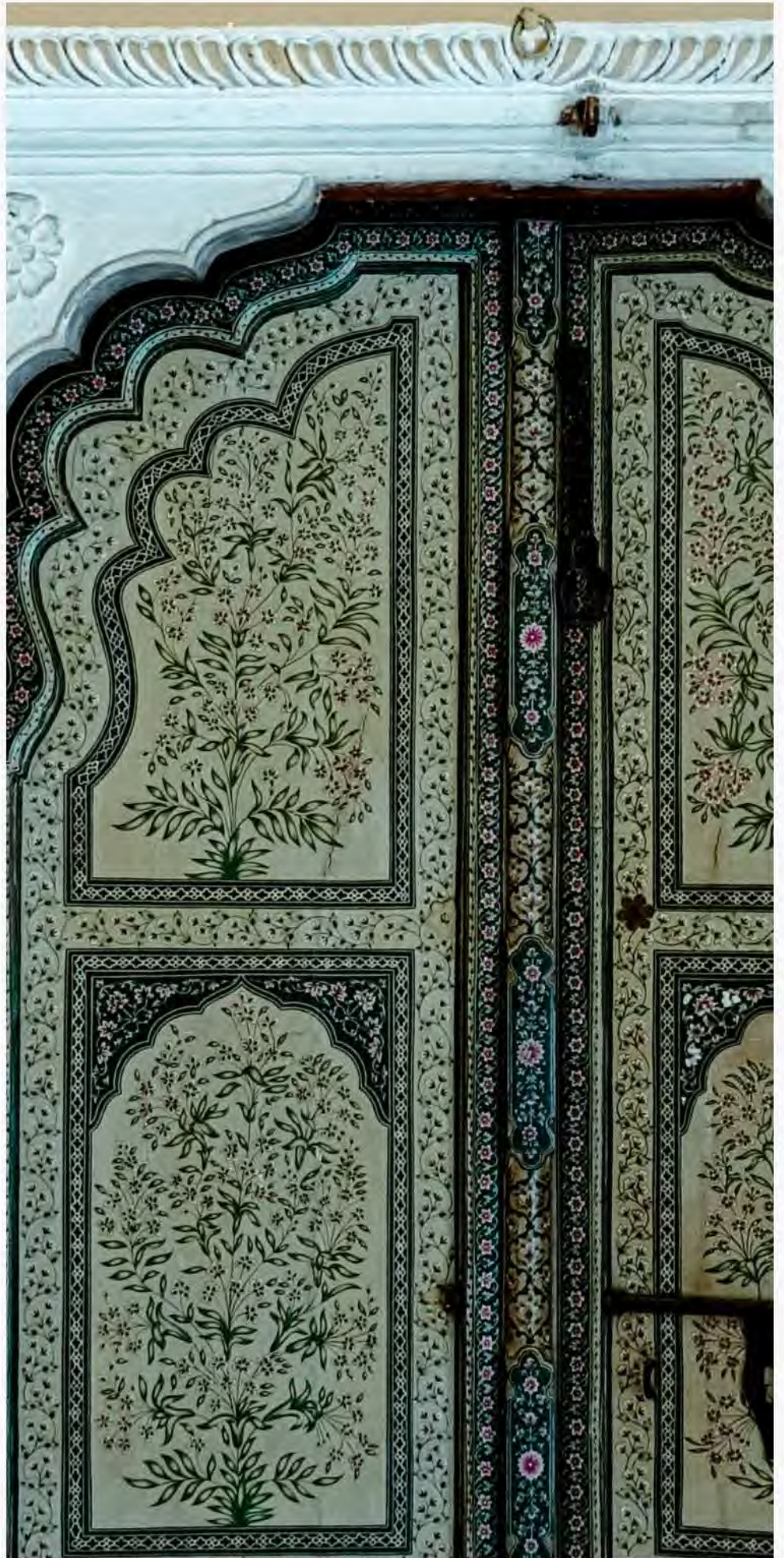


**NEW
BEGINNINGS**

INSPIRIA

NO.1



A STUDENT PUBLICATION OF ELA, SCAC



Magazine Design and Layout By
Ananya Chopra

Cover Photo By Madhav Chobisa

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From the Principal's Desk

Feeling extremely joyous and filled with gratitude, I am proud to present the first edition of our English Literary Association's magazine. It has been a long and beloved dream that has come to fruition at last. I give my heart-felt congratulations to the faculty and students who have worked hard to make this cherished dream come true, contributing to the growth of our esteemed college.

In this first edition, we honour the unseen spirit that unites us as well as the material accomplishments of our campus community. The magazine encapsulates our institution in its pages, a colourful tapestry interwoven with the strands of wisdom, imagination, and friendship. Every piece of writing, artwork, and picture is proof of the variety of interests and skills that thrive within our walls.

Let us, as we turn through the pages, consider not only what we have accomplished thus far but also what lies ahead. Although this magazine's release is a significant turning point in our college's history, it is only the start of an exciting new chapter full of possibilities. Let's keep aiming high, reaching new heights in our ambitions, and fostering the ties that bind our community together. Let's write the next successful, inventive, and inspirational chapters in the history of Symbiosis College of Arts & Commerce together.

Best wishes,



Dr. Hrishikesh Soman



From the Vice Principal's Desk

With great delight, I put pen to writing for the first edition of Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce's magazine, suitably named Inspiria. This magazine is a watershed moment in our college's history, and I am overjoyed to see the result of hard work and creativity. We are lucky to have such great faculty and students. Their ability and passion are the foundation of our institution, and their diligent efforts ensure that our students are nurtured and enabled to attain their greatest potential.

Inspiria exemplifies this commitment. It is a platform created expressly to encourage our student body's creative endeavours, a place where they may freely express themselves and explore the limitless depths of their creativity. The core of Inspiria is its ability to kindle the spark of innovation within our students. As you go through its pages, I am convinced you will be stunned by the sheer vibrancy and ability on show. From engaging stories and thought-provoking articles to gorgeous artwork and incisive poetry, Inspiria celebrates the varied variety of skills and voices that makes our college unique.

On this historic occasion, I send my heartfelt gratitude to the Principal, whose vision and leadership have been critical in bringing Inspiria to life. My deepest congratulations are extended to the committed editorial team, whose hard efforts have secured the magazine's outstanding quality. Finally, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the students for their ingenuity, passion, and readiness to share their talents with the world. Let this be the start of a long and fruitful journey, lined with artistic greatness and limitless inventiveness.

Best Wishes,



Dr. Tessy Thadathil



From the HoD's Desk

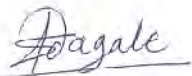
As I sit down to write this personal message for our very first edition of *Inspiria*, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude. This magazine is not just a collection of words and images; it is a testament to the creativity, dedication, and talent of our students.

Inspiria is more than just a literary magazine; it's a representation of the vibrant spirit of our English department. It's a platform for us to showcase our thoughts, our ideas, and our stories. And I have no doubt that this edition is just the beginning of many more to come.

I want to take a moment to express how proud I am of each and every one of you who has contributed to this magazine. From the designers to the writers, from the editors to the proofreaders, your hard work and passion shine through in every page.

I extend my thanks to our Principal and Vice Principal for supporting us through each step in this endeavour. Finally, to all the contributors, editors, and readers, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations. You have created something truly special, and I cannot wait to see where this journey will take us. Here's to *Inspiria*, may it continue to inspire and captivate for semesters to come.

Best Wishes,



Dr. Anil Adagale



From the Editorial Desk

The first edition of *Inspiria* is a tribute to new beginnings. It is as much a celebration of fresh starts as an acute nostalgia for the times past. We have endeavored to create this magazine with full consciousness of the traditions of the English department of our college, whose roots have found firm footing over the last couple of decades. We are grateful to those who have paved the way for us because no new beginning can be truly realized unless the vision of the ones before drives us.

The cover page is an embodiment of our theme as the door signifies this transitional space that new beginnings are all about. *Inspiria* seeks to revel in paradoxes owing to the diverse presence and coexistence of students from a variety of backgrounds in our college. Through *Inspiria*, the English Literary Association strives to create a safe space for artists and to give their thoughts a creative outlet. We hope the readers enjoy reading these works as much as the writers have loved penning them down.

Born out of a dream, *Inspiria* is a product of immense dedication, love and hard work. Building this magazine from scratch has been one of the most fulfilling experiences. It has etched its place in the hearts of the entire editorial team. From coming up with the name to publishing the first edition, it has been quite a journey. The name 'Inspiria' is an ode to creativity and inspiration. It is a celebration of words.

Our deepest and most sincere thanks go to our Principal, Dr. Hrishikesh Soman, Vice Principal, Dr. Tessa Thadathil and our Head of Department, Dr. Anil Adagale for their constant support. The content and graphic design teams have gone above and beyond in terms of what has been achieved. We are truly grateful to all the people who have stood by our sides with unwavering faith and unfaltering enthusiasm—*Inspiria* is because of you; *Inspiria* is you.

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Contents

01 FROM DUST TO
NEW DAWN

Tanvee Panse

02 ON THE DAYS
WORDS BETRAY
ME

Tasneem Bandukwala

04 SIN

Tanushree Bhattacharya

06 CAP'N OF
ETERNAL SAILING

Ananya Saxena

08 JOURNEY OF A
LEAF

Zoya Khan

10 METAMORPHOSIS

Aditi Kale

02 OLDER

Soukhyada Waghmare

03 VALKYRIE

Apurva Tope

05 MY FRENCH GIRL

Red

07 LOVE DECOIT

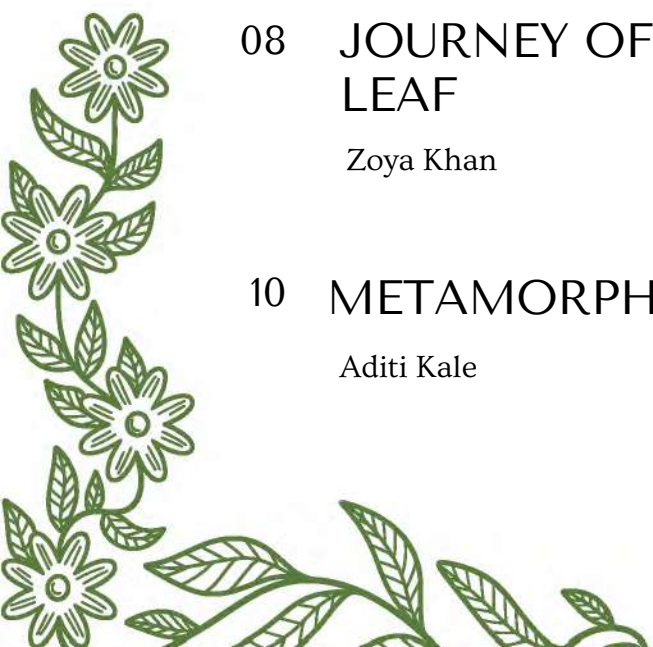
Haani

09 THE BREEZE

Shaunak Shirgaokar

11 GOOD THINGS
TAKE TIME

Amrita Kaur



12 WHY DO WE
OBEY THE LAW?

Esther John

14 ABOUT ALL THE
STORIES WE DON'T
GET TO HEAR

Charvee Srivastava

16 JLF'24

Vanshika Haldiya

19 MOONLIT
TRANCE

Shubhangi Sharan

23 THE GIRL ON THE
CANVAS

Asra Yaseen, Ruspa Sarkar,
Pritisha Pingle, Simran Kaur Bal

13 MOVED

Anonymous

15 IT IS JUNE

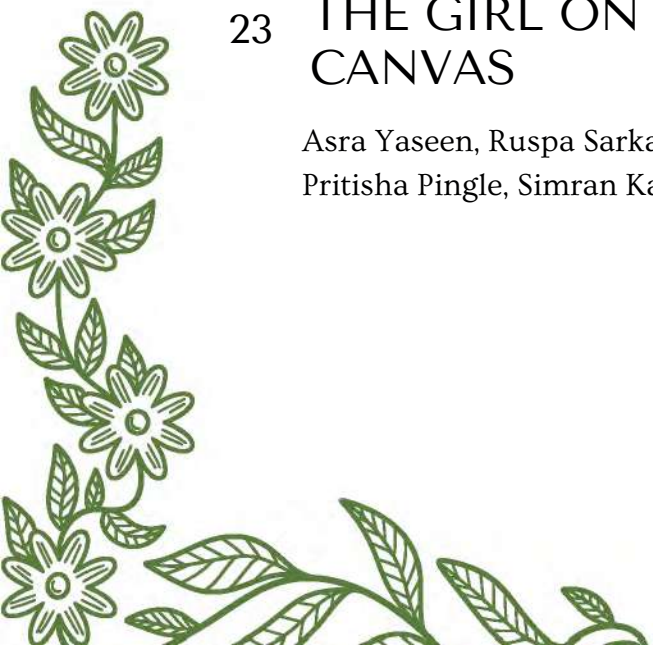
Anonymous

18 CROSSWORD

Soniya Gaikwad

21 THE PHANTOM'S
LAMENT

Shubhangi Sharan



About ELA



The English Literary Association is a major part of the Department of English. Through a wide range of engaging activities, provoking discussions, collaborative events, hosting literary festivals, ELA aims to create an environment where students can immerse themselves in the beauty and power of words. A community formed with readers and writers, and cultivated through an inspiration for literature and creativity, it encourages students to expand their literary horizons and foster their imagination. ELA is led by a team of experienced faculty who strive to provide something for each student to express their unique voice and thoughts. They provide an avenue to hone the written and spoken abilities by hosting authors' talks, book club meetings, writing workshops and literary competitions. English Literary Association is the place where words come alive and dreams take flight!

ELA: The Clubs

1. The Book and Media Club

At the heart of our association lies the Book and Media Club, a haven for those who seek solace in written words and the magic of visual storytelling. This is a place to discuss books and movies that get us excited as well as to open ourselves to the point of view of others.

2. Seminars and Workshops

For those who thirst for knowledge and intellectual discourse, our Workshop and Seminar committee brings for you a plethora of opportunities to expand your horizons and attain a unique set of skills.

3. Educational Visits

Learning begins outside the classroom. From exploring the cultural heritage of the Karla and Bhaja Caves in Lonavala, to visiting museums steeped in art, culture and literature, to being charged by the atmospheres of various literary festivals, we're dedicated to ensuring a fun learning experience for you all.



4. Literary Competitions

Are competitions your thing? Then step into the arena of friendly competitions and hone your literary prowess through a series of captivating contests that challenge your creativity, wit, and ingenuity. From roleplay monologues to flash fiction and charades, our exciting competitions will keep your literary fervour ignited.

5. Play Production and Performance

Well, for all our little Thespians who find their passion in the world of dramatic storytelling, our Play Production and Performance Committee is your stage. Here, you'll get a chance to captivate the audience with thought-provoking themes and street-plays or even bring out the actor in you or be a part of our grand Annual Play.





From Dust *to* New Dawn

TANVEE PANSE

I walk around a
forgotten land,
collecting broken bits
of memories and promises.

I dust them off
and create a new world
out of it,

building a roof
from buried secrets.

I scatter the sky
with endless stars
carefully picked from
the ones shining in my eyes.

From the deepest depths,
an ocean of drying lies,
I gather paper boats
with the truth written on them.

Trudging lightly
through glass and stone,

I plant my garden
with flowers
that need old moonlight to grow.

My new world slowly
starts seeping in color.
Stillness and silence crawl back
into their shells.

Shadows start helping me
instead of pushing me away.

The light comes again.

I start revolving again.

New sunshine is born.

“I call these miracles and mendings”



Older

SOUKHYADA WAGHMARE

I wish I could grab life by its shoulders,
And scream I'm sick of getting older.
I'm not scared of losing beauty,
It is inevitable to put it crudely.
I'll miss the privileges of being a child;
How I could do things with no one getting riled.
I miss how I could act carefree,
And how I could be euphoric, filled with glee.
I'll miss the things I never even noticed.
Things I somehow missed.



On the Days Words *Betray* Me

TASNEEM BANDUKWALA

On the days I don't have strength for words,
My poetry slips away from my fingers.
And instead of bleeding through my pen and onto my paper,
It finds shelter in the places I visit,
It swings giddily in joined palms,
And flies into my pockets for when I need it most.
On the days I don't have the patience for words,
My poetry is in the camera app on my phone.
In mediocre photographs of peculiar things,
And videos of the world I try to notice.
On the days when words choose to betray me
Poetry always finds its stubborn way somehow.





Valkyrie

APURVA TOPE

I look towards the heavens and wonder
If someone's looking down at me too.
Perhaps with hopeful eyes and a dejected smile.
Much like my own.


Twinkle twice or flash a light if you see me too.
And when you do, I'll shoot through space to get to you.
Across the nine realms and a loopy time,
I'll meet you at the end of the Bifrost.

You can teach me to fly, and I'll teach you to dream.
Together, I am sure we could defeat every demon.
From Valhalla to Tartarus, we would ride into battle.

Victorious every time, because it's you and I.
At the end of the road, outside the gates of Zion.
You glance at me and say, 'This is it?'
And with a mischievous smile, I reply, 'Doesn't seem like
much to me.'

So back we turn, searching for another battle,
Another demon to defeat, another hero to beat.
So if you are not, it's time alright.

For I have waited too long.
Twinkle twice or flash a light, and I'll meet you at the end
of the Bifrost.






Sin

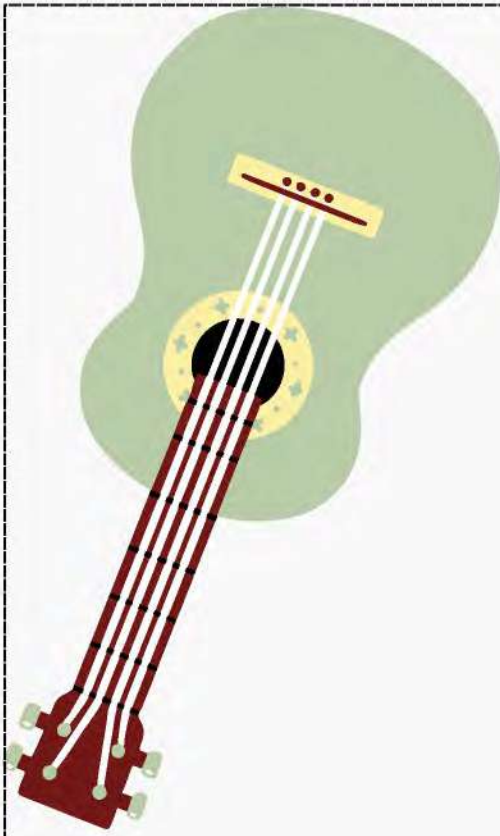
TANUSHREE BHATTACHARYA

The little angel's eyes sparkled with a dream;
A dream of filling everything he touched
with kind warmth to the brim,
He wanted to be a loving God
for everyone to see;
He looked up and said,
"One day, this is what I wish to be!"

Now, the little angel remains hurdled in the dark,
his delicate wings, now black;
Lay on each of his sides, torn apart;
A million stars twinkled down his numb eyes.

His gentle hands
Now painted in the blood and lies
that he was too blind to see.
He looked up and said,
"What have I come to be....."





My
French Girl
 RED

In the hues of her art, the French girl
 Spun in the sunlight, short wild hair,
 Cheeks kissed by the sun
 And strawberry sunglasses.

Around the bonfire in darkness,

The French girl danced,

Clothes alive with dyes,

She painted my world with the brightest of shades.

Absurd dance moves,

Ukulele strumming,

English melodies for my ear,

In my dreams, I held her near.

With her mischievous smile,

She became my wild French girl,

Burning with dreams untamed.

I willingly touched the flame.

My wild French girl captured my heart in a faraway land.
 I painfully craved to be around her all the damn time.

An artist in love, jotting down frantically,

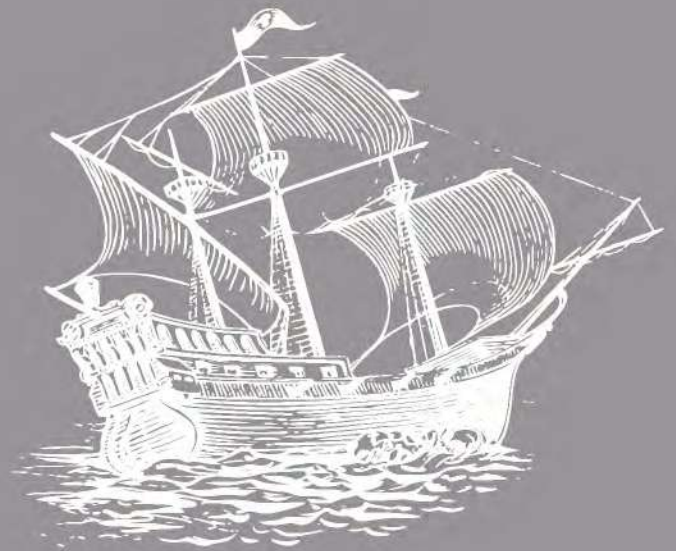
Lost in the dance of the wild French girl.

Cap'n of Eternal Sailing

ANANYA SAXENA

Bound away to leave her,
And land I kept so close.
She bade me farewell with a hug,
And a handpicked rose.
The shanties call me away,
The blooming brig always awaits.
Every time we weighed anchor,
We gambled on our fates.
And when the sea played rough,
I kept her in my thoughts.
Awoken by the cry of mates,
I fiercely fought off the Scots.
The crimson cutlasses sat on my hip,
They came and went through time.
But never the crimson rose saw,
A true and brutal crime.
Amidst the uncharted briny,
I lost my crew to a malady.
We mourned their poor souls,
And crooned while sailing the sea.
We looted good old treasure,
And drank away our sorrow.
Our dreams to meet our darlings,
We left for the morrow.
So as we heave away to our land,

My eyes dance for her glance.
To board her in my arms so tight,
And cease the seafaring trance.
Taken aback by the knowledge,
My dear beloved was stolen,
Estranged in rust,
By the dark-hooded men.
With red blood eyes,
I called upon my mate;
To an unforeseen voyage,
For I am the captain of the syndicate.



Love Decoist

HAANI



Love creeps in my heart like a thief
in the middle of the night,
with hushed heavy footsteps and quick small sprints,
I watch the stars in the deadly silence of the night.
Aloof as I fall prey to the infamous predator of the night,
all I remember is I smile widely as I
feel the warm and bitter taste of love on my tongue,
I awake the next dawn and see
everything with a new set of eyes.
The world seemed happier this morning,
flowers sparkled as the sun hit the
morning dew on their petals.
The grass smelled fresher.
I had a slight hop in my step,
almost as if prancing.
Birds chirped in unison
as I realized, I fell in love with
myself last night,
And the world isn't happier this morning,
I am.



Journey of a *Leaf*

ZOYA KHAN

Journey of a leaf falling from a tree top to the earth -

There, there, there it falls,

I watch it go down and lose its wrath.

As it detaches itself from the tree,

Its tiredness and hopelessness set it free.

As it goes down the pane,

It loses the strength to refrain.

Now the motion of the wind is playing with its emotions;

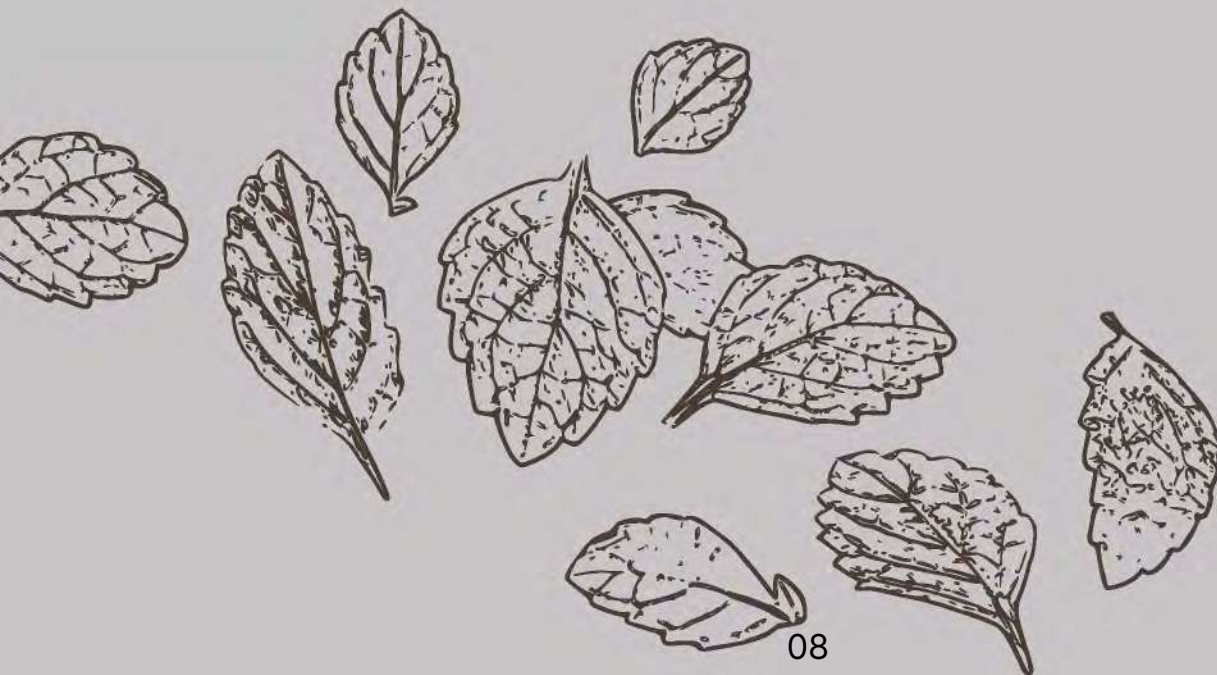
Fragile and fugitive with no sign of trust and patience.

It continues to go down and down,

Losing its beauty and serenity,

Turning into a lifeless soul -

For once, losing didn't seem to be off bounds.



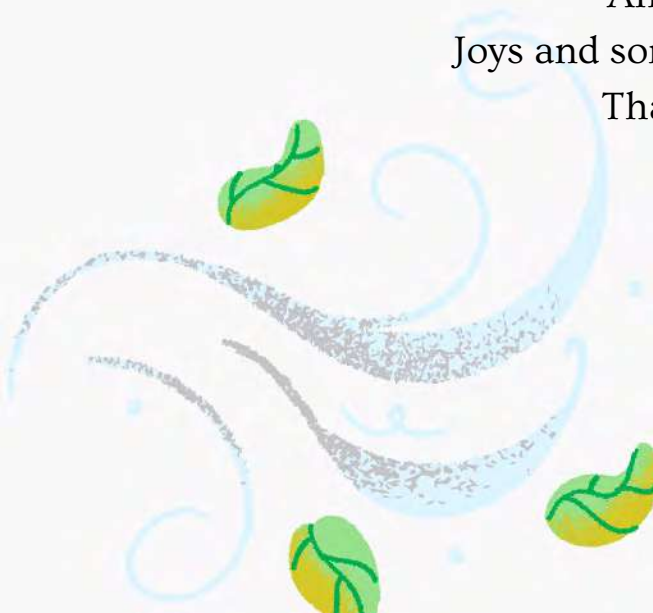
The Breeze

SHAUNAK SHIRGAOKAR

Every year around the same time there's this breeze.
It arrives at an interstice in time,
Just after the jaws of winter have left my soul mangled
But before the talons of summer can scavenge its remains.

As I am sitting atop my tower, talking to the
Plants growing in the cracks of my walls,
The gush of air brings with it the sound of the
Birds chirping across the moat.
It smells like fresh grass and lands on my cheek
Like the soft kisses my mother used to give me when I was a child.
Sometimes it smells like the flowers that used to
Grow in my grandfather's garden,
Other times it is reminiscent of the milk that used to be served
In the canteen of my school.

Every year around the same time there's this breeze,
And every single year it manages to invoke the same feelings,
And the same thoughts.
Joys and sorrows, burdens and memories
That I refuse to let go of.



Metamorphosis

ADITI KALE

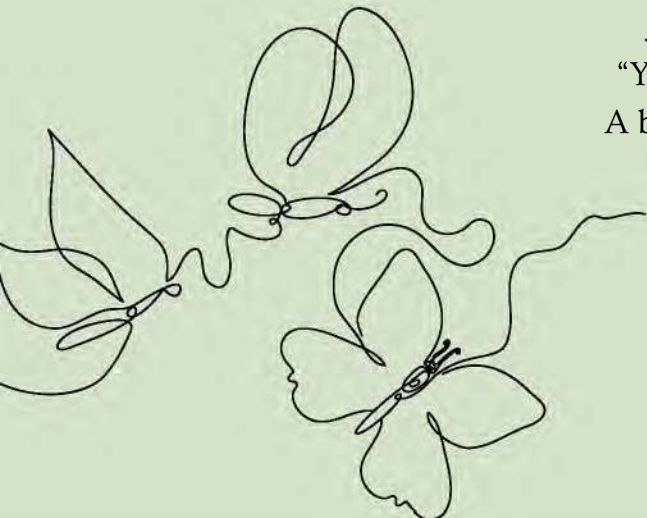
There's this point in life, where the definition of everything changes.

Love. Hope. Emptiness. Fun.
Everything we believe in
Goes through a metamorphosis.
We go through a metamorphosis
Like a butterfly
Just reciprocating it.
Why?
Because

We already are a free spirit;
With the wings of craziness, adventures, colours, emotions.
But we learn to crawl out of it,
To become a cocoon that society wants.
There is nothing wrong with that;
Just the wings are cut off,
Colours are gone,
Emotions become foolish,
And adventures-dumb.

I'm 20 this year,
A transitional age from a butterfly to a caterpillar.

Call me rebellious,
I will keep my wings.
I will crawl every day,
I will also fly whenever I want to,
Just because I want to.
"Yes" to a metamorphosis.
A bigger "yes" to a butterfly,
Who can crawl,
Fly,
Know its worth,
And call it life.

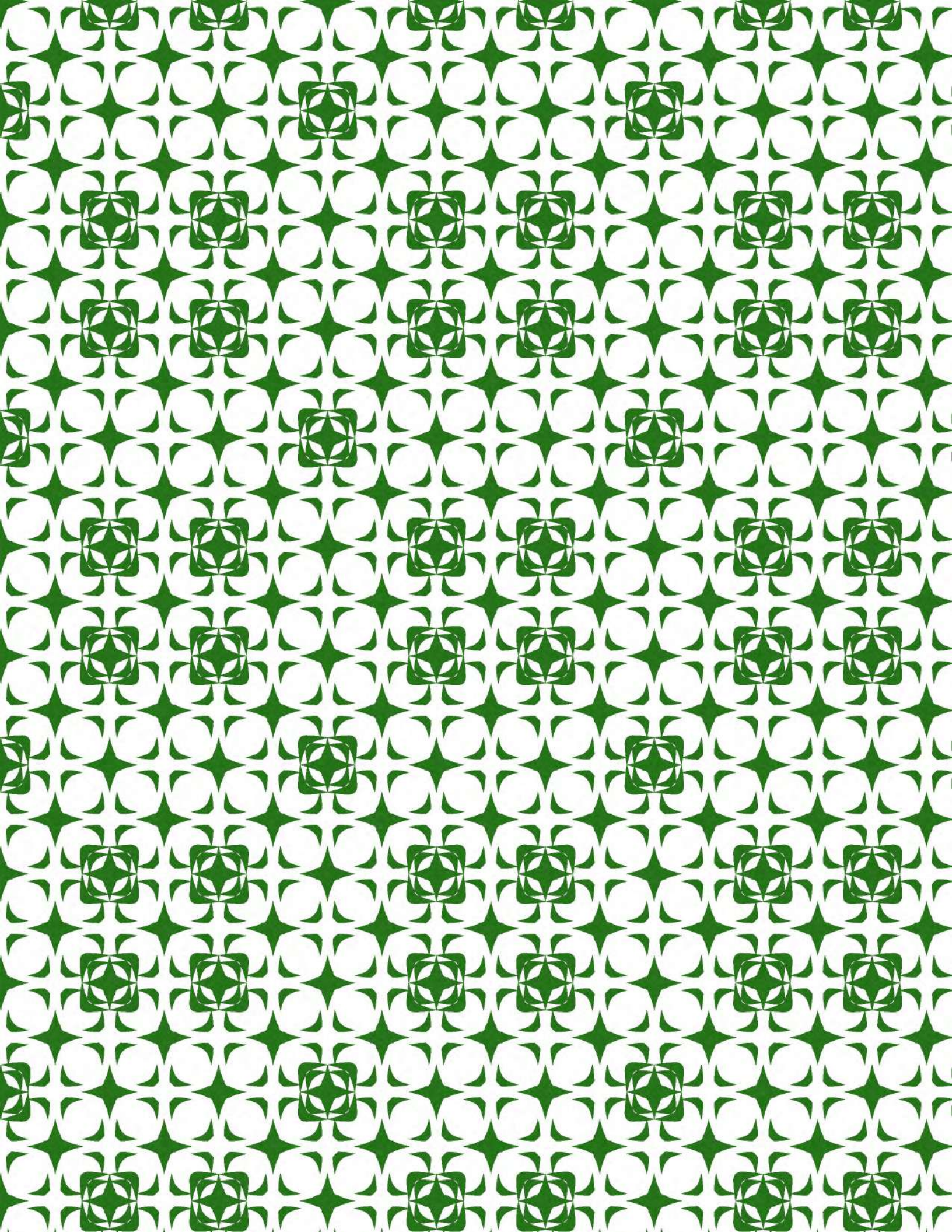


Good things take time

AMRITA KAUR

Don't write and edit together they say,
The good in the good times runs by the clock,
Like watching a pigeon build its nest
from the corner of your eyes,
Like boiling tea, with even the tiniest minuscule
of patience left when running late for class,
Instead of rushing it on the stove,
Only to lower the flame once the tea
reaches the brim of your vessel,
waiting for it to come up again,
Or watching vanilla cupcakes rise
to the top from your window one December afternoon,
Watching sunsets through your mind's eyes,
instead of a capitalistic android lens.
To rambling on handmade sheets,
sipping green teas instead of frappes,
Listening to a song on Spotify,
instead of switching to the next,
let its music, beats, instruments, time signatures
and all the theoretical jargon calm your soul.
Watching Bruno grow a few inches in a fortnight,
not realizing home now had a new name,
four paws and a canine,
Knowing that wisdom won't kick in before the tooth itself,
The sunflower that smiles at its source of light,
was once a sapling and a seed, long before that.
There is a sense of peace in knowing that glow-ups too,
have their timing.





WHY DO WE OBEY *The Law?*

By Esther John

It is an age-old question that one does often come by. Laws are passed from moral facts, universally accepted thoughts, or ideologies. In one's belief, the law is a set of guidelines that ought to be followed since the need for control is a psychological necessity. It is generally accepted that people obey the law because it is seen as a legitimate authority.

“Legitimacy is the right to rule and the recognition by the ruled of that right” (Sternberger, 1968; Beetham, 1991; Coicaud, 2002; Tyler, 2006a; Bottoms and Tankebe, in press).

We consider laws to be legitimate since they are passed on by legitimate social institutions i.e., our government, for proper operation of a society or grounds that it is passed upon. Now that we have understood the use of it, let us ask ourselves, why do people obey them? The belief is that compliance with public services like the police will bring down the threat or the risk to their well-being. In other words, policing laws help put people in place. Without laws we can find several threats in opposition to the development of human society, it is widely believed and accepted

that all humans are designed with the will to choose, we are born with the innate need for control. Though we also need free will, anything that sabotages our vision of control can be harmful to our well-being. Hence, another reason we tend to obey the law is that laws help us function in a stress-free environment.

Laws are a social control mechanism based upon the assumption that risks that come with the punishments persuade individuals to act rationally, and no matter how desirable, disobeying the law is not worth the risk. From this we can understand that the innate reason people choose to obey the law is not from a self-righteous law-abiding personality, but only because it is a personal commitment. Morality and ethical behaviour come down to the individual, and if we had laws to sanction such private behaviours, they would be on the same level as moralists or preachers. One's morality always continues to change and develop; they are invariably variable. In some cases, several factors influence the law i.e., political, social, economic, etc. The collective morality of a society is

considered. For instance, in 1989 Scotland officially criminalized rape in marriages, this is due to the collective morality of the society back then which forced the law to change consequently and recognize the role and status of women in society. In general, however, the use of the law to enforce one's moral values is not considered, as it is accepted that a society can function with different moral values or standards. This is in the act of liberation for an individual.

To conclude, on the concept of law, we do not need to become desperate anarchists because of flawed laws. By looking for reasons as to why we obey the law, and why we should obey it, thus analyzing its strengths, we can find ourselves a picture of our reasons to fulfil the law.



MOVED



I am moved by the way a mother greets her child. I am moved by the way sunlight breaks through the leaves. I am moved by the sound of music coming from an old café. I am moved by the smell of old books in a library. I am moved by the cacophony of voices in a carnival. I am moved by photo albums, and by the comfort old memories bring

me; by the way people and places make their homes in my heart. I am moved by heart-shaped balloons and birthday cakes. I am moved by words whispered in the soft light of the morning sun, half asleep. I am moved by flowers, by drops of dew on petals. I am moved by colours, by textures, by art. I am moved by the rustling of pages, by words scribbled on scraps of paper.

I am moved by notes passed around, hushed laughter, and muffled giggles. I am moved by hugs, by silent conversations. I am moved by scenes in a cliché movie. I am moved by the mundane, moved by the small things, by grand gestures. I am moved every day. By the things that were and that will come to be.

ABOUT ALL THE STORIES THAT *We don't get to Hear.*

By Charvee Srivastava

There is a really small house next to where I live, a dwelling as I like to call it. They are a family of five or six, there are two women, both of whom sit outside on two chairs every evening and talk. About what? I don't know. There are two bus stops on my way to college. There are people eagerly waiting on a bus every morning of every day. To go where? I don't know.

It bothers me that there is so much going on around me, that I am not a part of, I am not aware of. It bothers me that I can't shake these people up and ask them. Ask them what is going on in their lives, about what their plans are, and if they're doing okay or not.

It bothers me that I am unaware of the many reasons, as to why things are happening the way they are in my life. It bothers me to not know where these things are taking me. It bothers me to not know the story that I'm going to be telling about my life ten years down the line.

In my conversations with people, mundane day-to-day events often don't make the cut. Even though the impact they have on me is huge. I don't usually tell everyone

I meet what I had for breakfast, even though I spent a considerable amount of time deciding what to eat. I can only imagine that this happens to almost every other person I speak to. Some stories just don't make the cut. They're not talked about- not appreciated enough.

Some don't make it into conversations because they're embarrassing. Some, because they're thought of as boring. Some, because we have already judged ourselves before anyone else had the chance to. Some are forgotten, and some are hidden purposely. And some, because we are too tired to speak. The point is, that there is a plethora of untold stories that all of us carry with us. The phrase 'untold stories', though repetitive and overused, is something we should all take a minute to ponder upon.

There are people we see every day, who we practically know nothing about.. These stories and incidents which we don't realize, shape the narrative of our lives. All of these tiny little incidents are leading up to making one hell of a story. Some of us will get to write a book about it or make a movie out of it. Others will take their stories with them when they die, and we'll probably never hear of them.

Consider it a little unhealthy glorification, but I can only imagine how beautiful it would be if we could think of incidents in our lives as being part of a story. A bigger picture that we don't see, yet it still comes together and makes sense.



It is *June*—

Six months in, six months out. Summer solstice— the flowers fall off the Gulmohar tree like dying embers, melting at the touch of the first drops of rain. Thirst— the earth pants at the cruel sky that chases the clouds, scattering them into short bursts of white. Pathetic fallacy— at the heart of these musings, an unfulfilled, untethered, un- pacified, un-, un-, un-, somebody; a nobody. Tired of being brave, says Anne Sexton. It isn't bravery unless you're scared, says JK Rowling. June has me quoting writers because my quota of courage has been exhausted.

The inhabited-no-longer walls of a vacant shell of a house strive to touch the moon. Its hands are the shoots of a banyan tree growing along its parapet. They beckon to the wandering restless souls who pass by 7A, Kalu Ghosh Lane, avoiding the open windows that stare back like blind eyes— asking for empathy but becoming a source of fear. Seeing people fear the blind. Why is it not the other way around? And thus, these pedestrians dwell on the fate of the tenants who spent a lifetime in this house yet are now gone. I'm gone, cries their absence. The enunciation of this sentence is nothing short of heresy. How

can one truly be gone as long as they are there to talk about their gone-ness? Blasphemous! Or is their negative presence enough proof of their state of being gone?

June marks the cyclical nature of time. There was a June before this and one before that. This much is true. Nothing comes from nothing. June has me sighing in sibilance. Damn you, spoilt creature. Not a single leaf rustles. The forever frowning white crests on the red flowers of the Gulmohar lay strewn in a halo around the tree. Things are running out. Incoherence takes a firm grasp. Nothing will make sense anymore. And Time itself will wither before the tree does.



JLF'24: THE BIGGEST LITERARY SHOW ON EARTH

By Vanshika Haldiya



As an art and literature enthusiast, I have always wanted to be part of the Jaipur Literature Festival. So, when I finally acquired my passes for the Jaipur Literature Festival in 2024, I found myself on cloud nine. Stepping into the festival grounds on day one was like entering a literary wonderland. The vibe was extraordinary, the setup was pure magic, and the people? Well, they were like characters from a book – each one walking around with a purpose, bringing their artsy mojo and rocking some seriously elegant outfits. For a die-hard art and lit fan like me, it was practically stepping into paradise.

From February 1st to 5th, the 17th edition of the festival took place at Hotel Clarks Amer in the lively

pink city of Jaipur. Boasting over 250 writers, thinkers, and speakers from India and across the globe, the event proved to be a massive success, emerging as a global literary phenomenon. The festival featured captivating programs and engaging conversations, with the Jaipur Music Stage drawing a substantial audience. The creativity seen at the festival bazaar was overwhelmed with young people spilling over into an array of captivating scenes. Among the stalls, intricate jewellery glistened like fragments of a dazzling dream, and handcrafted boho diaries whispered tales of artistic ingenuity. Customized necklaces hung like personalized poetry, while the air resonated with the strokes of exquisite

artworks, each stroke a brushstroke of passion.

Amidst such an electrifying atmosphere, exceptional food was inevitable. Catering to the diverse attendees of the festival, an extensive array of food and beverages was thoughtfully curated. Fratelli, renowned for its impeccable selection of wines, also had a stall strategically positioned in the vicinity of the food zone.

The sessions were evocative, and among all those I participated in, the one that left an indelible impression was when Gulzar Sahib graced the stage alongside Yatindra Mishra. The front lawn, where the session unfolded, was brimming with attendees, with some even standing in the aisles, utterly mesmerized by the

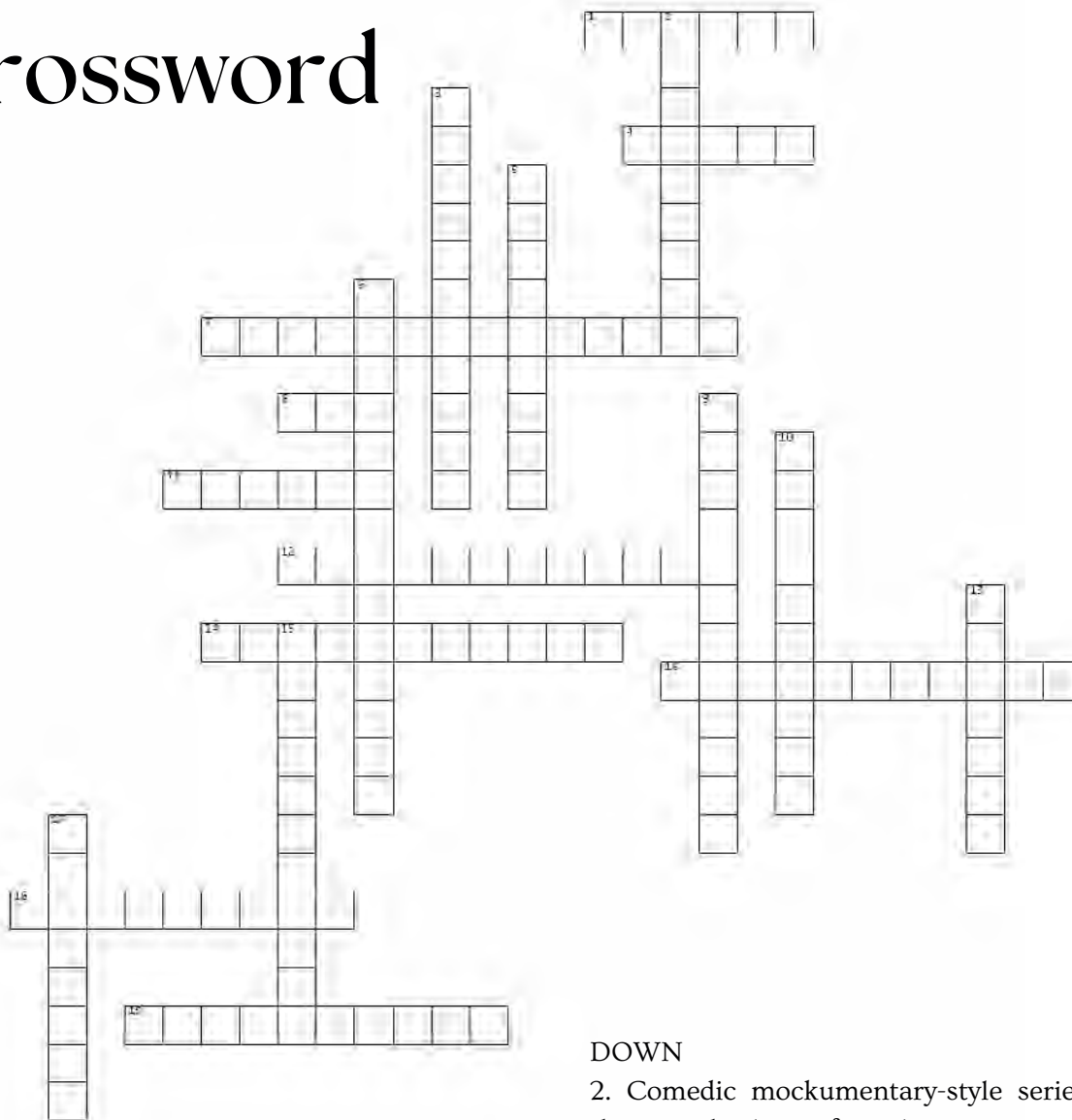
legendary figure's presence. Gulzar Sahib delved into discussions about music, and poetry, and shared bittersweet tales of the partition. Another memorable session featured Tarun Tahiliani, the renowned fashion designer, engaging in a dialogue with Shivani Sibal on the interplay of style and substance.

Despite its vast size, the bookstore gave an intimate feel as passionate readers from around the world picked up different books, quietly reading blurbs and often running into the same authors they were reading two minutes ago. Enthusiastic readers were buying more books than they could carry and rushed to authors for signed copies. This year's festival made me realize what I had been missing for the past 19 years. Despite attending alone, I

didn't experience loneliness, instead, I forged numerous friendships that made me feel truly welcomed. Out of the three days I spent in Jaipur, I dedicated two to the event, while the third was spent wandering around the old city, which surprisingly felt like home. The city seamlessly blends cultural richness with a modern touch, making it easy for anyone to fall in love. As the festival's last day approached, I realized how swiftly time had passed, leading me to make a heartfelt commitment to attend the Jaipur Literature Festival every year.



Crossword



ACROSS

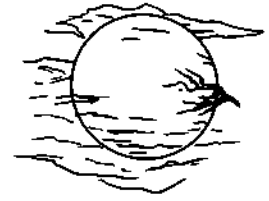
1. Caped crusader and Dark Knight of Gotham, also known as billionaire Bruce Wayne?
4. "May the _ be with you"
7. Author of the 'Twilight' series?
8. Magical creature that serves as a messenger in the wizarding world?
11. "Yer a _, Harry"
12. Hobbit who embarks on a quest to destroy the One Ring?
14. Lead vocalist of the band Coldplay, known for 'Fix You' and 'Yellow'?
16. Fearless and charismatic pirate captain, captain of the Black Pearl?
18. Album by Lana Del Rey with songs like 'Summertime Sadness' and 'Born to Die'?
19. Film about a young woman who wakes up in a pod spaceship, alone, 90 years away from Earth?

DOWN

2. Comedic mockumentary-style series depicting the everyday lives of employees.
3. Drama series following a high school chemistry teacher turned criminal mastermind in Albuquerque, New Mexico?
5. Friendly neighborhood superhero with a red and blue costume, known for swinging through New York City?
6. Author of 'The Kite Runner' and 'A Thousand Splendid Suns'?
9. Medical drama series set in the fictional Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital, known for its ensemble cast?
10. R&B singer famous for 'Blinding Lights' and 'Can't Feel My Face'?
13. "Why so _?"
15. Animated film about a rat with a passion for cooking, set in Paris?
17. Film about a young lion's journey to become king of the Pride Lands?

Moonlit Trance

By Shubhangi Sharan



As the moon hung low in the night sky, casting a pale glow over the desolate landscape, a chilling sight unfolded in the heart of darkness. A woman in white, her ethereal form shimmering in the moonlight, danced with horrific trance.

The scene was mesmerising, a grotesque juxtaposition of beauty and terror. Her flowing gown billowed around her as she twirled, her movements fluid and effortless. Each step she took sent ripples through the crimson liquid beneath her feet, staining the water further with every spin and leap. The woman's skin glowed against the macabre backdrop, accentuating her otherworldly presence. Her eyes, brown as the woods, seemed to hold an ancient wisdom that transcended time and space. They sparkled with a strange mixture of sorrow and joy as if she were both captivated and burdened by the scene she was a part of. No sound accompanied her dance except for the haunting melody that echoed through the air, as if carried by the wind itself. The notes were mournful yet strangely alluring, beckoning those who heard them to bear witness to this twisted spectacle. The melody seemed to rise and fall with the woman's movements as if she were the very embodiment of the music. As the woman spun, her long, flowing hair fanned out around her like a dark halo. It cascaded down her back, seeming to defy gravity as it deftly avoided the pool of blood.

There was an air of melancholy about her as if she were trapped in a never-ending cycle of dance and despair. As she pirouetted, a soft, melancholic smile played upon her lips. It was a smile that held a thousand untold stories, a smile that spoke of a deep understanding of the darkness that resided within the human soul. It was a smile that both enticed and repelled, drawing me further into the vortex. The pool of blood seemed to take on a life of its own, swirling and shifting in response to the woman's movements. It mirrored her as if it too longed to be a part of her ethereal dance. The boundaries between her and the crimson liquid blurred, as if she were one with the grotesque scene she had created. The strokes made by her trance painted a different story on the pillars- a story of a battle in which she lost everything. The woman's dance continued unabated, her steps growing more fervent and her movements wilder. The blood splattered against her gown, staining it in grotesque patterns that seemed to mock her purity. Yet, she danced on, undeterred by the desecration of her immaculate attire. Suddenly, a gust of wind swept through the landscape, extinguishing the pale glow of the moon. Darkness enveloped the scene, leaving only the woman and the pool of blood illuminated by an ethereal, otherworldly light. The darkness

seemed to enhance the woman's presence, making her glow even brighter against the inky blackness that surrounded her. As the last strains of the haunting melody faded into the night, the woman's dance came to an abrupt halt. She stood there, her body heaving with exhaustion, her eyes fixed to the dark. It was as if she were searching for something, a glimmer of understanding or perhaps a hint of compassion.

The intricate details of her gown were now marred by the stains of the blood. It was no longer pure white, but a tapestry of hues, blending the purity of white with the darkness of red. It spoke of the woman's journey through the depths of despair and the transformative power of embracing both light and shadow. The moon emerged from behind the clouds, casting a gentle glow upon the still liquid. The dance had left its mark, a swirling masterpiece of beauty and horror.

The pool of blood had begun to walk back towards the world I had left behind.



The Phantom's *Lament*

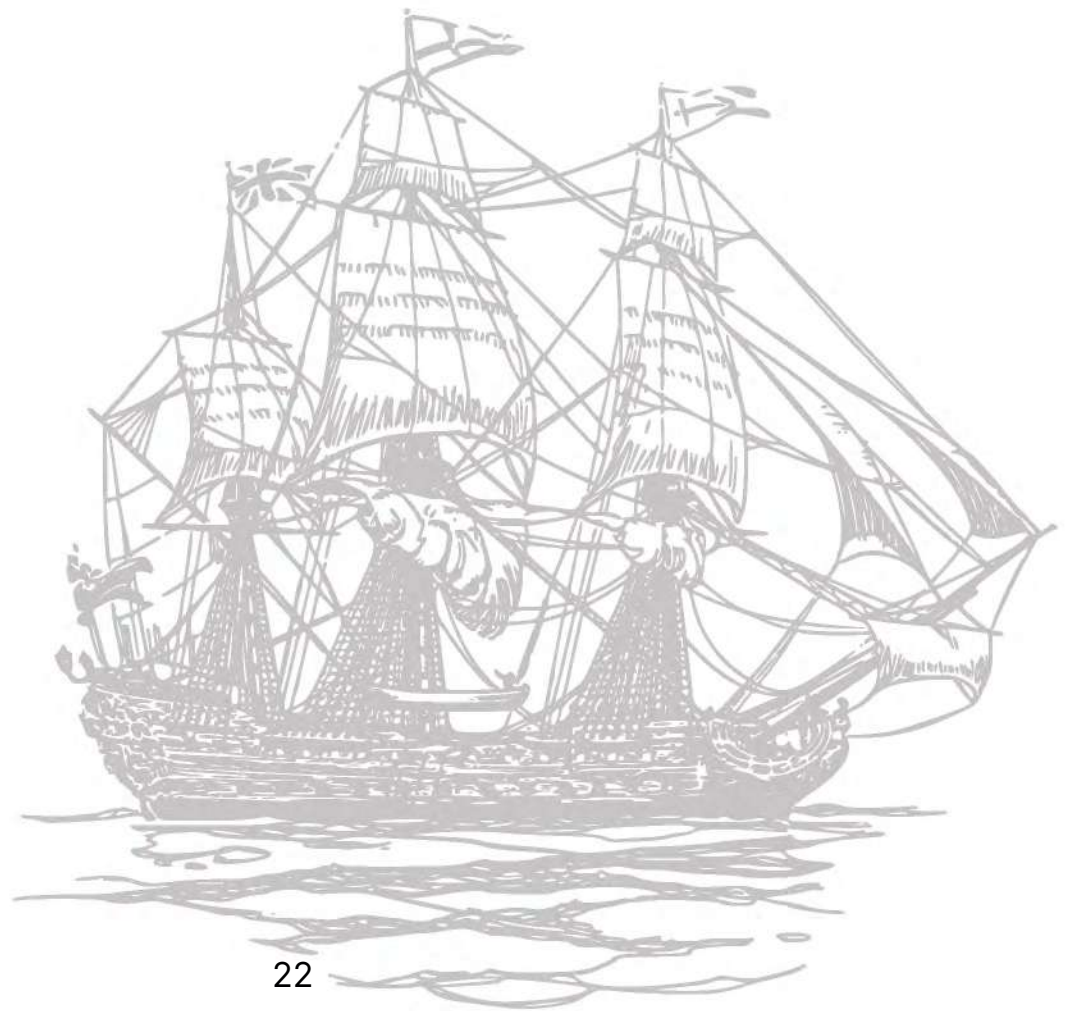
By
Shubhangi
Sharan

The phantom ship lurched forward through the murky depths of the foggy black sea; a vessel condemned to eternal drift. Its once proud frame was now withered and frail, the haunting remnants of its former glory whispered tales of dread and despair to any unfortunate soul. The tattered sails, barely held together by a makeshift mast, fluttered aimlessly, echoing the ship's pitiful existence. As the eerie mist swirled around, its ghostly presence seemed to materialise from the depths of the abyss. The air was thick with an otherworldly stillness, broken only by the creaking of the decaying wood. It was a vessel of the forsaken, a curse bound to sail eternally, a realm where reality and nightmares merged into a sinister dance. On this fateful night, as the moon hid behind a shroud of clouds, I found myself inexplicably drawn to the haunting sight. My curiosity overwhelmed my senses as I boarded the ship, my heart pounding in anticipation of the unknown horrors that awaited me.

Determined to turn blood into ink, I carried with me a quill and a vial, ready to capture the essence of this enigmatic vessel. The deck beneath my feet groaned with every step as if protesting my intrusion. The air grew colder, chilling me to the bone, and whispers echoed through the darkness.

Whispers of lost souls, their tormented voices a symphony of anguish. In the belly of the ship, I discovered a chamber of grotesque beauty. Walls adorned with decaying tapestries depicted scenes of carnage and suffering. The flickering light of a lone lantern cast haunting shadows upon the disturbing artwork, illuminating the macabre details in ghastly clarity. It was here, amidst the vilest of visions, that I felt the presence of the tortured story. As I dipped my quill into the vial of crimson liquid, the ink took on an unsettling hue, a mirror of the ship's cursed essence. With trembling hands, I began to write, capturing the harrowing reality that enveloped me. Words flowed like blood from an open wound, each stroke etching the atrocities witnessed by the ship. Visions of forgotten sailors, their bodies twisted and mangled, danced before my eyes. Their gory fate became intertwined with my own, the line between observer and victim blurring into a nightmarish blend. The ship's dark past manifested itself in every word, seeping into my soul, staining it with a darkness I could not shake.

A symphony of screams and moans echoed through the ship, growing louder with each stroke of the quill. The parchment struggled in front of the madman who was holding a quill. The very fabric of the vessel seemed to vibrate with an unholy energy, the ink on the parchment had the power to awaken the sleeping spirits. The once-hushed whispers escalated into a cacophony of tormented voices, their wails reverberating through the corridors of the ship. As the final words spilled onto the parchment, a deafening silence enveloped the ship. The phantom vessel stood motionless, as if holding its breath, waiting for the damning tale to be concluded.



The Girl on the Canvas

Written by: Asra Yaseen, Rupsa Sarkar,
Pritisha Pingle, Simran Kaur Bal



I was waiting impatiently for my food delivery when the doorbell rang. I excitedly jogged over to answer it. But by the time I opened the door, the delivery guy had already left, leaving the parcel behind. “I can’t believe how careless the delivery guys are these days”, I sighed. I was about to turn and shut the door behind me when my eyes caught sight of a fancy package leaning against my shoe rack. I was pretty sure that I had no delivery arriving but then again, this couldn't be the first time that the delivery boys in our area messed up an address. I stepped out of my apartment and took a good look at the package. I was looking for contact details on the packaging to return it to the rightful owner. But to my surprise, I found my name and address attached to it.

In my utter confusion, I decided to bring the package in and as I took it in my hands, I realized that it was lighter than I expected it to be. Although at first I decided not to open it, my curiosity ended up getting the best of me. It was a simple brown paper cover with jute threads. On the top right corner was a note that had my address and details, written in beautiful Italic cursive. I opened the package carefully. As I took a step back from the opened package, I realized that it was a beautiful painting of a woman. I couldn’t take my eyes away from the intricate strokes of colour on the canvas and found myself studying the painting inch by inch. And right then it dawned upon me that I knew the woman in the picture. It was me. Laying half-naked on a bed. The only striking difference was the blue that shone in her eyes. In my state of shock, I found my hands shaking as I tried to figure out what was happening. I couldn’t understand why anybody would paint me in this way. And who would send this to me? As I kept staring at the painting, a sudden wave of dizziness came over me. At first, I tried shaking it off, trying my best to focus on the painting itself and wondering who could be behind it but then it got too much for me to take. I stumbled towards my couch for a grip and tried to take a seat with my heart pounding in my chest. Before I could process anything, I blacked out. Suddenly, It was all quiet and dark. I opened my eyes and found myself seated on the couch. The air felt eerie and suspenseful as I looked around, my sight automatically locking on the painting.

There was something very strange about it, as if the colours were moving - as if the painting inside the canvas was moving and the girl in the painting was staring right into my eyes. I held my breath as I watched it unfold in front of me - the way the girl in the painting took a step out of the painting and into the room. "Hello, Lauren," The girl spoke with a sense of urgency, her voice carrying an unmistakable resonance. "I am Catherine. Do you recognize me?" I sat there trying to process her words, bewildered beyond thought and trying to process the haunting familiarity of her face. She was me, but at the same time, she wasn't. Caught in a moment of transfixion, I struggled to find words as she continued, her tone tinged with desperation, "Time is of the essence, Lauren. I need you to hear me out and understand what I'm saying, okay?"

With no words escaping my lips, I found myself nodding to whatever she was saying. "I am a version of you from a distant past - from a life where I was betrayed and wronged by someone I held dear. And that person has transcended time to pursue you in this existence. The night he painted me on this canvas, he ended my life. Now, he's coming for you. You must know his identity, Lauren, and you must protect yourself. His name is—" And just like that it was all dark. The echo of her words lingered, leaving me in a bewildered silence. I woke up with a start, gasping for breath. The remnants of the dream clung to my consciousness, and the weight of Catherine's warning echoed in my mind. As I sat up, desperately trying to make sense of my surroundings, I found myself in the familiar embrace of my living room. Somehow the night had escaped and the light of the morning peeked through the curtains.

I reached for the water bottle standing on the centre table and took a sip out of it. I was assured that I was back to reality. But the air felt heavy with unanswered questions, and my eyes automatically searched for the painting. It sat right there, resting in its place as if mocking my confusion. Who could he be? The question reverberated in my mind as I recalled what Catherine warned me about. And was the dream even real? Doubt clouded my thoughts, casting a shadow over the vivid images that lingered from the dream. But then if I was just imagining all of it then what was the painting even doing here in the first place? The painting itself had a melancholic air to it. The woman, Catherine, lay sprawled on a bed, her body partly veiled by the delicate sheets that draped over her, looking as vulnerable as it could be.

As I gazed upon the painting, an inexplicable connection resonated within me. Perhaps the dream was real after all because this woman in the painting mirrored my essence, my very being, in ways that I couldn't explain. A shiver ran down my spine as fragments of the dream surfaced, and I recalled the voice of my past self, telling me about betrayal and tragedy.

I couldn't shake the feeling that this painting held the key to unlocking a mystery buried in the recesses of time. Catherine had spoken of a terrible incident, her murder, happening on the night this portrait was painted. And she said that it could be me next if I didn't figure out what was happening soon enough. Before I could delve further into my thoughts, the doorbell rang, pulling me out of my chain of thoughts. I stood up on shaky legs, a sense of nervousness coursing through my veins as I walked over to answer it.

Kevin's familiar face greeted me at the door, the happiness radiating in his voice feeling like a world apart from the turmoil coiling inside my chest. Yet, I found some comfort in his embrace as he wrapped his arms around me. "Good morning, love," He said as he kissed me on the cheek. I sighed as I closed my eyes. "Kevin I had a horrible dream last night" I mumbled against his shoulder. "A nightmare again? Are you alright?" He asked worriedly. "I'm okay I guess" I said as I pulled away from him. "But I need to tell you about something." "Okay," he replied, "Let me just grab something real quick and we can go inside and talk, alright?" I nodded as he turned around and my eyes followed his gaze. A blank canvas lay against my wall outside the door, and Kevin walked out to grab it along with his bag.

Kevin. An artist. How had I forgotten this?

He walked in, smiling his radiant smile as his eyes locked with mine, "I'm going to paint you tonight"





Everything you imagine is real.

-Pablo Picasso