



THE ART DAZE

*Where the mind
speaks and the ink
bleeds*

**Presented by
Literati Bytes**



April 2021 Edition

FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

"For me, art is the restoration of order. It may discuss all sorts of terrible things, but there must be satisfaction at the end. A little bit of hunger, but also satisfaction."

- Toni Morrison



Great art, whether it's literary, artwork or photography, challenges and inspires us. And in doing so, it has the power to transform us and the world around us. As a tribute to the value of art in our world, Literati Bytes has come out with their annual magazine to allow more creative freedom to the young minds who have contributed to this year's edition! Despite being in the midst of a pandemic (and an unfortunate second wave), the students of the English Department have not backed down. In the face of all that's happening around us, Literati Bytes has consistently proven that art transcends the physical medium and will continue to do so!

This magazine is a culmination of emotions, thoughts, and ideas. Reading through it is truly an experience that broadens the mind. I strongly believe that this kind of exposure to different viewpoints is what keeps our artistic wheels turning, and anybody who comes across this magazine will surely find a lot to learn from among its pages. I wish a hearty congratulations to the Editorial Team and to the Heads of the English Department for their continued endeavor to support and promote the young artists of this generation. I hope that this magazine will continue to inspire an artistic fervor in bright young minds for years to come. So here's to the very first successful year of Literati Bytes, and I look forward to seeing many more!

- Dr. Neha Jagtiani
(Principal, R.D. National College)

FOREWORD

*"Life beats down and crushes the soul and
art reminds you that you have one."
- Stella Adler*



With unbound joy and pleasure, I take this opportunity to thank our Principal Dr Neha Jagtiani for all her support and to Congratulate Prof Kranti Doibale and her Literati Bytes Team for coming up with an Art packed edition of the magazine.

The Art Daze intends to dazzle you with the astonishing talent and creativity that our young minds possess.

I recommend Resilience, hope, love and art as my 'Forewords'(Four words) that shall help us tide over these times. There is immense meaning in art that speaks to the soul and calms it. It's time to try this through Literati Bytes Art Daze !

- Prof. Prerna Jatav
Head, Dept. of English

MEET THE TEAM



Sakshi Bhatia

"If you can eat alone on a table for two, you can do anything."



Dhwani Shah

"Oh, to be a cloud in a Ghibli movie."



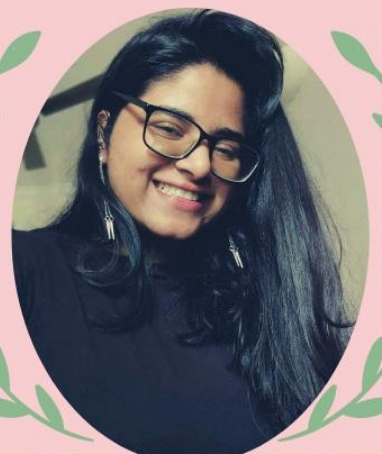
Asmita Karambar

"If no one comes from the future to stop you from doing it, how bad of a decision can it be?"



Niha Arif

"Does anybody even read this page?"



Ankita Sinha

"Constantly trying to embrace the void & finding the courage to exist."



Siya Sunil

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail."



Ansuya Kak

"If you have dreams, only you will be able to accomplish them, no one will come to fulfill it for you."



Rashi Shetty

"To be a polymath or just an actor is the question."



Valerie Dsouza

"There is an 'us' in genius, I am us."



Aushim Das

"I refuse to believe it has been a year since March 2020."

PROFESSORS



Prof. Perna Jatav
Prof. Kranti Doibale

**'The head and the tail
of the English Department.'**

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Poetry



WASTELAND, BABY!

*Wake to a pale night sky, light a cigarette//
Watch the smoke casually fade out and ruin myself away
From a square cutout hole in a concrete block jutting
awkwardly into the pale night sky,
Head a little lighter / heart a little heavier,
My eyes drift towards the light trails from the vibrating roads
That takes me to a place far away, as I follow them distantly
For it is one thing to drown in memories,
But an entirely other to be a spectator to one's own misery.
To observe and learn, only to forget and repeat.*

*People come and go,
These light trails will come and go,
I will stay, right here.*

*In this yellow square cut out in a concrete block jutting so
awkwardly into the pale night sky,
That it might just explode with shame
Like memories of us do, in my head.
(It's all the same).*

**- Shikha Ramesh
NMIMS, Mumbai**

Was it?

With months of fighting and heated argument,
A cloud of silence hovered over us.
It suddenly started raining.
Both of us loved rains.
We sat on our balcony.
Still quiet.
The cold breeze kissed our warm faces.
Chilled our entire body.
On our frowning faces,
Started appearing with a gentle smile.
No! It wasn't because we were close,
It was just the weather.

It started feeling cold now,
Our bodies had chilled.
I knew his nose froze before his body.
I made hot coffee for him.
We sat in the balcony sipping it from the same up usual.
We smiled.
No! It wasn't my coffee,
It was just the weather.

It had been long time now,
We had sat staring outside.
He bought his laptop and started working.
I bought my diary and started writing.
Time and again our eyes met.
And we smiled.

No! It wasn't me,
It was the weather.

Suddenly the mesmerising smell of the wet mud reached
us. We inhaled deeply.
Both of us looked at our babies
We had planted with love.
We smiled looking at our plants swaying.
No! Not the plants
It was just the weather.

Suddenly it started raining heavily,
The wind blew hard and rough.
I ran towards him to shut his laptop,
And save it from getting wet.
Surprising he ran towards the opposite side
Away from me...
My heart dropped,
Was it over?
I turned and looked at him.
He held my wet diary in his hand,
Wiping it with his shirt.
We looked at each other and giggled.
No! It wasn't the weather,
It was just us!

- Priyanka Suryagan
University of Mumbai

KOHL-RIMMED EYES

There's nothing the kohl-rimmed eyes can't hide
The kohl holds the eyes from the onset of a tearful tide
The kohl conceals all the stories that the mute storyteller reveals
Like the dark sky that overshadows the moon's ordeals

But when the tearful tide is too tough to hold
The saline flow mars the line of control
Then the kohl disperses with the fluid's flow
And leaves the marks of a disastrous flood's blow

The transparent orbs feel naked without this dark-hued stroke
For the vulnerable and candid eyes, it's a powerful cloak
Delineate the soul's window by reiterating this marker
To perceive life's dark undertones enduringly through this filter.

- Rashi Shetty
TYBA English

COMING OF AGE

*In desperation murmur,
Trembling tongue tremor,
They walk the way
they recline
they decline
they incline.*

*Stumbling, falling,
sometimes drowning
in everything but water,
I see you there as well
putting a filter over the coffin,
over caffeine,
over nicotine,
over dine and dimes,
over crimes and rhymes,
filtering till your eyes
get boiled and nothing remains.*

*In half-filled hand you give,
In half-filled hands, you steal.
You hold those half-filled hand
Your heart tremble, crumble, rumble,
in tears that's vague
questioning themselves,
speaking of depression, oppression
suppression, impression, regression,
crying and sobbing
till you see the truth among truth
of the truth that you've seen before,
You hunt for truth in papers
in words, on-screen, in a scream

you can't handle the truth
you can't know the truth
yet you see the truth standing beside you,
in eyes and eyes of devils and demons
in eyes of the baby, a beautiful maiden,
You close your eyes and you see it in you,
Nothing is true, Nothing has value.*

**- Gautam Sandeep
M.A. English**

LAUGHING

I hear them laughing;
They don't think I notice,
But I do.

Every word spilled from venomous lips,
Attacks the fragile skin and seeps through like a stain.

Words are forever incised,
My heart lies shattered.

The worst is not the sting of words,
But the friendly and inviting smiles they use against me,
Faking what I thought was real.

My mind plays tricks,
The mirror shies away.
The eyes I see refuse to meet me,
I'll leave them be.

A poor soul would take my place and be, forever challenged
If I were no longer here,
They would find a helpless new victim.

- Chahek Poddar
TYBA English

To T.W.

"You fit into me
Like a hook into an eye

A fish hook
An open eye"

-Margaret Atwood

I hate waiting for you on the way
More than the traffic that I travel
To reach that absolute knave
Of a place, near Westin hotel.
You're not late, I'm early.
Then why when we arrive
It's always too late?

No, let's go back:
I am waiting and you aren't late.
Then you arrive
And my anger dissipates.
You look at me for a full second
That feels like a second, not eternity
And as the driver navigates the traffic,
We sit in silence minding our own selves.

I stoop to steal a glance and notice
The makeup: the red lipstick that
Could as well be pink; the eyeliner
And mascara adorns your eyes that only
Your trained hand knows how to apply.
I turn back to whatever I was reading
And realise
I have skipped quite a lot of lines.

The driver strikes up a conversation
Talking more to himself not to any real person
And yet you look up and kindly shut him down
And I fawn over every dagger that has
Escaped those blood red lips.

You don't stoop,
But touch my shoulder
To ask me a question
And I instinctively reply.
You turn back to whatever
You were doing, satisfied,
With your elbow propped
On the armrest
Leaning a bit towards me
And I do not lose my mind.

I prop my elbow on the armrest
And slowly conspire
To touch yours. A speedbump helps
And we touch; it's not electrifying
But rather comforting and my heart
Is pretty normal at a hundred
And ten beats per minute.
You don't react and now I'm bold
I trace your knuckles with my fingertips
That are ragged and cold.
You acknowledge and don't resist
And yet I cease and desist.

I stoop and steal a glance at your lips again
I know exactly how they'll taste
And respond: full of passion and fury;
I know you'll touch my left cheek
And respond but I refrain.

~~I know exactly where my hand will rest:~~

~~It'll be on your waist~~

~~or tracing the tattoo on your chest~~

I stoop and steal
A glance, again.
This time noticing your hair
That you claim the hairdresser
Botched but I quite like that flawed fringe.
You catch me red-handed
And pose a simple
Question: "What?" you ask
And give me an askance glance.
"Nothing", I blatantly lie
And we turn back to our lives
full of replies filled with lies.

- Barkat Dhanji
University of Mumbai

THE STARRY NIGHT

(but not Vincent Van Gogh's masterpiece)

*On the night before a big day
I sat mulling over every decision I made
My mind leading me astray,
Peacefulness starting to fade
I was left wanting for your love and aid*

*So I put on a song, the one that you sent
To calm the storm inside my head
The melody told me to let go of what's not meant
I'll always be by you, the words read;
And my fears and worries, they left unsaid*

*Then I looked out into the night sky
To see the moon beaming in white
The stars embedded made me wish, I could reach them high
Just for a minute, everything seemed alright
And that is how I came under the spell of the starry night*

**- Ruchita Patharla
TYBA Economics**

LABEL

Eye with this label,
I'll have to see. Hey man, you weak or something?
Us men don't cry over anything.
We're the ones society looks up to,
In our books, there's no feeling blue.

Come on, get up! Let's get going again,
Don't sit in the corner and make it rain.
I need you out there looking fine,
You can cry at home on your own time.

Sure... yes... I'll do that.
Work my hours like a rat,
Slog for the money, push for more,
Put up a face, with emotions locked and stored.

I wonder how long does it have to be this way,
I wonder when over my own feelings I'll have a say,
I wonder if it'll ever change, this toxic demand,
That no matter what he goes through, HE will stand.

I'm not allowed to feel I guess,
They'll laugh if I talk about my stress,
They'll just not accept, I can suffer too,
If I act up, they tell me I'm someone new.

They'll say,
The old me wouldn't have bothered,
The old me would have those emotions slaughtered,
But the same old me was suffering guys,
Now I'm done hiding behind those lies,

Men have problems and men suffer too,
Crying isn't only for women, and for men, it's nothing new.
But it'll be a while before they can tell,
A man too can need help.

Are you done with your rant out there man? No one cares

Umm, yeah, I guess? Was just a moment of weakness.

'A strong silent man' ought to be Eye to

No choice, but to keep it all suppressed,
And become,
The man they wanted me to be.

- Rashesh Majithia
Kandivali Education Society , Mumbai

CHAHA HAI JISSE

Iss chhote se dil mein ek tasveer hai
Kuch dhundli si hai, par muskaan dekhi hai
Uski aankhon mein pyaar saaf dikhta hai
Humne chaha hai jisse, kya wo waisa hai?

Door se kahin uski awaaz aati hai
Pukare wo hume, saanse tham jaati hai
Ek kashish si jaise, uski saanson mein hai
Humne chaha hai jisse, kya wo waisa hai?

Jab aankhein khuli, toh tasveer mit gayi
Aas paas dekha toh waisa koi shaks nahi
Muskurake is dil pe has diye hum
Arre naadaan, abhi tak wo hai gum

Jisse paa na sakein, uski chah kyu hai tujhe
Ae dil ab zaraa ye samjha de mujhe
Wo toh kisi aur ki kismat ka hai
Tune jisse chaha, kyu wo aisa hai?

- Rimpie Tulsiani
RDNC Alumni

REVERIE

*I have never known Peace
Like the sea breeze laced with salt
Yet I yearn for her, thirsty and frantic;
A starving dog wandering on the asphalt*

*The nights are not cordial to me
And I am forced to find solace within this château.
But she fades the more I call her name,
What can you confide in when your own mind is a foe?*

*My darling Peace! Come hither
And hold me in your warm embrace.
You and I are like Heaven and Earth,
Left and right, ocean and space.*

*Dawn breaks its silence,
To my surprise, the doorbell follows.
The merlot slips from my grip
And the carpet swallows.*

*She sits me down and I drown
In her murmuring secrets of
Acceptance and mayhem.
Outside, I hear a waning dove.*

*Said she's present in the melody of a nocturne,
And in the ones I call dear.
In golden bees twirling over lilacs,
And on tranquil days with a cold beer.*

*I have never known Peace,
Like the sea breeze laced with salt,
Even so, my dearest fill me with serenity
And I prize it to a fault.*

**- Dhvani Shah
TYBA English**

THE GARDEN OF AFTERLIFE

After death

When I opened my eyes in the realm of the afterlife

Serenity is what I felt

The sensation of being lighter than a feather

Because just a soul I was now

My shell buried deep in the mortal realm

After my hazy vision cleared and I gazed around

Looking up I saw a tree

So enormous, magnificent and bold

Its huge branches were swaying around graciously

And its leaves were made of gold.

As I walked towards the tree

Still in awe of its size and beauty

I noticed a gate at the base of its trunk

“Entrance to the garden of the Afterlife”

The letters carved above it read

Approaching it, I got a hunch

that the garden was specifically just for me.

Before the gates opened, I heard a deep voice

It was as if the magnificent tree was speaking to me

“In the garden beyond, you will experience your mortal life.

The flowers blooming will emit the emotions you have felt throughout.

Your grave will be resting in a field of flowers

and the emotion they emit will represent you

by the way you lived your whole life.”

And so the gates opened. Walking the path through its trunk

I reached the garden of the afterlife.

The garden looked surreal and endless!
Greeted by a field of beautiful red roses
My soul blushed in the presence of the roses
I felt warm and comfortable around them
They were emitting the love and affection I had received
throughout my life in the mortal realm
"Surely my grave would be here" I hoped
But my grave was nowhere to be seen
Disappointed, I walked away.

And arrived in a field of bright yellow sunflowers
My soul glowed brightly in the presence of the sunflowers
I felt enthusiastic and hopeful around them
They were emitting all the joy and happiness I had experienced
throughout my life in the mortal realm
"Definitely my grave would be here" I hoped
But my grave, again, was nowhere to be seen
Disappointed, I walked ahead.

And arrived in a field of melancholic blue bell-flowers
My soul dimmed in the presence of the bell-flowers
I felt downhearted and gloomy around them
They were emitting all the sadness and sorrow I had dealt with
throughout my life in the mortal realm
"Is my grave resting here?" I feared
But it was nowhere to be seen
Relieved, I ran away.

Came across a field of pale white tulips
My soul felt as if it were sinking in the presence of the tulips
I felt hollow and empty around them
As they were emitting no emotions, rather my emptiness
that haunted me throughout my life in the mortal realm
"Is my grave resting here?" I feared
But it was nowhere to be seen
Relieved, I ran away.
Reached a field of wicked black tulips
My soul felt as if it was being crushed by their presence
I felt uneasy and was suffocating around them
They were emitting a sinister emotion
the emotion of REGRET
that suffocated me throughout my time in the mortal realm
I felt as if I was dying again in the afterlife.
"Is my grave resting here?" I feared.
And my fear turned into a reality when I saw my grave
Resting within the field of these black tulips. My soul lost all its glow.
I tried to run out of the field but I couldn't
For this is who I was.
A man of regrets when I was alive.
Nothing truly made me happy, there were always what-ifs.
so I succumbed into the darkness of these flowers
Bearing the burden of my regrets in the afterlife
Now here I am lying in the garden of afterlife
Between the black tulips near my grave.
Haunted by all my regrets
My soul keeps dying again and again.
I will be lying here

For an indefinite amount of time

A man of regrets when I was alive. Now a man of regrets I am after death.

- Mohammad Ayaaz Qureishi
Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Technology, Mumbai

A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

I want to write a letter to my younger self

but when I think of something to write, I freeze.

I freeze like it had snowed all night and, I was just a tree

because all I can remember is a girl who was so scared

Feeling the pain like she had a wounded knee.

Too scared to love, too scared to leave,

I was just a little girl standing alone in stormy rain.

drenched with fear and pain

hoping somebody would believe.

She longed for affection

someone she would never regret

a true friend,

to share her deepest secret

but all she got was mortifying depression

and crippling anxiety
seeped through the cracks of her broken heart

Staying by her, time after time
something that stuck in her every diary
just like a piece of gum sticks to a bench
and stays there forever.

Years later,
I want her to know she will be fine,
just like a finely aged wine,

All those dreary nights,
where everything felt like a plight
will go away

as you hold a glass of Chardonnay,

On a warm cozy day
I promise everything will be okay.

- Ankita Sinha
TYBA English

SATURN DEVOURING HIS SON

*Saturn devouring his son
And all things macabre
And all thoughts deathly*

*Saturn devouring his son
And I am devouring myself
I hate what I eat and I don't want to eat anymore
But I force myself to*

*Saturn devouring his son
And I taste sickly and hateful
I taste lonely and pitiful
I taste mediocre and dreadful*

*Saturn devouring his son
Why would anyone want to eat something so shit
Why would anything want to multiply when it's so pathetic*

*Saturn devouring his son
Vacant eyes staring into nothingness
Eyes that look inward
Eyes that see the darkness devouring him from the inside*

*Saturn devouring his son
The blood runs down my back, with all the red it lacks
The fingers have become numb and so has my heart*

*Saturn devouring his son
There's a necessity in his action
There's fun in violence and oppression*

*Saturn devouring his son
Nobody cares about your thoughts
And your art is shit*

*Saturn devouring his son
Do you see the blood that fills the street of your imagined utopia?*

*Saturn devouring his son
You stand on the hill of imagined love that doesn't exist*

*Saturn devouring his son
Love is borne out of the lonely neediness of the beloved
You're being used*

*Saturn devouring his son
Your existence is invalid
You haven't suffered enough*

**- Tanmay Yadav
Tolani College, Mumbai**

INCEPTION

A walk-through history
A change in the air
The colours fade
Creating a saturated effect

The clouds overhead boom
Preparing us for the oncoming slaughter
Between heaven and hell

The world stands still
Praying for a swift victory
Of whomever might be listening.

The roars sounded
Feels like ecstasy
To the onlookers
Who know their time is near

As the colours dissolve
To a sombre tone
A new shade arises
Moulding a new dawn

-Zina D'Costa
M.A. English

notes

Articles



MANIAC

It happened again last night. I was calmly detangling myself from the day's stress when I heard it again. That voice... A familiar voice. I've heard it countless times. It almost sounds like a woman. A woman in her blooming youth. A woman with a gentle voice and a feather touch. I hear her every day. It's almost a ritual now.

Sometimes I feel uneasy when I don't hear her say "die" in her soothing, yet painful voice.

At 5 am, I wake up and have two pancakes. That is always enough to fill my appetite because the pancakes never taste anything like they should. They taste like a horrendous mixture of salt and pepper wrapped in dough. Every bite of the meal presses itself against the walls of my throat as if it wants to escape. Still, I never complain.

After eating, I take my keys and move out of my cabin for the day. The doctors always tell me not to drive. I don't understand why. Am I forgetting something?

I open the door and sit in my car, I can smell a rosy scent. Something like the perfume my girlfriend would wear. I don't know how and in what way the smell comes to me but I don't pay heed to it and move on for the day. I mean, who would want to be late for a political science lecture?

I turn on the radio and hum to some songs, lost in the melancholy vibrations of the music. "Die". Am I forgetting something?

"Die, Die, Die." It goes on. Is this the music they like these days? I can feel shivers go down my spine and my entire body looks like a field of weeds, plucked out. I have goosebumps all over my body. I hear a whisper, for the fifth time now, "Die". I don't know what to do. I can't remember anything but I know that I have heard this voice somewhere. This voice resembles someone. Someone close to me, intimate.

I leave the place, with nothing in my hand, maybe I went there for a walk or just to feel the breeze. I wasn't hungry anymore. What did I go there for? Suddenly, I couldn't move. I remembered how everyone called me a statue. "Mikael, you're handsome but don't you think it would be better if you acted less like a retard?" I heard Cindy say.

What is she talking about? I know I'm handsome but what about it? I hardly understand the things happening around me these days. Everyone acts so cold and unfriendly. Back in high school, I was the guy in demand, most popular with girls. I could swoon any girl with a slight smirk. But Cindy? Didn't she confess her feelings to me? Why would she say something so outrageous? After a few minutes, I could move. It happens almost every day, for a while, where I can't seem to move my body. At that moment I'm empty. I am a hollow object, soulless. Why does this happen to me? Am I forgetting something?

Daniella, my good friend, also maintains distance from me these days. One day she said to me, "Mikael, I know it's hard but you need to get over her. Look at you, you've gotten so sick. Your *Schizophrenia* is getting worse, please visit the doctor. She's gone. Please come back, Mikael. I miss you. Forgive yourself." She must be out of her mind. I don't understand a word she says. Whom is she talking about? Am I forgetting something?

I leave the university, many people occasionally call out my name, "Mikael" but the words which follow are always unpleasant. "Retard, loser, dumbass". The worst I've heard so far is "waste of genes".

I get in my car and I could still smell the rosy perfume. Ah, so pleasant. I get home, hang my coat and hat and then sit down to eat my pancakes. I wonder what they will taste like today. Mayo? Or maybe Mustard. I gulp a liter of water and breathe. I don't really pay attention around me but I sometimes see random notes down my hallway. Some say "See the doctor", some say "She's gone, I'm sorry". I wonder who puts them up.

I reach my University, lock my car and walk to my class.

After the long lecture on Fascism, I realise that there is a pang of hunger which I can feel in my stomach. I go ahead to buy a drink and....

Am I forgetting something?

I leave the place, with nothing in my hand, maybe I went there for a walk or just to feel the breeze. I'm not hungry anymore. What did I go there for?

Suddenly, I can't move.

"Mikael, you're handsome but don't you think it would be better if you acted less like a retard?"

The night greets me and the moon is full. Fuller than ever. It has a strange spark in it, enchanting yet mysterious.

Among the shadows near my window, I see Luna. She is right there, breathing. I can't believe my eyes. I missed her so much. Where have you been all this while? I felt so alone. I love you Luna.

She stands there, doesn't move an inch. Her silence is so loud that it etches a scar in my heart. It bothers me. I stand up, fuming. As I get closer I can see that she has a hole in her chest. I am worried. Who hurt my Luna? Her eyes look lifeless; as if they can't see anything beyond darkness. She smells of roses, gentle and beautiful. I touch her gently, "Luna?" Silence.

I can feel my eyes tearing up. Oh, I've missed her so much. I take her in my arms and hug her, in an attempt to put back all her broken pieces together. I can feel her breasts touch my chest but they have no motion. As if she is heartless. As if she isn't breathing.

"Say something". Silence. After two minutes, which feel like hours to me, Luna lifts her head and stares right into my eye. She does not smile.

She mouths the word "Die". She disappears.

I can't understand. Am I forgetting something? Why can't I remember? The whole night I wonder. I look at the humongous moon and try to remember. My throat is parched. I get up and walk to the fridge to quench my thirst. There I see three little notes, curled up in the corner.

"Murdered". I am clueless, yet curious. I open the second note. It says, "Luna". The third one says, "You". I can't understand.

What could these words possibly mean?

"You murdered Luna?"

Am I forgetting something?

- Sumaiya Khan
TYBA English

SNAP OUT OF IT

Dream, your imagination goes wild. You jump as high as you can and free fall from a height and yet land on your feet. You're either running away from one or chasing another. Dreams make you feel immortal at that very moment.

I usually tend to forget my dreams by the time I wake up but I never forget how I felt. It might be hard to remember but it's subconsciously there at the back of your mind.

Personally, I never have good dreams, they're always the unpleasant kind. I could've written short stories about them only if I could remember. But there is one dream that I vividly remember. Maybe I'm supposed to or maybe I won't let myself forget it.

You often hear that dreams are an escape from reality but sometimes you wish for that one dream to be true. I had one of those dreams which felt so insanely real that it was impossible to snap out of. I lost someone I love 3 years ago and the thought of not seeing that one person ever again makes life as miserable as it could get.

But then, I dreamt. I saw her again. I hugged her again, I felt loved again. We laughed, spending the best day together. Sitting at the beach, staring at the ocean. Talking about everything and anything as if nothing had changed. I remember thinking how wonderful it felt, only to sense everything fade away slowly.

I hate the phrase escape from reality because this was that one time I wanted the escape to be THE reality. I would give anything to live that dream once again, to see my mother smile and laugh again. If only dreams were reality.

-Asmita Karambar
TYBA English

SAME AS BEFORE



"Meera turn off the alarm you know I slept at 2 am," grumbled Raj, half-asleep.


"So who told you to watch football till late at night," Said Meera, searching for her hairband.


She turned the alarm off, it was 7 am and she had so many chores ahead. After having a bath and offering her morning prayers, Meera entered her head office, the kitchen. It was a mess, she wished she had done the dishes last night but hell, she was tired. She checked the clock again, she'd quickly do the dishes and then go to the general store before they announce another curfew.

At the general store Meera adjusted her mask, she was glad that today the owner of the shop was being quite strict about social distancing and not entertaining anyone without a mask. It was definitely the result of the recent complaint filed against him for being irresponsible at such a crucial time. Meera had heard he was heavily fined and warned. When it was her turn, she handed him a paper with the list of things she wanted.

It was extremely hot and the bags were heavy. This was the third time in this month that she had to refill the stock. She exhaled thinking about their summer trip which they had planned after years but this lockdown brought a comma on all the plans, she liked to call it a comma rather than a full stop.

She looked around her, everything was the same but still, everything had changed.





All shops, except the essentials, were shut down. She passed Chandu Tailors shop and wondered about the dress piece she had given him. God knows when she'll get it back, and even if she does, she is not sure whether her cousin's wedding will be held this year or not.

“Hello, Meerabai! Wait!” she turned towards the voice. It was Sujata from the third floor, carrying double the bags as Meera.

“You also don't trust the watchman with things and money?” Sujata asked, struggling with the bags. Meera would have helped her but she was struggling herself.

“No, it's not that. The watchman is already very busy with all the extra work he has to do now, checking temperatures, not letting outsiders in, helping the senior citizens. Plus he is away from his family and for all these things he isn't even paid extra.”

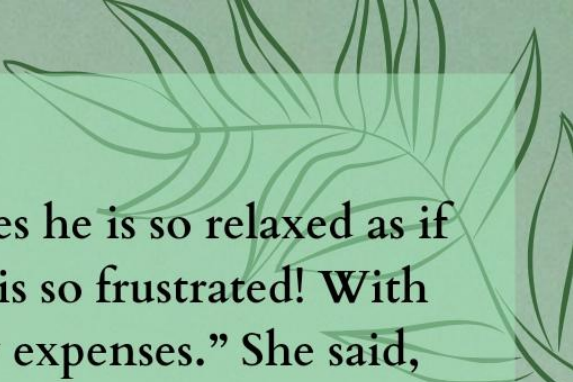
“At least he is getting paid,” said Sujata with a snort.

Meera didn't want to acknowledge this fact but she was right. At least he was getting paid. Every now and then there was news of people losing their jobs, having nothing to eat. Though the government is taking measures, they still can't reach everyone.

“Don't you have too many bags? Why didn't you send Amok?” asked Meera, as they passed one more police barricade. She watched as a policeman questioned two guys without masks who were roaming around aimlessly. People just don't understand the seriousness of the current situation, thought Meera.

“Amokkkk!” laughed Sujata, before continuing,





“I don’t understand him these days, sometimes he is so relaxed as if he is on a mini-vacation, and other times he is so frustrated! With his job, salary, plus these increasing everyday expenses.” She said, holding up the bags in her hand.

“At times he is just angry about being in the house, he says it feels like being in prison to him. Now you tell me, how can your own house feel like a prison? We also stay in the house the whole day but do we say it’s a jail? And the kids are worse, they feel schools are closed forever! And they have turned the whole house into a playground. My whole day goes in cleaning and cooking a new variety of dishes for them, and still, they aren’t satisfied. Am I on Masterchef?”

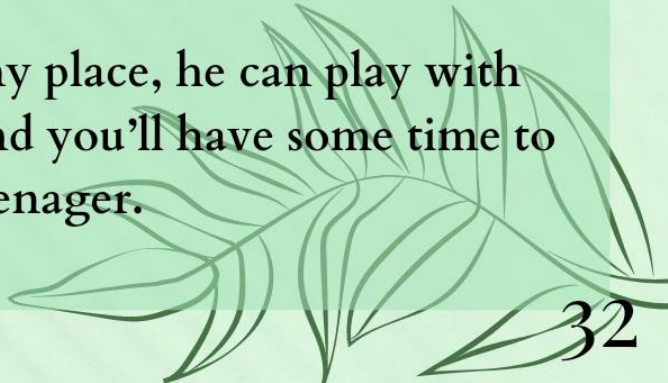
Meera smiled as she could relate to each and every word of hers. “Relax they aren’t used to staying in a house like us, even Raj is intolerable these days,” said Meera as they entered the building gate.

“Two of his colleagues are fired.”

“My god, is his job safe?”

“Can’t say, that’s what annoys him even more. At times it feels he just wants to fight with me. I try to understand he is just worried about all the EMI, loans, and everything but he scares me at times. Yesterday he almost hit Ankush for listening to music on full volume.”

“Poor kid must be scared. Send him to my place, he can play with Rubi and Ravi. They’ll have company and you’ll have some time to relax Raj.” said Sujata, blushing like a teenager.



“Shut up”, smiled Meera as they reached the second floor and parted ways.

As soon as she entered the house she heard Raj’s voice from the bedroom.

“Meera where were you, you know I need coffee first thing in the morning!”

“Went to the store to get your coffee, you finished it yesterday forgot? You have been drinking coffee a lot these days, that’s the reason you don’t sleep at night.”

She saw Ankush running towards her to check the bags for his chocolates and chips, Meera immediately halted him.

“No! First Mama will sanitize herself and all the bags, then you can check,” Ankush nodded and followed Meera to the kitchen

She served more sambar to Raj who was busy with the news.

“Not a single good news, cases are just rising, people are dying, what the hell are the government and doctors doing?”

“They are trying, all we need to do is have patience,” said Meera, trying to make Ankush eat.

“Baby please eat, Mama will make you aloo ka paratha for lunch. Raj, how are the dosa and sambar? I tried it for the first time.”

“Meera I think you need to start taking tuitions again and I need to have a backup, otherwise I don’t know how we are going to manage. I doubt whether next month I’ll get my salary or not, we don’t even have a lot of savings.”

“Relax Raj we’ll both manage, think positive.”

“It’s easy for you to say, in this lockdown the only life which hasn’t been affected is that of housewives. It’s just the same as before.”

“Yes, like before,” said Meera, sipping her first cup of tea.

- Fehmida Shaikh
Patkar College, Mumbai

"THAT'S NOT FUNNY!"

Hi, my name is Kaushani. I was a very fun-loving, chirpy, and happy person when I was a toddler, but somehow I turned into a very shy person, kind of an introvert, when I was a teenager. All these changes took place just because of one sole reason, I WAS OBESE.

I have been a target of body shaming for quite a long time now. Just imagine, going out and meeting a bunch of people with a smile on your face, asking them how they are doing, and the first thing that comes from them is, "Wow you are really brave that you are able to carry the 'burden' of your body!" In addition, I was called out publicly in school too, 'pig', 'chimpanzee', and whatnot. On every occasion, event, or family function, I was always targeted for my body.

It wasn't until I was 11 years old that I started understanding how tremendously those comments had affected my mental being. It made me unconsciously behave in certain ways that wouldn't bring me or my imperfections, under the spotlight. I had imbibed all those bodily expectations which I couldn't possibly meet. I was fighting this constant, bizarre battle with my body which I didn't even want to fight. Gradually during this process I started losing myself. People continued to make jokes, even memes about me and I couldn't even do anything about it because I had accepted the fact that I was not perfect.

I was angry, frustrated, and therefore finally reaching the breaking point. I tried to seek help from someone, whoever that might be, but it was all in vain. They suggested that I was overreacting and I should change myself. But then something happened, within me which I don't know how, till date. It was during my school lunch break. I was walking in the portico of my school campus, looking for a place to sit and have my food. Just as I was going to sit down, a bunch of my batchmates passed by me and instantly started passing comments, but this time it was different because I shouted, **“That's Not Funny! And you better apologize to me, RIGHT NOW!”** They all were shocked. I felt a strength that was growing. I felt calm, for the very first time. This feeling was nothing else but my own self-confidence.

We need to remind ourselves that this perfect world we see online is presented to us through many different filters. It is unrealistic to think that your body or even mine will ever look like anyone else's. That is not the way it is supposed to be because we all are imperfectly beautiful.

A message to all the bullies and body-shamers out there-
That's not funny, that you try to pick on the imperfections of others, when you, yourself are not perfect,
That's not funny, having fun at the expense of someone else's peace of mind. That's not funny, commenting on people's bodies being completely oblivious of their mental state. The joke you created just now on me, That's Not Funny At All.

- Kaushani Ghosh
FYBA

THOUGHTS ON THOUGHTS

As I was staring out of the window, a random thought popped into my mind. Sometimes too many of them cram at once. It did not take me long before I switched to the next random one and then the next. This jumping and dumping of thoughts led me to yet another one.

This time, however, I decided to focus and meditate on it for a while. To my dismay, I could not concentrate for much longer. Honestly, I did not even realize that I had lost my focus, indicating how difficult it was to control the inrush. The uncontrolled flow of thinking opens gates to various ideas and memories. And those ideas and memories, in turn, invite different emotions.

On several occasions, I have found myself lost in the world of imagination, as many of us often do. It feels like traveling on a train without knowledge of the destination, an odyssey with no object. One may very well consider it an internal exploration of the conscious mind — a place where all our thoughts, emotions, feelings, and wishes are found. It is also a place that is not necessarily idealistic but aims to be like one.

We easily get lost in our world from time to time, especially when in a classroom attending a boring lecture.

And for each one of us, different external stimuli trigger a distinct thought process. Come to think of it, it is remarkable how the way we perceive and interpret external matters influence the way we feel in a given moment.

The above paragraphs highlight some of the general facts about our mental functioning. What I have mentioned above is common knowledge. But it is crucial to take notice of such facts so that it becomes easier for us to piece together the puzzle associated with our mental disposition.

Have you ever thought of controlling the stream of thoughts cascading inside your head?

Admittedly, it is quite challenging to gain control over the process of thinking. With all its complex neural links and synapses, our brain sets a default emotional response to different kinds of thoughts. For example, when you think about traveling to an exotic destination, the feelings of excitement and joy become all too evident.

Whereas, when we are reminded of our failures or the loss of a loved one, our mind is quickly suffused with sadness and despair. What adds extra burden on an already tensed mind is the weight of emotions that accrues as a byproduct of our thinking.

It is no secret that to achieve a zen-like state of mind, we have to maintain the right balance between our thought process and the emotions they trigger.

However, we cannot just tie a rein around our emotions and keep them in check. It is arduous to ignore the anxiety triggered by obsessive thinking, regrets from past incidents, and the discomfort caused by recalling awkward situations, or the worry of what opinion others might hold of you. Our basic instinct is to battle such thoughts and make them stop for good.

But such a battle has a bad reputation for throwing us into a downward spiral that leaves us feeling rattled and stifled. We engage in this battle in the hopes of eliminating the discomfort caused by negative thoughts and emotions. But the harder we try, the more challenging the task becomes, and the effort of quelling the negativity ultimately ends up making us disoriented and helpless. It is quite paradoxical.

Some of us try to find solutions through forms of escapism like drug intoxication or overeating. But in the end, you don't get thick skin without getting burnt. This means all we can do is embrace our problems and face them head-on. It is the first step towards overcoming our mental issues. Oddly enough, if we try to repress matters of the mind, they always find a way to make things worse for us.

The wise, stoic philosophers from centuries ago advise us that an uncompromising indifference towards extreme emotions, be it negative or positive, can enable us to lead a life with a rational attitude. We direct much of the mental fortitude towards stopping the flow of troubling thoughts and feelings, but the truth is that it is nothing but a part of our lives. In reality, all we have to do is learn to sit with those thoughts and feelings and not worry about fighting them off.

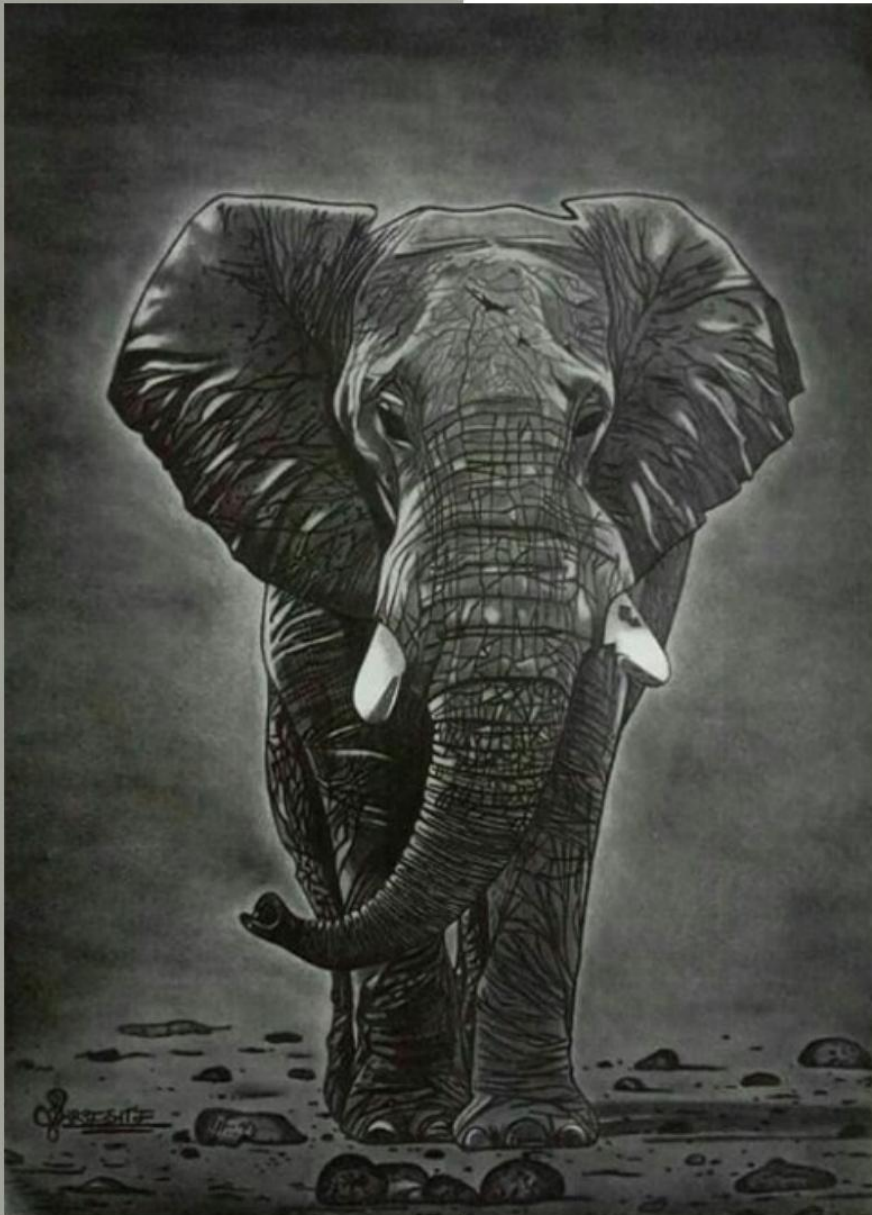
As The Ancient One in the movie Doctor Strange profoundly says, "We never lose our demons. We only learn to live above them."

- Girish Chugh
M.A. English

notes

Antwork





The name Gajanan is of Indian origin. In Sanskrit "Gaja" means elephant and "Anana" means a face. These two words "Gaja" and "Anana" clubbed together to form the name "Gajanana", which is shortened as "Gajanan". It's another name of Lord Ganesha. Elephant face denotes strength. The texture of an elephant's skin is so wrinkled that looks like old tree bark. Elephants are the incarnation of Lord Ganesh to Hindus in our Indian culture. This is what "The Gajanan" means.



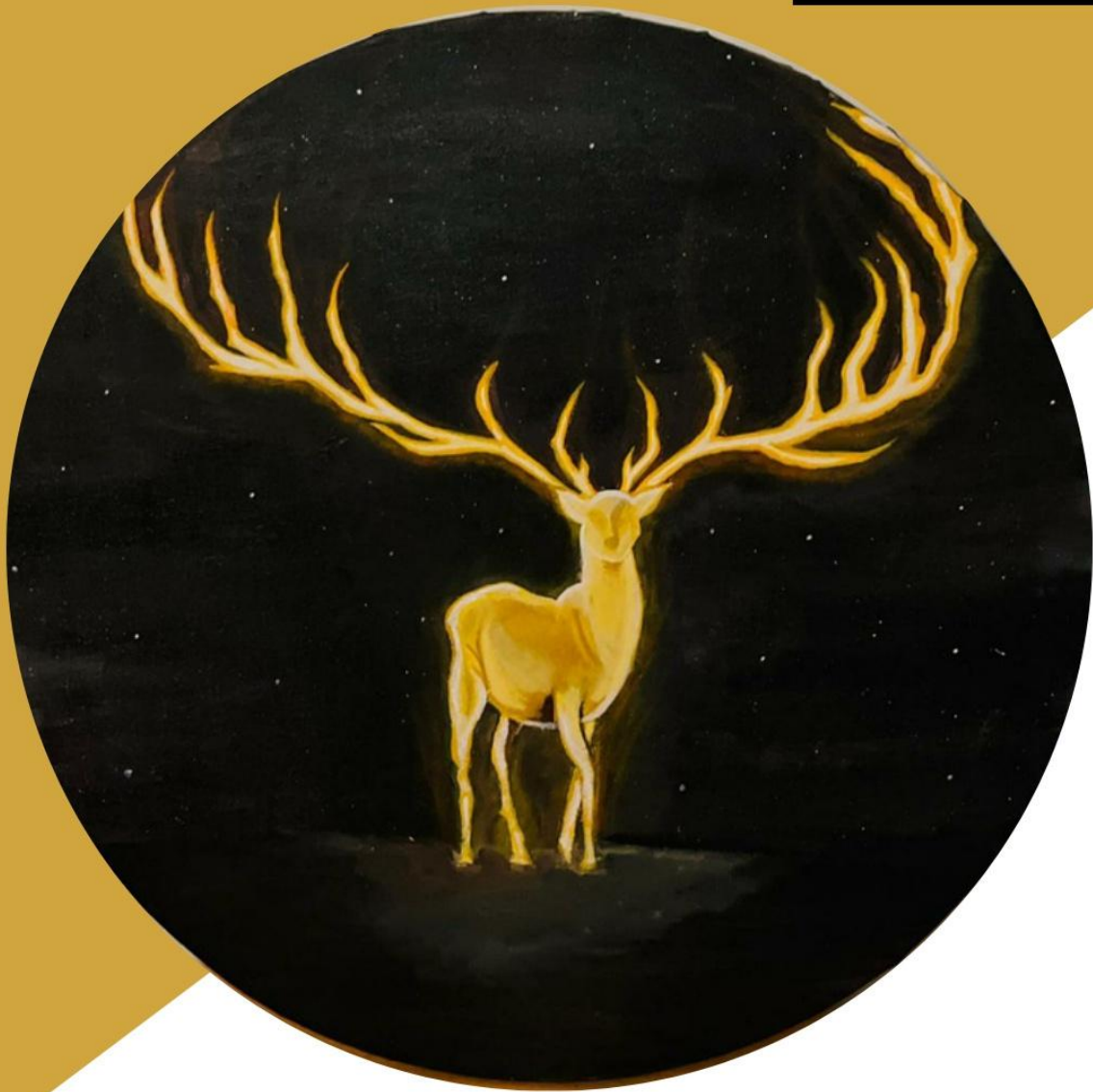
"A cat purring on your lap is more healing than any drug in the world, as the vibrations you receive are of pure love and contentment. I have spent lots of time with cats and I've noticed they express themselves very well. If they feel connected to a person they will love them in the same way that person does. But if the person doesn't behave well with them, if the cats are not happy with that person, they will express it and they will stay away from that person."

NIGHT BY MOONLIGHT



"As a child, I'd always wonder why the moon isn't yellow if it gets its light from the sun. After a couple of years, and a few science classes, the novelty of the idea did wear off considerably. But somewhere in my imagination there still exists a fiery red moon burning away in the night sky."

PATRONUS



"I love recreating digital art. This painting my recreation with a few twists and turns. I've always been a die-hard Harry Potter fan and if you are one as well then you know the deer has a lot of meaning to it. Harry Potter is my escape from reality and this painting is just a demonstration of my love for the minor details in the movie."



"During the toughest phase of my life, the stars and the moon eased my pain, both physical and mental and my love for the night sky is everlasting. So the Goddess of the night, Nyx, in all her glory is what I painted."



"Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble."

AUSHIM DAS
SYBA

THE SUN FORGETS TO SHINE IN THE FIELD OF ASPHODEL



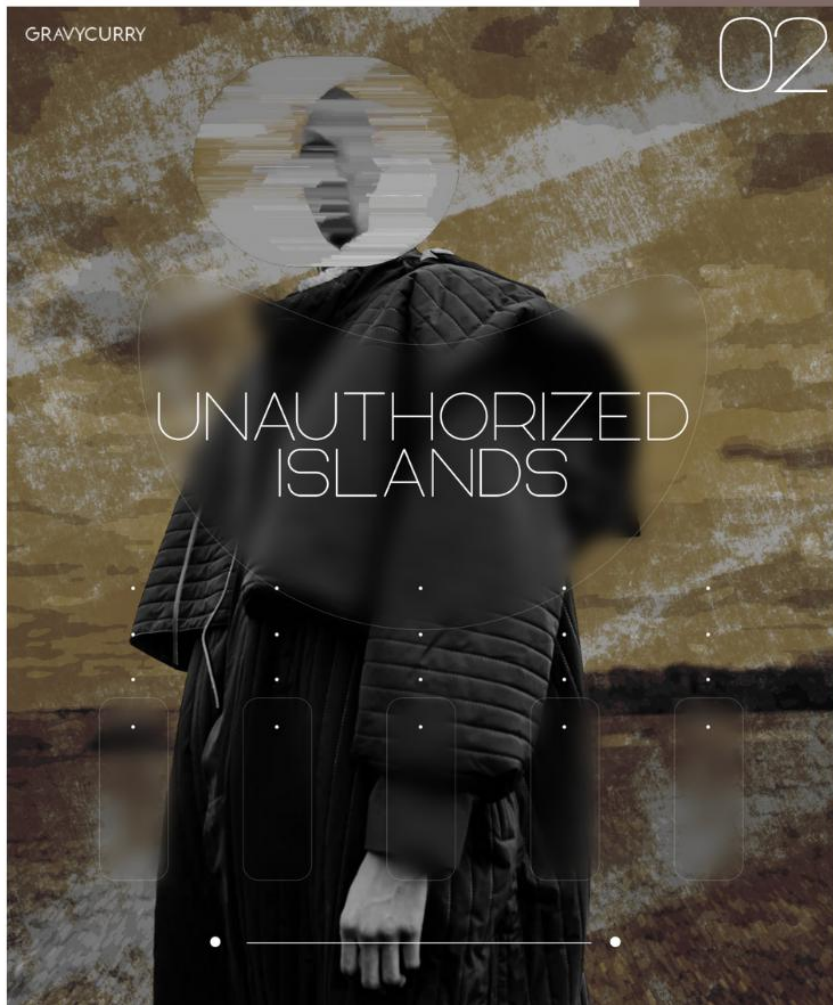
"When the mundanity of life is at its strongest, all I wanna do is escape into the field with the windmill and stay there forever."

LURKING AROUND



He lurked around in the shadows. It looked playful, but he was just circling around his prey.

UNAUTHORIZED ISLANDS



Not home. Not alone either. Surrounded by earthlings, but you're not one of them.

notes

Photography



I SEE THE WORLD



I see the world slowly transform into wilderness; I hear the approaching thunder that one day, will destroy us too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky I feel everything will fall into place and the cruelty too shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.

SOLITUDE



"The story behind 'Solitude' is, ironically, quite the opposite to how the picture was taken. The film shop where I had to get my roll developed was 5 minutes from closing, and I had 3 pictures left to take. My friend and I were frantically running from shops to roads trying to find a perfect location when we turned around to see a dingy alley, and a lone shopping cart and something just clicked. Somehow, our panicked rushing managed to end up as one of the most tranquil and serene pictures I've taken, and I'll always have a little soft spot for that shopping cart."

ALL WE NEED IS A BOOK AND THE SKY



In a world full of distractions where everyone keeps advising you about things you should be doing, creating a space for yourself whether it be day dreaming while staring the sky or getting lost in a book or whether it be taking the time to reflect and seeing yourself in a good light no matter how difficult it may be and being protective of your soul.

BEAUTY THAT THE WORLD REFLECTS BACK



"They say that eyes are windows to the soul, but if you open any science textbook you will find out that human eyes just reflect light from their surroundings. They are capable of not only the pain in the world but also amplifying the joy. With this concept photoshoot, I wanted to communicate that even if there is darkness, there is always a way to see through and admire the beauty that the world reflects back at us."



SAILING THROUGH THE ARABIAN SEA

"Life is better on
the water."

TAJ MAHAL PALACE

"It is not the beauty of the
building you should look
at, it is the construction of
the foundation that will
stand the test of time."

