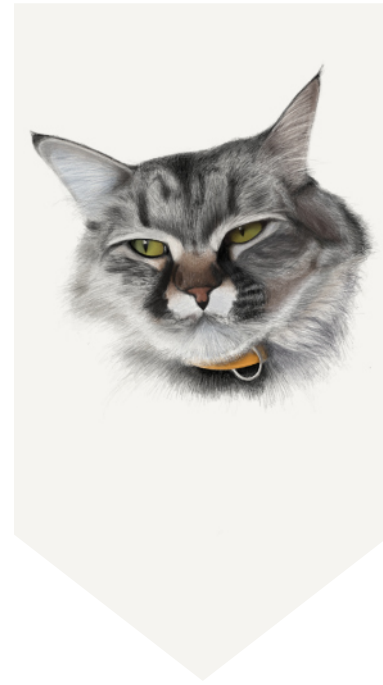


SLAICE

A Slice of SAICE | Issue 7, 2023



[illegible]

Editorial

Dear Readers,

The students of SAICE present to you the 7th edition of “SLAICE, A Slice of SAICE”. This year's edition is at variance from those previously published as it does not confine its content to a particular theme. Our aim this year was to bring across a myriad of articles, short stories and poems that individually hold an essence, or belong to one of the genres that literature has to offer. Our photo essays, 3D models and personal projects too convey the unique and deep passion of our contributors. This idea led us to experiment with this edition, whose outcome we leave to the reader’s judgment. We hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed working on it.

Web version available on: slaice.in



Editor-in-Chief

Jayati B

Illustrators

Aadya R

Aurosri P

Harumi M

Prachi P

Sayuri M

Design & Production

Abhipsa N

B K Aditya

Jaiman D

Ritaja M

Sachidananda P

Smera D

Swati S

Tuhina M

Vrishita J

Editors

Dhivith B

Jayati B

Special thanks to:

Copy Editors

Agastya N

Arunaditya D

Auro Krishna S

Janaki P

Jishnu P

Jayati B

Narendran K

Shubha S

Skandhan K

Photographers

Agastya N

Arunaditya D

Chaitanya S

Ramyak S

The Beach at Night

Chaitanya Sharma | K2

The dense sky above stole the silver light of the hour. The little stars dotted the gaps between the clouds. The dimly lit moon shone on the rough sea beneath, glazing it with a serene silver. The stormy sea waves crashed on the sandy shore in rhythm, putting out an orchestra for my emotions to dance on. I walked on the sand with my bare feet while the entire city slept and a trail of thoughts started whirling in my head. The tall waves violently crashing on the shore and silently pulling back looked like the visuals of the thoughts caged in my mind. The frosty sea breeze numbed my body. I stood there still, staring at the harshness of the sea.

Diving into my lucid thoughts, the harsh waves intensified what I was already feeling, brimming with them, incessant like waves. My emotions were a pair of sadness and anger that rose to the heights with the waves and crashed to a level where they would go unnoticed. But they seemed too determined to stay. The emotions in my head replicated the rolling clouds in the sky. Formless, free-flowing, dark and suppressive. I can't help but think, and at times my eyes forget to blink, and my mind rushes into a state of turmoil. The sudden strike of lightning, followed by a series of the rumbling of the rain clouds, reasoned tonight's violent sea. The wind was meandering its way through the trees opposite the shore, almost seeming

to be escaping the storm that was about to rise. The slight showers from the sky soon united with the sea and the sand. Its icy drops dotted the sand just as the stars did to the sky. I interpreted the rain as still water only falling from the sky in numberless ways but denied its purest form. Always fancied, always metaphorical, always figurative. The ocean was maybe for once experiencing what drowning felt like as the heavy rain fell into it. The winds hushed as if they were to keep a secret of the sea that night, conciliating the atmosphere.

The diffused petrichor unfurled, and the silver light dimmed as the hours of the sunrise neared. The sea was serene, the winds softened, the drizzle was soothing, and my feet were covered with wet sand. The clouds travelled further, and the waves were caressing the shore. My thoughts, like the waves, were now more peaceful and tranquil. The rumbling of the clouds was replaced by the swish of the waves and the whispering of the slow winds. The sea creatures crawled out of their holes looking for comfort and calmness. The sea at the late hours of this night, had found the new beginning that it longed for.

Illustration by Harumi M

Alter Self

Rayih Chaterjee | K2

If I were to be
 In an alternative reality,
 Assuming I'm the only one alive,
 I'd walk through the empty roads
 And then I'd feel a strong heartbeat,
 And follow that sound with my tiny bare feet.
 By now, curiosity has filled my lungs,
 and I can't wait to discover this other being.
 With a little disappointment and a little expectation
 I presume that I'm not the only one.
 I see the moving shadow
 going further, and I continue to follow.
 My legs are tired of running
 and suddenly, this appears to me like a nostalgic feeling.
 Just for a second, I look up at the darkened sky and a few stars,
 and they tell me that's where they always are.
 There's a million more, hidden but not too far.
 I've recovered my breath
 In this world, I'm totally unfamiliar with-
 And now I'm just lost in this town
 where even a ghost at sight
 would make me feel alive.
 My voice echoes off,
 and now it's just my eyes,
 running miles.
 All I see are silhouettes,
 But I guess that's just in my head.
 This city seems old,
 and as I look around to chase,
 a foreign wind cuts across my face;
 reminding me that here, it's just me.
 I look down with hopelessness,
 that's exactly when I hear it again.
 There's no more of hide-and-seek
 the shadow's right in front of me.
 To my surprise, there was no other soul I was seeking for
 This figure was mine, all along.



Illustration by Prachi P

Time’s Frolic

Anuva Alfassa Tripathy | EAVP 4

A day, a year, a decade,
What progress has been made?
Has death gotten closer?
Is the earth getting older?
We ponder the future,
Yet dwell in the present,
Time flows away, only
a dream for tomorrow.
We repent the past,
Which no longer exists.
Let it be,
And you shall be free,
To savour every fleeting day.



Choice

Shazneen Dallas & Uttama Bhatt | EAVP 3

Volker and Raphael are two close friends, one German and the other French under unfortunate circumstances. The stage is set during the early times of World War II, a friend against a friend, for life or for death. An action that could change his whole life.

Face-to-face, both holding guns;
Bombs bursting on either side, as the sun rose.
A man cried from behind, a voice Volker knew:
"Volker, schieß! Worauf wartest du?"
Volker lost, his way, his words, his sight,
Trapped within darkness, not a spot of light.
All he sees is loyalty, a commitment to hell!
But is it for the country or for Raphaël?
Raphaël lost the truth he seeks.
"What is all this for? Is it greed or peace?
Volker is obviously oblivious and often so-
But today, God, I hope he will toughen up and grow!"
Waves of guilt battered his veins and skull,
Haunted by the bombs the world grew dull!
One deep breath,
Loading the gun,
Another deep breath,
I'm sure it's no fun.
Inhale, exhale, inhale again.
Their eyes fixed on each other,
Questioning their fate.
They had to kill each other,
Yet neither could move
For there was no hate.
Inhale, exhale inhale again
Both closed their eyes and...
Behind Volker lay a bullet on the tree.
Behind Raphaël lay a bullet on the wall.
In the midst of war's storm, grey and blue,
Their aims faltered, their hearts stayed true.

BLUE SODA

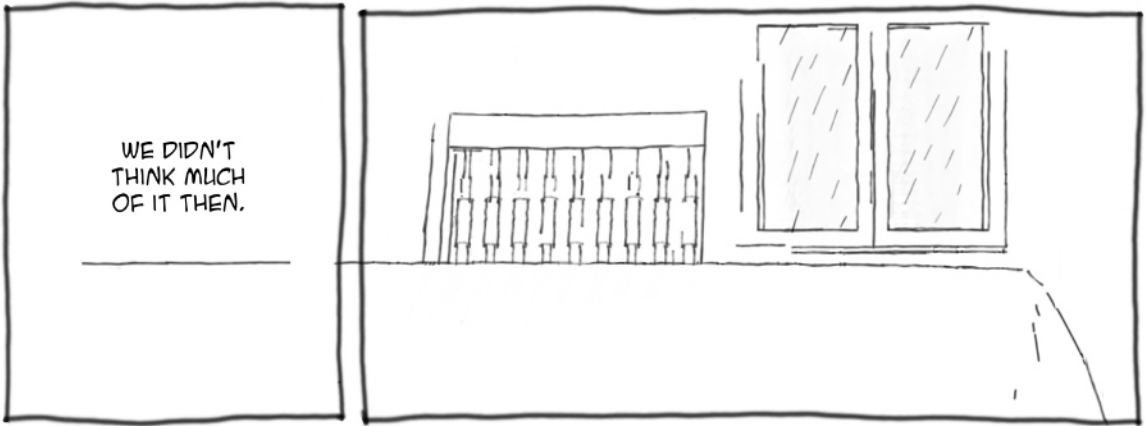
Sayuri M | K3



WHEN
I WAS
EIGHT,

MY MOTHER
SWALLOWED
SOMETHING
HARD

WHILE
EATING HER
FISH.



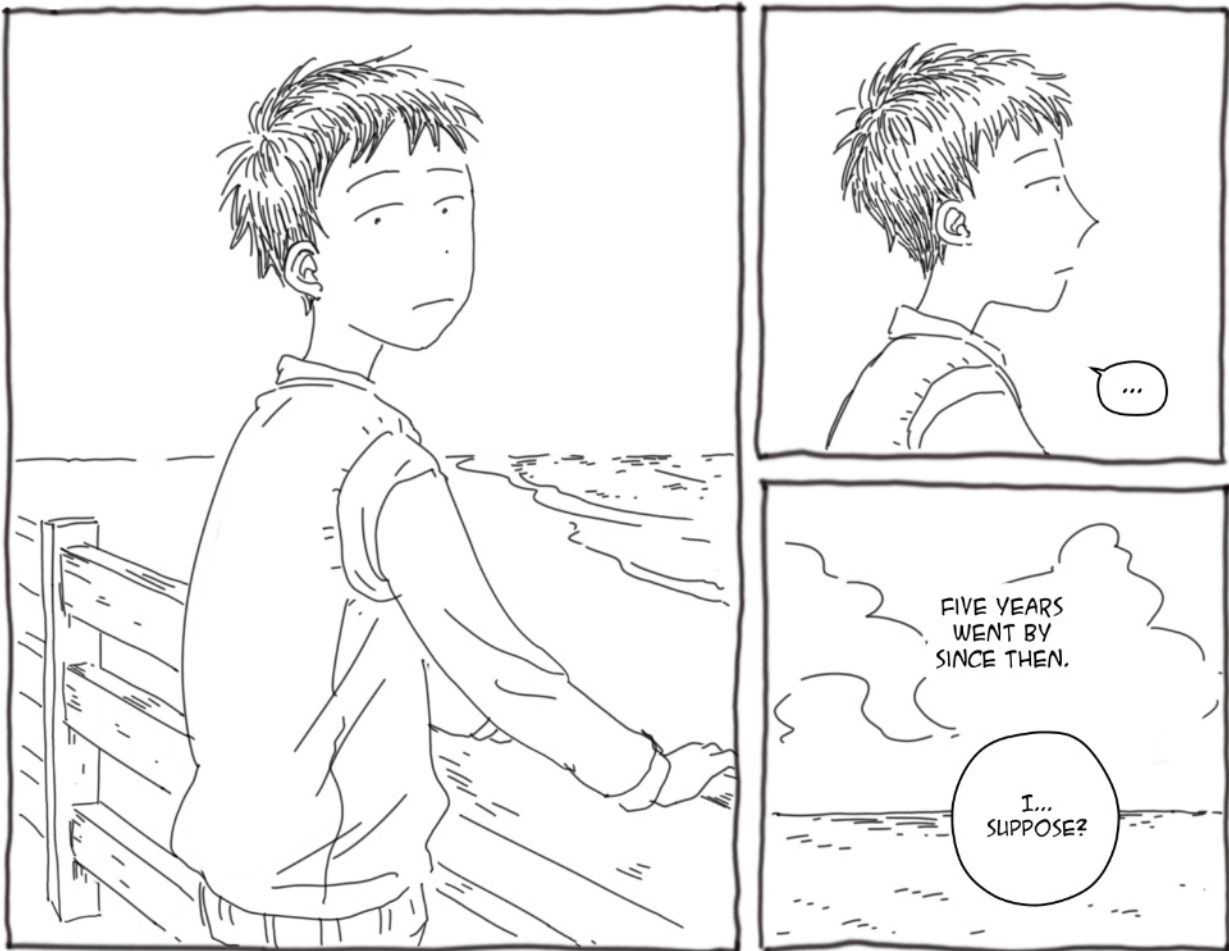
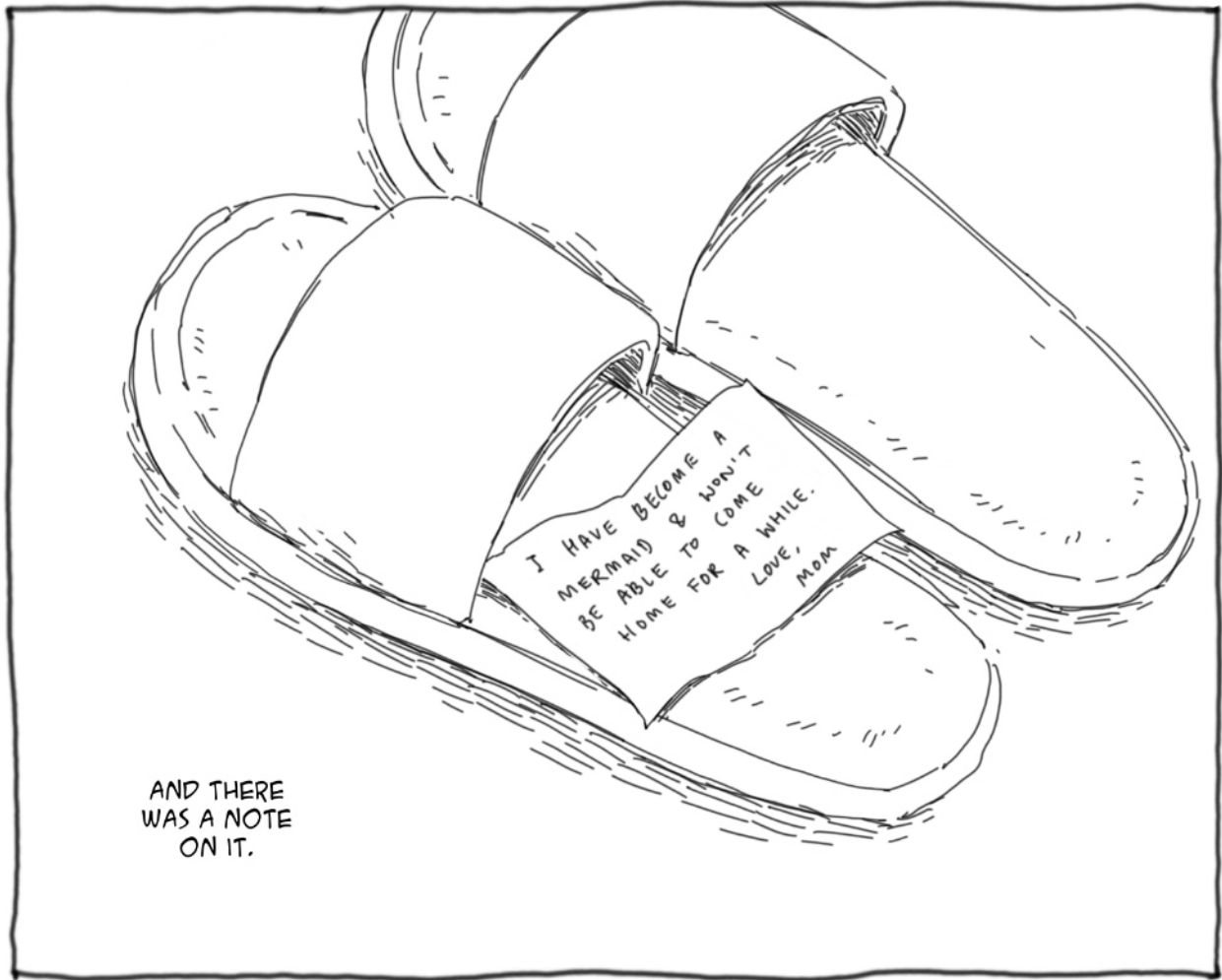
WE DIDN'T
THINK MUCH
OF IT THEN.

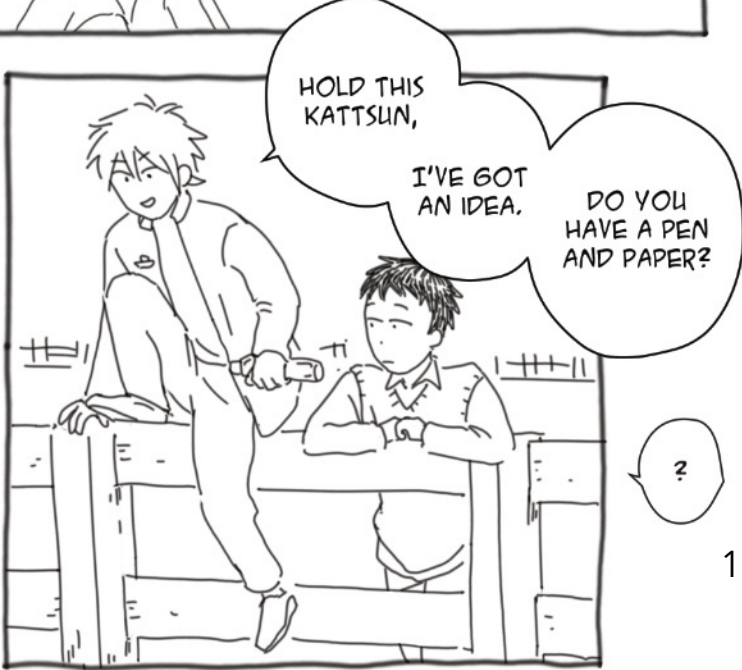
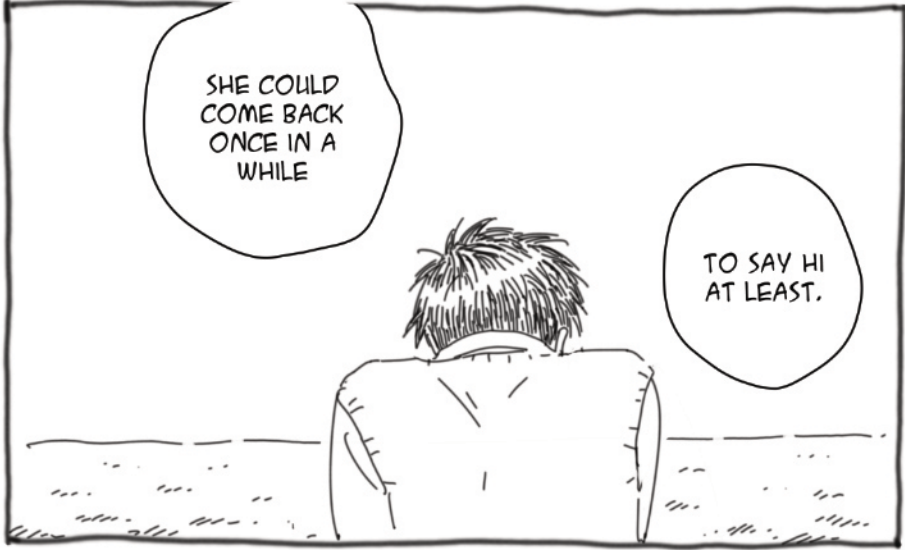
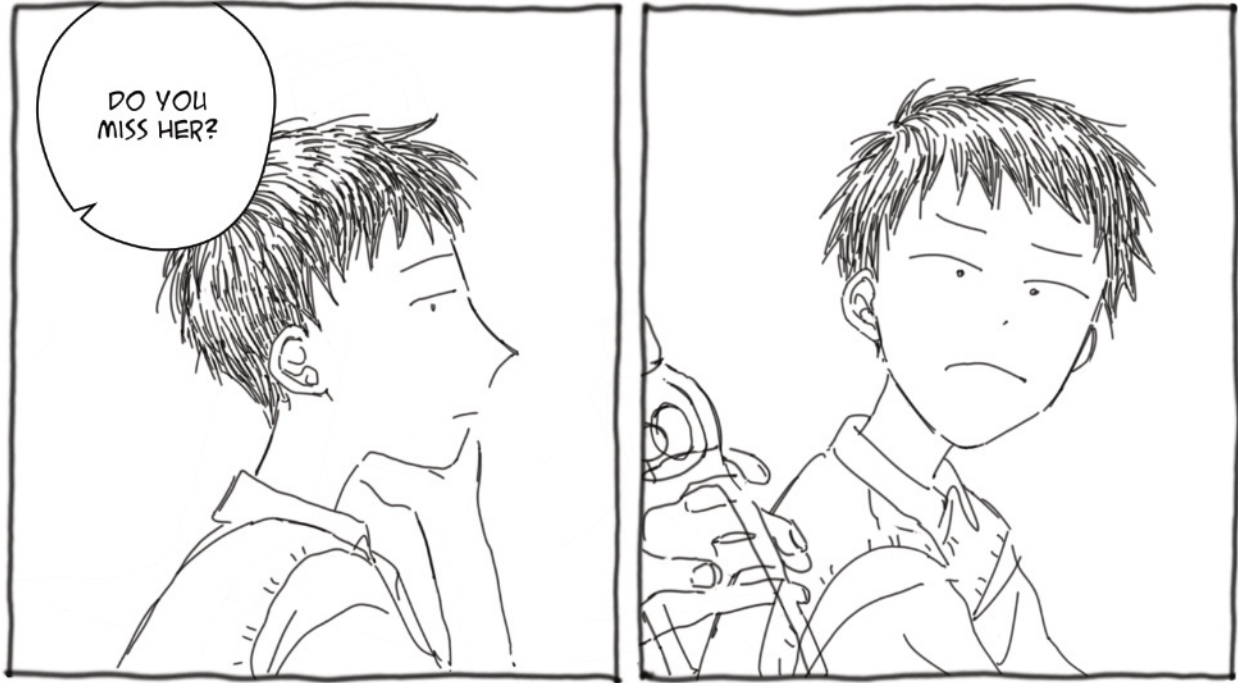
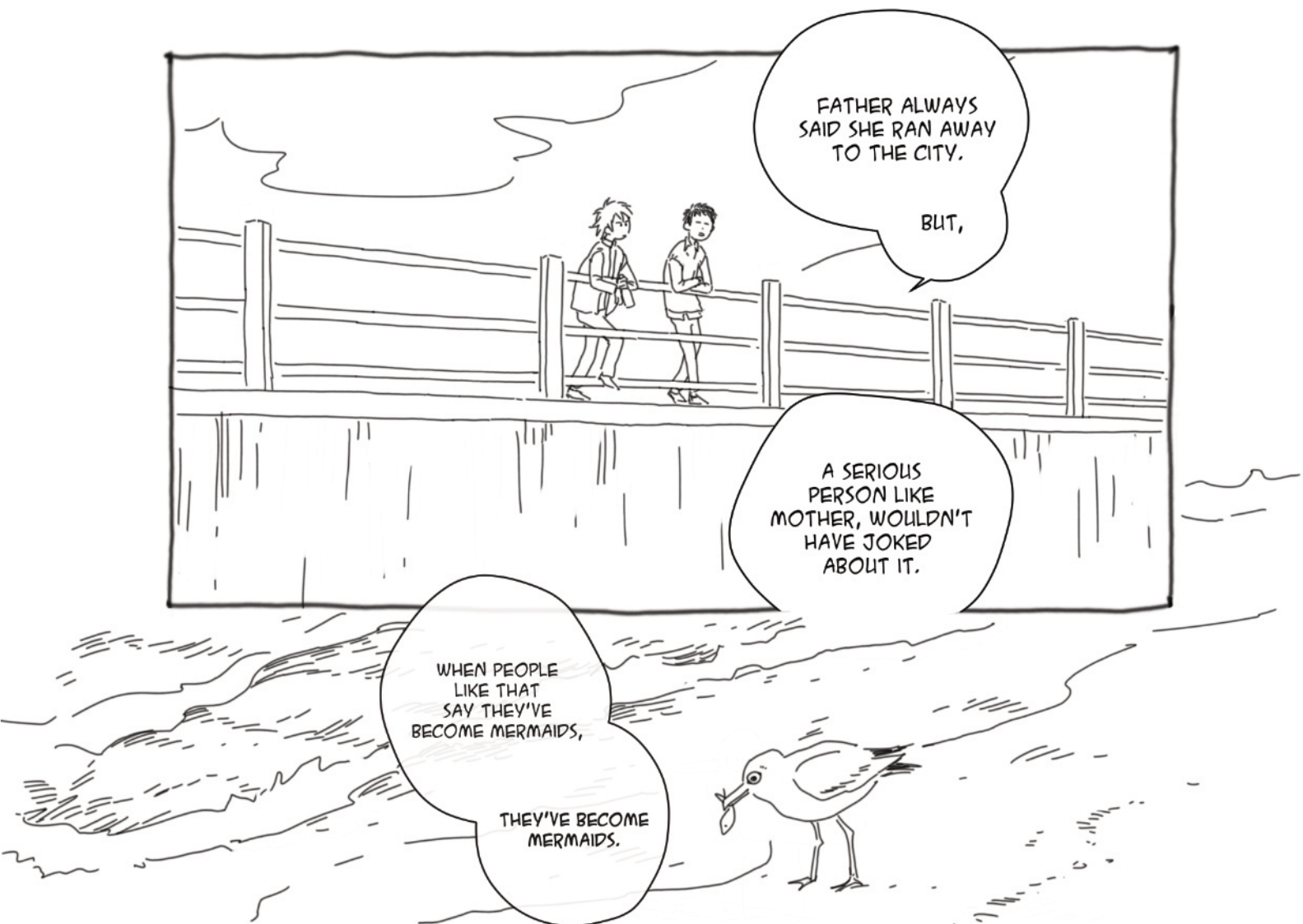
THAT SAME
NIGHT,

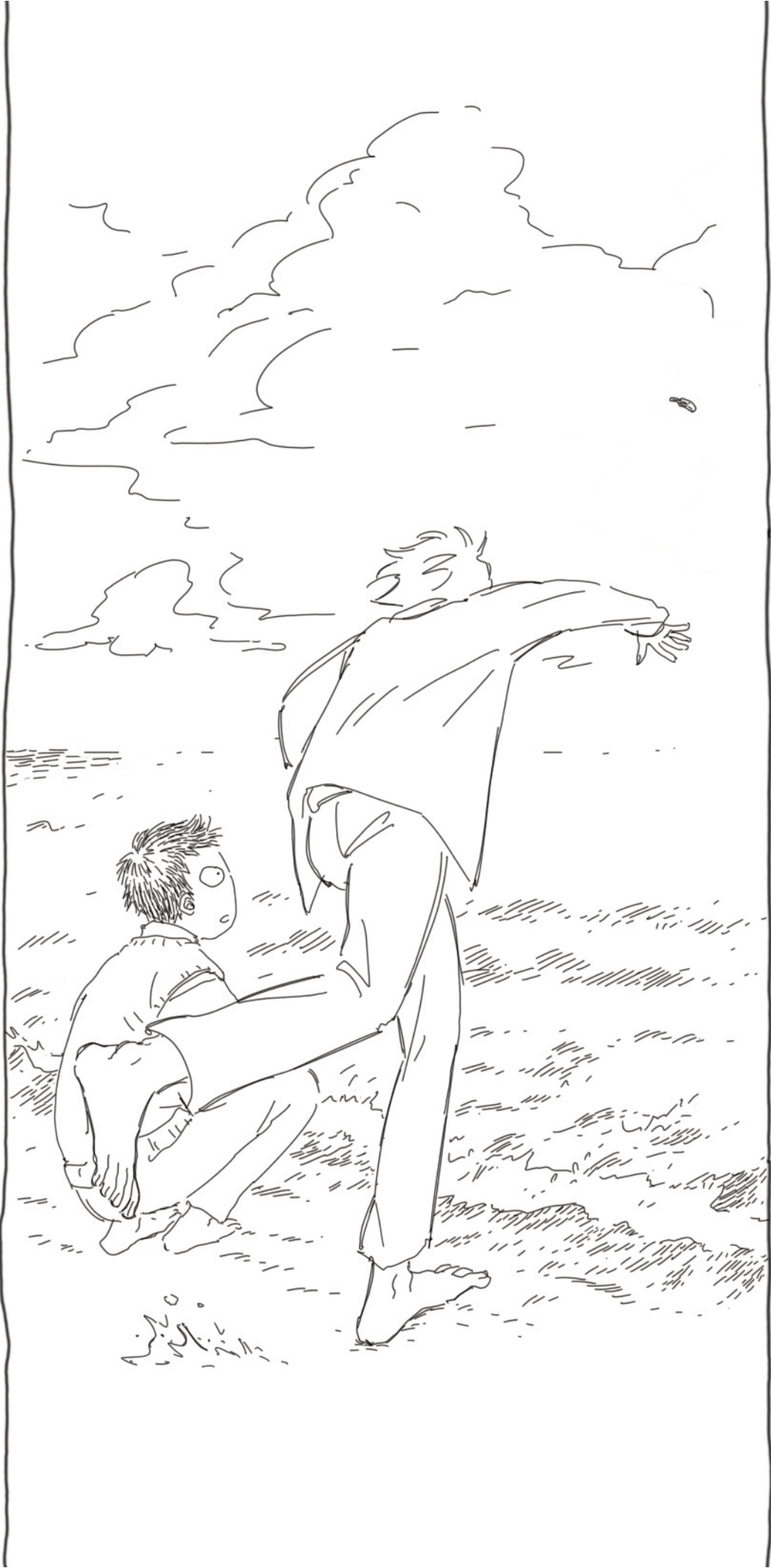
Illustrations by Sayuri M



SHE QUIETLY
DISAPPEARED.









How the British destroyed the Indian economy

Skandhan Karthikeyan | K2

In 1700, India had a 24.4 per cent share of the global economy. By the time India gained its independence, it had dropped to only 2.4 per cent. That was because India was governed solely for the profit of the EIC and later the British Crown, and everything else was subservient to this primary objective. While it is undeniable that certain aspects of British rule benefited India, such as the introduction of Western education, the establishment of Courts, and the creation of a robust and efficient administrative sector, it is also indisputable that the material condition of India had deteriorated considerably due to the British administration and the poverty of India was unparalleled to any civilised country at the time of independence.

An example of this is the deindustrialization of India. Before the British arrived, India was the world's largest textile manufacturer, with cotton textiles being its primary export. But it was not in the habit of the British to foster Indian industries. The cotton industry in Britain had begun to boom due to the Industrial Revolution, which increased total output while cutting manufacturing costs. Added to this were laws that imposed massive tariffs on Indian

exports, effectively destroying the Indian manufacturing industry.

Another example is the methods used by British traders to gain unfair advantages. In India, just like in the rest of the world, inland charges were imposed on products transported by land. However, the EIC was granted a permit that exempted them from making these payments. This meant that the goods imported from Europe and those purchased in India to be exported to Europe were no longer subject to inland duties. But private British traders began exploiting this authorization, which was exclusively provided to the EIC. So while the British traders transported their goods from place to place duty-free, the goods of the local traders were subject to heavy taxation. As a result, the local traders were ruined, their livelihoods destroyed, and the British traders had a monopoly and made huge profits.

Since agriculture was a source of livelihood for a large percentage of the Indian population, the land tax has traditionally been a significant source of revenue for India's past rulers. But during British rule, there was a constant increase in the amount extracted from the farmers

through taxes to finance their policies, war effort, and the administration of their territories. No attempt was made to safeguard the local population's interests and guard against excessive demands. It made any accumulation of wealth and improvement in the material condition of the people impossible and fixed no limits on the State-demand in the future.

All these culminated in the impoverishment of the Indian population and the destruction of native industries. Had India been an independent country, she would have indeed retaliated. However, the act of self-defence was not permitted to her, and the good of the Indian manufacturers remained unprotected.

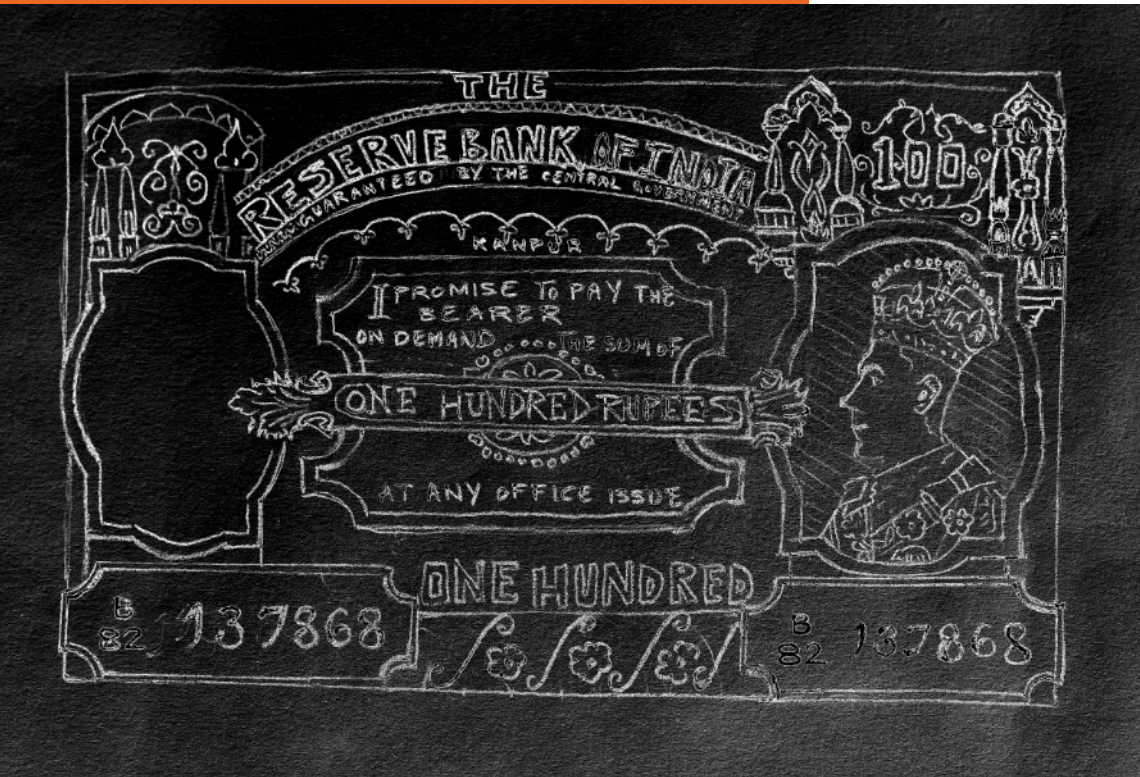


Illustration by Aurosri P

An Unconventional Estimation

Vibhu Dalal | K3

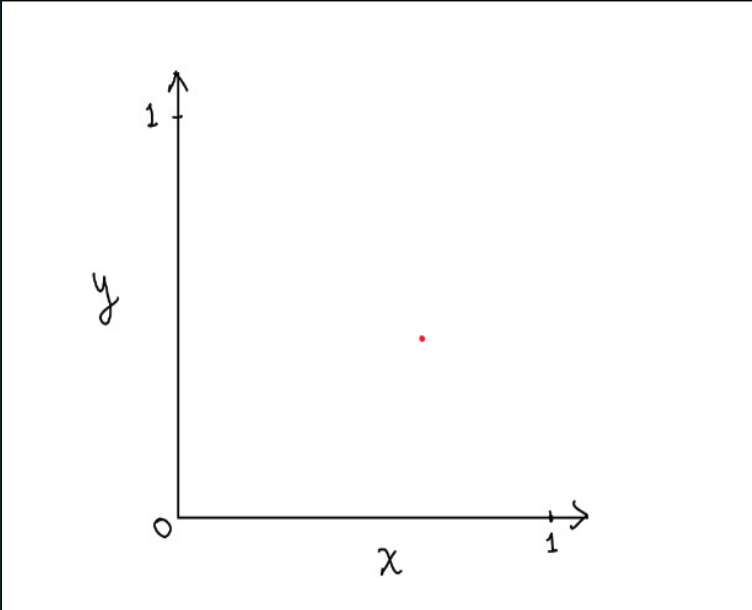
The most intriguing and inviting problems in maths or related domains are often those which are simple to understand but appear nearly impossible to solve, and yet possess a straightforward, elegant solution.

Such problems tend to surprise their readers at first, giving them the false impression that they surely lack the key ingredients required to solve the problem. Attempting to solve such problems may appear akin to trying to pull a rabbit out of the hat, whereas in reality, all that's needed is one creative insight. Such is the nature of the following problem.

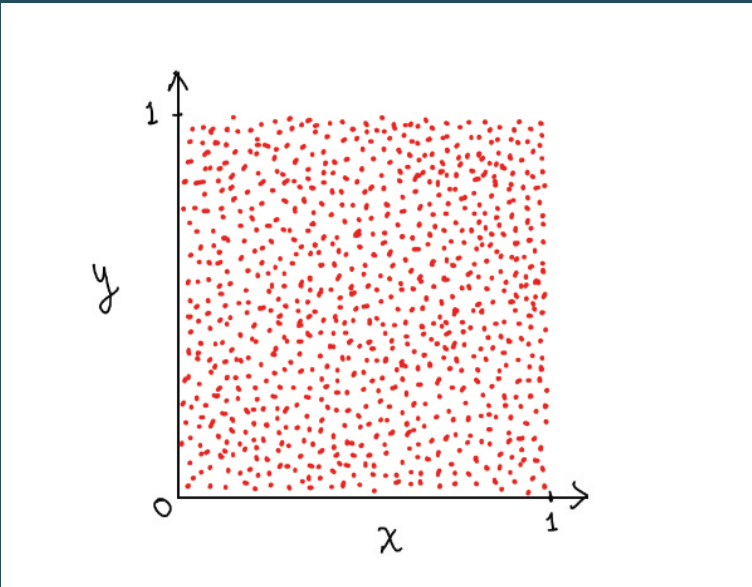
PROBLEM
Given a function which outputs a random number between 0 and 1, describe a method to estimate Pi.

SOLUTION

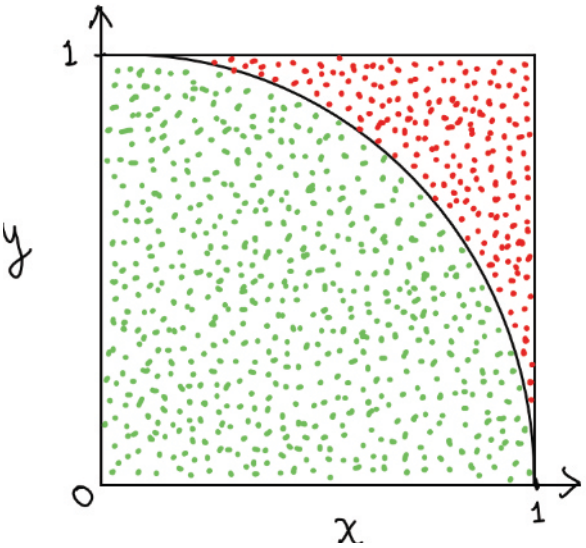
First, note that the random function can be called twice to get a random point (x,y), which belongs to the 1x1 square as shown below:



Follow this procedure to get a large number of random points:



The key insight into the problem lies in the following figure.



The remaining task is to determine whether a generated point lies inside the quarter-circle. Since the quarter-circle's radius is 1, the generated point will belong to it if the distance between the point and the origin is less than 1. In other words, a generated point (x,y) must satisfy the following condition to belong to the quarter-circle:

$$\sqrt{x^2+y^2} < 1$$

In summary, the method for approximating the value of pi given a function which outputs a random number between 0 and 1 is:
1) Generate a large number of random points (x,y) while keeping track of the number of points which fall inside the quarter-circle.
2) Use equation (1).

Note of course that the larger the quantity of the generated points, the better the approximation of pi.

We can now work with the following approximation:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{\text{\# points in the quarter - circle}}{\text{\# total points}} \\ & \approx \frac{\text{area of the quarter - circle}}{\text{area of the square}} \\ & = \frac{\frac{\pi(1)^2}{4}}{1^2} = \frac{\pi}{4} \end{aligned}$$

Thus:

$$\pi \approx 4 \cdot \frac{\text{\# points in the quarter - circle}}{\text{\# total points}} \quad (1)$$

Roads of Pondicherry

Sachidananda Patra | EAVP 6

On one dull afternoon, I was strolling around aimlessly on the paved roads of Pondicherry. The sky was clear with clouds spread across it like white cotton balls. A pleasant breeze with a cooling effect was blowing gently. It was playing with my curly hair and was murmuring a delightful tune in my ears.

My gaze fell upon a French building. A tightly knit bougainvillea crept down its tall walls. The creeper was in full bloom and the flower bunches had a tint of magenta and were vivid and bold. Suddenly it occurred to me that the significance given to this flower by The Mother is Protection, and the message it was giving out was true to its name; strong and protecting the building from dangers.

On the next turn, there were towering trees on both sides of the road. Their trunks were concealed with jagged pieces of bark, their wide-spread branches were covered with lush green leaves and tiny yellow flowers. Under the trees lay a carpet of those yellow flowers and in the air their redolence perfume unfurled.

At a distance, I heard an old woman with a vociferous voice calling out to everyone trying to sell her coconut

water. As I was thirsty I walked down towards her and asked for one. I drank from the refreshing coconut and the water it contained was ambrosial.

Then, I decided to return home. While walking I reflected on all that I had seen and came to the conclusion that nature has infused great details in all of its wonders, may it be as vast as the sky or as small as the yellow flowers.





The Triple Farewell

Janaki Pande | K3

Pondicherry found me when I was barely a metre tall. It was the summer of 2008, my parents had declared the war conch of their separation, and the winds of unsettling change had swept me off the dusty streets of Delhi and left me into the arms of the Pondy sea breeze. 15 years later, the departure now draws near. As a child, I grew up in this town's embrace, but now I feel that embrace loosening. Pondy knows that I must leave. Gently it is letting go of me, releasing me from its protection, allowing me to move on. The farewell lingers in the air around me, not always evident, and yet ever-present. I am not allowed to forget that I must leave.

Often, that fluid floating farewell solidifies into a form. Even though it is the whole of Pondy that I must leave, sometimes it feels like I am leaving a particular person, a place, a feeling. In the following passages, I wish to convey through my words three images that come to mind when I think of this farewell. The first is an activity I have done for the past 11 years of my education, the second is a place extremely dear to me, and the third is a person I love and admire. These three aspects of my life in Pondy have shaped me with

a lot of love and care, and to them I dedicate these words of mine.

Activity - Concentration

The concentration, the morning music, the voice of the Mother booming through the speakers - all my school days have begun with that sound. As children we were expected to close our eyes, to pray, to centre ourselves. It was never easy. It was an activity, or rather a lack of activity, that I always found challenging. Those daily 5 minutes when I was expected to find some inner peace, I would only find turmoil. My body refused to stay still. My eyes were afraid of the darkness they faced when the curtain of the lids came upon them. My mind was a-flutter, never unmoving, perpetually restless. In my early years of school, I would put my head upon the table, and as the music began, as the voice of the Mother, unintelligible words, filled the air, I would let sleep caress me once again. When we grew older, certain teachers began asking us what the Mother had said during the concentration, I could never quite remember. Eventually, I began trying to listen to Her, but I could catch only phrases here and there, the whole never seemed

coherent. I blamed Her. Clearly She did not want me to understand! There was a strange animosity that I developed for those 5 minutes.

As I grew older, when supervision was no longer forcing me to keep my eyes closed and my ears tuned to that sound and voice, I gave up trying to listen in the dark. I left my eyes open to wander around, prance outside the window, settle on some bird upon a tree or a fellow student. Sometimes, I would even rebel. I would come late to school, much after the concentration. Sometimes I would ignore it and continue working during those five minutes. I refused to meditate, I refused to still the inner chaos, I refused to let the silence, the music, the Words, enter my being. Perhaps this refusal, this giving up, was what I needed to do.

The exact date escapes me, it is irrelevant perhaps, but at some point, I realised the concentration was having an effect on me. I was already in my second year of Knowledge by then. One fine morning, as I sat through the morning music, my eyes open, my mind wandering, I began looking at a picture of the Mother. It hung upon the wall opposite me. She wasn't smiling. I remember quite distinctly, the music seemed to fade away, her own Voice dissipated into the background, and a conversation began. My inner voice was talking to itself, voicing my hopes for the day, my prayers, my dreams, and the

realisation came crashing into me - I had just had a conversation with the Mother! Technically, it had been a conversation with myself, but it felt like the Mother was listening. I told myself that day - 'Ah, this is what concentration feels like...'

Since then, concentrating during those five minutes of morning music has become an activity that I look forward to every day. I don't always try to meditate. I often let my eyes wander around the spaces She created for us. Perhaps I don't treat these five minutes like I should, but this activity for me is a conversation I have with myself. My inner voice speaks to itself and it always feels like the Mother is listening.

Place - Galleries

When I walk in through the heavy metal gates of school, I am assaulted with the scent of nostalgia. The building seems to have bid me farewell already. The spot - where I used to sit cross legged, my fingers committed to a furious tango on the keyboard - that spot has been filled already by another person. It is that ancient tragedy, where the familiar becomes the unfamiliar. My claim upon that patch on the galleries has exhausted its lease. There are new faces in the places I used to call mine, faces I do not recognise. Even though this particular location seemed to have moved on already, my farewell to Pondy

would be incomplete if I did not speak of the galleries at school.

When I was younger, I would avoid those large steps. They were always filled with older students and the chatter and clamour of conversations I was not meant to hear. It was only when I was admitted into the free progress in E4 that I realised, the galleries offered a new perspective to school. As if carved into the wall, they became the cave to this recluse. I would come early in the mornings, climb onto my spot, open a book or my laptop, and begin the day's work. Occasionally it would be noisy, but during class hours, when most people were boxed into classrooms, I would sit, as often as I could, in the galleries. The sky would be just beyond my reach, the grass almost at my feet, the imagination tree blooming as if just for me.

There, I wrote. Essays, poems, assignments, but most often stories. I would arrive there with a mind teeming with ideas and there, in the safety of the galleries, I would let all my thoughts scatter themselves around me. From that chaos, I would pick out words, characters, plots, and stories would come pouring out of me as if they had always been there. Even now when I go to the galleries, they remind me of the stories I wrote, the badly formulated sentences that I was so proud of, the nonsensical plot twists that I crafted. The galleries were the enablers of my creativity.

Sitting there, watching the imagination tree blossoming, the clouds drifting through the sky, I felt at home.

Even though I remember the galleries mainly for the moments of blissful silence that I spent there, they were also a space where I had comforting conversations on a rainy day, friendly chit-chat between the scenes of a play, arguments loud and soft, the occasional outburst of tears. To me that space was a lot more than just a corner of school. The world, from the third step, felt different. In hindsight, I think I loved spending time in the galleries not because of what they were, but because of what they allowed me to become. They turned me into a writer, they moulded me into someone who cherished silences, they taught me to enjoy solitude. They kept the world at bay, not too far and yet not too near. I am yet to find such a home elsewhere.

Person - Sayuri Mima

For all other farewells, I am prepared, but no amount of preparation will be enough to say goodbye to Sayuri Mima. We met when we were ten. I was insufferable, often angered, and easy to dislike. She was quiet, mysterious, and had a kind smile. Perhaps I was drawn to her because I thought she might tolerate me, and I was right - she has tolerated me for the past eleven years and for that I am ever grateful. Looking back, I don't

remember our first conversation, or even the first time I really saw her. We were insignificant to one another. I'd like to believe that over the years we have grown considerably less insignificant to one another. You see, it was certainly not love at first sight. Perhaps love at multiple sights and conversations and laughs and a mutual disappointment with ourselves.

Sometimes our friendship baffles me. There are too many things that should have kept us apart. Our walks for example. Ten years ago Sayuri walked as if there was no hurry in the world. I walked as if the world was ending. It was infuriating to walk beside her. There was something slow about her, her thoughts, her voice, everything seemed to be tethered in another land. The person in front of me was only an image and she actually lay somewhere far away. I might not have understood Sayuri when I first met her, I am not sure I do now either, but I was drawn to her. I watched her and I wanted to be the kind of person who smiled like that, effortlessly, and so often. I wanted to recount stories like she did, to enjoy solitude like she did, to work diligently like she did, to be quiet like she was. When I turned 13, I had decided that I wanted to become Sayuri.

I failed to become her, but when I look at myself now I see parts of her in me. That unbothered detachment, those long silences, my love for solitude, my need for

productivity, even my walk. Now, Sayuri and I don't have the occasion to walk together often, but sometimes when I find myself alone on a street I have an urge to hop off my cycle. To walk slowly. As if each step was a command from beyond. I always find myself thinking of her in those moments. In the eleven years that have unfurled since I came to know Sayuri, she has filled me with memories so tangible that I can almost smell the air in which they live. Together and apart, through conversations and silences, we have grown wiser, older, faced the strange disillusionment that comes along with growing up. Saying 'goodbye' to her terrifies me because I do not know if there will be another 'hello'. Our lives feel like vast stretches of uncertainty before us, an endless ocean upon which we must set sail. Once we leave this shore, the winds that fill our sail might not carry us to the same places. Will we ever cross paths again? The question scares me. It would certainly be nice if fate decides to bring us together again, but even if it doesn't, we'll be okay. The conversations, the smiles, her colourful silences, will always remain one of my most cherished parts of adolescence. Sayuri was the first person I learnt to love selflessly and no matter where we go, she will always remain that person for me. I love her so much, it would be impossible to stop.

Goodbye

My farewell to Pondy took the form of three aspects that nurtured me and made me who I am. However, in hindsight, it is only a physical farewell. The three things I wrote about live within me and are inseparable from my identity. Those five minutes of conversation with Mother have taught me that whenever I do want to speak to Her, I can, and She will be listening. The galleries have awoken the writer in me, and left me with enough inspiration to last me a lifetime. All that I admire in Sayuri, I still strive to embody.

Pondy has been slowly preparing me for this farewell. I know it will not come crashing into me on the 16th of December. I will not be left in the debris of a heart-breaking goodbye. For the truth is, with Pondy, there can never be a farewell. I might leave, but only temporarily, because I am tethered here by something invisible. Pondy lives within me. Since that summer of 2008, Pondy has taken care of me, and now even as we bid each other farewell, Pondy and I know, this is not a goodbye, only a 'see you later'.



Krishnagiri

Narendran Karthikeyan | K3

Weaving through our clothes, the gentle wind caresses our exhausted bodies like a loved one would after a day of hard work. But our brief romance is interrupted by the bellows of the chaperone ordering us to set up camp. A solitary street light stands guard like an old, helpless watchman at the entrance of the hill area. A dulled, ochre gate beneath it, with ancient wounds of rust and metal, is kissed by dewdrops all over. It does not yield to our efforts to open it. The streetlight highlights my companions' faces as we heave our cycles over the gate. Their weary faces drip like leaky faucets. Sweat twists and curls down their shirts, forming continents and islands. Our accompanying car's boot swings open with a small click and some cyclists groan their way over to empty it. A two-layer tarpaulin, patched like an unplanned Lego structure, is unrolled. Some of the lazier cyclists sit there, animated in their conversation before the chaperone ambushes them and they separate like a flock of pigeons.

The sounds of passing cars roll into my ears and recede like drum beats while chirping crickets

pitched symphony. Chiming in, the wind whispers a soothing melody into my ear. And then, all sounds give way for a moment of deafening silence, a beautiful counterweight to the mellifluous sounds that preceded and will follow it. The sounds bait and lure my mind away from my body before it is dragged back by the icy, knifing air that I breathe, spreading its chill fingers gently down my chest to my abdomen, which results in my body shuddering to fight off the cold. It leaves behind a trail of goosebumps, rising like summoned soldiers, raising their hair-like spears upright.

Our guide points his weathered hands towards the stars. He focuses on the group of the brightest ones, as they sit like members of a council, their intensities signifying their wisdom. He forms a perpendicular with his hand like a veteran sailor and shows us the secrets that the stars hide within themselves. The moon watches the council from afar. Even with half her face obscured, she is the lighthouse of the dark, all-consuming sky. No star dares to stay close to her, afraid of her powerful beauty. They reside in

the periphery of her shine, blinking like shy, distant admirers or jilted stalkers. The dark void is the silent background to this celestial activity. The sky is a canvas of a higher power; the stars, his ink. At times, misty, white-grey-tinged clouds slowly sail their way across.

Stretched out in front of us, was the path leading to the fort. Its rough, ragged form, with sharp edges of rock jutting out, warned us of the hidden dangers of the journey ahead. It laid before us the possibilities of twisted ankles and devious stumbles, before blending into obscurity. Beside it, stiff green blades resist and refuse to surrender to the wind, standing upright and hostile. On both sides, blocks of stones, around a metre high, sides like jagged, steep cliffs, snuggled fit together like guards around a campfire. They cover themselves with the cloak of darkness, only their obsidian-grey faces peeking through giving them away. Beyond the two walls were acres of darkness gently blending with the sky. A few dying trees were sprinkled around, their branches like emaciated fingers, begging the skies for a drop of water, while the stars twinkle and shine in their conversation.

The path meshes seamlessly with the dark figure of the hill. He looms over all like a shadow. He gazes over his kingdom, his acres of darkness. Far away, he glances at both his brothers Rajagiri and Chandrayandurg, each with their

feudal territory, each crowned with their own fort. Krishnagiri's invisible eyes command me to pay my respects. A palely lit staircase snakes its way up to the top. The hill is a humongous pile of boulders as if some celestial power sprinkled some dust from his divine hand and formed the impregnable trio of hills. History is slabbered all over the fort. The scarred bricks sing ballads of attacks repelled, its towers narrate the lives of the common folk of the past, and its cracked roofs grieve over a glorious past. Their anger vibrates with the wind, once a coveted jewel of the south, now a mere tourist spot. Like an old soldier battered and forgotten after his campaign of glory, Krishnagiri rests unsatisfied and sullen, his black-brown boulders reflecting his mood. Now, his boulders barely stay on him as they acquire calcium-white shades of age. "8 years!", he screams, "For 8 years I defended a siege against the Mughals." But his appeal falls short on youngsters engraving their initials on his base. Defeated, Krishnagiri sleeps.

Tadoba

Arunaditya Das | K1

Photos by Arunaditya D

MAYA

Bodies sore from the past two days of forest excursions, skins parched from the aridity of the Deccan, and lungs heaving in the piercing chills of central India, we pushed off for our fourth and final safari at the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. It was six in the morning, an emanating hue of misty blues lay suspended over the forest floor, still as a cloud. All of life awaited the arrival of the gleaming sun.

The northernmost entrance to the forest, the Navegaon Gate, was swung open, and the all-pervading silence swiftly slipped away. There rose a synchronised uproar of Gypsy engines starting up, and the routine human infiltration of the forest was underway.

The forest's soft rejuvenating breath turned into a gale of sharp wintry blades piercing further into our thickly protected skins as the Gypsy drove deeper into the heart of the woodland. The morning held promise.

The three previous outings had been rather dry and desolate. The forest seemed to be engulfed in an emptiness, and a painful silence was eminent behind all the human commotion. Despite having had good glimpses of the rich wildlife, including the likes of elusive wild dogs and that of a tiger named Balaram on the very first safari, I was disappointed – disappointed that perhaps the forest had not entirely opened itself up to me, or rather I

had not been open enough to feel it in its entirety.

We entered the forest for one last time. My initial excitement had slipped away. My eyes seemed to be looking through a veil of neutrality. All was flat, – lost in an emptiness and nothingness. There was an all-pervading shade of grey. The mighty life force of the forest had, for the first time, failed to appeal to me.

Despite this lack of enthusiasm, excitement and intuition, there was a calm and sturdy conviction that the forest was bound to disclose itself. But it was not a superstitious yearning or a blind belief in this idea that drove me. It was an absolute and certain knowledge of the events that were to unfold, a pre-established faith in the feelings that the forest would awaken in the heart, and a flat timeless quietude in the mind. I felt prepared to immerse myself in the womb of the forest.

As the sun traversed the blue horizon and began to flood the forest with its golden light, the canopy opened out into vast, gentle meadows. Steeped in light, the grassland unfolded before our eyes, immersed in a body of absolute beauty. The tall dry grass softly brushed against a formidable herd of Indian Gaurs. Further ahead a grazing herd of Chital and Sambar deer jewelled the golden-hued, magic-infused meadows. In vain our lone jeep endeavoured not to mar the divinity around us. Amid all the





rapturous magnificence that engulfed us, mere existence was bliss.

“A godlike packed intensity of sense made it a passionate pleasure even to breathe”

The forest, awakened from its stupendous trance, spoke with a mighty golden-white tranquillity that rendered the air fragrant with love and bliss. The stagnant trees we left behind now danced to the call of perfection – every curve and texture responding to the transcendent rhythm of a Supreme Entity. A vast celestial movement rising from the depths of the forest’s enclosed soul, perhaps unbeknownst to the forest itself. The trail that seemed to lead one nowhere, now hinted towards the grandeur that lay in wait. The emerald forest was ablaze with the cry of aspiration.

But ephemeral and short-lived, the hour of glory, too, had to fade. A trickle of silent murmur from unknown planes troubled the calm and marred the peace. The unheard rumble, distant and yet at hand, seeped through our impotent minds and hearts into the vast ocean of bliss that engulfed us. Time, incessantly coursing through its unshakeable path, hauled the end of the golden hour in its unsparing clasp.

The ears, too, now caught a distant murmur. The minds raised fretful questions, and hearts, casually letting go of the moment’s bliss, turned in excitement to the sordid calls that plucked at its strings. The gentle sun turned harsh and gaudy. There came

an abrupt jolt to the body and a flash of storming jeeps, – the beautiful hour of fate had irrevocably slipped away.

The bewildering hunt for Maya was once again underway.

The soundless paws that braved the splendour they bore, the mystical stripes that crept unseen through the leaves, the glowing ember that set the forest’s silent heart ablaze, – Maya reigned supreme.

The tigress, codenamed T16, has ruled these lands for over a decade. Wise and graceful, she remains the sole enchantress of the ancient forest, hence the name, – Maya. Her very name emulates the power she holds and the resplendence that she is, and it was in search of her that jeep after jeep tore across the dirt track.

Maya had apparently been sighted on the western periphery of the forest, close to the Tadoba Lake. Despite knowing well the enigma that Maya was, I sat disheartened, reminiscing the visuals of the divine moment we left behind, wishing only to be amid the golden meadows once again.

As we continued on our way towards the Lake, there flashed through the clouds of dust an array of red lights, ensued shortly by an abrupt halt. Anxious murmurs arose, and eager heads began to peer out of their jeeps. The dust began to settle, and slowly the mystery, too, unravelled itself. There appeared through the fading clouds another pack of jeeps

in the distance, slowly coming our way. But before them, leading the way, was Maya. The queen, grand as can be, walked down her palatial corridor, tailing a convoy of meagre humans.

The revered tigress, the emanation of strength and perfection in form, had presented herself before us, and one could only remain transfixed in awe. Faced with Nature's most lavish creation, we sat still, abased by her enigma. Once again, all the magic poured in. Her stripes set our eyes ablaze, and her gaze kindled our feeble hearts. Her paws left imprints of her splendour on the sand, embedding the magnificence they bore. She was beauty unconstrained. She was strength concealed within wisdom and poise. Hers was a breath of majesty, and hers an air of graceful pride. Her coat glistening golden and her every movement distilling perfection, she had indeed set the forest ablaze. She was unlike anything I had ever encountered in the wilderness, for she carried within her lone self all that the forest was.

But once again, ephemeral and short-lived, this glorious moment, too, had to fade. Caused by a sudden animal impulse, there emerged a mindless agitation, masking the moment's beauty. Strangely, it was not Maya who was subject to these impulses, but us. Nature's most developed beings, evolution's highest creations thus far, – it was the humans who fell prey to the brutish vibrations. Excited jeering arose alongside a chaotic hustle to get a glimpse of the tigress. The air quivered from all the noise. As

the voices cried out loud and jeeps jostled for position, it was as though we humans had momentarily taken a step backwards in our evolution. The sheer unappreciation for the beauty that moved before us was eminent. Amid all the cacophony, Maya had remained entirely unperturbed. She effortlessly maintained her grandiose stature, but to no avail, for all of it was masked and concealed by the ruckus all around. All radiance and ecstasy had once again fled the scene. Dejection settled upon my heart once more, and confusion and emptiness once more occupied the mind space.

I had been so engrossed in simply absorbing Maya and her resplendence that I had forgotten to get on with my first order of business, – photographing her!

But now, with all the rapture drained out, I could not but proceed lifelessly. The passion for taking meaningful pictures had receded, and I felt no joy whatsoever in doing so. What ensued was a blind-eyed analysis of the lighting conditions, a disinterested adjustment of camera settings, and a series of uninspired images. I had expected nothing more. There was no creative endeavour attempted whatsoever.

In any case, the chaos around Maya lasted a while longer until she walked off the track and into the thickets. A cloud of grief now loomed over and followed me for the next few days. After all, how often does one get to experience the forest in its fullness, let alone the magical enchantment of a tigress like Maya? And to have it all

abruptly cut short is disheartening indeed.

I had felt at the time that memories of momentary experiences would be the sole takeaways from the trip, and that these, too, with the lapse of time would fade away. But upon returning to Pondicherry, while going through the set of ordinary images, I encountered one single frame that stood out. The image instantly sent my heart back to the forest, re-evoking Maya's living presence. With a miraculous stroke of chance, I had managed to capture her in all her splendour. I don't just feel, but know it with an innate conviction, that I have been able to bring out and showcase Maya in her true reality as far as I understand it, – that of a refined vitality; one that carries an elevated grace, majesty, wisdom and beauty, while retaining a pure and powerful strength at the core. With her powerful gaze fixed towards the camera, and the beam of light perfectly caressing her gleaming coat, Maya now remains with me through this picture, albeit an uninspired creation.



Blender: The Bridge between Fantasy and Reality

Gautama Aditya | EAVP 5

In 1989 a young Dutch man named Ton Roosendaal abandoned his studies in Industrial Design to develop a piece of 3D animation software called NeoGeo. Initially housed in just an attic, NeoGeo would turn out to be the predecessor to Roosendaal's next brainchild, a piece of software we now know as Blender.

3D Art by Gautama A

Released to the public in January 1995, Blender has become a free open-source application. It is now competing against film industry-level 3D animation software to be the best of its kind. In an industry dominated by proprietary tools and technologies, the Blender crew decided in 2005 to put their creation to the test by attempting to make a 3D animated short film using only open-source tools. From then on, the Blender team have been releasing a consistent flow of fantastic short open-movies—with all files visible and accessible to other creators—such as Agent 327: Operation Barbershop (2017), Spring (2019), and Sprite Fright (2021). They did this for the public to see what their software was capable of, to show young artists and film enthusiasts that they are no longer limited to paid animation software like Maya, and Cinema 4D, standardly used by the film industry.

Blender is a stand-alone application; animators can go from early concept to finished film all within this single program. From film production to architectural visualisation to game design, Blender is truly the epitome of an application capable of all 3D work. Blender's user-friendly interface allows anyone with a computer and a measure of enthusiasm to completely immerse themselves in a world where creativity reigns supreme. Its all-powerful tools give you unfettered means to create worlds beyond your wildest envisionings. It allows you to unleash the artist within and to delve deep into realms in which the only limit is your imagination.

Quill and Circles

Aura Sen Gupta | EAVP 4

Art, Why have I chosen this medium?

I never liked art. I didn't appreciate it much. During the lockdown I ran out of things to do so I tried to find something interesting from Social Media. I came across a lot of art and craft videos which I wanted to try out on my own. That's when I started to work on Mandalas and slowly got into painting. Since then I've really been into fine arts. Art helps me express myself. It's a way to channel my energy and emotions. It helped me concentrate and focus longer, I also learned the fact that creating beautiful pieces takes time and that you should never hurry with anything.

How much time do I dedicate to my art?

During the lockdown, I used to spend a lot of time on my art. I often worked on my artwork overnight. As school resumed, I barely had time. Nowadays I draw once every three weeks or sometimes more.

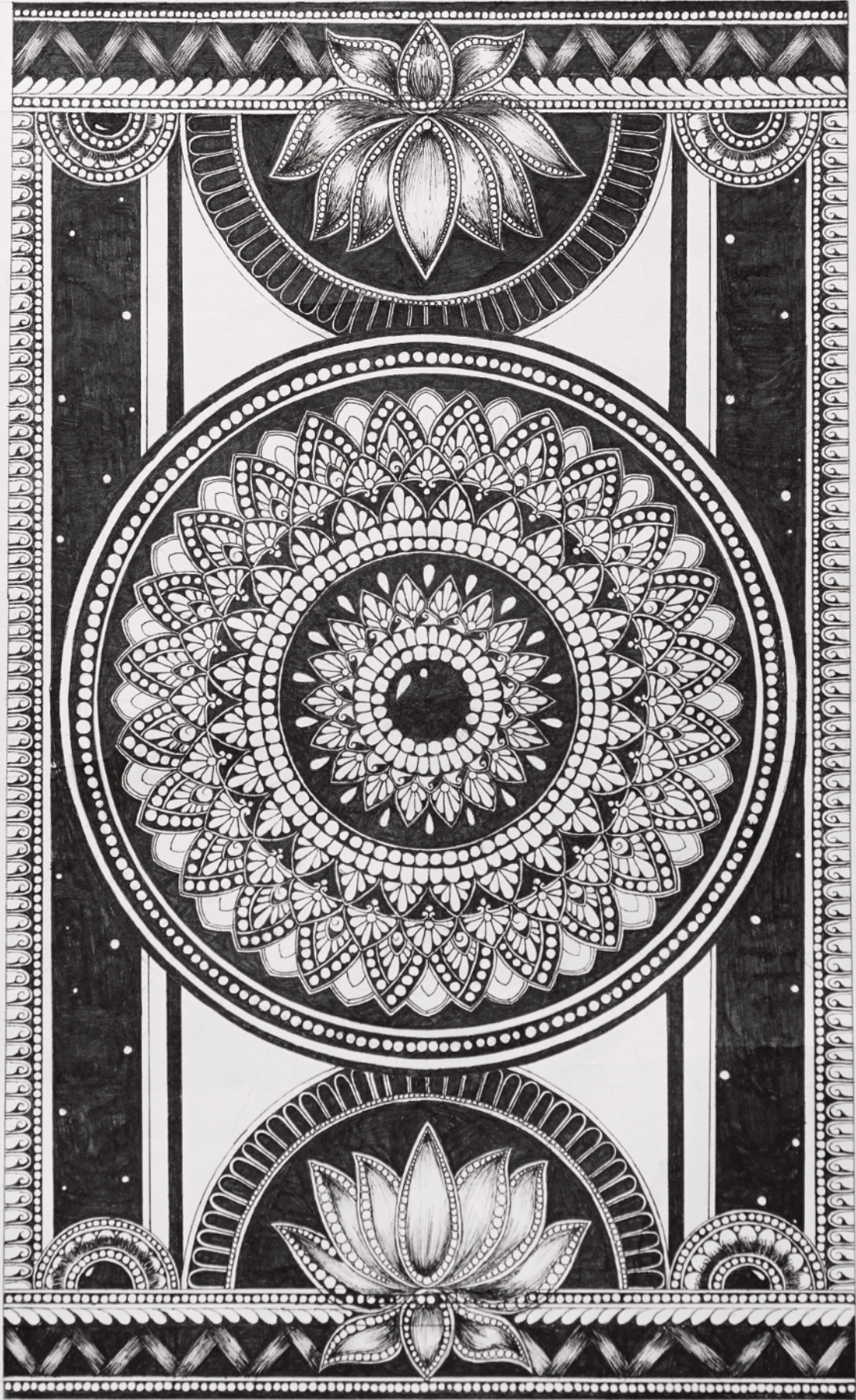
Are there any challenges that arise in my process?

I come across a lot of problems, such as, sometimes while drawing the ink accidentally spills out or goes off line, and I have to do something to fix the mistake. I have had other problems such as once I had chosen a Mandala artwork online which I thought I would replicate,

but when I started to draw, I realised that there was no room for the whole drawing to fit, the proportions were not right and I'd already started to ink it. It has also happened that my pen ran out of ink while I was running it over my Mandala. All these incidents required me to think of a solution fast. I've had problems while taking photos of my art because different projects required a background that matched them well, I also faced problems with the lights and the angles. My art has required me to make numerous adjustments. Every time I create a new piece of art, I face new challenges.



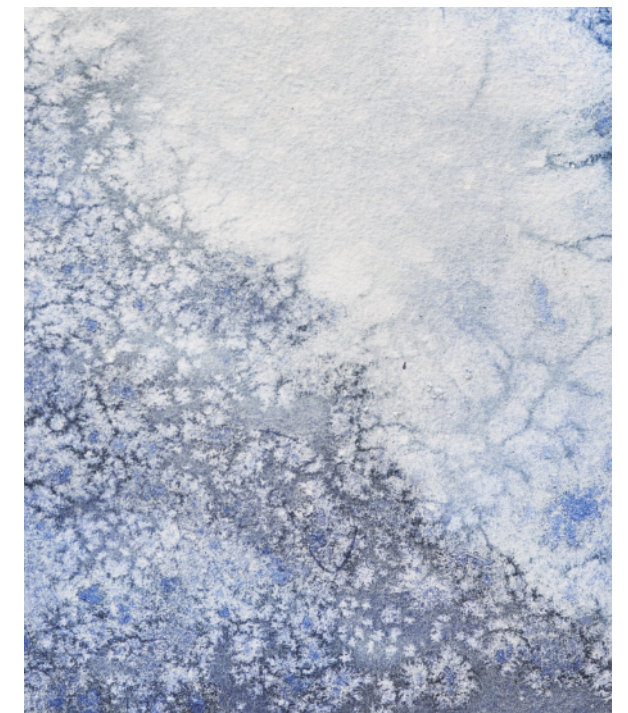
Illustration by Aura S



Uplift from the Depth

Sai Roshini Miriyala | K2

I enjoy watercolour painting as it has always been a way to express myself. I love the flow of the colours and their transparency. This year I tried a new technique in my arts class, called the salt effect in watercolour. I first start with a paper wash (wet the paper with water using a big brush). Then I add the colours and let the paint take the flow of the water. The trickiest part of the painting is knowing when to sprinkle the salt. The right time to add is when the paper is wet enough for the salt to absorb the paint. If the paper is too wet, the salt dissolves in water. If it is too dry, it doesn't absorb the colours. Thus, when sprinkled at the right moment, the salt leaves a white starry effect on the paper. Once the salt dries up, I gently brush it off the paper.



Painting by MS Roshini

A Grim Fairytale

Jayati Bhardwaj | EAVP 6

And I'm telling you I felt my heart stop.

She knew everything. She had seen everything. How could this be possible? She was all smiles at how terrified I was. And I kept quiet for the rest of the evening.

I've always found places with a bite to be fascinating. They're always oscillating between being lonely, grey capitalist dystopias and gemstone-like hardened, cyberpunk scenes drowning in brilliant shades of blue, violet and pink. This city is a beautiful piece of rugged art that God dipped in clear-neon green paint.

All of the people here are artists and poets and filmmakers, yet every single road has veins of unemotional logic and crafty science ribbing out.

But the best thing about a place is its people. I've never been to a city whose people I haven't loved in a particular way.

Here, I met Sumire with her uncombed, tousled long hair, pushed back with a metal hairband. She was hunched over with her eyes absolutely, completely devoted to reading something. A sense of peculiarity made her magnetic – her

personality breathed free because of her unusual nature. Her need for discipline, however, grew like vines around her strangeness. Another thing that I think shaped our relationship was the fact that she refused to ever tell me how she felt about me. I'd like to think we were best of friends.

If I sift through my memories of her, one that stands out would be the time she told me she loved to go to music concerts, the 1940s kind, and I could feel myself smirking, even though I really, really, really shouldn't have been.

It had been five weeks since we were friends and I knew even back then that it'd never work out, us and everything, it couldn't. I think the easiest way to demolish a friendship is to confirm the romantic tension that is woven into the fabric of your bond – to rip its threads out and make your friend stare at the fibres by holding their head down. And, so I decided not to mention it and that maybe I would hint at it later, but not that day. It was sometime in the evening, I was staring at the myriad of lights she had loosely fixed along the ceiling in a place she called her home. There were golden speckles on her obsidian walls that danced around in the room as the golden

lights overhead hit the walls. I felt safe. I sank into the familiar surface of her sofa. She slipped her cottony feet into shiny punk boots and I watched her like a child sideyeing someone, filled to the brim with suspicion and doubt. She interrupted me with her laugh. She laughed in her knowing way. And I got up and straightened my limbs out like a ventriloquist dummy. All of my bones clicked outwards. Sprinting towards the nearest road, we signalled for a ride.

The stars breathed life into the raven-coloured sky, the moon tucked itself under a blanket of silver clouds – a classic tale of unrequited love. The highway air filled my ears with an eerie, exigent fear like water does when you dunk your head in; or like, the almost liquid smell of Venetian coffee. I couldn't muster enough courage to ask her, "Aren't the 1940s singing crowd dead?" But I was afraid I would not word it in the best way, so I just nodded and smiled. Her lips broke into a smile so genuine that she almost convinced me to believe her words. I feigned fawning and gushing and was rewarded with a song of her giggles.

However, as sombre and romantic as things should've been, I was a jittery mess. This city can be very loud and very uncomfortable and very stinging without trying at times. We neared the performance stage. I heard the heavy footsteps dancing entirely out of rhythm, the speakers shattering the vibrations of the dancers, the squelching and slurping of mouths against fried chicken legs and the stripping of carpets from the wet

grass as the festival began once again.

Sumire cheered and stretched her hands high up in the air, and there he was, Buddy Holly –centre stage, arms open wide, every word enunciated with gestures. He was tall with a well built frame. His arms had rippling muscles and he had a slim, sharp face. He was grinning at the crowd. Then, I felt a sensation in my gut and in my cheeks, following which were haunting flashbacks of breaking news broadcasts and headlines, all remorseful of the plane crash that killed him decades ago.

All the other people here seemed to have once been bound by mortal flesh but now stood as gaunt and fragile spectres. Their skin stretched tight over delicate bones, almost tearing. Their eyes filled to their optimum with emptiness. Hollow orbs, deprived of any vibrancy, stared out from sunken sockets that seemed to absorb all life. Their eyes, like ancient wells, were shrouded in an occult darkness. The dead bore a perpetual smile, an expression that hovered between contentment and mystery.

A hushed stillness settled over the cobblestone roads and dull yellowed vintage lamp posts. The air was thick and heavy with morose longing, and the jazz melodies hung in the air like tendrils of mist.

Sumire was fickle, naive and unwarrantedly unafraid. I think her influence on me was evident, absurd and much too colossal to ignore. I

had begun to believe that she's lived a gazillion lifetimes in her seemingly 'young' 19 years. She let out another puff of smoke, breathing in the same air and her hair glowed under the neon lights overhead.

She picked up her messenger-bag and stuffed her jacket in and my eyes started to wetten. Big, fat tears sat at the corners of my eyes and I knew exactly what would happen next. Refusing to look at me whatsoever, she huffed and stormed out of the festival as if she'll never come back. It was like the slamming of a door that rings out in the room, as I sank down with my back flat against the carpeted ground.

A grim fairy tale haunts this city, and this place is one that will devour me if I never do anything about it and I cannot help but await the inevitable cannibalisation that might, might just be the climax I've been denying myself so wholly.

My comfort lies in a world that doesn't exist in most ways, and my well-wishers tug at the flannel I treasure so highly; but their words are incoherent mumbles to my brain. Their ghostly hands extend towards me, tender caresses of comfort wane into ones of trepidation. Their bodies are steel-strong and unbreakable in the face of an opponent. Their eyes, on the contrary, are darkened by the shadow of fear crying out for guidance and comfort. Their minds run amok at night, disrupting the peace that existed; their mind is of

violence and power. Their hair is as black as the day is long, and their skins burn with fire.

Their legs tapped against the floor to a coordinated rhythm stuck in their brain. And in that commotion I heard a distant, yet familiar song of chuckles; Sumire stood there, poised. Her nail polish was chipped away after hours of picking and scratching, only to reapply another coat just to scratch it away once again. Her skin was covered with concealer covering up scars from all the nights she pulled at her skin, clawing it with hatred. Her gums were burnt from the acid that visited her from time-to-time. Her hair was brown, lightening more as time went by, submitting to age in an untimely fashion.

And I'm telling you I felt my heart stop.

She knew everything. She had seen everything. How could this be possible? She was all smiles at how terrified I was, And I kept quiet for the rest of the evening.

This city, the people, its neon dipped streets, its light borrowed from long forgotten decades, they may all be dead. But that doesn't mean it's entirely sinister and it doesn't mean that when I look at it, I won't be filled with hope of the exact same golden stardust. Sometimes the abstract and the mental and the mystical are all as real as the ground you stand upon and the wrists you press your lips to.

Illustration by Harumi M



The Tenant

Chaitanya Sharma | K2

It sat on the dining table and stared at him in an oddly funny way. Head tilted a little to the right, ears upright, and the whiskers taut; the way someone would look at a cherry stone that he managed to bite on hard while eating a soft and sweet plum cake. It then opened its mouth and gave a deep-throated hiss, its green eyes with long vertical irises radiating irritation. Nevertheless, black, hairy, and rotund, it looked cute.

Harvey turned to his to-be landlady and asked the first question that sprang into his mind "Are there mice here?"

"Ah no, my dear! Isn't this a luxury apartment? They do all plumbing, wiring and ventilation with special attention to prevent pests." She said, waving away his ridiculous idea the same way she would have waved off a fly buzzing near her face. It was grey.

"Then what in the blue skies is this cat doing here?"

"Oh, he has been around since the construction got over. No one knows where he comes from, nor how. He always finds a way inside. He ends up in the living room in a few hours,

even if you throw him out and lock the door.

"But look at him; he doesn't harm even a fly. Never catches mice and leave them on your sofa. Never tries to steal food. Just feed him once a day with a little milk, and he won't trouble you. In fact, even if you don't, he manages to fill his tummy from somewhere else. Consider it an offer - a cute black cat, free with a fully furnished apartment." She laughed at her joke, her voice echoing in the room like the bottom of a copper vessel clanging as it hit the floor.

"And you know what," She whispered, bringing her face so close to his face that he coiled back to avoid smelling her breath. "Cats are always more attached to the house they live in than their owners. So the day you move out - I hope it doesn't happen too soon - I am pretty sure you will miss him so much. It would be like leaving a piece of you here."

He wasn't pleased with the cat, but the apartment was in mint condition, and the lady let it out at an excellent deal.

First, he had to get the contract signed. Chasing off cats can wait.

The air freshener was the last piece to get on the wall. It replaced the dusty smell and made him feel at home. He picked up a glass of juice from the refrigerator and dropped down on the recliner, satisfied. While moving in, he had also managed to pick up the cat and release it in the car parking, so his mental checklist had only ticks now. A yawn knocked at the roof of his mouth, and he released it, closing his eyes.

The doorbell sounded as loud as a gunshot. Harvey sluggishly got up and opened the door - the newspaper was on the floor, and so was the packet of milk with a note.

"Welcome to Pioneer Heights; today's milk and newspaper are on us. Please call us at the number below and let us know your preferences for newspaper and milk, and enjoy it at your doorstep every morning. - D&R agencies"

He was pleased as punch; another two items were taken care of without moving a finger. Now all that remained were the phone, internet, and cooking gas connections. Now he wouldn't be surprised if they would soon come knocking at his door too.

The newspaper they had left wasn't the one he was used to, but this would have to do for the day. He sat down at the dining table, spreading the newspaper, when he noticed a fur ball right next to the vase on the table.

Harvey swore. It sat on the table, the same way he had seen it the day before, and on the same spot, head tilted to one side and looking mildly annoyed.

"Meow!"

"No, I am not having you in my house...." He muttered, picking it up and shoving it out. He then closely examined every window in the apartment. All of them were closed and locked, and there was absolutely no way it could have come inside through one of them. The only logical explanation that came to his mind was that it would have slipped past him through the door while he was picking up the newspaper and the milk.

Then it struck him that even though the milk packet was on the floor, the cat had not even tried to get at it, just as the lady had said. It probably had stuffed itself with mice during the night, he suspected.

The following day he checked the dining table even before answering the doorbell of the milkman. The cat was back at the same spot.

Once again, he picked it up and dropped it downstairs. Back in the apartment, he locked the door and started hunting all over the place for any other entrance through which it could have gained access. A while later, his eyes fell on a new suspect- the gap between the blades of the exhaust fan in the kitchen.



Illustration by Aadya R

That evening he returned after a visit to the market, having got a steel mesh basket of the same size as the exhaust fan. He came home, lifted the cat off the table, dumped him outdoors, and started fastening the basket to the back of the exhaust fan's frame with metal wires. Satisfied, he spent the day watching T.V and slept tight by nine.

It was on the dining table the following day too.

His confused state merged with wrath that had been suppressed for as long

as the cat took to find ways to enter the home gave away. He clutched his hand around its frail neck and pushed him inside the back of his car. He floored the accelerator. He was at least twenty kilometres away from home by now. He stopped the car near a dumping yard outside the city. "It would have enough trash, mice, and other rodents to feel at home here." he thought. Crinkling his face at the stench, he opened the boot of his car and got the basket out.

Curled up inside, it raised its head, looked at him, and let out a half yawn-half snarl.

"Now, don't come back. Stay here and enjoy your life," he muttered, emptying the basket over the wall. He stepped on a stone and gave it a wink. It just stood on top of a pile of garbage, staring back at him like Caesar would have stared at Brutus as he drew his last wheezing breath.

He got inside the car and started reversing when he suddenly heard a hiss and a squishing noise. He stopped the car and got down to look, worried about a puncture. Instead, he found a dark fur ball squished to a pulp under the back tire. It was simply incomprehensible how it could have managed to clamber up that tall wall and attempt what looked like hitching a ride back. It was a sharp cat; he had to give it to him, but finally, its sharpness drew it to meet its own end.

Anyways, good riddance, he thought. A little guilt lingered somewhere, but then, he didn't run it over on purpose, did he?

He returned, humming a tune as he drove to convince himself that the cat's death hadn't affected him.

He reclined on the couch, wondering what he should do for the day, when he heard a key turn on the door. The landlady entered with a young girl, chattering in her crackling voice - "Look here honey... You remind me of my granddaughter. I am giving you this fully furnished apartment at a meager rent. And I can throw in a car for rent as well, if you need ... "

"Is the witch out of her mind? How can she rent the house out when we have a contract? And is she talking about my car?" He wondered as he got up from the couch.

The pretty girl turned and looked at him like he was a novelty item.

"Oh, isn't he cute... Is he yours?"

"No, my dear. He just hangs around here. Just feed him once a day and he won't be of any trouble at all."

His angry scream came out only as a deep-throated purr.

Mani

Shreevidhya | K3

If Karthik's mother knew the roots of a jasmine sapling weren't the only thing the boys had just buried in the family garden, Mani wondered how her delicate features might have contorted instead.

Only able to make out his own name in the mother and son's rapid English argument, his eyes soon wandered over the clay roof tiles and to the opening of the peacock-blue sky in the ceiling behind their heads. As his folded hands trembled behind his back and a turmoil of emotions brewed in the pit of his stomach, he tried to comfort himself by recalling the way Chinnaiyya, no, Karthik was leaning on the back gate with his arms crossed earlier that morning, the smooth polyester of his shoes and the silver brand name on his neon shorts shining in the sun. He had been waiting there, just for him! Eyes glinting under parted fringes, Karthik had flashed a brilliant, movie star grin at him, "Mani! There you are! You're the only one I want to trust with my secret. Quick, grab that hoe! This will be the birth of our friendship!"

Realizing Karthik and his mother were silently staring at him, Mani flinched and curled his toes on the rough concrete floor. Trying to look them in the eyes through the purple

afterimage of the sky clouding his vision, he apologized profusely in Tamil, "I am extremely sorry, Akka! This will never happen again, I promise to you on Lord Muruga. I'm really, very sorry!"

The young woman's lace-bordered nightgown fell to her ankles with grace. A few strands of her hair were hanging undone from her bun and flying into her eyes, causing her to bat her long eyelashes so often that Mani wondered whether she may be crying or not. Wrapped tightly around a book titled 'Kalki's Classic Short Stories', her slender arms which didn't have a single hair growing on them shone with the translucence of a pearl. Was he certain she didn't just step out of a Santoor TV commercial? She glanced at him, causing his heart to skip a beat but her eyes almost immediately flitted away and she turned her head to the half-open door of her room, her gold jimikkis shaking vigorously. She murmured firmly, "Subramaniyan, you may return to your work." He clenched his jaw, Mani recognised her demeanour, "Alright, Akka. Thank you, Akka!"

Twisting his sweaty hands, he kept his eyes trained on the floor as he headed to the backyard, where he was originally supposed to be helping cut down a coconut tree.



Photos by Shreevidya



"Mani! Would you please wait for me out front?"

It was Karthik's voice. Mani scampered in the opposite direction, a blend of elusive scents momentarily teasing his senses when he passed them, "Of course, Anna [4]!"

Crouching beside the wooden doorway, he played with the frayed ends of his shorts. He studied a trail of red ants which stretched from a crack in the wall beside him to a scooter parked at the other end. Their antennae quivered before they touched, acknowledging each other's presence and moving on. Why couldn't humans be as simple as those ants? A new, gravelly voice joined the conversation inside and at last, they switched to Tamil. It was Karthik's grandmother, the lady of the house and she had as many kind words to share as she had wrinkles on her face, "I was the one who told Karthi he entered from the back gate. The old Mani is lost and a new Mani has been befriended. Let the boy play with him!"
A murmur.
A what?"

The younger woman's voice rang out in frustration, "Harijan [5]!"
There was a moment of silence before the conversation erupted with renewed vigour. Mani expected it but it still ate at his insides all the same. Like a bubbling pot of rasam, he felt his emotions rising up and pressing on his lungs, making it hard for him to breathe. For the first time in his life, he felt like he deserved the full implications of that word. What had

he just done!? At what cost? Did he even deserve to tend to the calves or play with his little brother with those hands anymore?

A shadow fell over him, "Let's go to our spot before my mother changes her mind. Come on!"
Scrambling up, Mani fell into step behind Karthik. The white, concrete alleys and walls rife with black mould were narrow and the occasional overhanging creepers hung low but everything seemed to close in on him more than usual on that short walk. He wondered if the residents peered at him through their windows, not daring to check himself. Karthik slowed his pace to walk beside him, laughing and kicking a stone out of the way, "Why did you apologize to her? My mother was angry at me for leaving the house without informing her and dirtying my good clothes. Why do I have to report to her every time? She's so goddamn controlling!"

He kicked another stone against the wall and into the gutter, "Did you hear the way she yelled at me? I'm sixteen!"

They stopped before an asbestos gate. Fitting a key in the lock, Karthik looked up at him as he turned it, "It must be fate that we are named after the same God. I can't believe I don't know this but Mani, how old are you?"

"I'm twelve, Anna."

A startled flock of mynas took off from the ground, chattering harshly in protest as the gate swung open.

Unlike the main house, only family members could visit that garden and Karthik's grandmother preferred to let its vegetation have the luxury of growing however it pleased. If it wasn't for the variety of flowers, anyone might have thought they stepped into a wild plot of land. Bolting the gate shut, they wandered behind a hibiscus shrub and past rows of marigolds until they stood before the freshly tilled earth of a jasmine plant. Karthik suddenly grabbed his hands and held them together, an intense fire burning in his eyes, "Mani, I am honoured you decided to be my true friend. No one, literally no one in this place has half the heart and strength that you have."

When Mani felt his face flush and averted his gaze, the other boy yanked his hands to make him look at him again, "If I had gone to my mother, father or grandmother, they would have made it into a big deal, might have even sent me to a mental facility god knows where and the whole village would have come to know! You saved me!" Releasing him, Karthik turned his back on him and nodded his head at the jasmines, "Really, what we both need is peace. Tch! You understand what I mean?"

Mani sank down onto a concrete slab. He didn't know what to say. He had great admiration for him but he wondered if any of it was now governed by fear. Looking at the boy's heaving shoulders, he certainly felt a chill run down his spine. He

nodded along every time their eyes met.

Suddenly, Karthik slammed his fist into the wall behind Mani, causing him to jump in his seat and nearly choke on his own spit. Karthik doubled over his hand, "That hurt like a...! Argh, Jesus! I'm sorry, do you see what I mean? They drive me insane!"

A rock sailed over Mani's head, "Damn it! I have to return home tomorrow to the piles and piles of work, deadlines, arguments! I didn't ask for this!"

Pinching the bridge of his nose and sighing deeply, he trudged over to Mani who was by now trembling like leaves in a rainstorm and he instinctively sprang up when Karthik towered over him. He half expected to be thrown over the wall like a limp scarecrow and eyed the bolted gate, wondering if he should make a run for it.

"Look, look, sit down. I'm sorry, I'll explain it to you better."

Karthik grabbed his thin wrist and dragged him down to the slab with him, not releasing his vice-like grip even as his cold ring dug into Mani's skin, "Everyone has a deep respect for my parents; they are extremely sincere in their work. I would too if I wasn't their son and knew the monsters they can turn into.

"When I was a child, I never doubted them. I always did everything they told me to. But of course, as I grew up, my ignorance slowly crumbled. It revealed the injustices but I was not

able to do anything about them because everyone loved them so damn much; even now!"

Karthik dropped his wrist once more but the boy couldn't run away even if he wanted to. His magnetic eyes brimming with tears froze Mani in his place, like a cobra before a snake-charmer, "For example, when I was less than your age, I once asked my father about something that I can't recall now and can you guess his response? 'Bash your skull against the wall!' I almost did it only to shut him up and make him realise the impact of his terrible words! But then I thought I might hit my head too hard and die trying to prove something to this worthless human being, so I didn't. Even now I debate whether I should have or not."

He paused and Mani hurried to fill the silence, "Y-yes, that is horrible, Anna."

Karthik shook his head, laughing through his tears, "You are so loyal, maybe even more so than the other Mani. That one never listened to me. Look, that incident was nothing. Not knowing what to do with my disgust, my-my anger, my rage, I have to take it out on the things around me. Now, if only this one..."

Looking over at the fresh earth around the jasmine sapling, his voice cracked, "If only this stupid one didn't break his chain and run out of the house while I had an argument with my mother this morning, then I wouldn't have wanted to... It's not my fault I was born into that family!"

Hearing those last, few words, Mani felt like they were not so different. He was not an idiot, he knew why someone used to the comforts of the city would approach a little village boy to dig a secret hole in the ground and yet he couldn't help but pity him. He placed his small hand on his shoulder, beaming up at him with the radiance of a thousand suns and once Karthik smiled back, not another word was needed.

As Karthik was whisked away back to his world with the unfamiliar and musky scents of car air fresheners and suitcases stored under beds for too long, Mani silently prayed for his new friend as he and the lady of the house waved his silver car goodbye. Karthik never returned to his hometown, never drove past the rolling hills, the women hunched over in the sun-tipped paddy fields or endless rows of coconut trees.

Whenever Mani felt overwhelmed, small or lost, he found himself visiting their spot and taking comfort in the only reminder of what once was. Karthik's grandmother said he was busy with his studies abroad but Mani was certain he knew the real reason why he could never bring himself back to his former friend. He didn't blame him, he never did. Their sweet and innocent scent overwhelmed his senses; the boys' jasmines bloomed abundantly like stars, drawing life from the rotting carcass underneath.

Closing his eyes, Mani bowed his head. In the end, all that remained was the beginning.

The Epiphany

Vibhu Dalal | K3

The two men stared in bewilderment at what stood in front of them. They had finished scraping the last layer of stone from it, and stood glaring at it in silence, waiting for a possible explanation to arise. But none came. All they could do was mumble a few remarks of confusion and then look at one another with an anxious look. A flat, shining and perfectly rectangular slab of metal seemed to have no reason to be encased in the earth's crust, several kilometres underground. And yet it was there; a giant, polished piece of metal, sitting lodged in the stone parallelly to the two men, reflecting the elevator's light back at them. One of them pressed a button, and the underground lift moved closer to the metallic surface, and then jammed to a halt. He extended his hand and felt the dark grey surface with his glove. First, he felt the flatness, then its heat, and then suddenly a faint vibration. He yanked his hand back with a quick reflex action. And then the doors parted.

The elevator had been finished installing the day before, reaching a depth of more than four kilometres, and the two geologists had been sent down promptly to justify the reason for drilling in the heart of the Great Victoria Desert. They were to examine the body of an unidentified

metal underground, and report back whether mining it should be the next move. But they found themselves improvising when the elevator's light revealed what lay behind the soundless, sliding doors. A square chamber the size of a master bedroom stood in front of them, whose inner faces were made of the same metal as the doors. The doors had slid the entire length of a side of the chamber, revealing it in its entirety. It appeared completely bare, except for a cuboidal podium that stood at the centre of the metallic floor. The light from the elevator's lamp shone on a black, rectangular slab that was placed above it.

In the silence of the borehole, a faint but quick throbbing echoed around the elevator. The men looked nervously at each other, and then slid open the meshed doors of the elevator facing the chamber. The floor was close enough for them to land on it with a small hop. Their headlamps revealed the dark grey inner walls, polished and perfectly shaped. The men felt their sweat dry as the temperature dropped several degrees. They walked to the podium at the centre, which rose till their waists, and stood facing their lamps towards it. The black rectangular slab was the size of a large tray and a centimetre thick. Two large white

rings were marked on its surface one beside the other, and an ergonomic thumb imprint was marked in the middle of the borders of two opposite edges. The plate seemed to be designed for humans.

When Mr Moore entered his office the next morning, the two geologists were already seated around the small conference table. Cooper, the senior geologist, had informed him the previous night that something unusual had happened, and that his immediate attention was needed. Mr Moore sat down opposite the two men, and looked at the briefcase kept in front of him. He didn't know what to expect; if their search had resulted in a failure, the men wouldn't have kept it from him this long. He examined their faces, which had hints of impatience and enthusiasm on them.

The assistant geologist, Michael, opened the briefcase and placed the black plate on the table. He recounted the previous day's events to his boss, who frequently asked him to repeat his sentences. By the end, a faint smirk developed on Mr Moore's lips, as he fidgeted in his chair.

"If this isn't a prank, which I don't think it is, I think we have discovered something more valuable than the most precious metal. I suppose you have kept this to yourself?"

"Yes sir. We wouldn't have known how to proceed after this discovery."

Mr Moore was beaming as he looked at the black plate. Plans of arranging

a press conference had begun stirring in his mind, and he imagined the buzz that would grip the public. He didn't know the origin of the object in front of him, but he was sure it would put the Gorgen Corp and himself in the news.

"Do we know the function or purpose of this yet?"

"No sir. We haven't examined it yet. We believed it would be best to bring you up to speed first."

"Let's get to it then, before we reveal it to the technical team. I want to know what we have here first."

The men began their inspection of the simple yet perplexing artefact. They soon realised that there was hardly anything to tinker with; it seemed to have no openings or buttons. It was simply a neat, minimalist, black rectangular tablet. It felt metallic but was much lighter than it looked. The edges and corners were blunt, and the mat black surface had a flawless finish. They attempted to poke the white rings, press the thumb imprints, swipe the surface, but the plate stayed inanimate. The men left it alone after a few minutes.

"So what are we thinking? Aliens? Time travellers? By your description, it seemed to have been placed there for us to discover it."

"Yes, it appears so. But we don't have any theories as of now."

The men were soon lost in their thoughts as they stared at the baffling discovery they had made. They revelled in the thought that they were the only ones who knew that a momentous revelation was imminent. Some shocking news was coming the public's way, and they would be its source. But above all, they contemplated what story the plate would tell.

It came to Cooper when he recalled his memory of touching the metallic door for the first time. He pulled the black plate towards him and placed his palms in the two rings, which fitted almost perfectly inside the peripheries. Ten seconds later, he suddenly cried out in astonishment. The plate had begun vibrating faintly under his palms.

The gentle vibration continued for a while, but Cooper kept his palms glued to the plate. Nervous anticipation built up in the room, as the three men stared at the plate, waiting for something to grow out of the vibration. After a minute, it stopped abruptly, and the two rings began to glow an ominous white. Cooper decided to keep his palms fixed in place, as he looked worriedly at the other two, guessing what had just happened. It was then that a voice spoke from the plate. But what startled the men more was that it was Cooper's voice.

"This is a thought translator. It examines the physiology of the beings connected to this platform, and extracts a method of communicating with them in their

own medium and tone. It attempts to translate and convey the thoughts stored in this platform in the most precise way. Remove your palms to pause the translation of the information, and keep them placed otherwise."

Cooper pulled his palms away and looked astonishingly at them. The voice stopped speaking, but the rings continued to glow. He was breathing heavily and took a moment to register the last thirty seconds. Michael gazed nervously at the plate, and Mr Moore laughed in astonishment. "This is it", Cooper said, as he placed his palms back inside the rings.

"We predict that if you have the knowledge and resources to locate this platform, then you do have the capacity to learn and use what we have left behind. The following is a brief chronicle of our history. We were this planet's first creatures equipped with abstract and creative thinking capabilities. We were among the first bipedal species with large brains that migrated out of the vast landmass where all species of our genus evolved. Our ancestors finally arrived at another large landmass further east, where this platform finds itself now. They underwent a monumental mutation soon upon arriving, which increased our brain tissue density immensely and changed us forever. Our physiology did adapt to the new changes, but we still broadly resembled the other species. This new development sparked meteoric societal and intellectual progress, while our

cousins still hadn't learnt to communicate effectively. Although we were using our ever-increasing knowledge of matter and the universe to build structures and test inventions, we never expanded our territory beyond our landmass, as it wasn't necessary. If other species ventured into our land, we would relocate them to other unpopulated landmasses through our discreet ways. This way, we always kept our distance from others, but continued to survey their progress nevertheless."

Cooper reeled his palms away, and the men exchanged glances as they came to terms with the unexpected revelation. The creators of the machine were neither aliens nor time travellers; they were a different human species from the past. The spirited anticipation in the atmosphere had morphed into a more serious thoughtfulness and attentiveness. Cooper looked at Mr Moore, who signalled to him to continue.

"Towards the end of our existence, we collected the information we had gathered about the universe which we assumed could be beneficial for future intelligent species, maybe for some of our own cousins, once they procure the means to understand and make use of it. Behind the podium on which this platform is placed are doors that lead to a vault. Another thought translator will guide you in browsing the libraries.

It was our responsibility to erase all our creations from this planet before

our end to eliminate any chances of them harming the environment in the long run, and so that other organisms can inhabit the land naturally. In our last days, we monitored our cousins extensively, to predict the future of the planet. One species stood out, as it had developed abilities to communicate effectively and in large numbers, and was beginning to migrate out of our large, birth landmass. They were smarter and fiercer than others since they could collaborate in large numbers. We predicted they would eventually colonise the entire planet, and would begin expanding their knowledge of the universe. Our best bet is that the procurer of this platform is that species..."

Cooper looked at the other two with a stunned expression, as he placed his palms on the table. The rings continued to glow. Michael sat staring at the plate with his palm covering his mouth, and Mr Moore sat hunched, staring with anticipation at Cooper. The same thought crossed the three minds. They were thrilled about what lay behind the vault doors, but a more grave question nagged them: what happened to them? There was something unnatural about the way the platform phrased their chronicle; it didn't overemphasise the places where it spoke about their end. A numbness to the finality of things was expressed through the voice; there was no touch of sadness or distress. Mr Moore guessed it was due to the inability of the thought translator to convey the temperament of the thoughts stored. He hoped the plate

would reveal what really happened, and offer insight into what humans could do in the face of similar doom. He nodded at Cooper to continue. Cooper licked his lips, took a deep breath, and pressed his palms inside the glowing rings. The plate would speak for a minute more, and then the rings would stop glowing.

"... and that they will use our knowledge for their welfare. We hope it helps you in realising your mightiest ambitions, and also in creating bigger ones. There are few greater feelings of satisfaction than knowing the tapestry of the universe. But there could be unforeseen consequences in doing so. Once having linked the dots in your knowledge about the universe, it's possible you have the same epiphany as we did. It might arise out of your collective knowledge of the universe. It could be a powerful revelation, which might push you to realise it. In that case, we hope you will have faith

in yourselves and the courage to follow it. Trust.

We compose and store this message while a quarter-day is left to us. Our last days were our happiest. They were the days following the day the epiphany was revealed to us. The day the realisation descended upon us about what lays afterlife. We finally knew what doors death opens us to, and we finally knew what we had to do. We will end our lives; we will embrace death. No life fails which ends, no fulfilment is greater than that of death. A far, far better existence awaits us, than we had ever known. This is indeed the last and supreme discovery to be made by a conscious and observant species. This is the gift of consciousness and the ability to think. And this is the destination to which it all eventually leads. After all, why do you think you find yourself so alone in this dark and desolate universe?"

Green Tunnel Lane

Maitreyee Pohekar | EAVP 5

"I still freeze when I look at these faded photographs from February." That walk down the silent chilly elm roads, it was you who made it so memorable. As we skipped, tripped and slow danced down the surreal Green Tunnel Lane we clicked this polaroid which still remains. Once again I visited the Green Tunnel Lane, except this time it wasn't as green under the stormy rain. I dilly-dallied my way down the lonely road, and I gently sat down recollecting those memories that we made. I placed the polaroid picture on the bench, and watched it soak through and through with each and every teary raindrop. But alas, I had to let go of this crystallised memory, I had to set this soul free.

A Confrontation

Aurosri Patra | K1

Peter, my neighbour's toddler, stumbled into my room like a drunkard. He stopped midway, turned around, faced me, and looked me dead in the eyes. Then, mustering courage he hurled the vilest insult from his vocabulary, a loud shush. Insulted, I dropped my pen and scowled at him, my left eye occasionally twitching. Unperturbed, he stared right back and smirked. This was the last straw.

Like a wrathful Poseidon rising from the depths of the ocean, I arose from my bed, with a single goal in mind, to teach this puny mortal a lesson. Meanwhile, Peter waited patiently and yawned. Infuriated with the disrespect, I marched and stood in front of him. I attempted to intimidate him with my sheer height, but this warrior whose head barely reached my knee stood his ground defiantly. Seeing his puny form, I was overcome with pity and gave him a chance to abandon the fight, but this challenger wasn't here to talk, or perhaps he couldn't. Thus, after the staredown, the battle began.

Gathering all of his strength, he pushed my legs. My knees wobbled and I stumbled back. I looked at him with disbelief. He grinned. I advanced again, this time ready to obliterate him but he pushed back. His force

sent me crashing onto the bed. Peter looked amused, and let out a small chuckle. He then walked towards me, one unsteady foot at a time. He was prepared to finish me once and for all. But I wasn't ready for defeat yet.

He struck again, but this time I resisted. He was bewildered by my reaction. He stopped and looked at his tiny hands, trying to fathom their betrayal. Sensing his confusion I pushed him back. He resisted but his strength faltered. I looked down at him with a smug smile. In response, he retreated and disappeared, with a grin still plastered onto his face. He looked like he had something up his sleeve. A move that he hadn't used yet, a trump card.

A few seconds later he reappeared, but this time he was seated in my father's arms. My challenger had got a backup, against whom I was powerless, and he knew it. He gestured for my father to hit me, and my dad complied. My father patted me on my shoulders with mock anger and I recoiled with pain. Meanwhile, a sadistic Peter sat on his throne and enjoyed the punishment. After the beating, my father asked Peter if His Highness was happy with his service. The toddler signalled, 'No' by vigorously shaking his head, and then

asked for more. Hence the mock thrashing continued.

Peter was enjoying himself to the fullest until my father placed him on the ground. He kicked and squirmed in protest, but in vain. He was a defenceless, dethroned king who was now facing a subject he previously tortured. Thus sensing terrible retribution he dashed for my father. I pursued, determined to avenge my humiliation. Alas! I was too late. Crafty Peter had taken refuge between my father's legs.



Causation

Ritam Mondal | K2

Shan was a clever, fun-loving, and helpful person who had people skills and loved his job. He was on his way home on a Friday evening after a rather long day at work. He did not like to leave his work incomplete and got a little late trying to finish it. Shan was an environmentalist and preferred to cycle to work and back, twice a day, seven days a week, even during rain. When he got home at nine that evening, he went straight to his bedroom, and immediately lay down on his bed. He sighed and settled on his soft mattress, retrospecting the incidents of his day.

Since his childhood, Shan used to be meticulous about his work. He would not complain about too much homework, nor would he do it shabbily. Soon, he began to grow a particular interest in biology, especially the human body. It fascinated him to understand the functionalities of the entire human organism and its relation to its environment. By eighteen, he was determined to study in a medical school and become a doctor, which led him to excel at his studies. By twenty-seven, he had passed his examinations and found a job in the finest hospital in the city.

That Friday morning, a woman had come to visit him due to injuries she had sustained in an accident. She did not seem to be in anguish, but she was upset that she could not get to the meeting she was supposed to attend. She kept talking about how important it was in her career and what a loss this accident had caused her. While she did that, she was also coughing a lot, but she did not even mention that. Shan listened to her curiously while prescribing three medicines for her. He patiently waited a moment to ask her about the coughing, but she did not seem to stop. Eventually, when he did get a chance to speak, he mentioned that she should go and get those wounds dressed up. She quickly thanked him, took the piece of paper with the names of the medicines, and left before Shan could say anything else.

The doctor then sat back and sighed in relief before turning his attention to the remaining patients. He spent the rest of his day in a monotonous manner until, later in the evening, that same woman appeared again. This time, she not only mentioned her coughing but could not stop talking about it. She told him every detail he needed to know, and Shan began

prescribing the necessary medicines. He then interrupted her and said he would like her to perform some tests because the symptoms she was describing were uncommon. Upon hearing this, she became speechless, then suddenly thanked him and hurriedly left before he could stop her.

Shan was confused and tired after the long day in the hospital. As he cycled home through the city of Wuhan that day, he thought, "Why can't she taste or smell anything? Meh, what is the worst that could happen"?



The Marauders

Surya Savitri Dessirier | EAVP 4

Dear readers,

The piece of writing below is the hopeful beginning of a set of seven books recounting the lives and experience of “The Marauders”.

For those of you who are not Harry Potter fans, the Marauders are four characters whom J.K. Rowling (the author of the ‘Harry Potter’ series) created as mentors for the main characters. I believe that their lives are stories worth telling. My aim is to write another series of books, which would be “prequels” to the Harry Potter series, in order to expand on the lives of the Marauders and hopefully give Harry Potter fans something else in that genre to read. Below are the first two chapters of Book 1, whose name has not yet been decided.

James

Enormous lightning bolts invaded the night sky, and the low but powerful rumble of thunder that occurred in spasms drowned all other sounds. The rain clattered on the roof, and the plinking resonated throughout the entire house. Water droplets seeped through the poorly sealed windows, and as more water came in, the floor began to dampen. The trees in the garden whistled as the wind blew across their many leaves, and the sparrows chirped faintly in their covered nests, as they sought shelter from the downpour.

James had taken over the couch, his knees on the cushions and his head glued to the glass window. The dim light of the moon along with the raindrops on the windows almost made him invisible while he quietly observed the rain. It was very unnatural for James to be quiet, but he had a very particular and determined reason for being solemn.

“Why isn’t it coming?” He thought, “It’s already July!”

Suddenly he felt a soft hand caress his shoulder.

“Not now Mom,” he mumbled, “I’m busy.”

“Busy doing what?” she retorted, “simply waiting for your letter is not going to help it arrive faster. Just relax. It will come soon. Now are you really going to spend another whole day with your face plastered onto a window?”

As a response he emitted a soft but irritated grunt which left his mother smiling as she made her way back to the kitchen.

James wasn’t convinced, but decided that she was right. Waiting wouldn’t make it come any faster. So, he climbed the three flights of steep stairs to his room, threw himself on his bed, and played with a yoyo. He was eleven years old, and the letter he was waiting for, was his ticket to the magical school his parents had gone to. Hogwarts: School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

He was worried he would not receive his letter, that he would have to face the insult of being a non magical person with magical parents. In other words, a Squib. But that would not happen. He was sure of it. Then why was he so tense?

His wandering thoughts were interrupted by a loud bang, that sounded very much like matter on glass. He heard his mother exclaim:

“Oh no! The poor thing! Fleamont! Help!”

Hearing this, he immediately got up and bolted down the stairs in fear for his mothers’ safety.

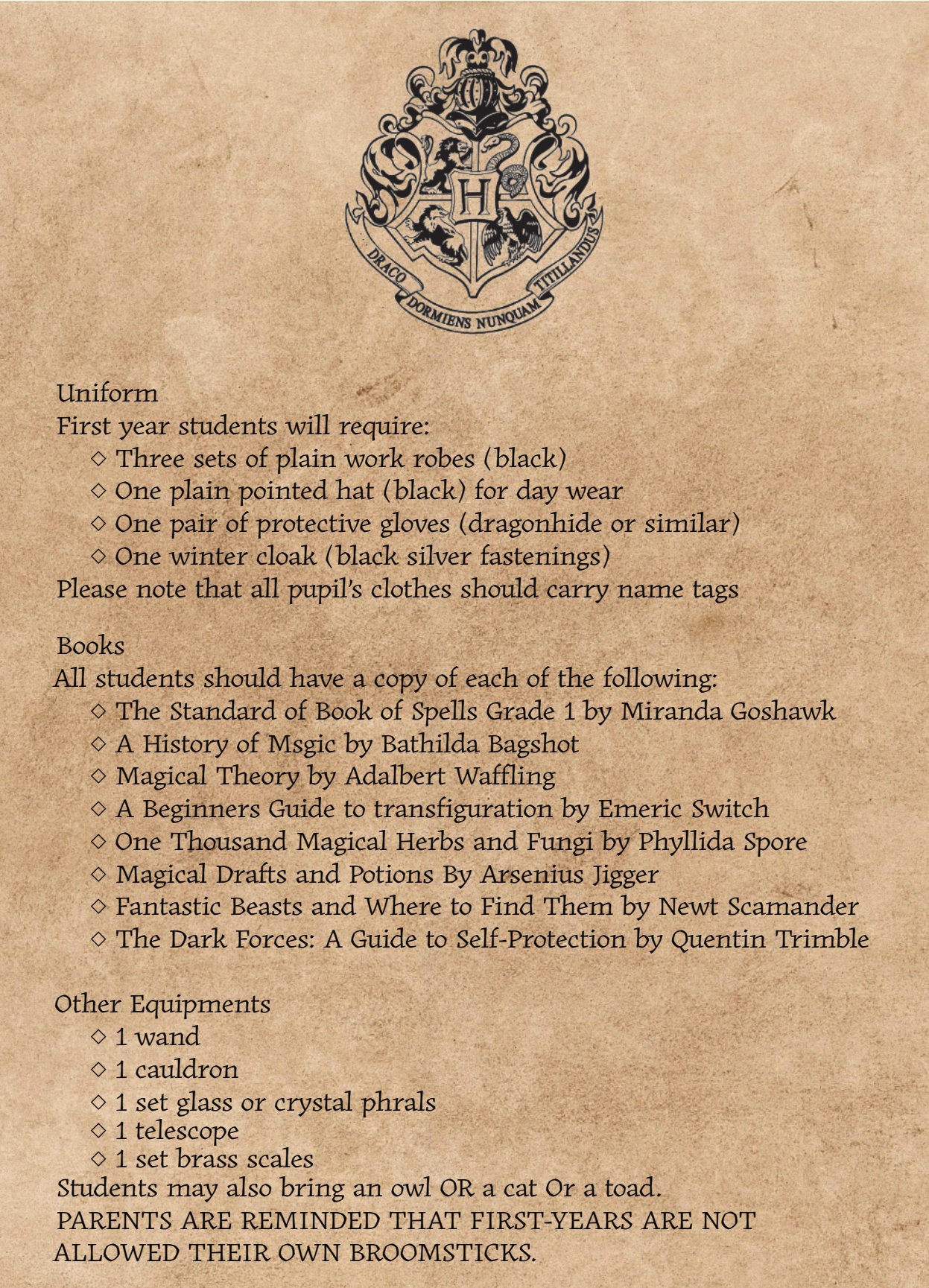
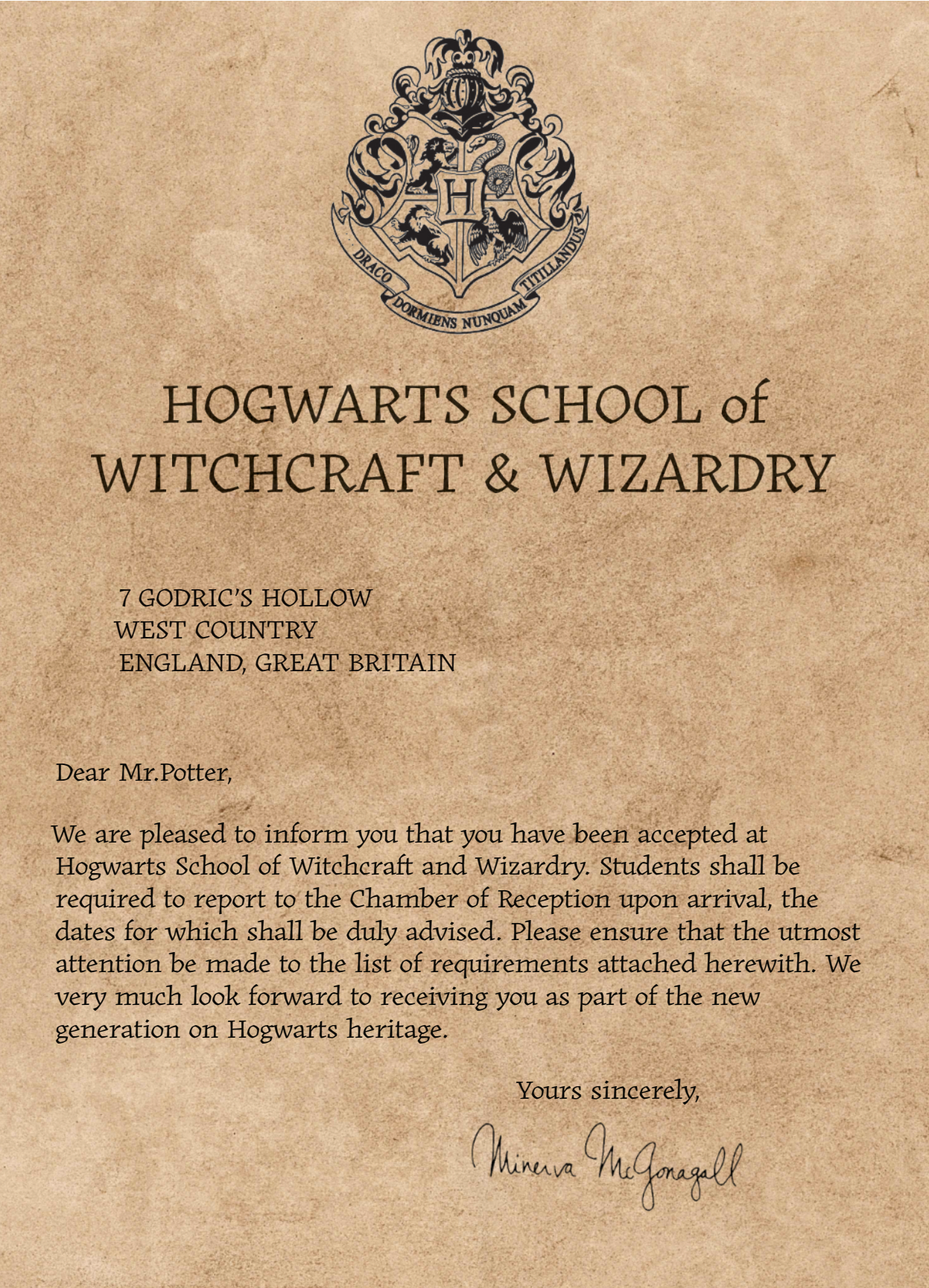
“James! Come!” shouted his father from the bottom of the stairs, “it’s an owl!”

An owl! This was it!

When he reached the foot of the stairs, he rushed to the kitchen. His parents stood there beaming. His mother had a brown letter in her hand.

“What a clumsy owl!” she said with a laugh.

He eyed it warily as though not believing it was real. He took the coffee brown letter from her with shaky hands. Upon it, was a red seal with the letter H beautifully engraved on it. He tore open the seal, and read the letter aloud:



It ended there, and James was speechless for a while.

"I'm off to school!" he murmured under his breath.

"That you are!" replied his father with a huge grin.

His parents hugged and kissed him until he had to drag himself away from their clasp. He immediately ran out of the house, in the pouring rain, went across the street, and knocked fervently on the door of his neighbour, Peter's house. When Peter opened the door, he was holding a letter as well, and it was the absolute twin of the one James had in his hand.

"You got it?" James asked with excitement.

"I got it!" replied Peter with just as much enthusiasm.

The friends hugged, and jumped around in the newly formed puddles like they had just gotten free ice cream for life.

"Let's go to Diagon alley together!" shouted Peter at the top of his lungs.

"I'll make sure we do, Pete" replied James, "no need to shout!"

The two friends entered Peter's house, arms locked, and full of frenzy for all the adventures that they would surely have.

Sirius

12 Grimmauld Place was huge. It had so many nooks and crannies and places to hide, but somehow Sirius always felt exposed. Maybe it was the pressure of being one of the "Blacks". It was such a powerful pure blood family, that everyone was expected to be great. Those who weren't, were disowned. His darling mother had a ginormous family tree painted in one of the many rooms of the mansion. This tree represented all the people from or related to the family. Whenever someone or the other acted in a way that in his mother's opinion, "stained the family name", she would blacken the spot on the family tree that had their name and image. That was it for them. No second chances, no forgiveness. Poof. Just like that they were no longer a Black.

Sirius was exceedingly cautious with his actions, since he did not want to disappoint, but he just felt so empty. His whole life felt like a void, a life that lacked happiness, one that was deprived of love. He was never allowed to do anything that his parents did not approve of. That was pretty much everything. His mother would make him sit down twice a day for two hours, and she would teach him about the dreaded muggle borns and how he should hate them. He was a great prankster, but over and over his mother would tell him: "Sirius! Pranking will not help you bring pride to the name of Black! Only when you do something great, will you be recognised!"

He could hear her incredibly shrill voice in his head, repeating her signature phrase over and over. Currently his



Illustration by Sayuri M

mother was in the parlour with some guests and the only reason she was not urging him to descend the velvet covered stairs from his room and join her, was because she thought he was revising his muggle history.

"It is very important to know where your enemy comes from," she would say repeatedly, "that way you may use their past mistakes and flaws against them!"

"Ugh, someone rescue me!" he said aloud.

Suddenly he heard a soft thud. He looked around to find its source, and concluded that it had come from his closet. He got up and noiselessly walked on the tips of his toes, and when he reached the cupboard, he threw open the door with a: 'hah!'

Standing there, at a height of two feet, was his house elf. The creature grinned sheepishly and said:

"So, I hear Master Sirius would like to be saved? From whom I wonder? Surely not from his dear mother who loves him so. Kreacher is very surprised. Mistress would not be pleased at all if she heard this. No no no no no..."

In a flash, Sirius had him pinned to the wall by his throat.

"What do you want, Kreacher?" He said ferociously, "I hope you realise that I can tell my mother anything, and she will believe me. So, I truly hope it wasn't you who burned those important letters she was trying so hard to find."

Sirius said this with a sarcastic pouty face which transformed into an evil sneer. Kreacher let out a hiss. He pushed his way out of the cupboard, and walked briskly towards the door. He gave Sirius one last glare, and left the room. About a minute later, he understood that his mother was calling him, from the very faint, but distinguishable shrieks coming from downstairs.

"Siriuuuuus! Time for your lessons!"

Her guests must have left her. With a sigh, Sirius lay on his bed. He looked up to the ceiling and prayed silently for a means of escape. Approximately three hours later, Sirius heard a tap at the kitchen window. His mother was rattling on about mudbloods, and squibs, but she heard it too and stopped mid-sentence. Her little eyes squinted as she rambled to the window and lifted it. A brown owl was silently perched on the sill. In its beak it held a medium sized letter, with a red seal. His mother grabbed the letter and shooed the bird away. It left reluctantly without receiving a treat. Now she approached her son with weary eyes.

"Sirius," she started, "you will, I see, be going to school. I doubted very much that your letter would come, but it seems like you are destined for some form of greatness. Hogwarts is a.. decent.. school for magicians. But I am sure they will take care of you in Slytherin." she grimaced and her usual haughtiness seemed to mellow down. A bit. Sirius was flabbergasted. He just nodded absentmindedly and took the letter from his mother. After reading it he put it down and looked out into the distance trying to process what he had just read.

"Blimey."

This was his escape. Of course he would have to come back during the holidays, but being away for most of the year was good enough. He placed the envelope on the table and left the room with wobbly feet. He couldn't believe this was happening. A few moments later his younger brother came through the corridor. When he noticed Sirius, he looked at him with curious eyes.

"What are you standing like that for?"

"It is too far beyond the grasp of your limited knowledge" he said with a faked haughty look. "After all you've only just turned 10! Silly Regulus."

Regulus' intrigued face turned into a scowl, and he marched off angrily. Sirius sniggered. He loved tormenting his brother. They had never really gotten along, but he was the only person in the house that Sirius didn't mind having around. Mother had always favoured Regulus. But Sirius had not been jealous like any other brother would have been. In fact it had made him like his brother more. The less attention Sirius brought to himself, the better. As he walked around the house aimlessly, his attention was drawn to the familiar shiny sign covered in glass with a gilded border.

'Toujours Pur'
It was French for: always pure. This was a very clear reminder to everyone in the house that the Blacks did not tolerate anything to do with Muggleborns. At 5 PM, Sirius's father came back home. He entered with his usual serene disposition, but he greeted his children and his wife with kindness. They sat on

the sofa for the usual half an hour discussion about their day's work.

"How is my dearest Walby today?" he asked his wife affectionately.

Walby was Orion's nickname for Sirius's mother whose full first name was Walburga. She pretended she did not like his affectionate name for her but Sirius had a feeling that she waited impatiently for this time of the day just so she could hear it. She smiled in response to this and acknowledged her wellbeing. Next the great Orion Black turned to his sons.

"Sirius, Regulus. What new things happened for you today?"

"I got my letter for Hogwarts this morning. Mother reckons they will take care of me," said Sirius softly.

Regulus's mouth dropped open.

"My..." he replied, "I am so proud Sirius. You will make an excellent Slytherin I am sure."

"That's what I said," piped in his mother

Sirius was very eager to contradict that statement and remind his mother that she had thought his letter would never come. But he held himself back. Nothing good would come out of criticising Walburga. The discussion went on and as his father talked about his day, Sirius started imagining all the possible things that would happen during the school year. The good for sure, but also, the bad.

Love and Fear

Tapomagna Behera | K1

Love and fear - sometimes they both feel the same. Fifteen years have gone by, yet his feelings and words remain suppressed within.

He is afraid she might recognise him. He pulls his cap down so she doesn't notice him catching glimpses of her. Her long hair is dancing with the breeze. Her dainty fingers are holding a paperback, like in school. Her passion for reading hasn't changed. Occasionally, she looks up from her book and out the window to watch the blurred buildings rush by. At every bump and turn of the bus, he is careful not to accidentally touch her.

But the love, too, persists. Some part of him is dying for a brush of the elbows or a bump of the knees. He craves any weird accident that might be a conversation starter.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," he would say.

"No problem," she would reply.

"May I know what book you are reading?"

"It's called The Pool by Jim Cusk. I love the writing."

"That's wonderful. Jim Cusk seems to be getting quite popular these days..."

The conversation would continue without veering from the topic of young authors and books, possibly without any hint of awkwardness or discomfort. But at some point, she would say, "My stop has come. I have to go. It was lovely talking to you." He would just smile and nod, not once mentioning to her that they had both attended the same school, that he had met his first crush after fifteen years, or that it was Jim Cusk whom she was sitting beside on that bus ride.

Even though love and fear felt the same, his words and feelings would remain hidden, because his fear would win.

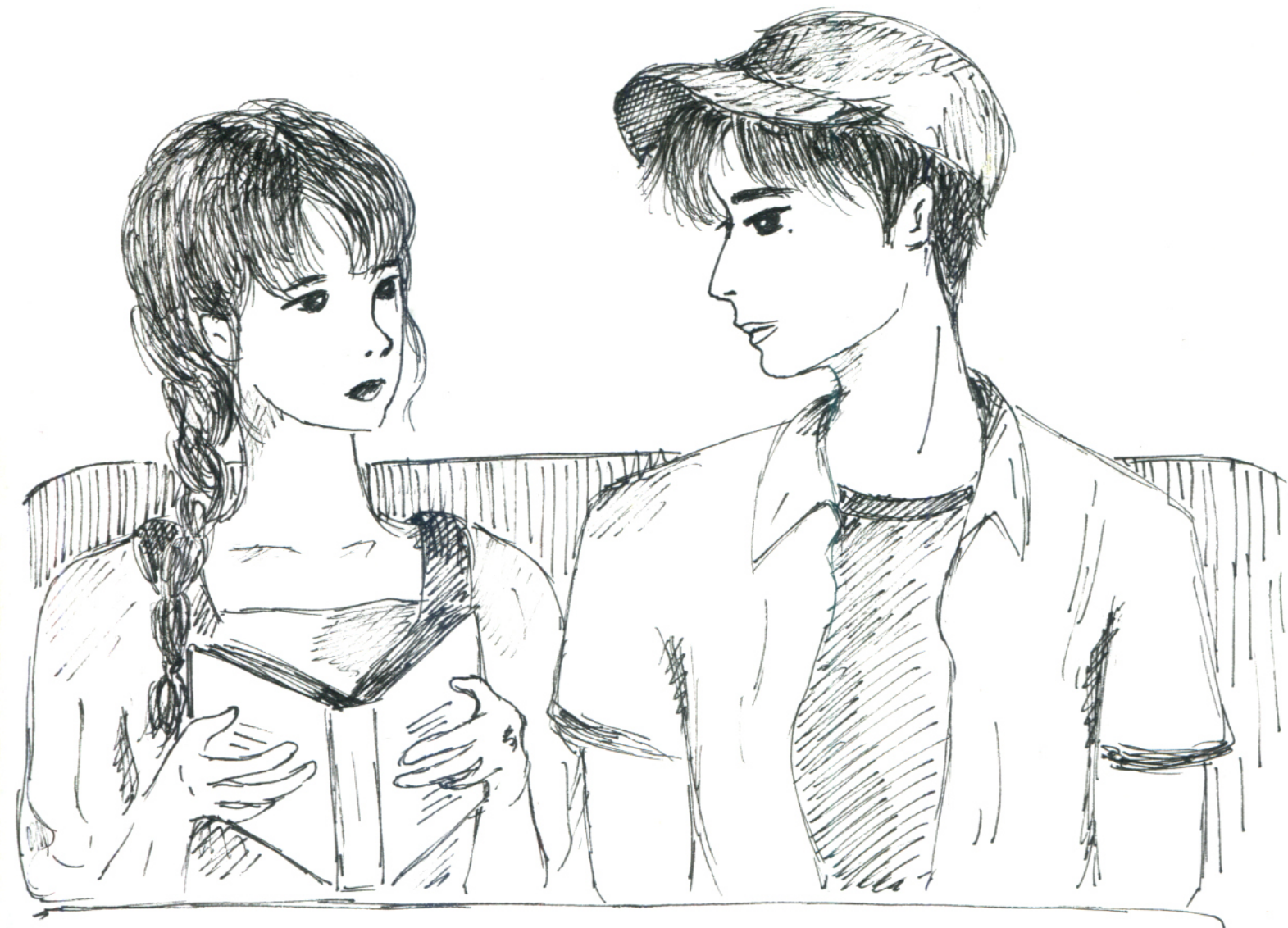


Illustration by Prachi P

The Power Of Imagination

Tejaswini Pachegaonkar | EAVP 5



Origami by Tejaswini P

My Neighbor Totoro is an animated film directed by Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli. The film is about two sisters who relocate to Japan's countryside with their father. One of the most fascinating features of this film is its themes and symbolism.

Totoro appears as a conceptual character in the film. He is a huge, fluffy creature with grey fur, sharp ears, and a broad grin. He is the forest spirit and the guardian of nature. Mei, the younger sister, depicts innocence, curiosity, and childlike delight. Satsuki, the older sister, depicts perseverance and courage. To protect her loved ones, she fearlessly overcomes obstacles. And who would find the concept of a Catbus not interesting? The idea of the Catbus is fantastic. It depicts a connection between the fantasy world and reality.

The film emphasises on how important it is to preserve our sense of wonder and imagination. Without that the world would be boring, and we would not find delight in the most ordinary things. It also indicates the relevance of familial relationships in a society. I don't know if this is normal in Japanese culture, but the movie

depicts very well that one family's child is the whole village's child. The scenery of the countryside in the film is breathtaking, and allows us to admire the beauty and magic of nature.

There are many lessons that we can learn from this movie. The first and foremost, is to respect, preserve, and protect the environment. To see the beauty of nature we need to be receptive and believe in nature's power. It suggests that we should keep our sense of wonder and imagination like children. By doing so we would find joy in the simplest of things. Also, we must recognize the value of love and support within families and communities. It is their love which gives us strength in difficult times.

My Neighbor Totoro is a lovely film. It is an entertaining movie that can appeal to both children and adults. Even though it was released in 1988, it is still relevant and adored because it has important truths of nature revealed in it. Everyone should remember these truths and never disregard them.

My Journey With Origami

Tejaswini Pachegaonkar | EAVP 5



Origami by Tejaswini P

Origami is an art form that has always fascinated me, and my journey with it began in Kindergarten. I was introduced to it through paper planes and paper boats, which added a fun and exciting activity to our recess time. As I experimented with making paper planes and jets, I became increasingly interested in origami and its creative possibilities. What I found most fascinating about origami is how a simple piece of paper can be transformed into something beautiful and complex, without using scissors or glue. I began making simple origami animals like cats and dogs, and gradually progressed to more complex figures such as birds and boxes. Despite making progress in my origami skills, I always had a sense that there was still so much more to learn. In practising origami, I've learned the value of patience and the importance of striving for perfection. Each fold requires precision, attention to detail, and careful consideration of every step in the process. The focus and discipline required in making origami figures have taught me the importance of following each step with precision to achieve goals in life. I often find myself drawn to art forms that require precision, whether in origami or other creative pursuits. The lessons learned

from practising origami have significantly impacted my approach to other aspects of life. For example, I have learned that being patient and diligent in my work builds not only a better result but a more satisfying and self-rewarding process. Overall, my experiences with origami have taught me the importance of being patient, diligent, and willing to work hard to achieve my goals. I may have started with paper planes and simple animals, but with continued practice, I hope to evolve my skills and learn even more about this fascinating art form.

Starry Night

Maitreyee Pohekar | EAVP 5

I was first introduced to embroidery in P2 or P3. At that point, it was just a way to pass time and I didn't enjoy embroidery either. It was during the lockdown that my interest in embroidery got aroused. 'The Starry Night' was something I'd always wanted to try out, as I wanted to create something striking and unusual.

I started embroidering 'The Starry Night' last year (E4) for the first project week and worked on it occasionally for over a year. Quite often, I would not like the way a colour would look, forcing me to undo all the stitches and work on it again, which was irritating. Another issue was bending the needle while stitching and eventually getting poked on my fingers. Other than that, I faced no other challenges and am extremely satisfied with the way my embroidery turned out!



Embroidery by Maitreyee P



Illustration by Titirat M

Digital Art

Titirat Mongkonasawalert | EAVP 5

Why did I start digital art?

Ever since I was small, I've always fancied drawing and colouring. They were my favourite time pass. I even took a few drawing lessons on weekends when I was small. As I grew up, my love for that hobby did not fade away. I still draw whenever I am free and feel inspired in a way. When I came across digital art for the first time on YouTube, I was extremely fascinated by it. One of the main reasons was that the apps provided us with many features, such as; brushes, textures, tools and colours. It made my creativity limitless. I would definitely recommend digital art for the people who share a liking for drawing, and I promise you, you won't be disappointed.



AMBI

Auro Krishna Silveri | K3

The name is Ambi. Ambika Prasad Mallik. It is hard not to picture that smiling man, short of stature, the oft worn baniyan, the blue shorts, perhaps a rescued bird perched upon his shoulders. Athlete, innovator, dive master, Ambi has a passion for creating and learning. As if a character come alive, Ambi's life and his goals are wrapped in a scent of fiction. Here is a man who dreams of 'landing up on an island and surviving', a man who discovers bliss in the middle of the decathlon, a man who finds meditative states deep within the ocean. Ambi has a simple philosophy. Don't be a cabbage with a feeding tube in your mouth. Live. Learn. Explore.

Ambi was born in Pondicherry. In his youthful days in the ashram, he would awake at 5, scurry off to the tennis ground to massage himself with oil and then bathe in the ocean. His days, despite being rigorous, disciplined and repetitive, were filled with discovery. In this interview, we read about three of the many interesting aspects of Ambi's life. Due to our unfortunate word limit, many of the fascinating things he mentioned have had to be omitted from this issue. However, all those who are fascinated by making projects, by scuba diving, or by the proficiency test, can try and find Ambi, perhaps in the Atelier, perhaps in

the Andamans, perhaps on his scooter, perhaps in the band, or perhaps deep in the ocean. Without further an introduction, we present to you, Ambi!

I have done too many projects to count or remember. Eventually I even stopped writing or documenting my work because I felt it was taking away the time I could spend working on other projects. Initially I would even try to publish my research and work, but finally I decided to let that go. I thought to myself that those who want to know will know, and those who want to understand it will come and ask me. From my side, I didn't want to go telling people what I was up to. I keep doing my thing and those who want to come and see or be involved are welcome. I'm very happy to help if somebody wants to do a project. I have so many projects, more than 300, just lying and waiting to be completed. Whenever I get some time, I try to do a little bit and then leave it for when I have more free time later.

One of the more complicated projects that I worked on was a dive compressor. Dive compressors compress air into a cylinder which we can then take for scuba diving. The one I made, I had decided I wanted it to be completely automatic and self-diagnostic. I made

sensors which I connected onto the compressor. Using an Arduino, I wrote the software which would check temperatures at different points, check pressures, and switch off the compressor if anything goes wrong. The Arduino even had a digital display and it would give you the temperatures of each of the piston cylinders. You could just switch on your compressor and if there was a problem it would be displayed on the screen and the machine would shut down. That was one of the more complex projects that I made.

I am currently working on other things too. Another project I worked on is an underwater scooter. It's a tube with a motor, a propeller and batteries inside. You can hold the thing like a torpedo, and you can move around in the water without having to make an effort to swim. Recently I even made aeroplanes and flew one around Vanur. A while back I had made a drone but the controller was not great. So I got a DJI Tello drone which is known to be stable, and I removed all the motors from it. I made a much bigger drone using its sensor controller and so, keeping the stability of the DJI, I'm trying to use the standard local motors which can pick up even a DSLR.

I think it is my own creativity that inspires me to create. If that creativity in a person is not kept alive, it can stagnate and take you down with it. I believe there is no "marquer-le-pas", one can't just hang in a spot. You either progress, go up higher, or fall. Anything that I see, I'm essentially looking at what can be made out of it, or how it can be used. Unfortunately, now that we are clearing up the atelier, there are hundreds of

things that I'm having to throw away. It keeps bothering me because I see that all of those things can be used, but I know that I might not have the time to use them. It is a consolation however, to think that I'm giving these things away to others who can probably use them. I believe that if more people begin to see different ways of using things instead of rejecting them, wastage in the whole world might reduce. A lot of people say 'manage waste'. I say 'don't even create waste'.

When I heard about the proficiency test, my first impression was: 'What are these big numbers! What is the point of having big numbers?' My belief at that point was to make my body as capable as possible to do anything. Doing 30 chin ups didn't make anyone a better person. The numbers did not enchant me. It was the capacity, the skill that one has in all one's movements, the beauty of the movement, the efficiency in movement that mattered. That is what I considered to be progress in the physical; not the number of repetitions that you can do. Later, when I talked about it to a few people, I told myself, 'If it isn't such a big thing, then I might as well just do it.'

A week later, when I thought I was ready, Dada refused to let me do it. He wasn't sure if could do it and asked me to work on it a little more. That put me down. I wasn't upset with him but I told myself to forget it. For about two years after that, I didn't do anything about it. Finally, a few friends convinced me to do it just for the heck of it, and on the 25th of April, I remember it being the day after Darshan, I tried the proficiency test for

the first time. This time Dada had faith in me.

At the time, I was also busy with other work in the Ashram, and all the video and music editing had probably tired out my forearm. So even though I got through the burpees and the risings, my hands slipped from the bar during my second set of chin-ups. Praveen bhai, who was overseeing me, told me I must come back later when I prepared myself. When he left, I completed the test for myself and everything went smoothly.

A month or two later, I began focusing on how to relax the forearm while doing the exercises. I would practise risings, with both my hands on the bar, but neither would be holding it. I tried reducing my computer work, switching between the left and right hands while working. Soon, I told Praveen bhai I was ready to do it again. This time, I did it without any problems.

I believe that one must develop the body to a certain level where it has the strength, coordination and capacity to tune itself to perform any task just with a few days training. When I was in D group, the maximum number of risings I had ever done was 15,. But when I prepared for the proficiency test, within a week I had re-tuned my body and it could then do 75 risings in one go.

Scuba diving has taught me a lot. Like I mentioned earlier, through scuba diving I have seen again how the physical body is capable of readjusting to different situations. I want to be a plastic person, plastic in the sense that I want my body

to be capable of doing what is required of it.

My interest in scuba diving began when I was in Delafon. My brother worked in the aquarium and I would play in the school waiting for him. Eventually I started helping out in the aquarium too. At first I was fetching the guppies from the pond, feeding the lionfish, and before I knew it, Shilpin began taking us sea swimming, surfing, snorkelling and all kinds of other activities. Sea swimming beside Shilpin gave us the confidence that no matter where we were thrown into the ocean, we could survive without any kind of gear, snorkel, mask or tank. He would also make us do a lot of difficult exercises that I now teach others who want to learn Scuba diving. Thanks to those exercises, I am extremely comfortable when I go diving.

Eventually, I did get into proper scuba diving. I went to the Andamans, did my basic courses there, even worked for 7 to 8 months there. I became a dive instructor too, mainly so that I can certify others from the Ashram.

What I find most profitable in diving is something I only tell people who I feel might understand. Deep underwater, it has been scientifically noted that the heartbeat slows down. I once checked my pulse underwater and it was 51 whereas my normal is around 73. The body is completely relaxed and free of stress. It feels like a meditative state. That experience, I feel, is the highlight of scuba diving. By teaching the body to take fewer breaths, to calm down, to enjoy that meditative state, one is also making the body capable of adapting to different situations.

Fitness in the Ashram back in the day

An Interview with Vimaura Di

Anaaya Gupta & Sahana Sarkar | EAVP 3

Do you ever wonder what group was like 40 years ago and how much it has changed since then? Wonder no more! We, being very curious to know, wanted to reach out and ask one of our coaches what it was like, and who better to ask our questions to than Vimaura Di?

Her answers to our questions reveal a slice of her life.

1. How did you manage to push yourself at times you wanted to give up?

A strong sense of discipline and duty inculcated by captains and teachers.

2. How did you become better everyday?

Effort and will to learn and apply.

3. What are some aspects, group-wise, that were different from what they are now?

Discipline, strict rules, consequences for misbehaviour and indiscipline.

4. When and how did you realise the importance of exercise?

Till group C I did exercise as part of group discipline (seriously never any

bunking). With independence to do our own exercise and maturity realised that good, correct exercise will affect / improve performance.

5. Has the level of our generation's capacities gone down? If so, why?

Yes. Lack of motivation, lack of goals, lack of good lifestyle, lack of belief in system

6. Did fitness come naturally to you or did you have to work hard to reach your goals?

Some amount natural, some amount hard work

7. How did exercise and fitness help your mental health?

With good fitness confidence in the body grows and the possibility of applying will to the body increases. And that way mental health and power also grow.

8. How does exercise help the other activities in Group?

Seniors and comrades. Observing their focus, will power.

9. What made you continue doing exercise to this day?

The benefits it brings health, fitness, a sense of well-being, confidence in oneself

10. What is your definition of yoga?

Work on oneself. (at every level- mental, vital and physical.

11. How did your attitude towards exercise affect your results? Did it help in your improvement?

Once you start enjoying exercise you see a difference in the body and vice versa. And then results or performance is a logical consequence.

12. Where did you get your inspiration from? Was there a source driving you to do the challenging things you did?

When I was your age, I had the usual desire to do well and come first in group championship. Later, a message of the Mother's changed my whole attitude and since then have always tried to implement that.

On Education, vol.12 p.275 Athletics competition 1962

13. Do you still have goals you want to achieve?

There should always be. Yes I do. Physically one can't keep getting better or stronger. But one can get more conscious, more receptive.

14. Was there a big difference/ separation between boys and girls at the time?

The difference will always be there. It's biological, but there was a large number of girls in the 1st group with the boys than now (obviously only in games, swimming.)

As we see from Vimaura Di's answers, the standard, higher than it is now, was maintained almost effortlessly. Though the capacities are still the same, the attitude of the students at the time was much better, from their concentration and performance to their enjoyment and sincerity. Most of us, even with constant encouragement from captains and coaches, will need a hard push to exercise well and do the best we can.

Hearing Vimaura Di, a teacher and a coach who has been in the Ashram for the major part of her life is an inspiration to all children, especially girls of our age.

The potential is still there in us, but our motivation, spirit and attitude towards sports has diminished over the years. Personally we feel that Vimaura Di, describing her experiences as a student, motivates us to assimilate the qualities that students have had in the past.

We hope this motivates and encourages you as well, to do your best and improve in the field of physical education.

Saurashtra

Ramyak Samantaray | K3

A photographer's love is to take photos. Unfortunately, even that love has its trials.

I have been pursuing photography since E4. Apart from learning theories, I have been going around Pondicherry and taking photos. The education system that I have been through believes in the concept of "near to far". Whichever topic you pick, first try to discover what is available in the immediate vicinity. Therefore, the street of Pondicherry was my point de depart for photography. With the initial vigour and the thirst to take photos, I went around and around capturing moments here and there until finally, I hit a wall of disinterest, boredom and lack of creativity. I was bored taking photos of the same streets, places and subjects. A voice inside constantly tingled me to go to fresh places to create new compositions. By then, I had developed an understanding that a new place might give me the opportunity to create better photographs.

Fortunately, the above theory was put to test in 2021 when I got the opportunity to spend my vacation in Gujarat. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we, a family of three, a son, a daughter, and a mother,

embarked on a memorable two-week journey through the state of Gujarat in 2021. Our adventure took us to several cities, including Ahmedabad, Jamnagar, Dwarka, Somnath, and Junagadh, all nestled within the Saurashtra region, surrounded by the Arabian Sea on three sides. After the vacations, when I revisited my album, I saw that I had about 1200 photographs and out of that, there were only 20-30 presentable photographs. Yes, while many of the photographs successfully conveyed a strong sense of place and culture, they didn't rank among the best in terms of composition and technical perfection. Therefore, let me clarify and dispel my initial theory of equating better places to better quality photographs is not the whole truth. It is a rather naive way of looking at things.

Hence, acquiring a better camera or exploring new locations won't necessarily yield superior outcomes; it's the mastery of skills honed over time and consistent practice that will ultimately, I hope, result in improved quality.

Photos by Ramyak S







Through the Lens

Markendeya Achille Morsiani | K3

I've chosen this medium because it allows me to capture moments, emotions, and stories in a unique and visually compelling way. Photography enables me to freeze fleeting moments in time, preserving them for generations to come. The interplay of light, composition, and subject matter fascinates me, offering endless creative opportunities.

I dedicate a significant amount of time to honing my craft. Beyond the time spent on actual shoots, I invest hours in post-processing, refining techniques, and staying updated with the latest advancements in photography.



Photos by Markendeya A





Challenges are an integral part of the process. Lighting conditions can be unpredictable, requiring adaptability and quick thinking. Composition and conveying the desired emotion or message can be complex. Technical issues and equipment limitations also arise, demanding problem-solving skills. Balancing creativity with commercial viability is another ongoing challenge.

Despite the hurdles, the joy of capturing that perfect shot and evoking emotions through images makes every challenge in the photography process worthwhile.

As a photography student, my journey into this captivating art form began unexpectedly during a family vacation to the ruins of Nalanda University in 2016. A mere 13 years old at the time, my parents had graciously gifted me a new smartphone with an 8MP camera, which became my initial canvas for exploration. Little did I know that this modest device would ignite a strong passion of capturing the world through my lens.

Fast forward to E4, when I finally got my first DSLR camera as my 16th Birthday gift. Since then, my trusty camera has become my constant companion on every adventure, a tool for discovering fresh perspectives and inspirations in every place I visit.

I've often found myself unsatisfied with my work. But amid all this self-criticism, a turning point in my photography path sometimes sticks out. Last year, I went on a trek to the Har Ki Doon Valley. This mesmerising location left an indelible mark on my artistic sensibilities. Although my photos only partially encapsulate the valley's grandeur, they offer a glimpse into its captivating beauty.

Har ki Doon

Chaitanya Sharma | K2

Photos by Chaitanya S







SLAICE TEAM 2023



Top L to R: Sachidananda P, Dhivith B, BK Aditya,
Tuhina M

Bottom L to R: Swati S, Abhipsa N, Jayati B,
Vrishita J, Jaiman D

SLAICE – A Slice of SAICE is an Annual magazine brought to you by the students of SAICE. It hopes to provide a platform for students to showcase their personal projects and creativity through their writings, photographs, illustrations and more. Initiated in 2014, this project has continued the tradition of passing the responsibility from one student batch to the next, with a new group of students taking charge of designing and producing the SLAICE Magazine every year.

This year, we have taken one crucial step forward. We are also launching a web version of the magazine. We hope that in the coming years the magazine will become even richer in content and presentation and help our students keep up with technological innovations in the fields of content distribution and publishing.

Web version available on: slaice.in

A decorative geometric pattern consisting of interlocking diamonds in orange and teal colors, located in the bottom right corner of the page.