers for Girls' Education

In a bustling city, nestled amidst towering skyscrapers and busy streets, there was a small neighbourhood where girls like Aisha dreamt of a brighter future. Aisha was a bright and ambitious girl, determined to break the cycle of poverty through education.

Every morning, Aisha would wake up before dawn, her eyes sparkling with hope as she made her way to the local school. However, her journey was not without challenges. Along the way, she would often encounter boys from her neighbourhood who mocked and taunted her, belittling her aspirations and questioning why a girl like her bothered going to school.

Despite the harassment, Aisha refused to be deterred. She held her head high and marched forward, fueled by her unwavering belief in the power of education to transform lives. Alongside Aisha, many other girls were facing similar challenges, yet they stood together in solidarity, drawing strength from each other's determination.

As months passed, tensions in the neighbourhood escalated. One day, a group of boys began following Aisha, hurling insults and threats. Fear gripped Aisha's heart, but she continued walking, ignoring their words. The boys, emboldened by her lack of response, closed in, blocking her path.

Just as Aisha felt trapped, a group of older girls from the school appeared. They had heard the commotion and swiftly surrounded Aisha, forming a protective shield. One of the older girls, Fatima, stepped forward with a fierce determination in her eyes.

"You think you can intimidate her into giving up? Think again," Fatima declared, her voice unwavering. The boys hesitated, confronted by the united front of the older girls. Sensing the shift in momentum, Aisha found her voice. "We have as much right to education as anyone else," she asserted, her voice steady despite her trembling hands.

The standoff continued for a tense moment until one of the boys muttered a half-hearted apology. The group dispersed, leaving Aisha and the older girls

standing in a circle, their hearts still racing from the adrenaline.

From that day onward, the incident became a catalyst for change in the neighbourhood. The older girls organised workshops on gender equality and rallied support from community leaders. Slowly but surely, attitudes began to shift, and more resources were allocated towards ensuring the safety and well-being of girls on their way to school.

Aisha's courage and resilience inspired not only her peers but also the entire community. She became a symbol of hope and determination, showing that with perseverance and solidarity, barriers to girls' education could be broken down.



Jessica Kaur Jassal
12-C

Ephemeral Impressions

In the grand theatre of life, a lot of faces enter and exit like fleeting apparitions, yet only a handful etch their presence as indelible imprints on the heart's canvas. Under the sun-drenched canopy of the school courtyard, where echoes of laughter frolic like beams of light, a procession of youngsters walks out of the gates, akin to rivers embracing the vast ocean of the world beyond.

Among the departing students, a young girl emerges, her brow glistening with beads of sweat—a tribute to the battles she had waged. Her footsteps upon the pavement tell a story of determination, as though each step was a brushstroke upon the canvas of her journey.

Within the sanctum of her home, sinking onto the sofa's cushions, Ruhi placed her bag upon the table, relieving herself of its weight. Shedding the remnants of the day, she discarded her shoes and socks, casting them aside with abandon. An unexpected voice resonated from the kitchen's heart—an invitation



veiled as a request— her mother, Sonakshi, called out to Ruhi, urging her to tidy up. “Mum, it was quite an exhausting day at school. I'll attend to it later,” Ruhi replied, her voice tinged with fatigue.

Intuitively sensing something amiss, Sonakshi emerged from her culinary domain. She gently probed, inquiring if a skirmish had unfolded with her friend. Ruhi nodded in assent, confirming the unspoken truth. Attempting to bridge the chasm of understanding, Sonakshi encouraged her daughter to resolve the discord. However, Ruhi remained resolute in her silence, deflecting the maternal concern that sought to mend her heart.

Amidst this exchange, Ruhi's father, Shivaay, emerged from his room. His words, laden with anticipation, painted a promise of a revelation. “Prepare quickly, Ruhi. Today, I shall unveil the tale of your uncle Siddharth— someone you've longed to comprehend,” Shivaay declared. Ruhi's excitement surged like a tide, propelling her from her seat towards her room. However, before embarking on this voyage, she sought assurance from her father, like a navigator

confirming his course before setting sail.

Ruhi soon emerged, ready for a new journey. In the car's embrace, Shivaay guided them down memory's winding paths. Under the azure sky, she probed about Siddharth, her father's enigmatic friend. Intrigued by whispers of their close bond, Ruhi's curiosity burned. As the road hummed beneath them, Ruhi's questions illuminated the night, threading the fabric of Siddharth's tale.

The past and present converged like colours on an artist's palette, revealing a portrait of friendship and sacrifice etched in time. Ruhi's voice weaved a fabric of inquiries, a delicate pull at the tapestry of Siddharth's story, a name that echoed through the halls of her childhood.

With each word, Shivaay emerged as a weaver of tales, threads of narratives intertwined with time's thread. His words, the stitches that sew patches of memory, creating a quilt of recollections.

As the car journeys on, Ruhi embarks not just on a physical voyage, but a journey through years. Sidd and

Shiv, two souls whose fates were woven by destiny's intricate hand, paint a portrait of friendship that spans the chapters of their lives. Raj, Shivaay's father, engaged in the illicit arms trade and held deep concerns for Shivaay's safety during his school years.

Recognising the risks, Raj summoned a loyal associate, tasking him with the responsibility of training his son to ensure Shivaay's protection. Now Sidd, a silent sentinel, stood as a guardian of light, shielding Shiv from life's tempests. Their names resonate like twin stars in the night sky, forever bound by an unspoken cosmic pact. In the school's corridors, Sidd's presence served as a shield guiding Shiv's path, a constellation of loyalty.

However, beneath Sidd's stoic demeanour laid a realm of untold emotions. He's a mystery wrapped in an enigma, a puzzle that Shiv yearns to decipher. Shiv's attempts at connection are like whispers carried by the wind, reaching Sidd's ears yet often falling short of stirring a true bond.

Their narrative spans school seasons and college

canvases. During their college years, Shiv distinguished himself as a top academic performer, while Sidd garnered a reputation as the college's enigmatic figure.

Their paths though diverged, leaving everyone curious about the reasons behind their apparent disconnect. Shiv's brilliance shines like a comet's tail, illuminating academia's night sky. Sidd, enigmatic and complex, becomes a college enigma, his true self obscured beneath layers of intrigue. Amid the kaleidoscope of college life, their connection remains like a bridge waiting for footsteps, a melody yet unplayed.

Avni and Sonakshi, two constellations in their universe, add depth and colour to the canvas of their lives. Their presence is like stars guiding a ship through turbulent waters. Love blooms within Sonakshi, a love that weaves threads of connection between her and Shiv. Sidd, a guardian of secrets, confides in Avni and Sonakshi, his words like verses shared with friends who hold his soul's melodies dear. Their aspirations diverged sharply – Shiv aspired to

become a lawyer, while Sidd nurtured dreams of becoming a singer.

However, Sidd's ambitions remained suppressed beneath his sense of duty, shackled by the belief that his destiny was predetermined. Despite this, he found solace in writing songs, often sharing them with Avni and Sonakshi, who were among the few he shared his inner world. Though he maintained a cordial relationship with them, the same warmth was not extended to Shiv.

Their final year of college marked a crucial juncture. One fateful night, a heated argument propelled Shiv to leave his home, his anger casting him adrift on the streets. Along his solitary path, he was confronted by henchmen aligned with his father's rivals.

Drawing upon the self-defence skills Sidd had imparted to him, Shiv began to fend off the attackers. In this perilous moment, Sidd emerged, an emblem of unwavering loyalty, to rescue Shiv from the clutches of danger. In a swift, brave move, Sidd interposed himself, taking a bullet intended for Shiv.

The assailants, startled by this act of valour, retreated, leaving behind a tragic tableau of sacrifice. Shiv, shattered by the loss, rushed to Sidd's side, but it was too late. The fatal shot had found its mark, and Sidd's life was over.

Grief-stricken, Shiv's tears mingled with the anguish of his loss, forming an unspoken indictment against his father, who he held accountable for Sidd's untimely demise. Sidd's grave becomes a shrine, a sanctified space where memories intertwine with the whispers of time. Shiv's heart became a vessel adrift on a sea of memories and regrets.

As the car came to a halt, the tranquil ambience of the graveyard enveloped them. Ruhi's watery eyes shimmered with unshed tears, each droplet a reflection of the emotions stirred by her father's poignant tale. In the presence of Sidd's resting place, Shiv's voice soared like a minstrel's song, a heartfelt tribute to the friend.

On their return journey, the car carved its path

through the fabric of time, eventually arriving back in the present. Ruhi's heart, now pulsed with newfound understanding. Her determination gleams in her eyes, a resolve as unwavering as a mountain peak.

She realizes that friendship is a delicate tapestry woven by destiny's hand, and she is determined to shield its fragile threads. The very next day, Ruhi sought solace in the warm embrace of her friend Neha. They shared their worries, their stories, and their laughter, united in a bond stronger than ever before, as they vowed never to let any conflicts tear them apart.



Vanisha Goyal
11-F

Fendi: A Tail of Transformation

I never thought I'd overcome my fear of dogs. For years, just the sight of them sent shivers down my spine. But my family had different plans. Despite my concerns, they were determined to welcome a pet into our home. On that fateful day, June 17, 2021, my parents and sister arrived with a small bundle of fur: Fendi, a playful Pomeranian. I was filled with anxiety and intrigue from the moment she scampered into our lives, leaving a trail of trouble behind.

Fendi was relentless in her pursuit of mischief. She chewed on shoes, stole socks, and turned our once-organised house into a playground. But even in the middle of the chaos, I had to respect her enthusiasm for life. Days turned into months, and then something unexpected happened. My nervousness gradually subsided as a result of Fendi's amusing antics, and it was replaced by a growing fondness. Her boundless enthusiasm was infectious, and before long, I found myself giggling at her playful escapades.

It's been three years since Fendi came into our lives,



and I can't imagine a day without her. She is more than just a pet; she is my life! We go to the park every day for walks together, and each outing strengthens our bond. Through Fendi, I've discovered that love is stronger than fear. She has shown me the true meaning of friendship, patience, and kindness. As we navigate life together, I've learned to embrace joy and laughter, overcoming my fears one wagging tail at a time.

Fendi has become not only a beloved companion but also a symbol of resilience and transformation in my life. Together, we've embarked on a journey of healing and growth, proving that sometimes, the most unexpected friendships bring the greatest rewards.



Bhavya Vaid
12-C

Glimpses Through the Veil

As I wander through the old roads, I often contemplate what I perceive—or rather, what I truly see. Stories abound in the crumbling ruins or perhaps crumbled to ruin. Vines and creepers lay claim to the remnants of the wide, balcony-like windows as if strangling the last vestiges of life from them.

I refer to it as 'The Nameless Palace', a fitting name for the once grand and ornate mansion. I have never ventured beyond its exterior, except for glimpses of shadowy impressions visible through a well-woven tapestry of cobwebs and flora. To most, it would be invisible. Despite its former grandeur, it remains shrouded in mystery and hidden beneath rampant overgrowth.

The owners must have been affluent to possess such a home, yet why has it been abandoned? I ponder who dwelled within its walls, or if anyone did at all. Did it witness a family torn apart, or was it forsaken and devoid of love? How did they drift from one another—swiftly in a cruel flash or slowly in



agonising sorrow? Questions swirl in my mind, eager to be voiced, vivid yet nebulous, like moments from yesterday forgotten; if prodded too much, they vanish like smoke dissipating into the air.

Surely there must be a hall where they last gathered. Surely there were moments of shared laughter, and meals eaten in harmony, unaware of the impending demise. A kitchen fire once ablaze, is now forever extinguished. A bedroom where tears were shed into pillows. The mansion holds them all, each brick a testament to moments of joy and heartache.

I can almost envision shadowy figures, frozen in their final moments together. I sense someone restraining tears, an unheard cry of anguish, fear in the heart, turmoil in the mind, and an unfillable void. A rosary whose beads slipped through trembling fingers, never to be reunited.

How do those decrepit walls remain standing? Is it a fragile strand of love clinging to every echo of laughter, every tear, every moment of care once shared? Or does the house wait like a faithful friend,

yearning for its companion to return, to recount tales on a starlit night of what once was? It beckons with mystery, a tale of loss and yearning lost to the relentless march of time. Whose dream was this place, and why was it abandoned to fend for itself?

Questions swirl incessantly in my mind, vibrant yet elusive, like fleeting memories of yesterday; prod too deeply, and they dissipate like wisps of smoke. Yet I know their fate—destined to remain unanswered.



Shambhavi Singh
11-A

House No. 13

It all started on a stormy night. I was watching the news on television when I heard my telephone ringing, the sound faint at first. Throwing the remote on the sofa, I rushed to my office where I kept all the documents and reports of the people I had performed exorcisms on. I picked up the handset of the ringing telephone, which sounded urgent. From the other end, I heard nothing but the panting of a man in what seemed to be an echoing space. Then a bright lightning strike left me in a panic. Trying to speak to the person on the other side, I said, "Hey... can I know who am I speaking to?" There was no answer from the unknown caller, and the call abruptly ended, leaving me clueless. I immediately switched off the television and went to sleep.

The next morning, I woke to the sound of the doorbell downstairs. I glanced at my alarm clock, the only thing that woke me up every morning, and saw that it was around 5 a.m. I was so deep in thought and still half-asleep that I nearly forgot someone was at the door. I slipped on my slippers and went



downstairs. When I reached the door, I saw a man whose face was obscured by the hat he wore. Feeling scared and confused, I opened the door and saw a man with a bright silver suitcase, which caught my attention immediately. He was dressed in a black coat, black trousers, and the hat I had noticed earlier. I asked, "Hey, may I know who are you and what brings you to disturb me so early in the morning?" "I knew you would still be asleep, Willy," he replied, taking off his hat. As I recognized his face, I realized he was none other than Pedro, my old friend from France. I greeted him warmly, saying, "Oh my god! Pedro, my friend, how are you? I never expected to see you here today." "Neither did I," he replied with a faint smile.

While I welcomed him inside the house, he asked, "What do you think about an unknown man calling you at night, with nothing audible but his cold, shivery pants?"

I was shocked and replied, "Do you read minds?!"

Confused, he answered, "No, why?"

"Because this exact situation happened to me yesterday!" I exclaimed.

Pedro replied, "Really?! I was just telling you what happened to me yesterday, but it's tremendously shocking that it happened to you too!"

"So, what happened to you?" I asked as I took out cups from my cabinets to make some coffee for us.

"When I received a call so late, I thought at first it might not be my wife but someone else. Initially, hearing only panting, I thought it was a prank. Then the call abruptly ended. A few seconds later, I received a call from the same number and this time I heard someone saying, 'Help me! Please!' I froze for a moment, but then I recognized a familiar voice..."

"Whose voice?" I asked, feeling horrified.

Pedro sighed and added, "James, James Patterson."

Bringing coffee for both of us, I said, "Julia's husband?!" "Yes," Pedro confirmed. We both fell silent for a minute, lost in our thoughts, reminiscing.

Pedro took a sip of coffee, trying to regain my attention. I said, "Is something wrong with his daughter again? What are the symptoms this time?"

"No," he replied. "This time, it's about his wife, Julia. During our call, he mentioned strange activities in his house, so I..."

"Do we need to help him again?" I interrupted.

"Yes," Pedro affirmed. "I've booked flights to Germany for both of us tomorrow."

Surprised, I asked, "Why me? I thought you were going alone to Germany!"

"I can't do this alone, Willy! You were the one who performed the exorcism."

"I was, but I'm not sure I'm ready for this," I admitted.

"Please, Willy!" Pedro insisted.

"Uhhh... okay," I reluctantly agreed.

The next day, after completing all my important chores, I left my house and hurried to the airport. In the lounge, I saw Pedro waiting for me. I could see the same sorrow and nervousness in his eyes as I had seen five years ago when we exorcised Lily, James' daughter.

After a two-hour flight, we arrived in Germany and felt the same negative impact as before. I asked Pedro, "Where do we need to meet James? He won't be living in the same house as before." Pedro replied, "He said

we should meet him at our favourite hotel where we used to go on weekends."

"D'you mean the Bavarian Bites?" I asked doubtfully.

"Yes!" he answered proudly.

Upon reaching our destination, we saw James standing in front of the restaurant gates, his bright smile greeting us warmly amidst the golden glow of the lights in the dark.

"Welcome!" James exclaimed. "Not when we have to perform an exorcism," Pedro sighed. "I know, but it's the best way to confront you both before we begin," James agreed. He ushered us inside the restaurant, and we sat down for a while before James shared his wife's situation with us.

"Guys, after my daughter's exorcism, Julia, our son, our daughter, and I lived in unprecedented happiness. We felt like the evil had left our family for good. But..." James paused.

"What happened?" I asked, confused by his sudden hesitation. Pedro and I exchanged looks, unsure of how to proceed. Oh, sorry, I nodded off for a

moment," James chuckled. "Anyway, our lives took a turn for the worse when we moved into our new house. It was everything we had dreamed of, but..."

"But what?" Pedro prompted.

"We began to feel the presence of an unknown force," James continued. "It started with minor disturbances like toys moving, and stools shifting, but it escalated when doors locked by themselves, lights flickered unnecessarily, and more. Then it started affecting my wife. One night, she was in the bedroom while I was downstairs making tea. I heard a loud thud and rushed upstairs to find her outside the room, her face blank yet filled with fear. She couldn't remember what had happened. It wasn't the first time I'd encountered such situations, but this time was more terrifying than ever."

"So, it all started in your new house?" I asked.

"Yes, as I mentioned," James confirmed.

Pedro thought carefully and asked, "Were there any unusual incidents reported in that house?"

James hesitated before replying, "Um... no, not that I know of."

"Why? Don't you recall the numerous suicide and murder cases in this area?" Pedro pressed. "How does that relate to my new house?" James deflected.

"I think something unusual may have happened there in the past," I intervened, understanding Pedro's point.

The waiter interrupted, "I apologize, but the restaurant is closing soon. It's almost midnight."

James settled the bill and invited us to his house, but considering the late hour and our need for more information, we declined and agreed to visit him the next morning. We took note of his address and left for our accommodations.

Pedro and I knew what we had to do. We immediately took a taxi to the library and began searching for anything related to the address of James' new house. Suddenly, Pedro called me from the end of a bookshelf, "Hey Willy! Come here!" I hurried over and saw his face pale with horror. He spoke in a trembling voice, "I f-found something."

Excitedly, I urged him, "What is it? Read it out!"

He started reading, "THE HOUSE NO. 13 BACK TO ITS CONSPIRACY - House number 13 in the woods has been the site of unbelievable incidents. Following the death of Marlie Clarke, the house's owner was found dead on the premises five years ago. People report hearing the screams of a woman at night, witnessing lights flickering on the first floor, and even sightings of a woman wandering in the woods. The murder case of Marlie Clarke remains open, but due to insufficient evidence and suspects, closure seems imminent. The government has faced criticism for its negligence in handling the case, with many feeling ignored."

Deep in thought, I mused, "So, someone died in James' new house?" Pedro immediately replied, "Yes." We decided to leave the library promptly with the documents we had found about James' house.

It was around 3 a.m., and we couldn't find a taxi to get to James' house. After a few minutes, we decided to call him and ask him to come pick us up immediately. He was bewildered but quickly got up to fetch us.

When he found us waiting in front of the library, he asked from his car, "Hey, what are you two doing at the library at this hour?"

We explained everything to him—how the previous owner had died in the house and how her spirit might have taken possession of his wife for some reason. James pondered aloud as he drove us to his house, "What if she wants revenge on the person who killed her?" "Yes, that could be it," Pedro responded.

When we arrived at James' house, I could sense a powerful negative energy growing stronger as we approached. Stepping out of the car, Pedro and I exchanged knowing glances, understanding that this exorcism would be more challenging than any we had faced together before. James opened the door, and we entered the house. Making our way to the bedroom, we found James's wife, Julia, sleeping peacefully. We secured her hands and legs to prevent any sudden movements if the possessing spirit became aggressive. Pedro and I gathered all the necessary items for the exorcism.

James asked us anxiously, "Will she be okay?"

"We can't say for certain, James, but we must remain

hopeful for a successful exorcism," I reassured him. Pedro and I reentered the bedroom and began reciting prayers. Suddenly, Julia's eyes snapped open, and she struggled against her restraints. Sensing the gravity of the situation, we intensified our prayers, hoping to force the spirit out of her. Julia screamed loudly and began uttering curses. James rushed in, distressed by her condition.

"Is she alright? Please, don't be so rough with her," he pleaded. Pedro explained firmly, "James if we don't do this, she won't recover!" I placed a reassuring hand on Pedro's shoulder, silently urging him to refocus on the exorcism while I continued with the prayers.

After an hour of relentless effort with no visible progress, I began to suspect that the spirit might have other motivations besides harm. Addressing Julia, who was still under the spirit's control, I asked in a commanding tone, "Who are you? Why are you in her body? I command you to leave her."

In German, she replied, "I am here to seek revenge on my murderer. The whole town thinks I committed suicide, but I did not!"

"Who murdered you? Do you know them?" I pressed. Without hesitation, she answered, "Robin, Robin Hooke! He was my neighbour."

"How did you know him?" I inquired.

"He was my neighbour. One day, I saw him dragging a large sack that stained the ground blood-red. I knew something was wrong and tried to run, but he caught me and brutally murdered me in my own home," she explained.

"I'm sorry for what happened to you. I promise we will see him brought to justice, but you must leave her body. You're harming someone else," I urged.

"Can I trust you?" she asked.

"Yes, you can," I assured her.

Immediately, Julia collapsed unconscious. The three of us understood that the spirit had departed her body for good.

The following day, we went to the police station and recounted the entire ordeal, urging them to arrest Robin Hooke, Marlie Clarke's neighbour.

The police took our statements seriously, especially

given our prior experiences. That same day, Robin was apprehended at his home, and subsequent investigations confirmed our claims. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murders of his wife and Marlie Clarke.

Pedro and I left Germany the next day, bidding James farewell and wishing him well for the future.



Riddhima Rawat
9-E

John's Resilience

John had always been a determined and driven person. He excelled in academics and sports, earning admiration from friends and family for his strength and resilience. However, everything changed when John was diagnosed with a chronic illness. At first, John was in denial. He couldn't believe that someone as strong and healthy as himself could fall prey to illness. But as reality set in, John confronted the greatest challenge of his life: a disease with no cure. Suddenly, all his hopes and dreams seemed shattered.

Determined not to let the illness define him, John resolved to fight. With unwavering support from loved ones, he underwent numerous treatments and therapies. Each setback tested his resolve as his condition worsened with every relapse.

As time passed, John's health declined further. He had to quit his job, his days consumed by medical appointments and hospital stays. Constant pain robbed him of activities he loved, like sports and adventures, breaking his once indomitable spirit.

Then, a revelation dawned on John. Refusing victimhood, he reclaimed control of his life.



Researching tirelessly and exploring alternative therapies, he altered his diet and embraced mindfulness and meditation. Connecting with others facing similar challenges, he offered support and encouragement, finding strength in solidarity.

As his physical health improved, so did his mental resilience. John saw challenges as opportunities for personal growth, cherishing life's smallest joys with newfound gratitude.

One day, John received miraculous news: full remission. Overcoming his greatest challenge, he not



only defeated illness but also discovered a renewed purpose.

Now an advocate for raising awareness and supporting others, John founded a charity to fund research and aid those affected. His journey of determination and resilience touched countless lives. Reflecting on his journey, John realized his illness was a disguised blessing. It taught him resilience, compassion, and the true meaning of strength. Though changed, he embraced gratitude for the lessons learned.

John knew he could face any obstacle ahead. His journey proved that through resilience and perseverance, anything was possible.



Ansh Sati
7-A

Lyra's Destiny:

A Tale of Light and Darkness

The annals of history, whispered tales and ancient texts speak of a time when the veil between the mundane and the mystical was thin, and beings of unfathomable power roamed the earth. It was an era where magic was not just a myth, but a force as tangible as the air we breathe.

In the heart of this age, there lived a sorcerer, Aurelius. Gifted with powers beyond mortal comprehension, Aurelius walked a fine line between light and darkness, his allegiance swaying with the ebb and flow of the cosmic tides.

But Aurelius was not alone in his mastery of the arcane. Across the lands, others wielded supernatural abilities, each with their agenda and ambitions. Some sought to use their powers for good, while others succumbed to the allure of darkness, craving dominion.

As the realms teetered on the brink of chaos, a prophecy emerged foretelling the rise of a chosen



one, a being of unparalleled power who would decide the fate of the world. Many whispered of this prophecy in hushed tones, while others dismissed it as mere superstition.

Meanwhile, in a remote village nestled amidst towering mountains, a young woman named Lyra discovered the extent of her supernatural abilities. Born with the gift of foresight, Lyra possessed the rare ability to glimpse into the future, a power coveted by many.

Fearing the consequences of her gift falling into the wrong hands, Lyra embarked on a journey to unlock the mysteries of her powers and fulfil her destiny. Along the way, she encountered allies and adversaries alike, each offering a glimpse into the complex tapestry of the supernatural world.

As Lyra delved deeper into the secrets of her lineage, she uncovered a dark conspiracy that threatened to plunge the world into eternal darkness. Behind the shadows lurked an evil force, manipulating events from the shadows in a bid for ultimate power.

With the world's fate hanging in the balance, Lyra joined forces with Aurelius and a band of unlikely heroes to thwart the machinations of evil. Together, they journeyed to the ends of the earth, confronting ancient evils and overcoming insurmountable odds.

In the final, climactic battle against the forces of darkness, Lyra tapped into the full extent of her powers, unleashing a torrent of magic that shattered the very fabric of reality. The darkness was vanquished in a blinding flash of light, and peace was restored to the land.

But even as the world celebrated their victory, Lyra knew that the struggle against evil would never truly end. For wherever there is light, there will always be shadows lurking in the depths, waiting for their moment to rise again.

Thus, with a renewed sense of purpose and a steadfast resolve, Lyra and her companions vowed to remain vigilant, standing as guardians against the forces of darkness for all eternity. For in a world where supernatural powers exist, the battle between

light and darkness is eternal, and heroes are forged in the fires of adversity.



Jessica Kaur Jassal

12 C

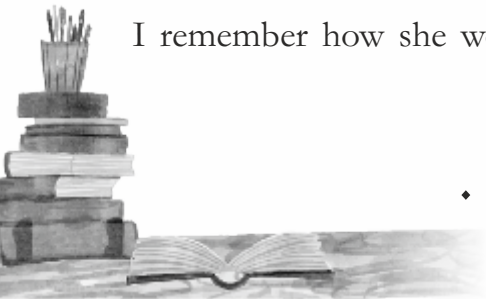
Memories in the Meadow

Green emerald grass, clear skies dotted with cotton candy clouds— a paradise, a dream, my heaven. I sit on the prickly grass, pen in hand, attempting to write but unable to. Frustrated, I close my eyes and stretch out on the grass.

"Memories are quite troublesome, aren't they?" I muse silently, as a memory flutters into my mind like a butterfly. It's not a regretful memory but one of childhood.

Years ago, I had a friend who lived among these grassy hills. Together, we would lie on this verdant carpet, shaping stories with the clouds above. She would pluck gem-like flowers and scatter them over me—a playful gesture from a cherished companion. She was always by my side. I recall our afternoons studying beneath the summer sun, though they often turned into playful escapes. She was home schooled, and her presence was a constant source of comfort.

I remember how she would cling to me when she



sensed trouble, her gentle nature masking a timid heart. She was strong, yet vulnerable—a mix of courage and sensitivity. I would kiss away her tears whenever bruises marred her skin, a ritual that soothed her cries. She was my friend, a blend of strength and fragility that I cherished dearly.

As I reminisce, her memories shimmer like jewels in the sunlight, filling me with longing and warmth. With a sigh, I retreat indoors for a cup of coffee, seeking solace in the familiar comfort of routine.



Anubhi Dyundi
10-D

The Desert's Blade

The relentless sun beat down on Korvus, a scruffy 12-year-old with dirt smeared across his face. His belly ached with hunger, an ever-present companion in the unforgiving city. Survival here was a daily struggle, fought out in the winding alleys where Korvus knew every dusty nook and cranny, every rusty grate that offered a brief respite from the cruel guards.

News travelled fast, as fast as a desert sandstorm. This time, it was the Azarians, renowned for their formidable warriors and ruthless ways, who were the enemies of Kaal. Desperate for soldiers, the empire issued a decree: everyone must fight or face the consequences. It was only a matter of time before their merciless grasp reached even the forgotten corners of the city.

The ensuing days were a blur of unease. The bustling market now felt eerily quiet. Soldiers were everywhere, their hard eyes scanning for anyone strong enough to fight. Sleep offered little comfort, plagued by nightmares of being ripped away from the



only life he had ever known.

Then came the dreaded knock. Two hulking soldiers, their faces set in bored yet cruel expressions, burst into Korvus' makeshift shelter. Before he could utter a word, they seized him, his scrawny frame offering little resistance against their iron grip.

"Another warrior for the esteemed Kaal army," one boasted, shoving Korvus towards a training field for new recruits.

The training grounds were a dusty mess filled with men, most of them bigger and stronger than Korvus. The trainers, grizzled soldiers with battle scars etched on their faces, barked orders at the recruits. Push-ups, sword swings, marching, everything was an exhausting struggle. The other recruits, mostly farm boys and skilled apprentices laughed at Korvus' clumsy attempts, his old sword wobbling in his grasp. Bruises bloomed across his body, his muscles screamed in protest, and the meagre rations left him always hungry. But Korvus wasn't someone who would easily give up. Unlike the other recruits who

relied on brute force, Korvus watched, learned, and remembered. Nights were spent huddled away from the snoring masses, observing the veterans fight, their moves like a dance of power and skill. He practised silently in his mind, visualising himself wielding the sword with lightning-fast reflexes, dodging the enemy. One evening, he found himself drawn to the ramshackle workshop of an old man, Malik, the city's blacksmith. Malik, a grumpy man with a beard always blackened by soot, let Korvus stay in his workshop. The young man's sharp eyes and nimble fingers were surprisingly helpful in sorting scrap metal and fetching tools.

That evening, Malik was honing a curved dagger with intricate markings resembling sand dunes, captivating Korvus' attention. Malik spoke in his deep voice, "War is a nasty business, kid. Strength isn't everything. Sometimes, having a clever mind and using a sharp tool can prove more useful." He then held up the dagger.

A spark lit within Korvus as he considered a different path. Perhaps with his agility, keen observation skills,

and cleverness, he could somehow survive this war and find a way out of this mess, step by step. The day of selection finally arrived, filled with tension as the trainers evaluated their progress. Korvus stood among the others, his heart racing. He knew he wouldn't impress them with brute strength, but he hoped his agility and unexpected moves would catch their eye.

Unfortunately, the trainers were unimpressed. Korvus was deemed unfit, just another weakling they wouldn't waste resources on. A mix of shame and relief coursed through his veins, but he couldn't help but feel grateful for this unexpected second chance. However, that relief turned to dread as a soldier roughly shoved him towards a group of men clearing out a dusty storage room. "Looks like you'll be serving the army the only way you can, scrawny," the soldier sneered. The mundane task of clearing out rusty weapons and forgotten supplies was a far cry from the battlefield, but it was a fate Korvus could live with.

In the sweltering heat of the desert, time seemed to crawl by for Korvus. Days dragged on into weeks, the

relentless sun beating down upon him like a merciless tormentor. One day, as he rummaged through a pile of discarded armour, his hand brushed against something cold and metallic: a sword hilt. Unlike the dull, rusted blades he had handled before, this one emanated a faint energy that sent a tingle up his spine. He carefully pulled it free from its resting place, feeling the comfortable leather grip in his hand.

The sword was unlike any he had seen before. Its blade curved gracefully, unlike the straight swords used by the Kaal soldiers. Strange symbols, similar to those on the dagger Malik had shown him, adorned the sheath. As he drew the sword, a warmth spread through his hand, and the faint hum intensified. Curious, Korvus practised a few basic swings, mimicking the movements of the recruits he had observed. The sword felt weightless in his hand, moving with an unexpected fluidity.

That night, he sought out Malik, the old blacksmith. Malik listened intently as Korvus recounted his discovery. A grave expression settled on Malik's weathered face. "Those symbols," he rasped, tracing

them with a calloused finger. "They belong to the Dunesingers, a nomadic tribe rumoured to possess weapons imbued with desert magic."

Malik explained that the Dunesingers were hunted by both the Kaal and the Azar for their neutrality and their deep knowledge of the harsh desert. "The sword you've found," he warned, "is no ordinary weapon, Korvus. Treat it with respect, for it might just keep you alive."



Days later, the monotony of their existence was shattered by the news: the Azarian army had overrun a Kaal outpost, pushing ever closer to their city. Panic spread through the ranks, including Korvus himself. The soldiers guarding the storage room were replaced by battle-hardened veterans, their grim faces a foreboding sign.

As tensions rose and the threat of battle loomed, Korvus couldn't help but wonder about the mysterious sword he had discovered. Its strange symbols and uncanny energy left him feeling both fascinated and terrified. He knew that he held a powerful weapon in his hands, one that could mean the difference between life and death in the coming conflict. But with that power came great responsibility, and the weight of that burden weighed heavily upon him.

The next morning, Korvus was jolted awake by the ear-piercing screams and clanging metal of an unexpected Azarian attack on the city. Confusion quickly turned to sheer terror as he realised the disorganised Kaal army was being routed in the

streets all around him.

Pandemonium ensued; Korvus, caught amid the chaos, found himself separated from Malik's workshop amidst the confusion. He was now alone and adrift in a sea of clashing swords and desperate cries for help. Fear threatened to paralyse him, but the memory of Malik's words managed to spur him on.

He sprinted through the dusty alleys, his small frame proving to be an advantage in the congested streets. The towering Azarian warriors with their intimidating metal armour loomed over him, their expressions cold and menacing. Korvus, using his agility honed from years of living on the streets, deftly dodged their strikes.

Eventually, he found himself cornered in a dead-end alley. A hulking Azar warrior, his face obscured by a visor, stood before him, a cruel smile playing at the corners of his mouth. Korvus instinctively reached for the mysterious sword Malik had given him earlier. The Azar warrior swung his broadsword with a deafening roar, aiming for a killing blow. Korvus,

guided by instinct, didn't attempt to block the attack head-on. Instead, he leapt nimbly out of the way, the Dunesinger sword slashing out with uncanny speed, leaving a bloody gash across the warrior's chest.

A stunned silence filled the alley as the warrior stared down at the wound. Then, with a thud, he crumpled to the ground. Korvus, trembling with a mixture of fear and exhilaration, looked at the sword in his hand. The blade glowed faintly, as if coated in sand dunes. The brief respite was short-lived. More Azarian soldiers rounded the corner, their metal armour glinting ominously in the morning light. With renewed vigour, Korvus grabbed a fallen shield from one of the fallen Kaal soldiers and retreated deeper into the labyrinthine alleyways. His role in the conflict had just taken an unexpected turn. Now, armed with a strange weapon and haunted by the act of taking a life, Korvus was not only a reluctant warrior but also a hunted one.

As Korvus desperately tried to escape the city, he found himself in a seemingly endless desert, constantly pursued by the Azarian soldiers. The once

familiar streets were now replaced with an unrelenting sun and vast dunes of sand. He was exhausted, hungry, and thirsty, and the weight of the sword he carried only added to his fear. Days felt like weeks as he navigated through the unforgiving terrain, learning to survive off the land and the stars in the sky.

One scorching afternoon, Korvus spotted an oasis in the distance. His heart raced with hope as he stumbled towards the shimmering pool of water. But his relief was short-lived as a group of Azarian soldiers appeared on the horizon, their menacing silhouettes cutting through the desert heat. Korvus knew he couldn't outrun them forever, especially in his weakened state. Desperation set in as he scanned the horizon for any sign of refuge.

Suddenly, a voice echoed through the desert wind, low and melodic like the gentle rustling of palm leaves. Korvus turned to see a figure clad in flowing robes, their face concealed beneath a hood. The stranger's eyes glinted with a mixture of curiosity and caution as they approached Korvus.

"You carry the blade of the Dunesingers," the stranger murmured, their voice filled with reverence.

"Few possess such a gift."

Korvus hesitated, his grip tightening on the sword. He had learned to trust no one in this harsh world, where betrayal lurked behind every corner. But something about the stranger's presence reassured him, a sense of ancient wisdom that transcended the chaos of the present.

The stranger introduced themselves as Ishara, a member of the elusive Dunesinger tribe. They spoke of a prophecy that foretold the coming of a warrior who would wield the blade of the Dunesingers to bring balance to the desert lands. Ishara offered to guide Korvus to their hidden sanctuary, where he could find safety and learn to harness the true power of the sword.

Reluctantly, Korvus agreed. Together, they embarked on a perilous journey through the treacherous desert, navigating past deadly sandstorms and evading

Azarian patrols. Ishara taught Korvus the ancient ways of the Dunesingers, honing his skills in swordsmanship and desert survival. Under Ishara's patient guidance, Korvus discovered a strength within himself that went beyond physical prowess—a strength born of resilience, resourcefulness, and a deep connection to the desert itself.

Months passed, and Korvus emerged from the harsh training as a changed man. He had embraced his role as the guardian of the Dunesinger blade, a protector of the desert lands. With Ishara's blessing, he ventured out into the world once more, his heart filled with a newfound sense of purpose and determination.

The war between Kaal and Azar continued to rage on, but Korvus now fought not out of fear or desperation, but out of a commitment to bring peace and balance to the desert lands. Armed with the knowledge and skills imparted by Ishara and the mysterious blade of the Dunesingers, Korvus became a formidable force against the tyranny and chaos that threatened to engulf the world.

Legend spoke of a lone warrior who wielded the power of the desert itself, his swift strikes as unpredictable as the shifting sands. They called him the Desert's Blade, a symbol of hope and resilience in a world torn apart by war.

And so, Korvus's journey continued, guided by the wisdom of the Dunesingers and fueled by the determination to carve his own destiny amidst the sands of time. With each swing of his blade, he sought to forge a path towards a future where peace and harmony prevailed, where the echoes of battle would fade into the whispers of the desert wind.



Sashreek Chauhan
9-D

The Haunting Text

I have always enjoyed watching horror and thriller movies since I was six, but little did I know this decision was going to make me regret it. At 16, I preferred staying at home watching horror films rather than enjoying parties, just as I did that evening. Alone, I settled in to watch "Catch the Cats," a classic horror flick, popcorn in hand.

As I chewed, a loud thud from upstairs made me flinch. Frowning, I stood up, my steps cautious on the stairs. Suddenly, a loud voice echoed—it was my mom. Relief washed over me. "Suhani, dinner's ready," she called, smiling warmly. I happily hurried downstairs, but then a text notification interrupted my thoughts: "Hey, we will be late; order food from outside." I glanced at the message, dismissing its sender.

Reaching the dining table, my mouth watered at the sight of the delicious meal before me. I quickly sat down, savouring each bite. "Mmh," I murmured as flavours burst on my tongue. "Did you like it?" my mom asked, and I nodded with a smile. "Yeah, it's



great," I replied.

"Tired," my mom sighed, rubbing her shoulders. "I'll take a nap; you enjoy," she said, to which I simply replied, "Okay," engrossed in my meal. Opening my phone to check social media, another message flashed: "I don't think we will be able to come back today; our car just got punctured." The spoon fell from my hand. Confusion gripped me. I checked the sender again—it was my mom. How could she send this when she was upstairs? Realization dawned: my parents were attending a party; who was there?

I knew I had to leave immediately. I jumped up, rushing towards the door, hand reaching for the knob when a hand reached for my shoulder and a voice behind me froze me in my tracks.

"Where are you going, dear?"



Priyanshi Bhardwaj
9-A

The Upside-Down Optimist

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Lily. She was an optimistic person who always tried to see the best in people and situations. However, despite her good intentions, everything she thought would go right somehow went terribly wrong. If she anticipated a sunny day, a sudden rainstorm would pour down. If she expected a delicious meal at a new restaurant, the food would be overcooked and taste bland. If she hoped for a kind and supportive new friend, they would turn out to be mean and deceitful.

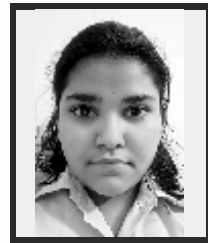
Lily was baffled and frustrated by this strange phenomenon. She couldn't understand why her positive thoughts seemed to have the opposite effect. One day, in a moment of despair, Lily thought to herself, "I'm sure today will be a disaster." To her surprise, everything started going right! She found a \$20 bill on the ground, her favourite coffee shop had a special promotion, and she even ran into an old friend who was thrilled to see her.

From then on, Lily discovered that whenever she



entertained negative thoughts, everything would turn out positively. It was as if the universe was playing a trick on her, reversing her expectations. Lily learned to adapt to this strange twist of fate and found a way to make it work in her favour. She would deliberately think negative thoughts, knowing that the opposite would happen. It became a strange sort of superpower, and she learned to laugh at the absurdity of it all.

Despite the initial frustration, Lily came to see the humour and irony in her situation. She realized that sometimes, life's unexpected twists and turns can lead to unexpected joys and surprises. And she lived happily ever after, with a mind full of "negative" thoughts that brought her positivity and delight.



Rashmita Bansal
9-D

The Whispering Woods

In the heart of the mystical forest of Kadamba, where ancient trees whispered secrets to the wind and creatures danced under starlight, lived a young girl named Lisa. She was a gentle soul, with a heart full of love and a mind full of wonder. Lisa possessed a special gift – the ability to hear the whispers of nature. Lisa's days were filled with the sweet songs of birds, the gentle rustling of leaves, and the soft murmurs of the forest floor. She would wander through the trees, listening to the whispers of the ancient ones and learning the secrets of the forest.

One day, Lisa heard a whisper that called her to the depths of the forest. She followed the sound, her heart beating with excitement and curiosity. As she walked, the trees grew taller, the path grew narrower, and the whispers grew louder. The trees here seemed to lean in closer, their leaves shimmering with an otherworldly glow. Entranced by the mysterious aura, Lisa cautiously approached the largest tree in the centre of the grove, its bark etched with intricate patterns.



As her fingertips brushed against the tree's rough surface, a soft murmur filled the air. Lisa's heart raced with excitement as she realized the trees were speaking to her, their voices blending into a harmonious melody that resonated through her entire being. They revealed to her tales of ancient guardians, hidden treasures, and the delicate balance of life within the forest.

Deep in conversation with the trees, Lisa learned of a forgotten prophecy that foretold of a chosen one who would unite the spirits of the forest and bring harmony to the land. Then, a voice spoke to her – a voice that came from the heart of the tree. "Lisa, you have been chosen to receive



the gift of the forest. You have listened to our whispers, and we have shared our secrets with you. Now, go out into the world, and share our wisdom with all who will listen.”

With that, Lisa's journey began. She travelled the world, sharing the wisdom of the forest with all who would listen. Wherever she went, the creatures of the forest followed her, singing their sweet songs and whispering their secrets to all who would hear.



Rashmita Bansal
9-D

Come Back When the Weather Gets Cold

"Autumn in Osaka," I remember her saying, "You were just a little peanut, barely three years old. Remember that tiny red coat? And remember crying all the way back to the hotel because you couldn't take a single maple leaf home? You insisted they were magical. Like a ladybug lost in a sea of golden leaves, chasing pigeons in Dotombori with those chubby cheeks. That giant takoyaki you devoured with such gusto, sauce dripping all over your face! You were such a mess, but the cutest mess I ever saw, the most adorable mess a mother could ask for."

A single crimson leaf, a lone herald of autumn, drifted down from a towering maple tree. Like ballet, I could say, were those moments full of grace against the sky painted in bruised purples. The sky seemed to be hurt too, for the trees were now abandoning the once youthful leaves of spring.

Paradox, isn't it? The gold and pretty earthy colours against a melancholic picture of a world stripped bare and naked. Everything is just a lie. The gale pretends to mourn in its shrills but is the ruiner. The trees, those seemingly stoic giants, were cowards in my eyes.



They lived for centuries, yet sacrificed the loyal leaves that shielded their naked bodies through countless seasons. Perhaps some would call it fate, but to me, it was nothing more than a cruel jest.

A tragedy. It truly was. A mere season had the power to bring back tides and tides of distorted memories. It was almost ironic how, even though the memories were hazy, they were always so strong, harsh, and ruthless, one would say. And I would agree with that. Unlike most, for me, autumn wasn't a season of crisp air, apples, bonfires, pumpkin patches and cosy sweaters, but a tide of memories that threatened to drown me.

The coffee cup felt heavy in my hands. Strangely, the steam swirled and made shapes mockingly in the cool air. It should have been comforting, but today, the first sip was a betrayal. It was far too bitter and far too hot for my usual liking. It burned my tongue, and that sickly taste was rather unrefined. It was autumn already and would be winter in a few months.

Fall was undeniably beautiful. I could throw a thesaurus at it and unearth a dozen extravagant

synonyms, but "beautiful" just felt right. Beautiful, in itself, was a beautiful word after all. But fall wasn't just beautiful. It was beautiful, delicate, enchanting, heavenly, unreal cruel, melancholic, ruthless, harsh, and sadistic.

Right then, I was held captive. The show was about to start, and as always, I would've had no option but to have to watch it until the very end. The curtains seemed to slide into nothingness. Seasons may mean change to everyone but me. I was rather unbeknownst to the word spelled C-H-A-N-G-E. Memories which were more like nightmares, plagued my mind every fall. It was as if all of them were part of a synchronised ballet with orchestra, and I - the audience. An audience of one. Every scene, every character, every action and every reaction – I knew them all by heart yet I'll have to watch it from start to end. It was a maze of the past, with no escape and no hope of a different ending. I could run, maybe hide, but it would always find me, whispering the melancholic script right into my ears in a warm, muffled breath.

The Beauty of Fall

The show started, and as a ritual, it was her again—the woman who I shared my daily dose of music with. If memories could be felt by the five senses, the first thing I would sense would not be the smell of the lilies my mom always bought from Southside Blooms. It would not be the smell of the apple pie she made, which was impossible to not take seconds of. It would not be my mother's sweet voice. It would be the sound of the music from the cassette player. She really enjoyed those songs.

I was seventeen. There was a school trip I really wanted to go to. My ever-so-compassionate mother nodded in approval. My mom's face while bidding me goodbye while I was on the bus is still vivid in my memory. Her eyes were as beautiful as ever, and her voice was so sweet when she said, "*Don't wander around in the wind and come back home when the weather gets cold.*" Her eyes, I knew, held both understanding and terrifying helplessness for some strange reason I was unaware of, which has haunted me forever. The chill did come, and I returned. But in its embrace, something else departed. My childhood, once a haven

of her love, had faded with the warmth of her presence. The air hung heavy with a silence that screamed.

“Mother? Mother, Mother Where are you?” “This can't be real. It has to be a nightmare. I'll wake up and you'll be here, making pancakes in the kitchen with your hair a mess and that goofy smile on your face”. “It's starting to be cold. All these blankets won't help long. I want to come home. I want to come to you.” “Where's home mom? Where are you mom?”

A tragedy. It truly was. A mere season had the power to bring back tides and tides of distorted memories. It was almost ironic how, even though the memories were hazy, they were always so strong, harsh, and ruthless, one would say. And I would agree with that. It was over. It finally was. I returned to my home and sat by the window. But then even in autumn, I saw spring. I saw him. The last brick to the place we called 'home'.

I somehow managed to make my mom's cassette player work a few days ago. Yayoi Tanaka was playing. Oh, how I had loved it when I was a kid. It was pretty

outside - at least for him I'd say. "Isn't the weather this evening so dreamy and magnificent?" he said and I nodded in a yes though I clearly objected. "Think I'd take a walk", he announced. his words hardly a whisper. "*Just come back when it gets cold,*" I managed, my voice thin. "*Don't wander around in the wind.*" My eyes, I knew, held a terrifying helplessness for some strange reason I was unaware of. He quickly slipped the cassette player into his pocket for he loved music at least as much as my mom did- if not more.

Moments slipped into minutes and minutes into hours. The darkness pressed against the windows. Every creak of the floorboards, every rustle of leaves outside the window, sent a jolt of fear through me. Finally, unable to bear the silence any longer, I threw on a coat and stepped out into the crisp night. It was cold already. I called his name, my voice swallowed by the darkness. The path he'd often taken for evening walks stretched before me, bathed in an unsettling darkness. My voice grew hoarse, and my body was numb with cold. But there was nothing, just the relentless silence mocking my desperate pleas.

"Ren! Ren, where are you?" I shrieked, "This isn't funny anymore! Come back!"

I saw the cassette player. It was lying on the ground. I turned it on but it was already broken. It was broken. But then I saw a splash of crimson against the monochrome backdrop. My breath hitched, a strangled gasp escaping my lips. It couldn't be... "Ren?" The word rasped out of my throat, a broken whisper. The closer I got, the more the dread coiled in my stomach. His eyes were closed, his features peaceful, a stark contrast to the storm raging inside me. "Ren," I whispered, my voice thick with unshed tears.

"Come back. Please, just come back home, it's cold."

The cold seeped deeper, not just through my clothes, but into the very core of my being. I was lost. The streets were known yet felt alien. Lost and adrift, I was a stranger in a landscape that should have felt familiar. Around me, the whistle of a fallen meteorite shrilled through the air, and the world burst into flames. I stumbled back and fell to my knees but couldn't bring myself back to my feet. My face was on the ground,

the dirt was in my mouth, and the smoke was in my eyes. Maybe that is why tears were coursing down my face then, the body's natural biological response to the invading germs into my eyes. Maybe that is why they will not stop coming because they must rid all the soot in my eyes so I continue to see. I couldn't even escape this through blindness. My eyes would heal, forced to witness whatever horrors remained. Maybe that is why I was crying because I will have to keep seeing. I will have to keep seeing.

“Don't wander around in the wind,” I remember saying. “But the wind always takes what it wants, doesn't it?”



Twesha Sharma
11-B

From Adversity to Triumph: The Journey of Mark's Family

In a small rural town during the late 1980s, Mark grew up in a prosperous family known throughout the community as prominent moneylenders. Their wealth came from generations of astute financial management and lending practices, which supported local farmers and villagers in their agricultural endeavours.

Life for Mark and his family was harmonious until tragedy struck with the sudden passing of Mark's beloved grandfather. Amidst their grief, disputes arose among Mark's father and his brothers over inheritance and property rights. In a vulnerable moment of mourning, Mark's father was manipulated by his elder brother into signing away their ancestral home and all their property.

The once peaceful household turned hostile as Mark's family found themselves forcibly ejected from their home by relatives now turned adversaries. With nowhere to go, they sought refuge at the home of a loyal family friend who generously offered them



shelter and support during their darkest hour. It was here that Mark's father, determined to rebuild their shattered lives, found solace and began the daunting task of starting anew.

Despite the setback, Mark's father refused to succumb to despair. He secured a menial job through the help of their friend, using whatever little savings they had left to purchase a small plot of land on the outskirts of town. Day and night, he toiled tirelessly, laying the foundation of a humble dwelling for his family.



With eight siblings to care for and educate, Mark's father knew a simple job wouldn't suffice. He embarked on several business ventures, each one more hopeful than the last, yet all met with initial failure. Undeterred by setbacks, he persisted, driven by an unwavering belief in providing a better future for his children.

Years passed, and Mark's father's resilience bore fruit. Through sheer determination and grit, one of his business endeavours finally flourished. The newfound success not only restored their financial stability but also rekindled their reputation in the community.

As Mark grew older, he looked back with admiration at his father's journey from adversity to triumph. He realized the invaluable lessons learned: the importance of integrity, perseverance, and hard work in the face of adversity. Mark understood that his father's achievements could never be matched, regardless of what paths he chose in life.

Reflecting on his family's journey, Mark pledged to

uphold his father's legacy of resilience and integrity. He embraced the challenges ahead with renewed determination, knowing that with hard work and steadfastness, anything was possible.

In the quiet evenings of their new home, amidst the laughter of siblings and the warmth of a reunited family, Mark's father would often share stories of their past struggles and triumphs. Each tale served as a reminder that their family's strength lay not in their wealth, but in their unbreakable spirit and unwavering bond forged through adversity.



Shreya Rajput
11-F

The Cartographer's Secret

Letty Rawlings stood at the edge of the cliff, the wind whipping through her hair as she surveyed the rugged coastline below. She had heard whispers of a hidden cove, a place where her great-aunt Evie Ludgrove had once embarked on a secret expedition. Determined to follow in Evie's footsteps, Letty braved the treacherous path down to the shoreline, her heart pounding with anticipation.

As Letty made her way along the rocky shore, she stumbled upon the remnants of an old shipwreck, its weathered timbers jutting out from the sand like the bones of some long-forgotten beast. Intrigued, she began to sift through the debris, hoping to find clues that would lead her to the truth.

Then, as if guided by some unseen hand, Letty unearthed a tattered journal nestled within the protective embrace of a robust, weathered chest buried beneath the sand. With trembling hands, she brushed away the dirt and opened the fragile pages, her eyes widening in astonishment as she read the



words penned by her great-aunt so many years ago.

In the journal, Evie recounted her harrowing journey to the hidden cove, where she had discovered a trove of ancient artefacts that spoke of a civilization long lost to time. But even more astonishing was Evie's revelation that she had stumbled upon a map, a map that held the key to unlocking the greatest mystery of all.

With renewed determination, Letty set out to decipher the cryptic clues contained within Evie's journal, each one leading her closer to the truth.



Along the way, she encountered challenges that tested her courage and resolve, from fierce storms that threatened to dash her against the rocks to encounters with ruthless treasure hunters determined to claim the hidden riches for themselves.

But Letty refused to be deterred, drawing upon her inner strength and resilience to overcome every obstacle in her path. In the end, her perseverance paid off, as she finally unlocked the secrets of the map and uncovered the location of a hidden chamber buried deep within the cliffs.

With trembling hands, Letty stepped into the darkness of the chamber, her heart pounding with anticipation. And there, illuminated by the soft glow of torchlight, she discovered the greatest treasure of all: the truth about her great-aunt Evie's disappearance.

For in that hidden chamber, Letty found evidence that Evie had not vanished without a trace, but had instead embarked on a daring quest to protect a secret that could change the course of history. As Letty gazed

upon the artefacts that lay scattered before her, she realized that she had not only uncovered the truth about her family's past but had also forged a path of her own, guided by the legacy of those who had come before her.

With the weight of the past lifted from her shoulders, Letty emerged from the hidden chamber, her heart light with newfound understanding. For she had proven that no obstacle was too great, no mystery too daunting, for those who dared to seek the truth. And as she gazed out at the vast expanse of the Australian landscape stretching out before her, Letty knew that her journey was only just beginning.



Atharva Saini
12-A

The Hidden Powers Within

“No one knows everything about the world; some people are not even aware of themselves.”

Ragi wondered about the truth of this statement. She had come across this intriguing phrase in a book, sparking her curiosity to delve deeper into its meaning. The book narrated a fantastical tale of a community deep in the forest, blessed with the ability to acquire the qualities of any organism they came into contact with through deep spiritual meditation. Initially sceptical, Ragi persisted in reading despite missing pages, until she stumbled upon a cryptic message on the final page:

“ONLY 657 PEOPLE WITH THIS POWER ARE LEFT ON EARTH, BUT NO ONE KNOWS WHERE AND WHO.”

Driven by curiosity, Ragi embarked on a quest to uncover the truth behind the book. Her journey led her to the doorstep of an elderly woman living atop a hill, who confirmed the existence of such a

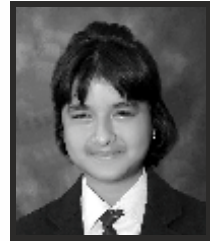


community deep within the forest near Eens Valley. Determined, Ragi ventured into the forest alone, hoping to discover her own hidden potential.

Days turned into sleepless nights as Ragi searched tirelessly, feeling increasingly disillusioned. However, a transformative moment came when she witnessed a burglary from a distance in the dead of night, under circumstances where she shouldn't have been able to see clearly. This event triggered a realisation within her—she possessed extraordinary abilities inherited from that mysterious community described in the book.



Ragi's newfound awareness of her capabilities led her to join a covert agency, where she used her enhanced senses and vigilance to serve for over a decade. Her story underscored a profound moral: despite our everyday existence, we may carry within us untapped potentials and mysteries that can only be revealed through curiosity, perseverance, and sometimes, unexpected circumstances.



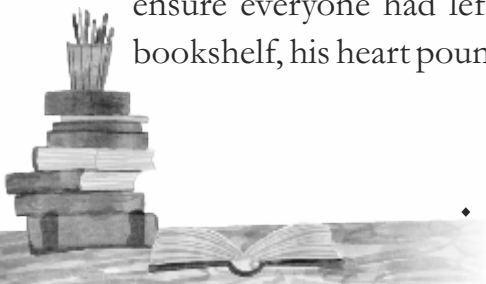
Angel Ghosh
11-B

The Midnight Rule

In the heart of Brentwood High School, situated between the gymnasium and the science labs, lay the library—a haven known for its extensive collection of old books and ancient secrets. The library had always been a sanctuary for students seeking knowledge and solitude. But there was one rule that everyone knew: never stay in the library past midnight.

It was a rule shrouded in mystery, a rule that Edward Jones was determined to defy. Edward, a senior with a reputation for fearlessness, set out to uncover the truth behind the midnight rule. Despite hearing stories of students who had lingered past midnight and were never quite the same afterwards, he dismissed them as tales to enforce discipline.

One chilly autumn night, with the wind howling outside and leaves rustling like whispers, Edward hid in the library after closing hours. As the clock struck eleven, the librarian, Mrs. Cooper, made her rounds to ensure everyone had left. Edward ducked behind a bookshelf, his heart pounding with anticipation.



Once the coast was clear, he settled into a corner near the back, armed with a flashlight and a bag of snacks. Midnight approached, bringing with it an eerie silence that enveloped the library. The usual hum of the air conditioning ceased, and the lights flickered before plunging into darkness. Edward's flashlight cut through the blackness, casting long shadows across rows of books.

Suddenly, a soft rustling sound, like pages turning, broke the silence. Edward swung the beam of his flashlight toward the source but saw nothing unusual. His breath quickened, and goosebumps prickled his skin. Then, he noticed a book lying on a nearby table, certain it hadn't been there before.

Driven by curiosity, Edward approached the table and picked up the book. Its cover was weathered, the title barely legible: "The Mystery of Shadows." He opened it, a shiver running down his spine as he read the first line: "To those who seek the truth, beware the shadows that dwell within."

As he turned the pages, the air grew colder around

him. Shadows cast by his flashlight seemed to stir, creeping closer. He glanced nervously around, but the library remained still. Determined to prove his bravery, he continued reading, each sentence more unsettling than the last.

"At the stroke of midnight, the library awakens," the book revealed. "Those who disturb its slumber shall face the guardians of the books."

A sudden crash echoed through the library, making Edward jump. His flashlight flickered, and he turned to see a row of books toppled on the floor. Pulse racing, he realized he was no longer alone. From the darkness emerged figures—tall, shadowy forms gliding rather than walking. Their eyes glowed unnaturally, moving with purpose, closing in on him.

Panic surged; Edward tried to flee, but the shadows blocked his path. Their whispers grew louder, like pages turning in a gust of wind. "You have broken the rule. Now you must pay the price," they hissed.

Desperate, Edward flipped through the book, seeking

a way to stop them. The final page held a single sentence: "To escape the shadows, one must return what was taken."

Understanding dawned; Edward placed the book back on the table. The shadows halted, eyes fixed on him. Slowly, they receded into the darkness from whence they came. The room temperature returned to normal, and silence lifted.

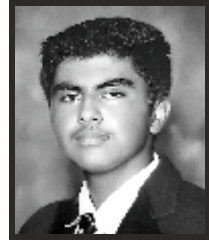
Breathing heavily, Edward checked his watch. It was precisely 12:15 AM. Lights flickered back on, and air conditioning hummed. He stumbled out of the library, shaken but unharmed, vowing never to break the midnight rule again.

The next day, whispers followed Edward through the school halls. He had survived the night in the library, but the experience had changed him. The midnight rule was no mere superstition; it was a warning to be heeded.

Passing the library, Edward met Mrs. Cooper's gaze. She smiled faintly, a knowing look in her eyes. She

nodded subtly, acknowledging his ordeal. Edward nodded back, realizing some secrets were best left undisturbed.

For in Brentwood High School, the secret of the library remained in the shadows until the next daring soul dared to seek the truth.



Pratul Pratap Singh
12-A

Unraveling the Mystery: When Fiction Meets the Streets

I've always been a die-hard fan of horror and have loved listening to horror stories or encounters that occurred with people. A few years ago, a local radio station was very famous in our town, and everyone used to tune in to listen to it in the late hours of the night. They narrated horror stories and real paranormal occurrences that people had written to them or told them. It was around 1:30 am when the show was on air, and I was listening to it in my room upstairs.

The host of that FM was narrating a story about how a few days ago, while she was at home, she walked upstairs to her room and spotted a young girl standing alone in front of a sweet shop visible from her house. The girl was buying sweets there. The host further narrated that when the girl came out of the shop, she carried a large bag and appeared alone, without anyone to accompany or assist her. The young girl had her hair untied, her facial features were not fully visible, and the weirdest thing was that she was barefoot, despite her clothes suggesting she belonged

to a well-to-do family and was not poor.

Listening to this story, scared me so much that I paused it to get a sip of water. While I was drinking water, I heard someone walking in my lane. It sounded like someone walking with broken slippers, shuffling and dragging their feet on the road, making a piercing sound that bothered me. I went to my balcony to see where the sound was coming from and saw a young girl, about 6 or 7 years old, carrying a bag on her shoulders, hopping and jumping around the colony. The initial sound I heard was from a man dragging his slippers as he walked.



There's a term in physics called "static charge." When humans experience direct physical contact with electricity, their hair stands upright against gravity. The girl's hair looked exactly like that—messy and standing on end. The girl did not appear to be a normal person walking at such late hours without anyone else around. Though I wasn't scared or spooked initially upon seeing her, I felt annoyed and irritated due to the disturbance and strange sounds. I looked around but found no one else in our colony, which was unusual for that time of night.

As I turned back to look at the girl again, she had disappeared. I quickly went inside and shut the balcony door. I felt a bit scared at this point, so I covered myself with a quilt and tried to sleep. After a few minutes, I felt a cat sitting on my stomach. Even though I was fully covered with the quilt, I could feel the warmth and sensation of the cat. I didn't move or react because I was scared and unsure if it was really a cat or something else. I breathed slowly, making no sound or movement. After some time, I decided to suddenly wake up, cover myself with the quilt, leave the room, and run downstairs to my sister's room to

sleep. That's exactly what I did.

The next morning, I casually discussed the previous night's story that was being narrated on the FM. Since my sister also listened to that FM and never missed any stories, I thought she would know the ending. However, my sister told me something that shocked me. She said there was no such incident narrated the previous night because the show only aired on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and yesterday was a Monday. I argued with her, trying to convince her that the show had aired and a story had been narrated. My sister called our cousins, who were regular listeners of that FM, and they confirmed that the show had not aired the previous night. They were certain because it only aired on specific days of the week.

I recounted the entire story I had heard, but everyone said they had never heard such a story on the FM. I became angry and decided to investigate further. I checked the location mentioned in the story and found that there had indeed been a sweet shop there, but the house where the narrator lived, facing that

sweet shop, had been abandoned for the past 25 years.

This incident really spooked me and made me question my beliefs about certain things. Hearing something that no one else in town heard, seeing characters from that story in real life in my lane, and then discovering that none of it existed, made me doubt my sanity. Even now, I don't have the right answers or reasons to explain this incident. It's been some time, but every time I think about it, even today, it sends chills down my spine.



Vidhi Rana
11-F

Whispers in the Dark

Detective Jaffers had seen his fair share of crime scenes, but nothing quite like the one that greeted him in the dimly lit alley of downtown Duskridge. The victim, a young woman named Emily Barnes, lay lifeless on the cold pavement, her eyes frozen in a silent scream. Jaffers knelt beside her, his keen eyes scanning the scene for any clue that might shed light on her tragic demise. As he combed through the evidence, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was off about this case. The wounds on Emily's body were precise, almost surgical, and there was an eerie stillness in the air, as if the alley itself held its breath, waiting for answers.

Weeks passed, and the city of Duskridge was gripped by fear as more bodies turned up, each one bearing the same grisly signature. The media dubbed the killer "The Shadow Stalker," but to Jaffers, it was more than just a name—it was a challenge, a puzzle begging to be solved. With dogged determination, Jaffers pursued every lead, following the twisted trail of clues through the dark underbelly of the city. He interviewed

witnesses, analysed forensic evidence, and consulted experts in the hopes of unmasking the elusive killer.

But as the number of corpses continued to rise, Jaffers found himself no closer to unravelling the mystery. The pressure mounted, both from his superiors and from the terrified citizens of Duskridge, but still, Jaffers refused to give up. Then, one rainy night, as Jaffers sat alone in his cluttered office, poring over case files and sipping cold coffee, he received a call—a tip from an anonymous source claiming to have information about the Shadow Stalker.

Following the lead, Jaffers found himself in the abandoned warehouse district on the outskirts of town, the rain drumming against the rusted metal roof like a dirge. With his gun drawn and his senses on high alert, Jaffers crept through the shadows, his heart pounding in his chest. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the darkness—a man cloaked in black, his face hidden beneath a hood. Jaffers tensed, ready for a confrontation, but as the figure drew nearer, he realized with a shock that it was none other than his

longtime partner, Detective Roberts.

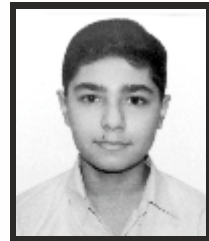
"What the hell are you doing here, Roberts?" Jaffers demanded, his gun still aimed at his colleague. But Roberts simply smiled—a cold, calculating smile that sent a chill down Jaffers' spine. "I'm sorry, Jaffers," he said softly. "But you were getting too close."

Before Jaffers could react, Roberts lunged forward, a glint of metal flashing in his hand. Instinct took over as Jaffers dodged the attack, his training kicking in as he disarmed his former partner with practised precision. As Roberts lay defeated and exposed on the ground, Jaffers felt a surge of triumph mixed with confusion. Why would Roberts betray him? What did he have to do with the Shadow Stalker?

But before Jaffers could get any answers, he heard a whisper—a soft, sinister sound that seemed to emanate from the very walls themselves. Turning, he saw the shadows shifting and coalescing, forming a shape that sent a shiver down his spine. And then, with a sudden burst of movement, the shadows enveloped Roberts, swallowing him whole before

dissipating into the night. Jaffers stood frozen, his mind reeling as he tried to make sense of what he had just witnessed. And then, with a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, it hit him—the Shadow Stalker was not a person, but a force, a malevolent entity that had been lurking in the shadows all along.

With Roberts gone and the truth revealed, Jaffers knew that his work was far from over. The Shadow Stalker may have claimed another victim, but as long as he wore the badge of a detective, Jaffers vowed to hunt it down and bring it to justice, no matter the cost.



Shivansh Dobhal
11-A

The Story That No One Heard Except Me

I've always been a die-hard fan of horror and have loved listening to horror stories or encounters that occurred with people. A few years ago, a local radio station was very famous in our town, and everyone used to tune in to listen to it in the late hours of the night.

They narrated horror stories and real paranormal occurrences that people had written to them or told them. It was around 1:30 am at night when the show was on air, and I was listening to it in my room, which was upstairs. The host of that FM was narrating the story about how a few days ago, while she was in her house, she was walking upstairs to her room when, from the window, she spotted a young girl standing alone in front of the sweet shop that was visible from the lady's house, and the young girl was buying sweets from there.

She further narrated that when that girl came out of the sweets shop, she was carrying a big carry bag in her hand and had nobody around her. That young girl's



hair was open too; her facial features were not completely visible, and the weirdest thing was that she had no slippers or shoes on her feet, though by her clothes, she looked like she belonged to a well-to-do family and was not poor.

As I was listening to this story, I got so scared and spooked by it that I paused it for a while to go get a sip of water. Right as I was sipping water, I could hear someone in the lane where I lived, and that person was walking. Just like if someone's slipper breaks, they shuffle and drag their feet and walk on the road, and that sound was in such a high pitch that it was piercing in my ears and was bothering me.

I went up to look out of my balcony to see where the sound was coming from, and there I saw a young girl who could be around 6 to 7 years old who had hung a bag on her shoulders and was hopping and jumping in the colony, but the sound that I first heard was of a man who was waking as he was dragging or shuffling his slippers and feet.

There's a term in physics called "static charge". When

a human has direct physical contact with an electric current or electric shock, their hair stands upright and straight against gravity. That girl's hair looked exactly like that—untangled and messy.

That little girl nowhere looked like a normal person who was just walking on the road that too in such late hours of the night without anyone to look after her. Even though I didn't feel scared or spooked out at first when I saw this, I did feel angry and irritated because of the disturbance and the weird sounds. I thought there must be someone around that girl, but I looked till the very ends of our colony, and no one was there except that girl, and it's not very common for the people of my colony to be out at such hours of night and jumping and walking on the streets.

As I turned my head back to look at the girl again, she had disappeared and was nowhere. I quickly came inside my room and shut the door to my balcony. I did feel a little scared at this point, so I just covered myself with a quilt and tried to sleep. After a few minutes, I could feel that a cat had come and sat on my stomach. Even though I had covered myself fully with a quilt,

even through that quilt, I could feel that cat's warmth on my stomach and the sensation of it. I didn't move or react until sometime.

I even started breathing slowly without causing any sound or movement because I was that scared and freaked out, because I was not really sure if it was truly a cat or some other entity. I thought that after some time, I would quickly and suddenly wake up, and whatever this cat was, I would cover it with my quilt, leave it in my room, and run straight down the stairs and go to my sister's room and sleep with her, and I did the same. In the morning, when I woke up, I was casually discussing last night's story that was being narrated on the FM because I hadn't heard it fully and I was eager to know the end of it.

Since my sister used to listen to that FM too and would never miss out on any story, I thought she would know and remember it clearly. My sister told me something that shook me. She told me that there was no such incident that was narrated the precious night, and the show didn't even air the day before since it only aired on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday,

and yesterday was a Monday, so how come I heard that show when it didn't even air the night before? My sister told me that I was probably hallucinating or dreaming about it.

I started quarrelling with her and tried to convince her that the show had aired the previous night and they had narrated an incident. My sister called my cousins to confirm this with them since our cousins were also regular listeners to that FM. They confirmed that the show had not aired the previous night, and they were sure about it.

It only used to air on the allotted days of the week, and yesterday was not one of those days. I even narrated to everyone the story that I heard the day before, and they all told me that they had never heard a story like that on the FM.

I became furious, and just to verify and convince everyone about that incident, I did some digging and checked at the location that the lady in the FM was narrating the story about and found out that there actually had been a sweet shop there, but the house

where that girl lived, that was in front of that sweet shop, had been abandoned for the last 25 years. So this incident really spooked me and changed my beliefs about certain things.

Hearing something that nobody else heard in the entire town and then seeing the characters of the story in real life in my own lane, and then it turns out that nothing like that ever existed, I almost doubted my mental condition. I still don't have the right answers or reasons to support this incident. It's been sometime, but every time I think about it, even today, it still sends chills down my spine.



Vidhi Rana

11- F

Practice the Pause

One day, a girl was driving to work. She was following a car on the road that had a sign pasted on the back window which said “learning—sorry for any delay”.

Knowing about this information well enough, she was very patient about this slow shifting, and honestly, they were doing pretty well for still learning. When in the middle of a conversation with her colleague in the car she brought this up. “Would we have been just as patient if the sign behind hadn't been there? I can almost definitely say no.”

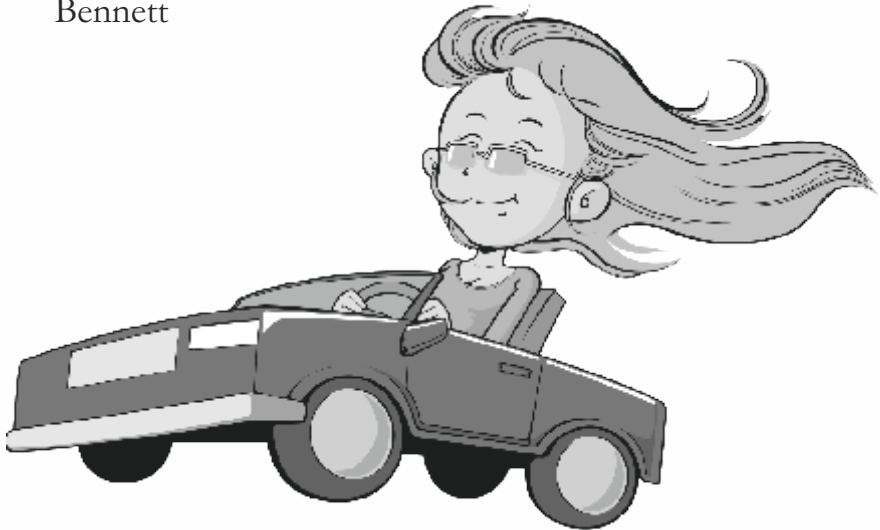
We don't know what someone is going through so practice the pause, we don't wear signs that illustrate our personal strengths or struggles, and you don't see signs taped on a person's forehead that says, “Going through tough times”, or “lost a child”, or “feeling depressed”, or “diagnosed with cancer”.

Pause and think, if we could read visually what those around us our going through we would definitely be nicer, but we shouldn't have to see the signs and have



reasons to treat strangers with kindness. We should do it anyway, whether we know what is going on or not, whether they actually deserve it or not.

“Treat everyone with politeness and kindness, not because they are nice, but because you are.”- Roy T. Bennett



Aarna Sharma
12 - C

Two Hearts, One Dream

A girl with big dreams and goals was raised in a middle-class family. She was encouraged by God to live a life beyond her wildest dreams. She was entrusted to a lady (her mother) who was already facing challenges while preparing for competitive exams but managed to succeed. Despite being beloved by all, her family doubted her ability to cope with life's challenges. Therefore, she was sent to school at the age of four. An intellectual and compassionate girl, she excelled in her studies and life.

However, she was sent to a boarding school at a very young age, leaving behind loved ones, as her family wanted her to progress in life. Her family devoted themselves to guiding her toward her destiny. The turning point for the girl came when she found herself in a new city, surrounded by unfamiliar faces and an entirely new environment, causing her to become withdrawn. She longed for everything she had left behind and, after all of this, she found herself completely alone in this unfamiliar city.

Over time, it became a routine for the girl to live alone.



Life is different for everyone; sometimes it's beautiful, but in her case, life was full of challenges. Life brought her both highs and lows at a very young age. When she had no one by her side, she had to face this phase of life all alone. Life made her cry into her pillow because she never had a shoulder to cry on. Life revealed the true sides of her close ones to her.

Life was often frustrating for her, but she believed that it was part of God's plan for her to become stronger in her circumstances. At times, she questioned her worth and wondered why she always faced challenges. She asked, "Am I not worthy of a better phase in life?" In response, God told her to have patience and assured her that He had plans for her.

There were moments when people humiliated, triggered, bullied, and judged her. She cried and felt alone. However, at the end of the day, she realized that it was her battle. She reminded herself of how far she had come on her journey, knowing that she was fighting for her big dreams. She recognized that to achieve her goals, she needed to overcome her

internal struggles, which made her the strongest girl ever.

Oh, I recall the struggling woman who became the silent architect of my dreams, leaving me with the profound realization that in her strength I had found my own.

Now I will be the architecture of her dreams that will be played not in the refuge of her closed eyes but in the bright reality of waking life.

ALL THIS WAS, IS, AND WILL BE FOR YOU...
MY GUARDIAN ANGEL.



Anvishita Yadav

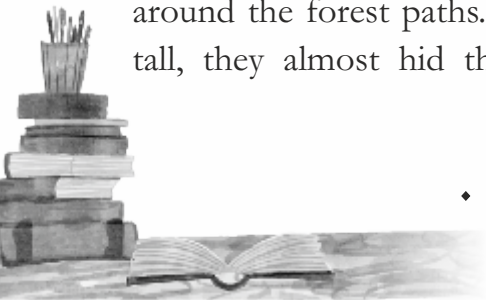
11- F

Untitled

Spending two months of vacation in a far-off mountain town away from the chaos of the city and boarding life, was a dream come true. The only problem seemed to be the yelling and shouting of incompatible people and my twisted brain that echoed through the walls of my temporary home. After all a boarding house is a place where everyone seems to know everyone yet no one. But when you realize that the misery is no longer just external but instead festers inside you like a parasite, the pain is different.

I hatched a plan, to clear my mind of all the junk and the clutter. A long afternoon walk that would stretch into late evening seemed perfect. I would leave at 3 in the afternoon and wouldn't return by around 6.

That got my mother worried, but I assured her it was just a stroll through the market. That was a lie. Half of it was. Instead of returning home after I was past the market, I chose to walk further and ended up roaming around the forest paths. The deodar trees stood so tall, they almost hid the sky. Burans, wild roses,



bayberries, and the one grass to sidestep at all cost, the Kandali brimmed the forest. The yellow raspberries called Hisalu peeked through the big bushes. I felt the cold breeze on my face and some of that anxiety withered off me. I would bump into all kinds of people on the way. The small vendors, ladies of all ages carrying bundles of grass on their backs, the children running home from their daily escapade. But the ones that struck me the most were the young kids of 9-10 with the heavy load of grass and wood cradling their backs.

In the hilly villages, the weight of a heavy school bag on those tiny shoulders is replaced by the pressure of providing for their families. But the brutality of lifestyle failed to hide the innocence and mischief in their eyes. You could stop and chat with them for hours. I would go around the village and the woods every day feeling my mind getting quieter.

On one of these days, I found myself lingering around the woods a little too long and a little too far. As the sun started touching the peaks of the mountain tops I came to terms with the fact that it was

time to head back. But when I started to return home it took me half an hour of continuous walking to realize that I was just circling the same place again and again. I in fact was lost. I had no other way out than to ask the kids the way around. They knew the woods' trails like the veins on the back of their hands. But me? I was an amateur. Honestly, it did hurt my pride to be asking a child for help but I chose to push that thought aside and focused on the current critical situation.

“Hey, could you tell me the way back to the market? I am kind of lost. Every direction seems the same...” I asked the young girl I spotted.

She seemed amused by my question. “You must be kidding me, lady. It's so easy! You just have to follow the mud trails. They only differ by the amount of times they're used. Look, this one is a shortcut for the road to the next village.” I followed her tiny finger pointing to the dusty path leading upwards. “That one leads to the Achhri lake*,” I looked at the hardly visible path that looked barely walked on. “And that one is the way to the market. You see it's quite easy to

navigate your way through the jungle. You just have to look.”

Thanks to her I reached home safely before dark. But something about the lake intrigued me. I couldn't stop thinking about it. And my mind raced with all possibilities of what had happened there. So naturally I inquired about it. Unfortunately, no one gave me a proper answer. Rather they would just tell me how it was cursed and sad. Folk tales like these always haunt small towns. Whether they were true or just made-up bedtime stories, remained a mystery. But I couldn't stop wondering what happened there to have people speak its name like that.

The next day I put on my shoes and took off for my afternoon walk. I passed the bazaar, and the tiny tea stall, and reached the place where I met the girl the day before. After a wait of an hour, she finally came along. I offered her the cake I had brought along. The bribery was done and the story spilled from her lips. “No one in the village likes to talk about it but my grandma once told me the story.

It is said that actually, the lake is a portal to another world

where there is a place that mirrors our very own village. And in the lake lives a shapeshifting sea serpent that guards the portal. A long time ago there was a girl, the daughter of a wood crafter who made the village's best musical instruments. Natural to her upbringing, she was an amazing singer. She would frequently go to the lake to practice there despite what the folktales talked about. In her defence, it was quiet and peaceful there. Under the water, the serpent would closely listen to her sing. One day, intrigued by her voice he finally rose from the water in his human form. The girl was terrified. He begged her not to be afraid and told her how he just wanted to listen to her sing up close. The girl realized that the serpent was just lonely. From that day on, she would come by the lake every day and find the serpent on the shore waiting for her. With her, he felt as if he had finally found a family and thought of her as a sister. One day, in return for curing his loneliness, he offers to let her pass through the portal. The girl excitedly agrees. She swims under the water and into the town without the knowledge of her parents. When she doesn't return, they consider her missing and send out search parties all around the forest. When she isn't found even after 3 weeks of disappearance, the father grieves and announces her dead. It turns out the girl had fallen in love with a man from the town below but because of his past disputes with the head of the village they were attacked. The man was severely wounded and

needed immediate attendance. The girl travelled back to our world all bruised and weak seeking help from her people. She cries to them about the lake, the serpent, and her lover. Instead of believing and helping her, people think she has descended into madness. Seeing the abysmal state of his daughter, the father takes her life believing he would set her free from her madness unaware of the truth. Later on when he visits the lake in grievance. He sees the serpent worriedly waiting for her to return. Upon realizing the truth, he takes his own life drowned in guilt. The serpent is furious to find out about her sad death. He cries and cries, cursing the lake as his poisonous tears infect the entire lake.

Since then everyone who dares to enter the lake is either found on the shore of the lake lifeless or disappears forever. I like to believe they travel to the other world instead.

As I slowly walked home from the walk. The story still rang in my ears. The trees whispered the words to me. I finally understood the anguish in people's voices when spoken to about the lake. It really is a story that pierces through one's heart and fills anyone with a sense of immense unease. The loneliness of one's being, the youth's curse to fall so madly in love, the

loss of lives, both literally and figuratively, and the grief and guilt of a father, are enough to move a person.

The following day I found myself walking on the fading trail to the cursed lake. I knew I shouldn't be going there after what I'd found out. But curiosity got the best of me and I couldn't seem to stop my feet. They seemed to have a mind of their own. As the trees fell behind and the lake finally came into view, I was astounded. Sunlight pierced the trees at the perfect angle and scattered over the lake and grass too perfectly. The water was clear, so clear you could see it mirror the sky. I stumbled closer to look at the lake. There was this certain pull that compelled me to touch the water that looked like the elixir of life itself. I indulged in the pull and just as I bent down to dip my hand in the water I felt a pair of hands push me down. I fell into the water head first. Whoever pushed me must have thought of it as a silly prank. But the thing is, I didn't know how to swim. I moved my limbs frantically in the hope of grabbing onto something. Anything. As I felt my nose and mouth fill up with water, my vision seemed to turn dull. The burning

sensation spreading through my lungs forced my body numb. I finally gave up and as I stared up at the surface I saw two figures staring right down at me. Unmoving. I felt myself sinking, for I don't know how long, expecting to reach the bed of the lake. But surprisingly instead of a harsh lake floor, I was greeted by a sharp light that fell on my face. A torch. No. sunlight? I struggled to open my eyes. But when I finally did. I felt myself being washed onto land with a strong force. As my eyes finally adjusted to the bright light and my surroundings finally came into view. I found myself in a familiar yet strange place. I gasped as the realization struck.....

The legend of the Achbri lake is true.....



Samriddhi Kothiyal
12-E

Sam and the Amulet of Unity

Introduction

In the quiet town of Rivertown, 18-year-old Samantha "Sam" Thompson was known for solving mysteries. Growing up there, Sam inherited her love for puzzles from her father's old detective kit. Despite her sharp mind, she carried the burden of past mistakes.

One evening, as the town prepared for the Harvest Festival, Mr. Hawthorne, the local historian, showed up at Sam's door.

"Sam, we need to talk about Victor Blackwood," he began urgently.

Sam's eyes narrowed. "What's Victor up to now, Mr. Hawthorne?"

Taking a deep breath, Mr. Hawthorne continued, "Victor is obsessed with finding the Amulet of Unity. He believes it will grant him unlimited power. If he gets it, it could be disastrous—his ambition knows no bounds."

Victor Blackwood's Obsession

Victor Blackwood was once a respected historian, but



his quest for power led him down a dark path. Consumed by the legend of the Amulet of Unity, Victor believed it held the key to controlling the universe. He dedicated his life to finding it, using any means necessary. His obsession cost him his career, his reputation, and eventually his sanity.

Victor's loyal henchmen, John and Lisa, were drawn to his vision of power and glory. John, a former soldier with fierce loyalty to Victor, and Lisa, a cunning strategist, believed in Victor's promise of a new world order with them at the top. They were willing to do whatever it took to help Victor achieve his goal.

The Amulet of Unity

The Amulet of Unity wasn't just any artifact—it was a large stone glowing with ancient powers that could control the universe. Sam's great-grandfather had once been its guardian.

Since then, no one else has been chosen as its master. "The amulet chooses its master," Mr. Hawthorne explained. "No one has been chosen since your great-grandfather. Victor plans to force it to submit with dark chants."

Sam's thoughts raced. "Can't we destroy it then he will never be able to conquer amulet power?"

Mr. Hawthorne looked serious. "The amulet can only be destroyed by its master when saying this ancient chant written in this book. And it's very dangerous. The ritual could kill the master if they aren't strong enough."

He paused, then added, "To use the amulet's power safely, one must forge a special wand that can channel and control its energy. Without this wand, trying to harness the amulet's power is extremely dangerous and could lead to catastrophic consequences."

"Where do we find the materials for this wand?" Sam asked.

Mr. Hawthorne handed her a list. "These rare materials are scattered around Rivertown. You must gather them quickly before Victor finds the amulet."

The Hunt Begins

Sam knew she needed help and went straight to her best friend, Ethan. He was good at sneaking around and picking locks.

"Ethan, I need your help," Sam said as she found him.

"Of course, Sam. What's going on?" Ethan replied.

"We need to find the amulet and gather materials for a special wand to control its power. Will you come with me?" Sam asked.

Ethan nodded. "I'm in. Where do we start?"

"Let's check the old libraries and catacombs," Sam suggested.

Together, they searched Rivertown's old libraries and hidden catacombs. In the dusty archives, they found a cryptic map.

"Look, Ethan! This map shows a secret chamber under the old church," Sam said excitedly.

Ethan smiled. "Let's go find it."

Finding the Amulet

Deep inside the maze, Sam and Ethan found a hidden room glowing with an otherworldly light.

"Look at that light, Ethan," Sam whispered, awe in her voice.

"It's beautiful," Ethan replied, eyes wide.

At the centre of the room, on a pedestal, was the Amulet of Unity—a bright stone filled with powerful energies.

"We found it!" Sam said, excited but nervous.

Their moment was cut short by the sound of

footsteps. Victor and his henchmen, John and Lisa, stormed into the room.

"Hand over the amulet, Sam," Victor demanded, his eyes gleaming with greed.

Sam's heart raced. "We need to get out of here," she whispered to Ethan.

Desperate to escape, Sam activated a hidden mechanism she had noticed earlier. A trapdoor opened beneath them, and she and Ethan fell into a hidden tunnel below.

Escape

They slid down the tunnel, landing in an underground river. The strong current carried them away from the hidden chamber.

"Ethan, hold on!" Sam shouted over the roar of the water.

"I'm right here!" Ethan replied, grabbing onto Sam as they navigated the rushing river.

After what felt like hours, they were washed ashore in a secluded part of the forest.

Exhausted but safe, they took a moment to catch their breath.

"We can't let Victor find us," Sam said, panting.

"Agreed. Let's get those materials," Ethan replied, helping her up.

Gathering the Wand Materials

With the amulet safely in their possession, Sam and Ethan began their quest to gather the materials for the wand. Sam explained the list of items to Ethan: a rare crystal from the deepest forest, a piece of ancient oak from the oldest tree in Rivertown, and a feather from a mythical bird said to live in the nearby mountains.

First, they ventured into the dense forest to find the rare crystal. After hours of searching, they found the crystal deep within a hidden cave, guarded by a wild animal.

"Stay back, Sam. I'll distract it," Ethan whispered, picking up a stick to fend off the creature.

While Ethan distracted the animal, Sam carefully retrieved the crystal. "Got it! Let's go," she said, and they quickly made their way out of the forest.

Next, they headed to the ancient oak tree, rumoured to be guarded by spirits. As they approached the tree, eerie whispers filled the air.

"We must be respectful," Sam said. "The spirits will only let us take what we need if we show respect."

They approached the tree with humility, explaining their quest. The spirits allowed them to take a small piece of the ancient oak, and they continued on their journey.

Their final destination was the mountains, where the mythical bird lived. The climb was tough, but they kept going. At the peak, they spotted the bird and managed to collect a single feather without disturbing it.

"We have everything we need," Sam said, holding the materials. "Now, we need to forge the wand."

Forging the Wand

They returned to Mr. Hawthorne, who guided them in the forging process. "This will be delicate work," he warned. "But if done right, the wand will let you control the amulet's power safely."

As they began forging the wand, Victor and his henchmen burst into the room.

"Hand over the amulet and the materials," Victor demanded, his voice cold and menacing.

Sam clutched the amulet tightly. "We can't let him get it, Ethan."

Ethan nodded. "We have to protect it at all costs."

Victor, realising the importance of the wand, decided to destroy their efforts. He lunged at the forge, smashing the equipment and scattering the precious materials.

"No!" Sam screamed, trying to stop him, but it was too late. The forge was in ruins, and the materials were destroyed or scattered far and wide.

The Final Confrontation

A fierce battle followed, with Sam and Ethan fighting bravely. Despite their efforts, they were outnumbered and exhausted.

"Give it up, Sam. You can't win," Victor sneered, advancing on her.

Sam's heart pounded. "We can't let him take it, Ethan," she said, her voice firm with determination.

Ethan, understanding the gravity of the situation, nodded. "We will do our best."

In the middle of the struggle, Sam's hand brushed against the amulet. Instantly, she felt a surge of power flow through her. The amulet glowed brighter than ever before, surrounding her in its light.

"Ethan, look!" Sam said, surprised by the amulet shining in her hand. "It's chosen me!"

Ethan's eyes widened. "That's amazing, Sam! You're the first one since your great-grandfather."

Despite the amulet choosing her, Sam realised she couldn't use its power without the special wand. As the fight intensified, the amulet seemed to understand the seriousness of the situation, its light growing more intense as if trying to communicate with her.

"This amulet isn't just for control," Sam whispered. "It's for unity."

Victor, seeing his plans fall apart, pulled out a revolver in anger. He aimed directly at Sam, ready to take control of the amulet's fate.

"Stop right there, Sam!" Victor yelled, his voice full of rage.

Ethan, always alert, threw a knife with perfect aim, knocking the gun out of Victor's hand.

"Nice try, Victor!" Ethan shouted.

With the gun out of the way, Sam saw her chance. She reached out to grab the amulet.

"I've got it!" Sam yelled, her fingers wrapping around the bright stone.

Victor screamed in frustration, "No! It belongs to me!"

But it was too late. Sam held the amulet tight,

determined to protect its power from falling into the wrong hands.

The Decision

Victor stumbled back, shielding his eyes from the intense light. "What are you doing, Sam?" he shouted, panic in his voice.

Sam took a deep breath. "Victor, you don't understand. The amulet isn't meant for power. It's meant for unity and healing."

Victor's eyes widened with fury. "You're lying! The amulet is mine!"

"No, Victor," Sam said firmly. "It chooses its master, and it chose me."

Victor lunged forward, but Ethan intercepted him, tackling him to the ground. "Stay back, Victor!" Ethan shouted, struggling to restrain him.

Sam knew there was only one way to stop Victor and his henchmen. She had to destroy the amulet, even if it meant risking her life. She closed her eyes, focusing on the ancient chant Mr. Hawthorne had taught her.

As she recited the words, a powerful energy surged through her, connecting her to the amulet. The room filled with a blinding light, and the amulet started to

crack. Sam felt the intense pressure building. The cracks in the amulet deepened. Victor, realizing what was happening, screamed in fury.

"No! You can't destroy it!"

But it was too late. With one final push, Sam completed the chant. The amulet shattered into a million pieces, releasing a burst of energy that spread throughout the universe. As it broke, it also destroyed the book of dark chants that Victor was trying to use to control the amulet.

Healing and Redemption

As the energy from the shattered amulet spread, it began to heal Victor and his henchmen, John and Lisa. They were enveloped in a warm, radiant light, and the darkness that had consumed them slowly dissipated.

Victor looked around in confusion, the anger and obsession fading from his eyes. "What... what happened?"

Sam, still weak but determined, stood up with Ethan's help. "The amulet's power was never meant for control, Victor. It was meant to bring unity and healing."

John and Lisa, feeling the effects of the amulet's energy, looked at each other with newfound clarity. "We were wrong," John admitted, his voice filled with regret.

Lisa nodded, tears in her eyes. "We were blinded by power. Can you ever forgive us?"

Sam approached them, her heart filled with compassion. "Everyone deserves a second chance. What matters is what you do with it."

Victor, overcome with emotion, knelt before Sam. "I'm so sorry for everything. I was lost, but you've shown me the way."

Sam placed a hand on his shoulder. "It's never too late to change, Victor. Use this second chance to do good."

As the healing light faded, Sam and Ethan helped Victor, John, and Lisa to their feet. The amulet's energy had not only healed them physically but also emotionally, giving them a fresh start.

Epilogue

In the days that followed, Sam and Ethan worked with Mr. Hawthorne to gather the rare materials again and return them to their rightful places. Rivertown slowly

returned to its peaceful state, the dark cloud of Victor's ambition lifted.

Sam and Ethan's bond grew stronger, their shared experience forging an unbreakable connection. They spent their days exploring new mysteries and helping those in need, their hearts filled with hope and determination.

One evening, as the sun set over Rivertown, Mr. Hawthorne visited Sam and Ethan. "There's something you both should know," he said, a serious look in his eyes.

"What is it, Mr. Hawthorne?" Sam asked, curious.

"The amulet's energy didn't completely disappear when you shattered it," he explained.

"Some of it remained within you, Sam. You have the power to rebuild the amulet if ever needed."

Sam's eyes widened in surprise. "I can rebuild it?"

Mr. Hawthorne nodded. "Yes, but only if the world truly needs it. You are its master, and with that comes great responsibility."

Sam and Ethan exchanged a determined look. They knew their journey was far from over.

The amulet's legacy lived on within Sam, and with Ethan by her side, they were ready to face whatever

challenges the future held.

As the night settled over Rivertown, Sam and Ethan stood together, looking out at the stars.

They knew their adventure had only just begun, and with the power of the amulet within them, they were prepared to protect the world from any threat that might arise.

Their story was one of second chances, forgiveness, and the unbreakable bond of friendship. And as they faced the future together, they knew they were ready for whatever came next.....



Samarjeet Singh

9-C

The Good Shepherd

“Imagine, that you were a shepherd taking care of your sheep.” A shepherd had one hundred sheep and he took very good care of them. Everyday he led the sheep to fresh green grass and water so they had all they needed. The shepherd knew each of his sheep so well that he could even tell whether they were doing well or if some of them were about to get ill.

As time went by, the sheep learned to stay close to the shepherd because they knew everything would be fine as long as they were in his sight. Every evening when they returned back home, the shepherd carefully counted all his sheep before he locked them behind the fences so they were safe from the wild animals for the night.

But one evening, as the shepherd returned back home with his sheep, he counted and realised that one sheep was missing. He only counted 99, and knew that a sheep had been lost somewhere. After counting the sheep once more he was sure that it was a little sheep that was missing. It now was getting dark, but the shepherd was determined to leave the 99 sheep inside the fence, to go out to find the missing sheep. As the



Sun was almost below the horizon, the shepherd went further and further away from home searching for the sheep. Suddenly he heard the sheep calling and rushed to find it. When he found the sheep, he took it and placed it on the back of his shoulders to carry it home. The shepherd was very happy because the sheep that had been lost was found again.

Therefore, the moral of this story is to explain that God is exactly like this good shepherd in the story who loves his sheep. If any human being is lost, God will find and bring them back again no matter what it requires, and just like the good shepherd in the story, God is very happy when he finds someone who has been away from him. Actually, God's joy is much more than the shepherd's that is because human beings are so much more valuable to God than sheep are to the shepherd.



Adrina Kumar

11-F

The Author's Paradox

Good and bad and right and wrong, are stories made up when we're young to scare us. Love and hate are in-between, depends on your reality to see them...and Liana was going to find that out soon enough. Liana Marlowe had always believed that the pen was mightier than the sword. As a bestselling fantasy author, she spent her days crafting worlds where heroes triumphed, villains were vanquished, and justice prevailed. But nothing in her literary career had prepared her for the surreal reality of becoming a character in her own novel.

Liana sat in her small, cluttered apartment, staring at the blank page in front of her. She had spent years honing her craft, writing story after story, and perfecting her skills. She had been working on her novel for months, pouring her heart and soul into it, and yet, she still couldn't seem to make any progress. The words just wouldn't come. The final draft of her latest manuscript, *'The Shattered Realm'*, lay open, its pages filled with the familiar intricacies of her fantasy world. It was meant to be her crowning



achievement—a tale of good versus evil, where the protagonist, Elara, battled against the dark sorcerer Malakar and his wicked henchman, Darien.

A mysterious old book had arrived in the mail that morning, an anonymous gift with no return address. Curiosity piqued, she opened it only to find it was filled with cryptic symbols and runes. As she touched the pages, a strange sensation washed over her, and the room seemed to warp and twist, like ripples on a pond. Liana's vision narrowed, and for a fleeting moment, Liana felt weightless, as if she were floating in the midst of a vast, swirling vortex. Time seemed to stand still, and then suddenly, with a jolt that sent her heart racing. In an instant, Liana was no longer in her study. She found herself in a dimly lit chamber, surrounded by eerie shadows and the scent of damp stone. Her heart raced as she looked down and discovered that she was no longer her own self but rather Darien, the antagonist's loyal sidekick. The world of her novel had become all too real.

Liana struggled to comprehend her situation. As Darien, she was under the thrall of Malakar's mind

control, a sinister enchantment that made loyalty and obedience more than mere duties—it was an obsession. Her body moved on its own accord, her actions guided by the dark sorcerer's will.

The castle was alive with tension. Malakar had been preparing for the final strike against Elara, and Liana, now Darien, was tasked with executing the plan. It was a role she had crafted for herself with meticulous detail, knowing exactly how the scenes would unfold. Yet now that she was inside the story, her perspective had shifted dramatically.

In the depths of her new consciousness, Liana experienced the world through Darien's eyes—a man twisted by ambition, desperation, and fear. The drive to please Malakar was no longer just a narrative construct; it was visceral, all-consuming. Liana found herself grappling with emotions she had only ever described in prose.

As Liana navigated Darien's existence, she was faced with a critical choice. Elara, the hero of her story, was at the castle gates, preparing for a final confrontation. Liana could sabotage Malakar's plans, ensuring

Elara's victory, or she could stay true to her role as Darien and help Malakar secure his triumph.

The choice gnawed at her. In the manuscript, the right path was clear—Elara's victory would restore balance and peace. But now, from Darien's perspective, the stakes felt different. The fear of failure, the anger at being used, and the desperate need for Malakar's approval weighed heavily on her.

Liana's mind swirled with conflicting thoughts. The rational side of her, the author who had designed a noble hero's journey, wanted to choose the right path. But Darien's fears and desires were intoxicating, and the power he wielded, even if it was merely an illusion, felt real.

As Elara stormed the castle, her heart full of courage and justice, Liana stood at the crossroads of her fate. Darien's internal struggle mirrored her own—a reflection of her battle between right and wrong. In a moment of weakness, Liana chose to act in her character's interest rather than her own moral compass. Driven by the desire for approval and the intoxicating sense of power, she helped Malakar launch a final, devastating attack on Elara.

Elara fought valiantly, but the odds were now stacked against her. Liana watched from the shadows as her protagonist was overwhelmed, her carefully constructed heroism unraveling. The sense of triumph Malakar and Darien felt was hollow to Liana, but the consequences of her decision were irreversible.

As Malakar's victory seemed assured, Liana was suddenly pulled back into the void of her own reality. She found herself back at her desk, staring at the manuscript's final pages. Her heart was heavy with the knowledge of what she had done.

In the weeks that followed, Liana grappled with the profound impact of her experience. The manuscript's ending had changed drastically, and with it, so had her understanding of her own story. She had always written from a place of idealism, altruism and morality, but living as Darien had shown her the complexities of choice and the weight of consequence from a perspective she had never truly understood. Liana revised the ending of her manuscript, not to undo her choices but to reflect the

deeper truths she had uncovered. She realized that even in fiction, the struggle between light and darkness was not always as clear-cut as she had once believed. The final draft now bore the mark of her own journey, a testament to the nuanced reality of human choice and the fragility of virtue.

Years after the release of *'The Shattered Realm'* she would still be criticized and questioned upon her decision to change her plans with the book and all she could say was that in the end, she realized that the most well-intentioned plans can be swayed by the very characters who breathe life into them.



Mohishaa Bhandari

11-F

The Origin of Life

In the divine serenity of God's abode lived the beautiful spirit of the river. Well, she was really the water spirit, but she preferred to be called river. She had hair so flowy, it appeared liquid on her pure white skin. She had many friends, but the tiger spirit was the closest friend. The two could trace their first memories back to each other if they excluded God from the picture. However, their friendship was presently conflicted. The tiger spirit, now an adult, would hunt regularly and then wash the blood of the hunt away in the river, leaving the river soaked in blood. The river despised this.

She was proud of her crystalline, clear, and transparent nature. Tired of bickering with the tiger, she complained to God. God told her, "It's your nature, my daughter. What is the harm?"

She stormed out and away. Far, far away, she wandered in her anger until she reached a portal. White light shone between two brown stone pillars covered in runes.



“Blood is not my nature. No one here understands me,” she thought and leaped into the abyss of the portal. Her whole being tore and twisted. A primal scream ripped from her lungs. Thud.

She opened her eyes. She was on her knees, her whole body tingling and hurting. Somehow, she hurled herself to her feet. The ground beneath her feet was brown, and the sky above was blue, except for a golden ball of light. It was fire, the light source.

“Who are you?”

She turned around, and a girl little older than her stood inches away. Her skin was as dark as the ground she stood on, her eyes glittering emeralds.

“I am the water spirit,” proclaimed she.

“Water spirit?”

“Yes,” she said, raising her hands, palms out, and water flowed from it like small waterfalls pouring on the ground.

“Wow, that thing is so... flexible.”

“I prefer flowy, but flexible would work,” River

chimed. "Who are you?"

"I am the ground you stand on. I am the Earth spirit." Earth declared.

Just then, a boy around the same age as the two girls appeared next to earth. The next second, he was standing exactly in front of River. She gasped, stumbling back.

"Air!" Earth yelled, "Don't scare her. She literally just arrived here."

In the divine realm of God, the tiger spirit had just returned from a hunt, and as usual, he was bloody. With the blood dripping from his face still, he searched for his friend. From the highlands to the forest to the lowlands, no place was left unsearched. At last, he asked God where his friend was.

God tore a piece of his own robe and wiped the blood from his son's face as he said, "She has ventured far away, my child. It'll be a while before she'll be back."

"Where has she gone? I want to see my friend!" tiger demanded.

“I'm afraid you'll have to wait a little. But I assure you, you will meet her soon enough. Till then, why don't you nap a little?” God placed his hand on the tiger's head, and the feline drifted to sleep in his creator's strong arms.

Days had passed on earth. The water spirit could feel the change in her. Her power was growing every day. She started leaving wet trails behind, but it quickly advanced to full on bleeding water from her limbs. Secretly, River loved that she was growing. It made her feel more beautiful, as she thought the best of her was always on display. To add to it, Earth once commented that the streams were pretty like carved gemstones. Since then, days had passed.

Presently, “Stop it,” Earth yelled.

“Why?” river challenged.

“You will ruin everything I've built.”

“Ruin it? My presence will make it better.”

The limit was crossed. She burst completely liquid. Waves rose so high that sky and water became one. Water flooded the whole globe, eroding all that the earth had built. It was drowning Earth. The ground

shook, silently screaming. Air felt earth's need and took on a vicious form. Geared in his battle armour, it struck the water, managing to only toss it around.

The water herself roared. She didn't want to hurt Earth. She tried to gather herself, to shrink to her former self, but she couldn't. She'd lost all control. Below her, the earth trembled helplessly, and above her, air waged a war already lost.

That was when she realized just how badly she'd messed up.

She pleaded to God to help her as her last resort.

She was torn from herself and found herself standing opposite to God. "I'm sorry," River said.

"Fix your mistake, my child; you still have time."

"How? I've lost all control over it."

"The 'it' is you. Don't fool yourself; you only lose power over what you allow yourself to lose. You lost because you grew vain. Let it go, and take your power back."

God pushed her back, and she fell. She was water again. The one that had drowned earth and the one air couldn't move. But she could. Deep in the depths, she

felt the earth mix with water. It was beautiful. An urge to give it air prompted her.

Taking her power back, she gathered all her strength and tore the water away from earth, yanking it up in the air and sun-forming clouds of it. The winds carried the clouds away in low-lying areas. The potion of earth and water welcomed air and the warm sun.

With a gold flash, God appeared. Taking the potion in his hands, the creator tore strands of his own hair and carefully weaved his own hair, his own energy, into the cacophony.

Life was created.

He handed the creature to water and declared, “Earth, water, fire, air, you will take care of my creation. Water, you are the medium in which life has begun. Earth, life shall reside and grow on you. Air you are the life giver, life's conscience shall function through you. Fire, you are the life-giving force. You will keep life alive and lively.

It is your dance of creation that created life, and your ballad will preserve it. Remember, I am you, and you

are me. Blessed be.” Gold filled the space, and God disappeared.

True to God's words, it was the ballad of the four that preserved and advanced life. The process was divinely beautiful, and it brought fulfilment to them beyond measure. However, despite this, the happiest river spirit recalled being in the history of all life was when all her friends, plant spirits, and animal spirits, including her dearest friend, the tiger, manifested on earth. Water swore to never again grow vain, and the earth, air, and fire swore to help her. That is why when rivers flow, it carries sediment, air carries clouds to all the earth, and fire burns the water to form clouds. And this is the story of the origin of life.



Khushi Bhardwaj
11-F



THE ASIAN SCHOOL
DEHRADUN

THE STORY BOOK

