

HOPE IN AN HOURGLASS

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Cover by Bhavika Sachan

HOPE IN AN HOURGLASS

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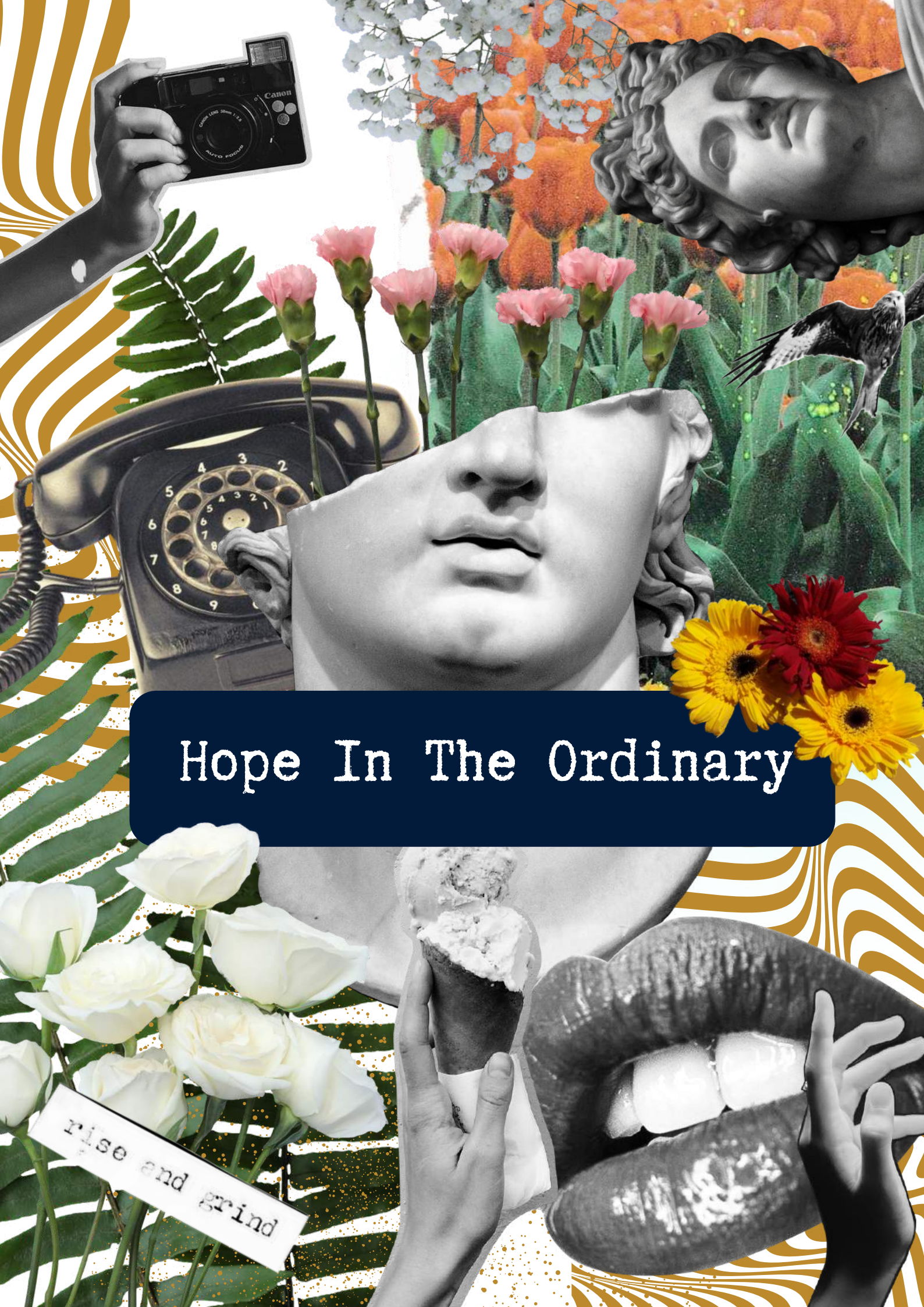
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GRIEVING TIME



Hope In The Ordinary

rise and grind



I remember her words as she hands me the three-inch chess piece, words which keep me afloat to this day. "You don't have a lot of power, and you don't really do much for anybody. But despite everything, you will always be most important to me".

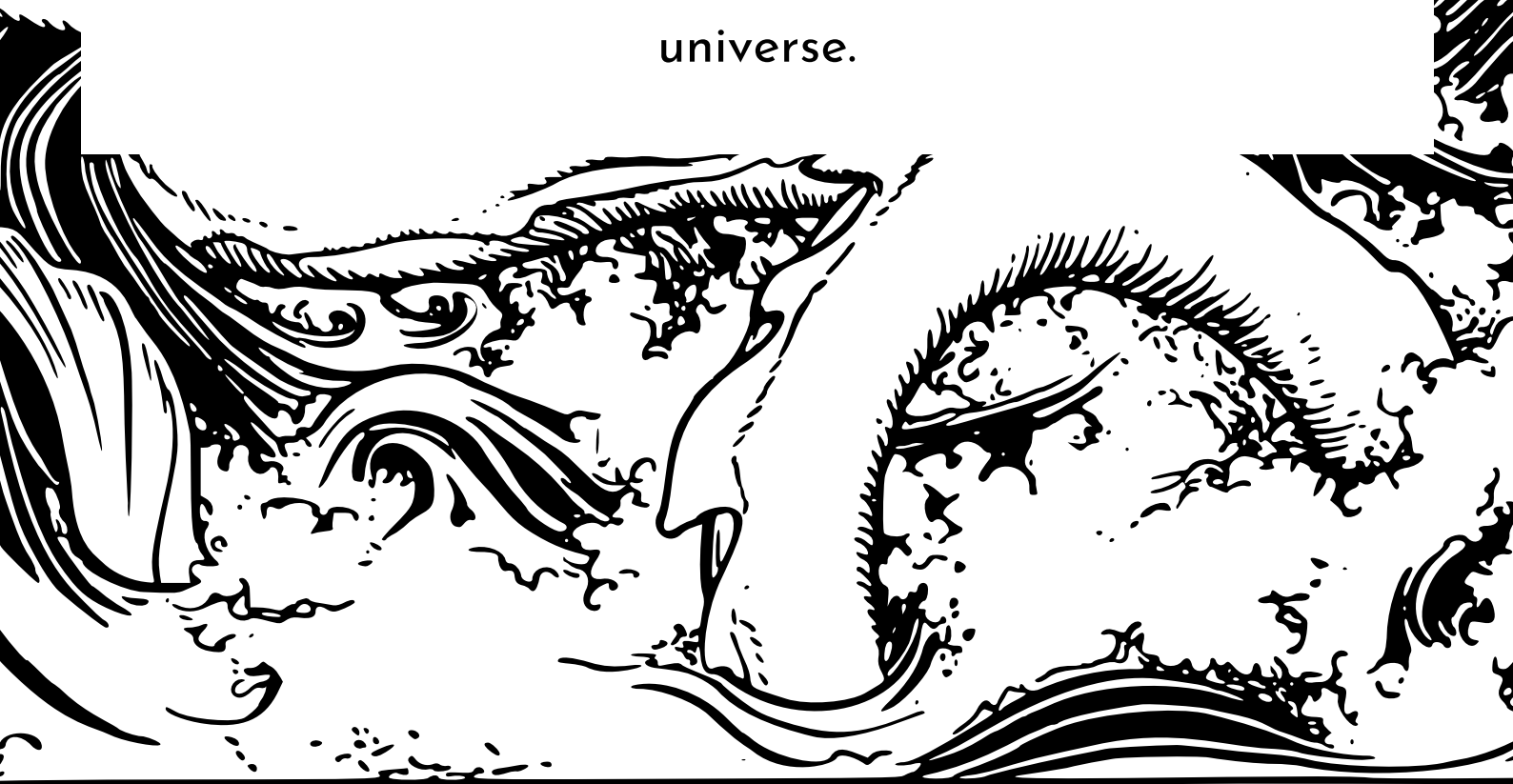
It sits on the table, casting shadows long enough to battle its miniscule being. It is a king made of fogged glass; translucent as if it contained everything and nothing at all, reflecting every inch of sunlight but having no substance, delicate as a feather with barely enough power to defend itself. It is true that it doesn't hold much power; it isn't the first move one would go for in fact, it is something most would brush aside.

The Glass King

*Vasundhara T, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. Economics, Miranda House*



But every time it seems powerless, you're reminded
that
without it, there would be no game. Maybe this is only
my mind spinning lies into fairy dust, but that
tiny piece has since become a saving grace. The
shadows consume the darkness as the sliver
becomes a beacon of light; ethereal, immortal. And so,
in defiance of the entire cosmos, the tiny
glass king remains the sole centre of this infinitesimal
universe.



To you who hasn't been
feeling like yourself
lately...

I want to be that sudden wave in your life
which anonymously seeps through the rigid
boulder you've become,
and slowly transforms you into soft clay-like soil.
so you have the courage to seek new sculptors,
and the patience to be uniquely shaped.

listen to me:

shake your insecurities off for a moment.

i want you to break free.

explore what lies around, patiently waiting for
you.

walk barefooted during evenings over the grass,
feel the morning breeze gently brush past.

stay up through a freezing winter night
with a warm mug of coffee and try counting the
stars.

i want you to take things a little easy,
to try to get up and move ahead.

i want you to smile more often, laugh more fully,
and proudly pin your battle scars to your sleeve.



I want you to trust a certain someone,
not blindly, but completely,
and i want to explain to you the massive difference
between the two.

just for once, i want you to listen to me.

I want you to allow the seeds of hope to germinate
within you.

and each time the raindrops of love leave you
drenched,

I want you to spread your comforting earthy
fragrance.

I want you to be brave enough to allow yourself
the empathy
that you keep reserved only for those around you.

I want you to be gentle enough to accept:
to forgive your past.
to forgive yourself.

Shreya Krishnan, B.A. English,
2nd Year, Miranda House





On Sunshine and Cemeteries

The night has been melancholic,
its charcoal skies slither onto my body.
My eyes pray for sunlight to kiss my palm,
the birds are embracing the turquoise
and I'm silent, I'm breathing.

Trees; curving and bowing in timeless fatigue
yet warm in its coffee brown greens,
arms far away from the horizon.

They remind me of my father.

Trees; curving and bowing in timeless
fatigue,
the dawn of October blooms through all
brokenness.

The flowers tumble in a dance of their own,
and so does the sun.

The petrichor brushes the tip of my nose
and I feel untouched yet held.



The nighttime fog wraps itself around my throat,
and my skin is withering with dewy gloom.
The black is unrelenting in its pursuit,
making the moonlight sway away from me.
So, I wait for my mother's hands to work their
way
through the crumpled blocks of ice in my cheeks.



I wait for the sun to fall in gold and October,
easing the quiver in my throat,
the rubble dotting the insides of my fingernails.
The sun covers the cemetery around my bed with
sunflowers.
Though hope glimmers into the open,
it still trickles thin with the day unfurling through
the hourglass on my bedside.
I pray that I don't wear thin today.
Hope still smiles into the hourglass,
the day is still long.
My hands will find their way out
of the smoke of winter.



**Sakhi Singh, B.A. English,
2nd Year, Miranda House**

XVIII

XVII

The fault , dear reader, is not in our stars
As those around us remain in the dark
Sure you can blame it on the times
And lament how it isn't as loving
But the odds aren't meant to be equal
Regardless of our affection

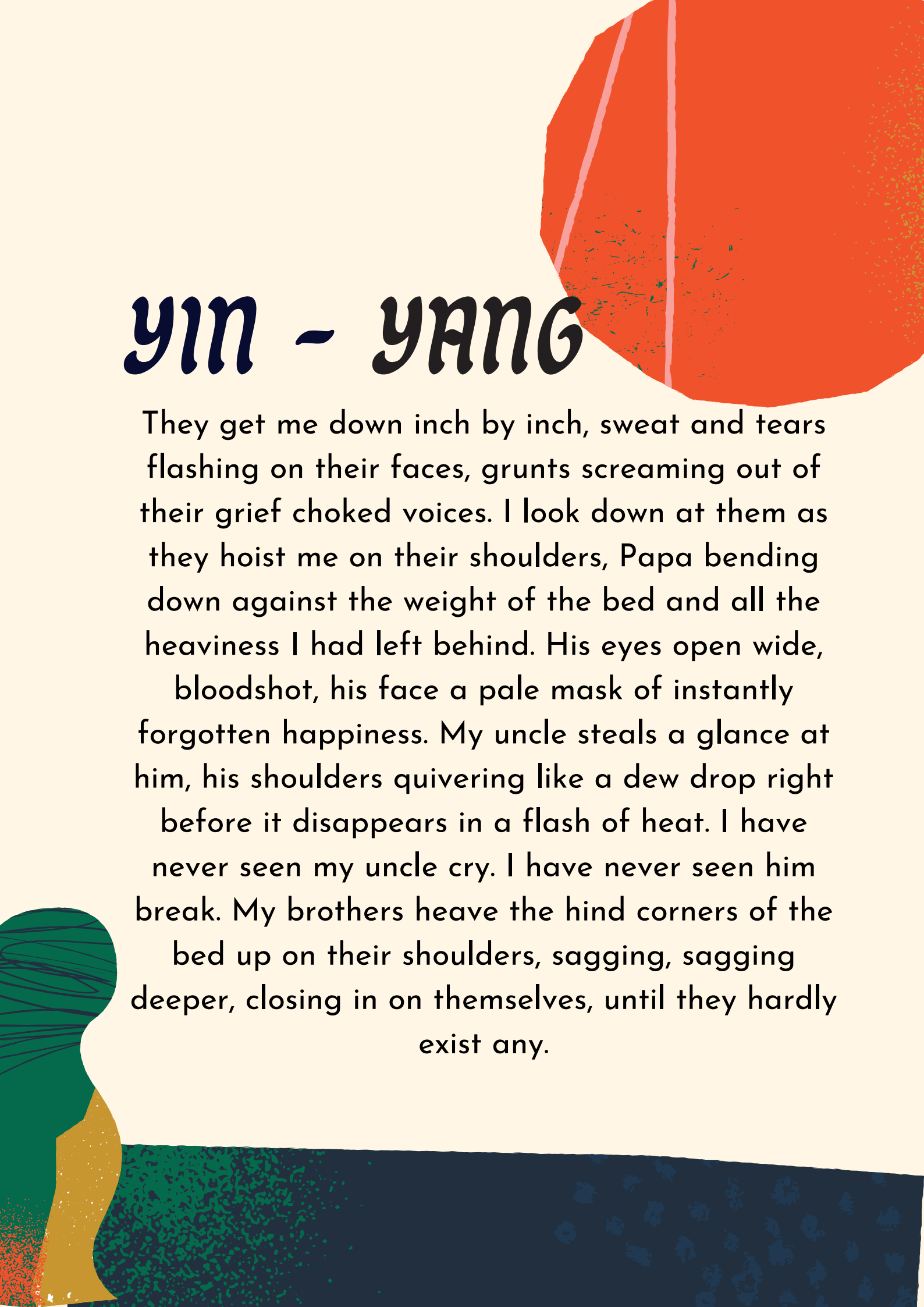
I doubt they even care about your affections
These dimly lit little big burning stars
You could hardly prove to be an equal
To be privy to the secrets held in the dark
It may seem fain in verse but the truth is in
the loving
Regardless of the times

THE MOON

THE STAR

Sestina

Ranjini Sarkar,
B.A. English Hons



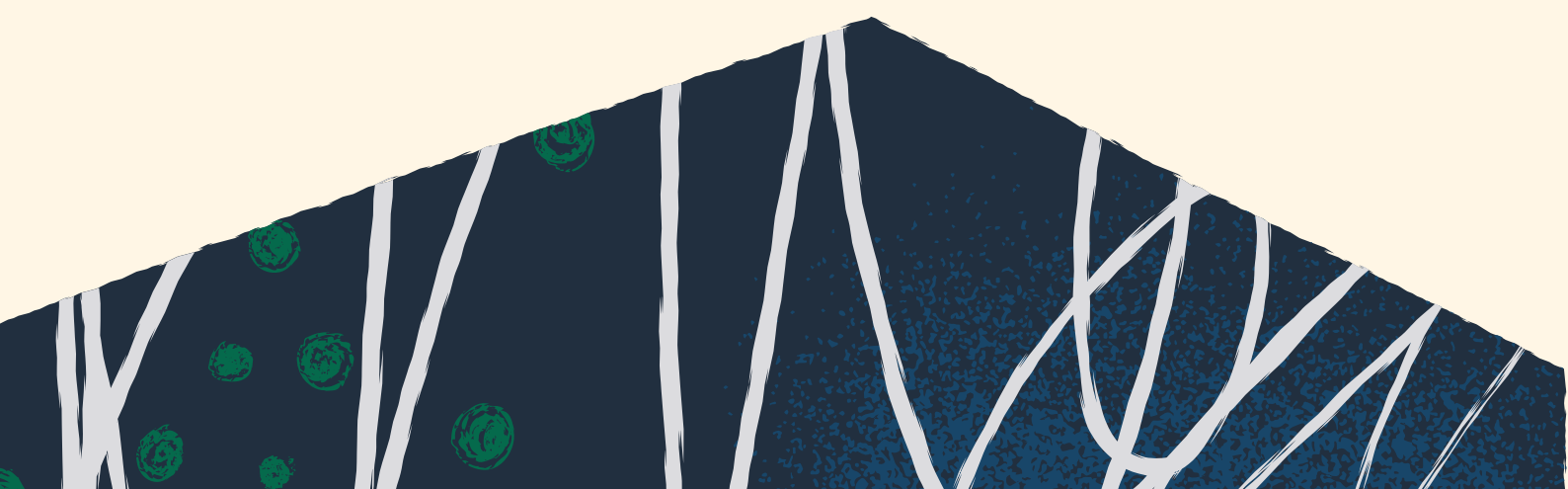
yin - yang

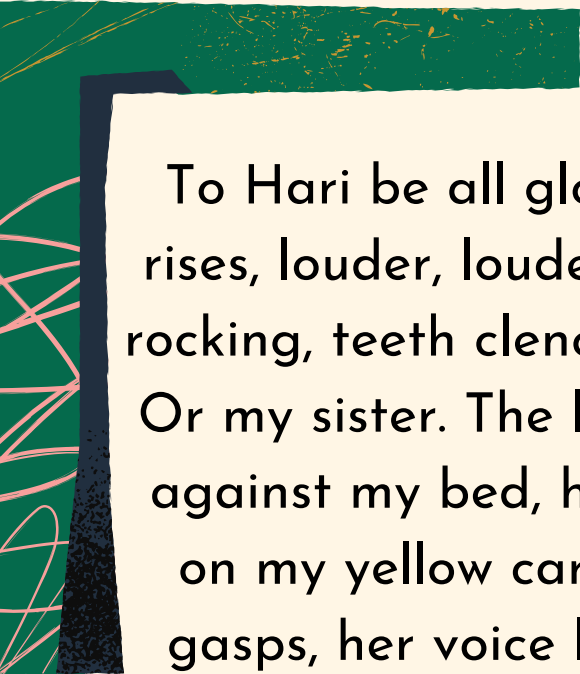
They get me down inch by inch, sweat and tears flashing on their faces, grunts screaming out of their grief choked voices. I look down at them as they hoist me on their shoulders, Papa bending down against the weight of the bed and all the heaviness I had left behind. His eyes open wide, bloodshot, his face a pale mask of instantly forgotten happiness. My uncle steals a glance at him, his shoulders quivering like a dew drop right before it disappears in a flash of heat. I have never seen my uncle cry. I have never seen him break. My brothers heave the hind corners of the bed up on their shoulders, sagging, sagging deeper, closing in on themselves, until they hardly exist any.



When they were ten, they had picked up some miraculous dance step from the high school boys and flexed it before me, making waves out of their shoulders, bobbing their heads like a beach ball. All of a sudden, I wanted to see them do it again. I wanted to scream at them to stop because I couldn't do it the exact way, I wanted them to laugh like they would then - condescending, forgiving, complying. But all they do is crumble and go dark all the way to the corners of their eyes.

To Hari be all glory! They cry out, a mad plea in their eyes. The bed moves. They carry me along the mud path, washed by the frequent floods the Ganga always breaks out in, their feet slipping, the cold river air whistling in their hearts.





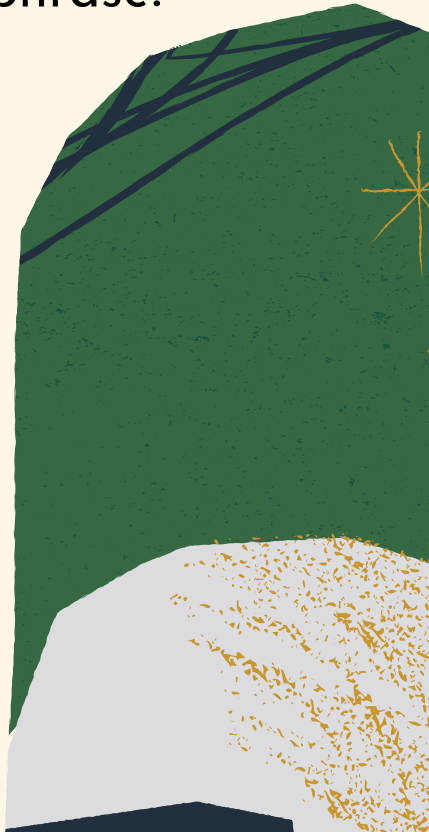
To Hari be all glory! I whisper. Hari. Hari. The chant rises, louder, louder, voices rupturing with tears, knees rocking, teeth clenching. I don't know where my mom is. Or my sister. The last I saw Ma, she was lying reclined against my bed, her lips all aquiver, her body flailing on my yellow carpet, her breaths coming in jagged gasps, her voice letting out a low desperate moan. I

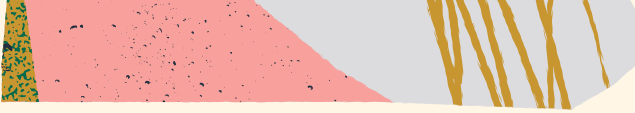
haven't seen my sister in a long time. I heard her scream once, right before they clipped the sunflowers to my hair, and then never again.

They walk on, twenty more steps to the fire. And then, my body will be gone. Dust and ash. Dust you are, and to Dust must you return. Father Philip would say it over and over again every sacrament, and sitting in the back row with my friends, I would double over giggling. Impeccable poetry! What a turn of phrase!

We turn the corner, and there is the river.

Right behind, there are pyres already burning, all the people I am gonna travel with boarding the train... already. I am late, but I don't want them to hurry up. All of a sudden, like never before, I want to stay.





Wildflowers.

Right along the right bank, a melee of wildflowers bob their fragile heads, mere buds still, just blooming. The temple doors open right as we cross it, and a roar of song erupts out of it.

Ten fingers, ten toes, this boy is just fine! Startled, I feel the bed tremble as my father snaps out of his daze. *Fine!* The women in the temple scream.

Then, out they come, faces a-bloom with a radiance I had forgotten there existed. A young woman, head covered with the hem of her bright red saree, giggles into her shoulders. Cradled across her breast, snuggled in flowers and fluffy blankets, just like I am, sleeps a baby, cheeks rosy from the cold, fists closed into blooming buds.

I stare at the boy, safe and asleep, boarding a train right into life, rushing headlong into the first compartment, bravely, strongly into a journey he knows nothing about. As I pass him, his eyes open - twinkling brown, plotting his first mischief. His closed fists are stuffed with all the hope erupting out of my cotton stuffed nostrils, all the life I had vomited out in an agony of giving up.





Coming to the temple doors, they lower me to the ground.
The woman in the red saree stops and stares at me, dead
in the face. Instantly, her hands fly to her boy as she
covers his eyes with her fingers. A shocked tear shone in
her kohl rimmed eyes. Agitated by his Mama's fingers, the
boy lets out a piercing wail, salt tears gushing out of his
baby eyes.

Almost instantaneously, all of them around my bed scream
out to the heavens, cursing their fates, cursing their lives.

I look at the baby and smile. The baby turns his eyes to
me.

Hope. Hope. Hope.

That is all there is in those eyes.
Fragile, momentary, dripping like the sand in an hourglass.

Hope.

The women take their baby home to milk and bed.
The men take me to the fire.

*Mudra Banerjee, B.A. English,
1st Year, Miranda House*





HOPE

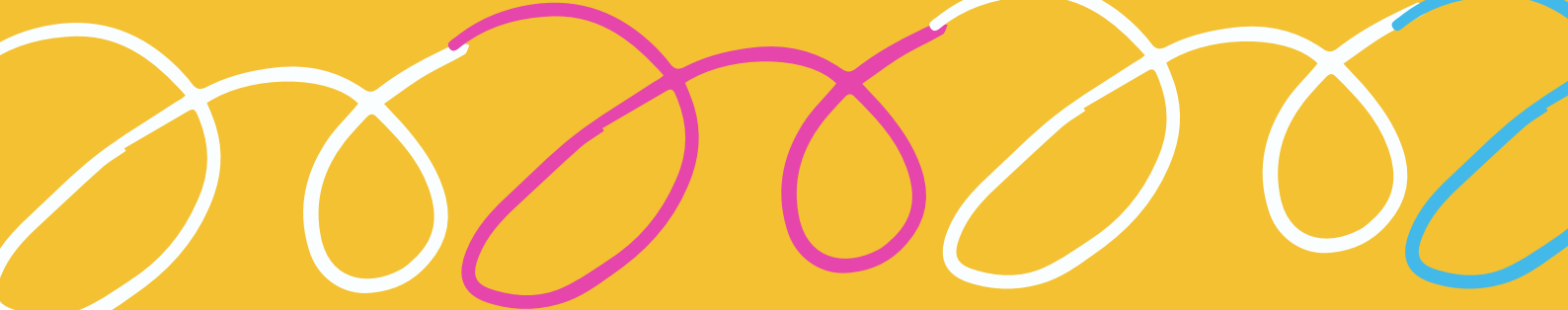
in a person

Like the froth on top of my coffee
I look at you to find traces of serenity
The blossoming of flowers of red and green
Accompanying the deep echo of your laughter
The leaves fall in autumn
Akin to the tears you shed in grief

As the night falls
And the cold creeps in
My hand fumbles on the mattress
Hoping to lace my brittle fingers
With your sun-roasted ones

The dance of the sunlight on the lush blades of grass
Invoked by the subtle gusts of wind
Reminds me of the way your fingers dance on the
piano
Spawning the music which charms my soul
Earning smiles for their frivolous labor





As I draw the curtains of my room
The urge to gaze at the moon overcomes my
weariness

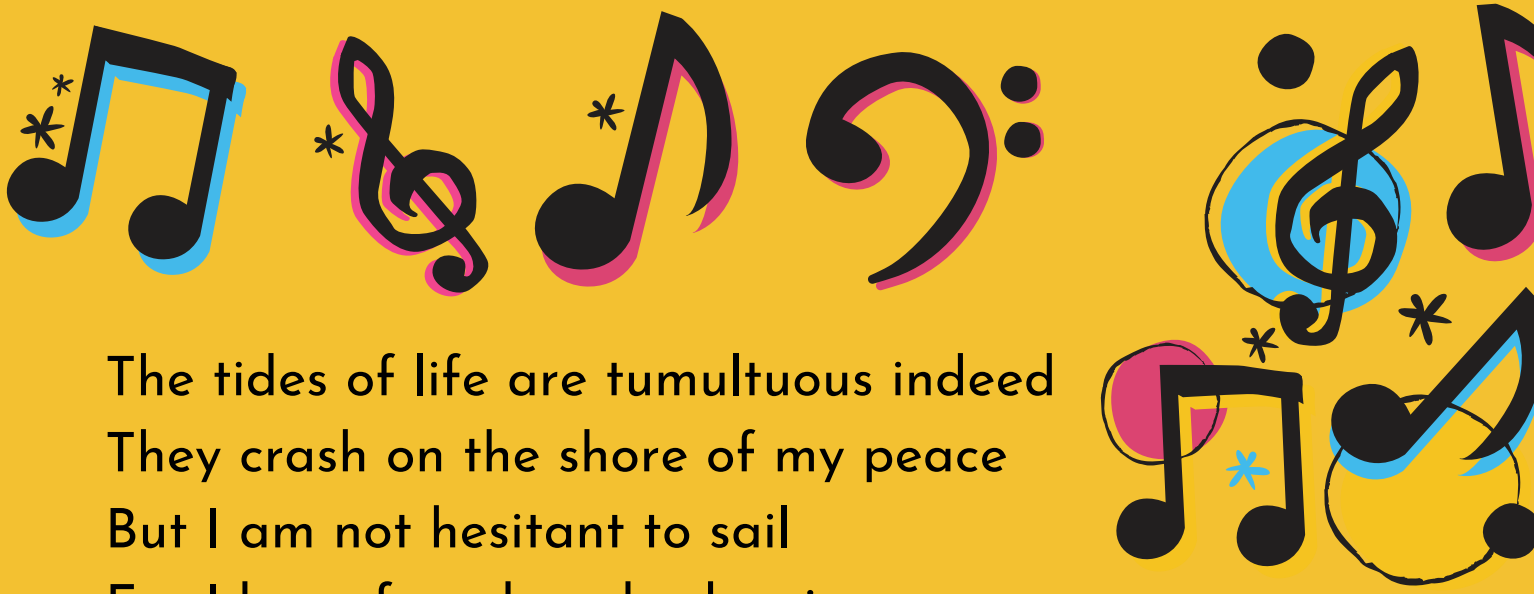
It mocks the orbs of your keen eyes
The clouds engulf it leisurely
Maybe you closed your eyes to rest?

I sit on the windowsill to fuse into the moonlight
The wireless on my dresser sprinkling
The atmosphere with mellow song

More of a whisper than a melody

I murmur your name under my breath
Regardless of how the cold breeze lashes against
my cheek
It fills me with an enchanted warmth
As if the fireplace itself ignited

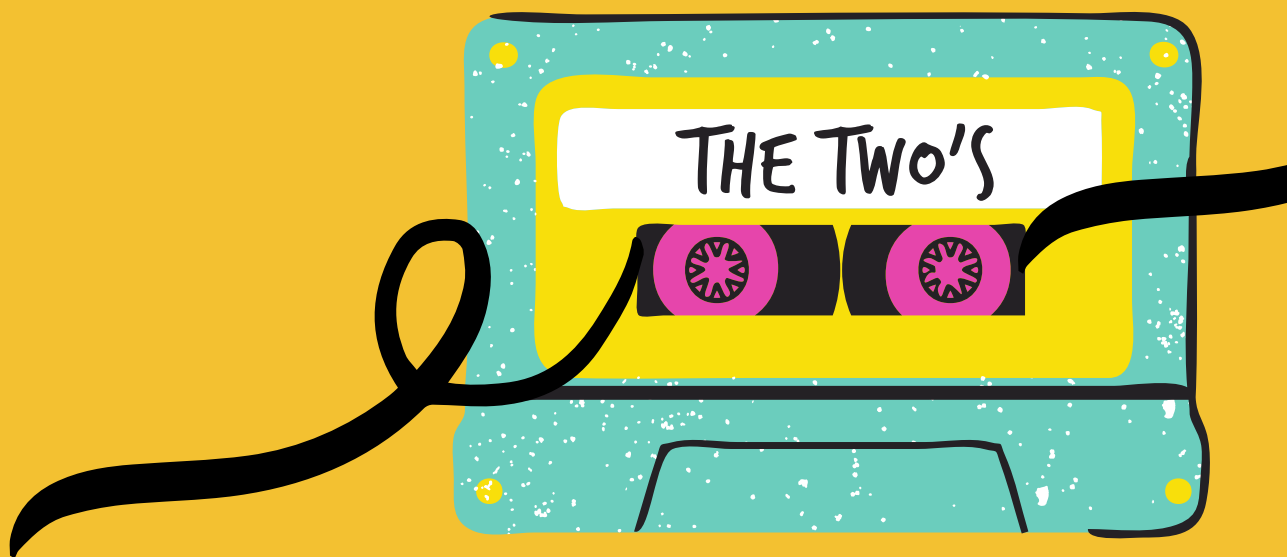




The tides of life are tumultuous indeed
They crash on the shore of my peace
But I am not hesitant to sail
For I have found my harbor in you

Whatever storms lay in my path
Would be but some gusty intrusions
I'll take shelter in your words
And ditch the heaven, while in your arms

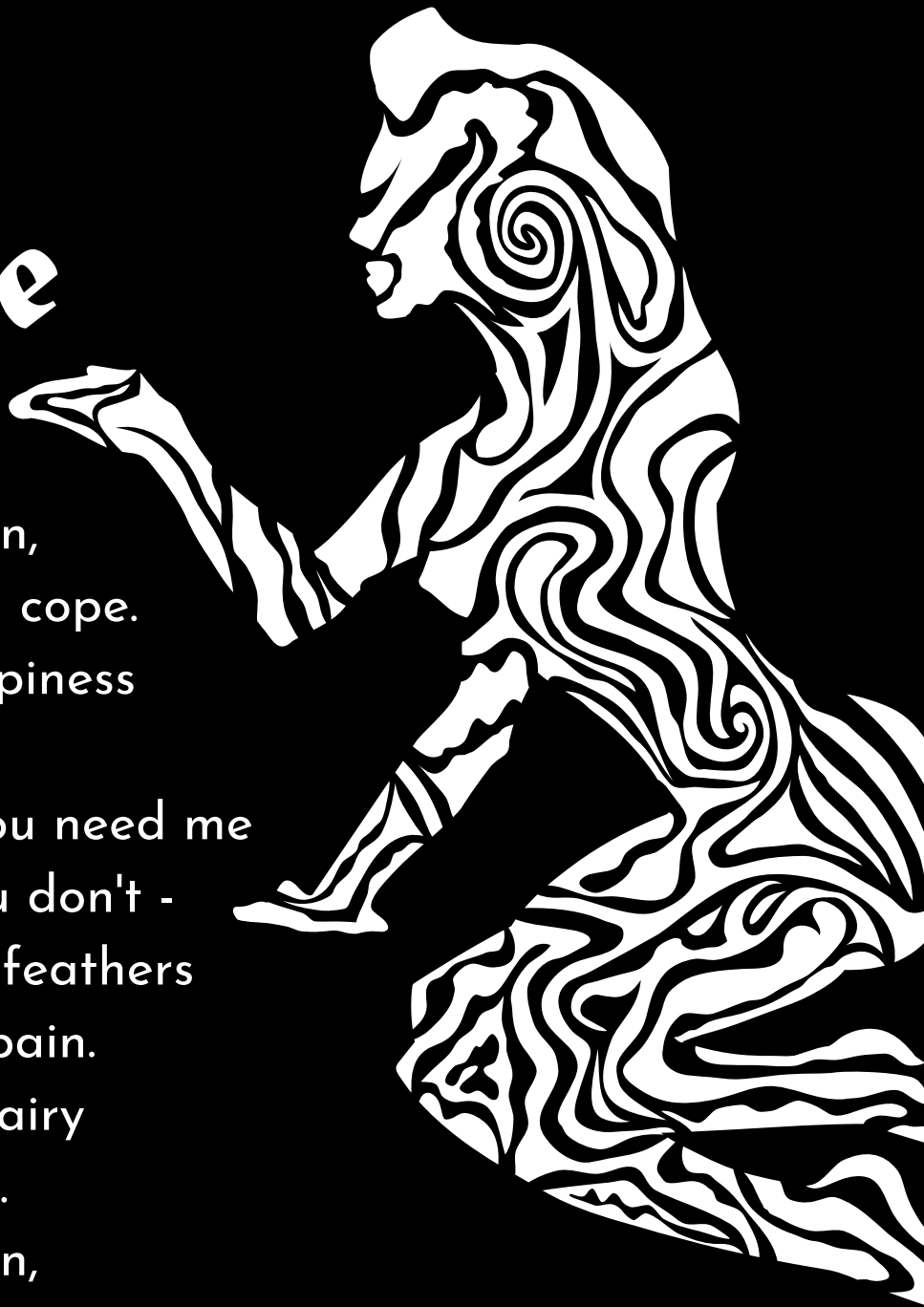
If hope is anything, it is you
My roof in the rain
My flame in the dark
My hope in a person...



**Kriti Khurana, Member, BlueQuill, B.A.
Philosophy Hons., 2nd year, Miranda House**

Hope

I am a loyal maiden,
always helping you cope.
I dwell in your happiness
and joy and pain.
I am there when you need me
still there when you don't -
flying around with feathers
to rid you of your pain.
I am the amiable fairy
with will and scope.
I am a loyal maiden,
and they call me hope.



*Ishani, B.A Applied Psychology Hons,
2nd Year, Gargi college*

BUBBLES

Diyasha, Second Year,
English major, Miranda House

I ask you,
How about some more mediocre writing?
You sip your tea and say,
Ah! I can't see why not.
So I read you my crappy poems. When you love
something,
you enclose yourself within it.
It stretches like a bubble around you, cocooning you in its
warmth.
When you lose it,
the bubble recedes from around you, no matter how hard
you try to grasp at it.
It slips through your fingers and you are left
with a fist full of air
and a lingering bitter
aftertaste,
somewhat like
toothpaste.
You sip your tea.
I tell you about how
I have always had trouble
moving on.
Sometimes I think that
it is much more than a
bubble for me.

Every time I love something,
I make room for it
within myself
not outside or around me.

You must know,
it is difficult to get rid of every little thing
that I made room for.

If I love someone who smokes,
I make room for the
smoking or the
squabbling about smoking.

I make room for the
movies we watch together,
the bands they love and
all our inside jokes.

So tell me,
once they grow out of me,
what happens if there is a new season of the show we had
watched together?

It is a part of me now,
how do I tell them that?

It is not always about human beings, every book I have
loved,

every song, every movie,
everything that I have ever loved,
is like matter

(It occupies space inside me.)

Sometimes I just finish a book and sit,
dumbfounded
because each book comes with its own bubble.

This bubble engulfs me,
I become it.

I wonder, how am I
ever going to read another book and
love it this much?

But eventually, I read another
And another, And another
maybe it is an infinite loop of all the books
I will ever love.

When I think about all the bubbles,
I feel infinite

And not in the way Charlie felt in
The Perks of Being a Wallflower that is for cool American
kids whose parents let them drive I feel infinite
in a quiet way.

Don't look at me like that I say, right now I am full,
I don't have room for you inside me.

You thank me for the tea
and you leave.

I walk away
but in my head, I know that I will
make room for how you dip your biscuits in tea, And then
for you.

The bubble grows.

REVELATIONS



The room I was isolating in soon became an extension
of myself.

My mind expanded into a physical space where
melodies wafted in.

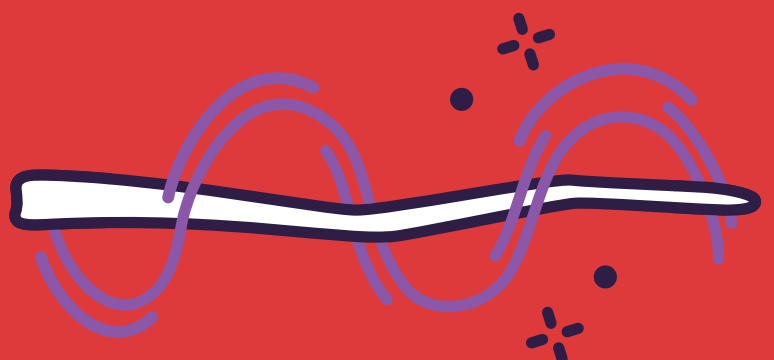
At odd moments I sang to a flower-shaped spill stain
of haldi milk
on the sheets.

Poisoned by Paracetamol and Azithromycin,
writhing in sweat blankets is all my fevered brain
remembers.

But I saw how objects transform in loneliness
Nothing moves without permission, stillness becomes
obedient.

And there is not a word except for mine
So much silence that its too big for a single person to
break

! Therefore I don't. This is what I write instead.



Someday while taking a walk around my bed
I might choke on water.

Danger is very much within, between my two eyes and
inside the shape of my head,
I can be hazardous to myself
What else do I need?

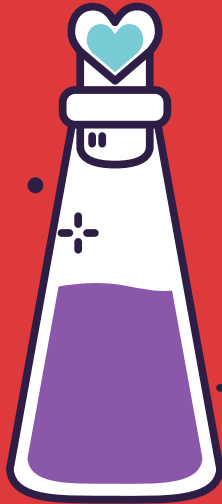
The best part about being dizzy is
You move even when you're still.

Unravel, yes I'm coming apart
like a loose thread being pulled from a sweater.
It's fascinating that soon it can vanish.

I can vanish

Disintegrate into something I do not know yet
And just like that, poof.

Where is the sweater my friend's grandmother knit?
It left a mess behind in a tangle of red.



There is an abrasion in the wall
I take myself and sit inside it

Quietly witnessing the room enliven into a
forest of people-

The bookshelf flails its doors about like
arms inviting a hug,
a blanket flies overhead,

My guitar walks over to the cabinet
and catches an empty bottle of cough
syrup rolling over the edge of
a highrise.

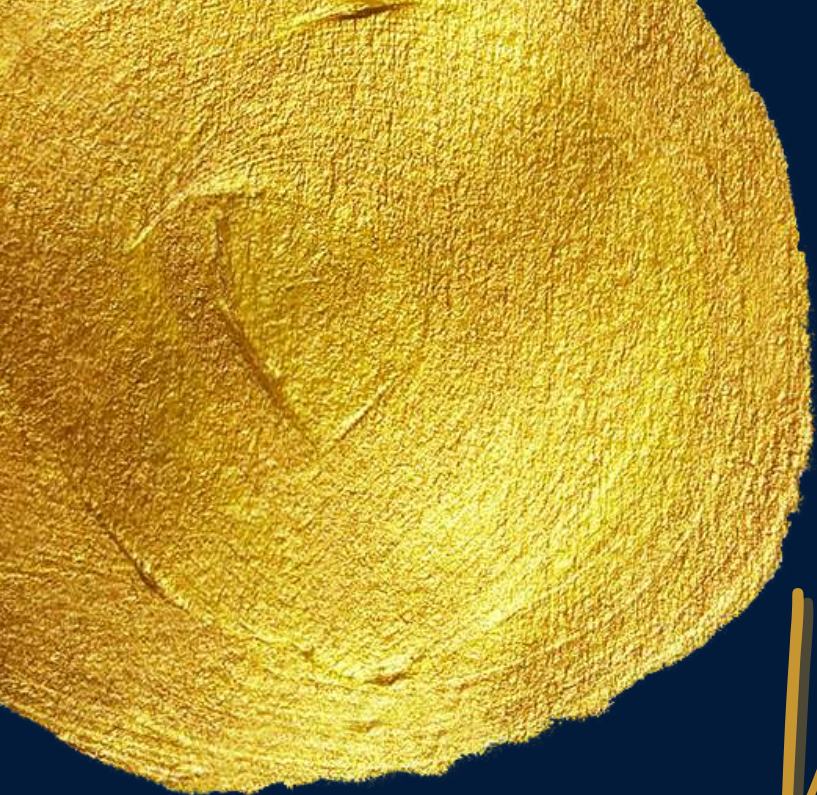


I might never get out of this room
having turned it into a Wonderland of necessities
the question of survival has been answered.
So I can remain crouched, a fly on the wall
And wait till all the characters that climbed out of books
of poetry from my shelf
die of their own causes.
A 'very young thing from New York' straight out of a
Sullivan
Is frighteningly confused about the face staring at her
through
the foggy glass door,
It is the face of a very young thing from New Delhi, out of
a blue paperback by Roy.

The two sit down
One recounts walking home down fifth avenue, at dawn
And the other shares feeling like a cannibal's feast at
Vishwavidyalaya station.

When their corpses line up under my bed
I will sweep
the room,
dutiful daughter,
wash every utensil
ready the garbage for collection
pop a Cetirizine and set down to write their eulogy.





Nickname

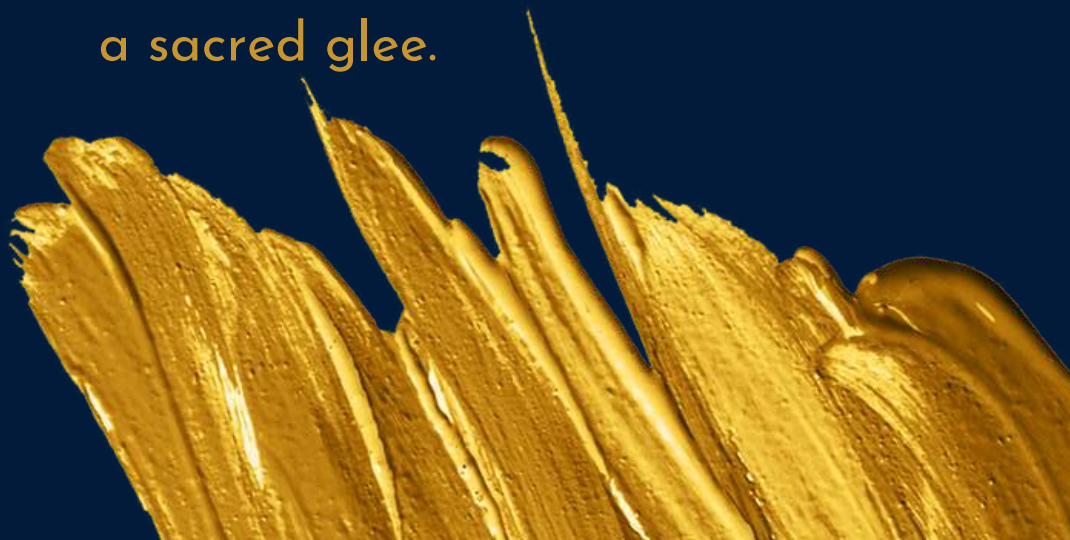
i hated my nickname, before i heard it in your mouth.
soft and reassuring. like for a moment, it was calling
someone else entirely: someone better, someone warmer,
someone who loved and was loved just as fiercely.

someone

who rivaled spring in it's joy and autumn in it's beauty and
winter in its stillness and summer in it's freedom. someone
who made people laugh and held their hands under the
bright bright moon not out of a mysterious longing but

out of

a sacred glee.

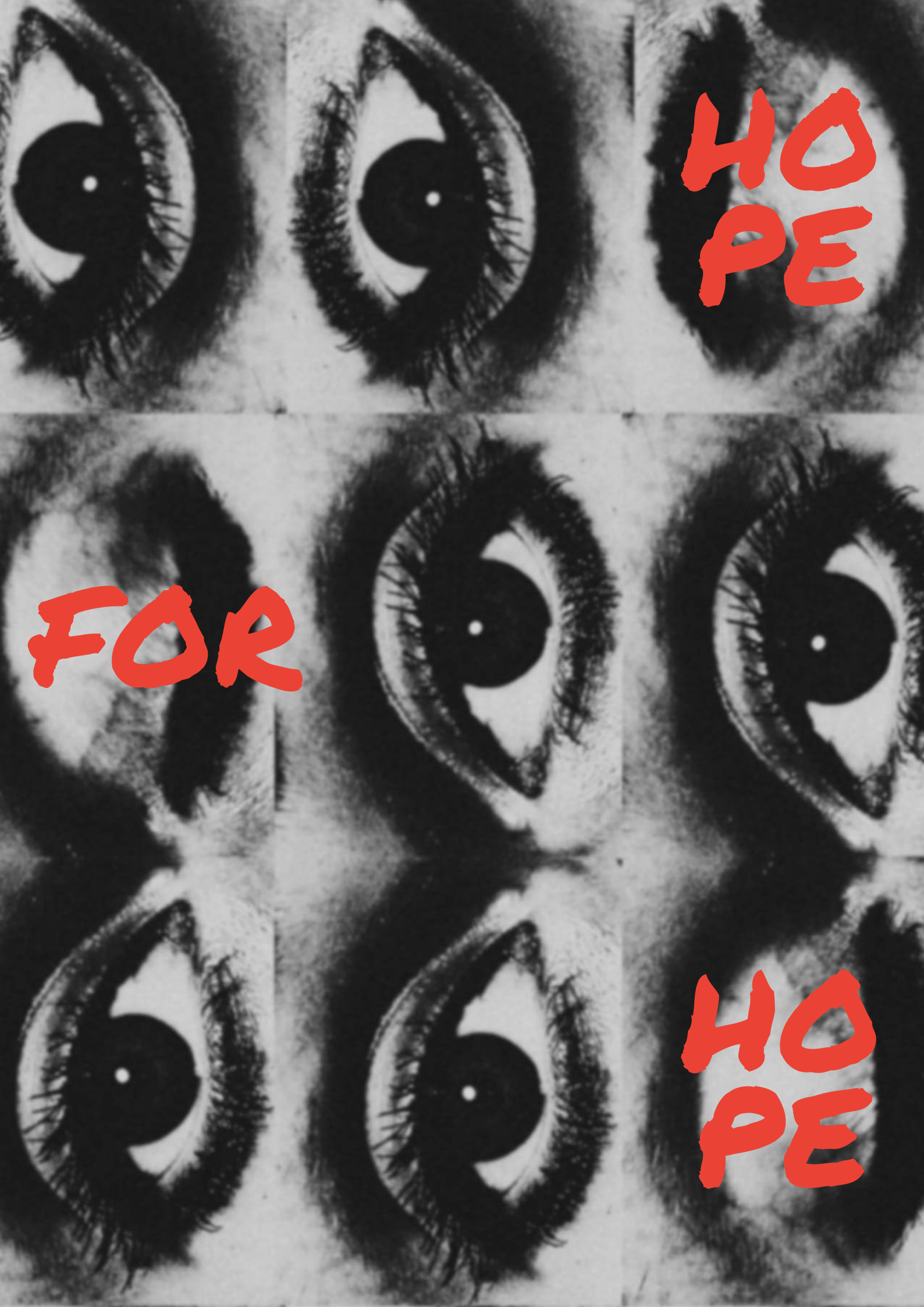




at home, i would whisper it underneath blankets to
myself, like a mantra for bad times. my name no
longer a
reminder of what i hated, no longer something i had to
leave
behind. it had been made a whole now, like biting into
a
bruised orange, only to find out the rot hadn't reached
the
core at all.



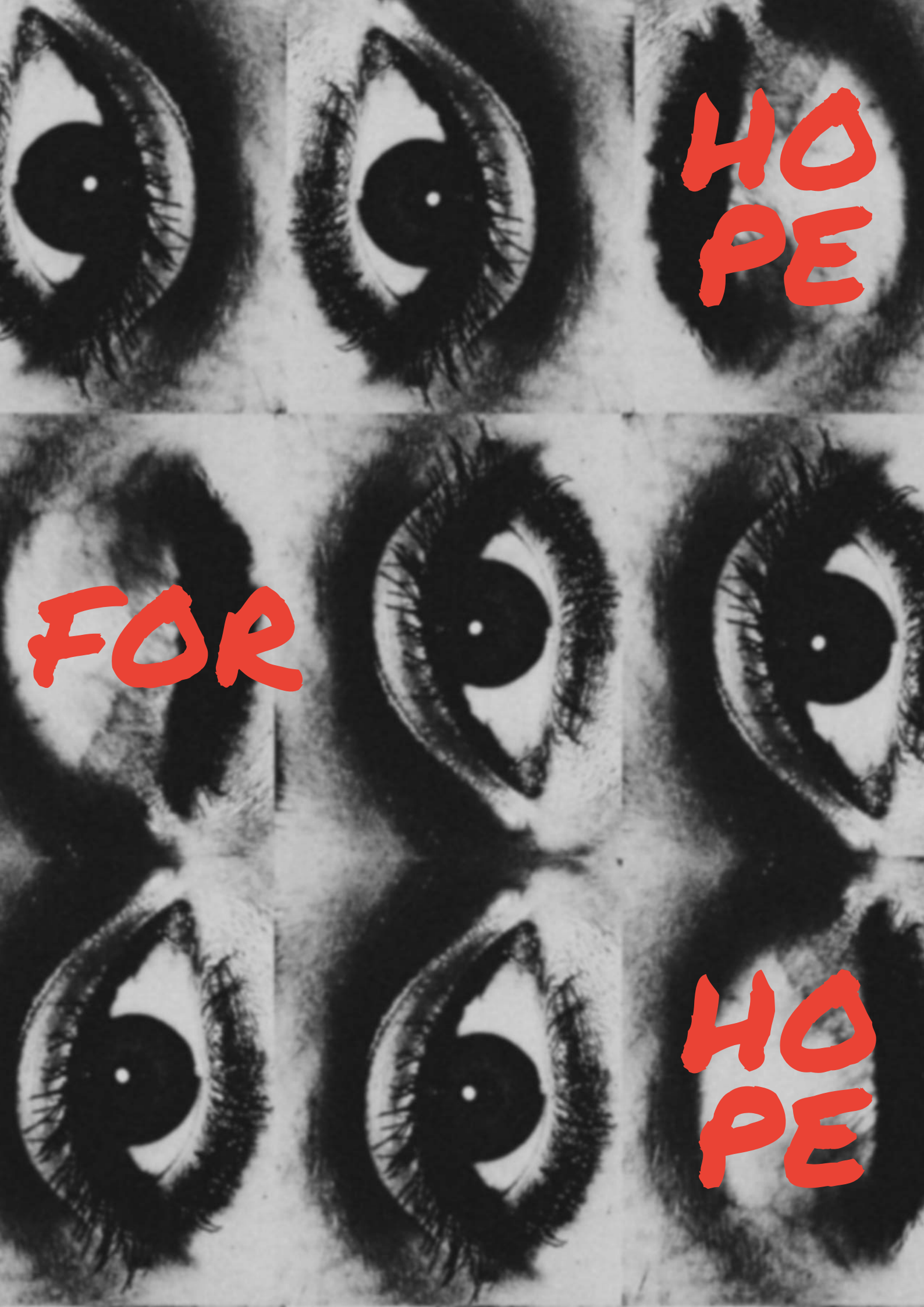
Soumya



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The sky fell yesterday and I
have been running for
a decade.

Maybe home exists on the other side
of time, serving spring
all year long, and I
have been a fool

running away from myself
till all that remained were
empty slots, berths
on a passenger train
hoarding luggage for everyone
who happened to stop by.

Maybe the fallen parts of me
have regrouped on
an abandoned platform
with a cardboard piece whispering
the remaining letters of my name
and that is why the world is round
so I can find my way back some day.

NEXT TO THE LANE OF SERENITY...

Next to the lane of serenity,
Lies a sense of mystery:
Some thousand throbbing hearts and
a million dreams.
This unruffled beauty spoke of a
poetry that could not be understood
Simply hustle in the breeze,
Flutter in the wings and
Whisper in the trees
As the Sun becomes the far-fetched,
much awaited Destiny.

Next to the lane of serenity,
Lies a crave, a sense of yearning:
Some thousand dainty steps and a
million miles covering.
This path spoke of a still unraveled
desire that could not be understood
Uncommonly run in the veins
Wriggle in the arms,
Flounder in the legs, flicker in the
eyes
Fillip the heart and burn like a flame!

Next to the lane of serenity,
Lies a a sense of security:
Fewer words, infinite feelings
Incomplete sentences, endless fantasies
This calmness within spoke of a sensation that
could not be understood-
Only felt and believed in.
Dangling in the soul, flapping its wings
Inhaling the scent of freedom, away from the
fizzle and the flinch.

Next to the lane of serenity,
Lies a sense of new beginning:
Burning passions, skipping beats
A million dashes, a land free from everything.
The shackles break, hope arises,
Fervours glow, flounders become flimsy
Through the romance
Of the burning hearts,
The souls find expression against the curbing
stigmas.
Challenging the brilliance of the Sun itself!
Dreaming to create, creating to dream!

*Bhavika Sachan, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. (Honours) English, 3rd Year, Miranda
House College*

PROMISE TO THE SELF

Unreal as it was, my then overwrought heart was now overwhelmed by a surreal feeling. I was seated in a yogic posture, almost as if imitating the Buddha's quest for nirvana, already conceptualizing the idea of life as nothing but a cycle of our own actions. Though my lids were shut, I could unmistakably gauge the blissful aura of the place I was in. The murmur of a steady flowing stream came from somewhere and the pleasant breeze caused the leaves to flutter at times. Though a sparrow or two chirped once, I knew they were watching me, confused but intent. As I inhaled once again, the air felt divine. I knew the morning air was alluring, but today it felt like the breath of existence.

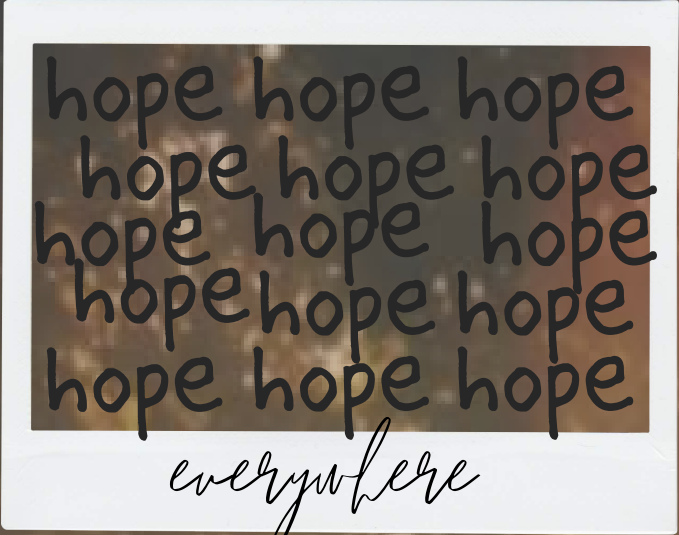
Within just a year and a half, life took a complete circle from denial to helplessness to numbness. But this morning, a new feeling germinated and I named it, 'the seed of hope'. It all began with an inevitable shutdown of life, when all were forced into the four walls of their homes while the clock ticked by and I watched the still mountain outside the bedroom window. The morning sun heralded a new day while the Prussian blue skies summoned lonely nights. Yet a voice inside me spoke that, 'better days are near'. Three years of campus life in an unexplored city with unfamiliar faces was summarized into a year of online sessions, recordings and exhaustive lectures, until one fine day they announced the final culmination of a chapter. Even then, the face on the other side of the mirror smiled and said, 'This too shall pass'.

In the ensuing months, losses occurred like seasons changing. Friends turned to unfamiliar faces, lovers let their desire diminish, families wept the untimely end of young and old, experiences became photographs stuck onto scrapbooks, moments unlived were all a blur and days swiftly turned to age-old memories. If anything remained in me, then that was the 'seed of hope'— the subtle ray of optimism that shone bright like the light at the end of a tunnel; the little message hidden inside the half-sunk bottle that read, 'cling on, it's all temporary'.

I inhaled deep. My eyes were still shut but the muscles felt easy and the chest was not tight anymore. I slowly parted my lids and let those eyeballs wander, as I exhaled for the final time. I thought for one last time, "You only fear losing when you're attached to something". No attachments, I repeated to myself.

I didn't have a confidant to make her my human diary, I didn't have a lover whose comforting embrace could soothe my pain, I didn't have a lord who showed me they were there when I mumbled alone to the ceiling, I didn't have a parent who could comprehend my deteriorating mind as months turned to years and I never said a word. But this morning, the seed of optimism bore fruit and all the formidable times looked nothing but a short movie, which never really transpired into a reality. I read it correctly, "You are the hope for yourself; you bear the light that must guide you through the kaleidoscope of life. Trust the process of it".

But where did I read it? Was it some ancient novel or an advice an elder had given me? I can feel my fingers shake as I type this; it is me who fathomed it. I got up and placed my feet firmly on the ground, as my toes felt the moist grass underneath. My lips curved into a smile and I looked up to the sky. It was a shade of bright blue today. I began walking on my way and the little squirrels followed.



hope hope hope
hope hope hope
hope hope hope
hope hope hope
hope hope hope
everywhere

Hopelessness might be the most
terrifying feeling I've ever felt,
and hope might just be the loveliest.
That overwhelming emotion you feel
when you look up at the skies,
or out into the sea,
the peace you feel when you realise
how minute and inconsequential you
are,
when compared to something that feels
so infinite.
That kind of hope,
feels so beautiful.
Loneliness
makes me feel hopeful-
maybe one day,
I won't be so alone, and even if I am,

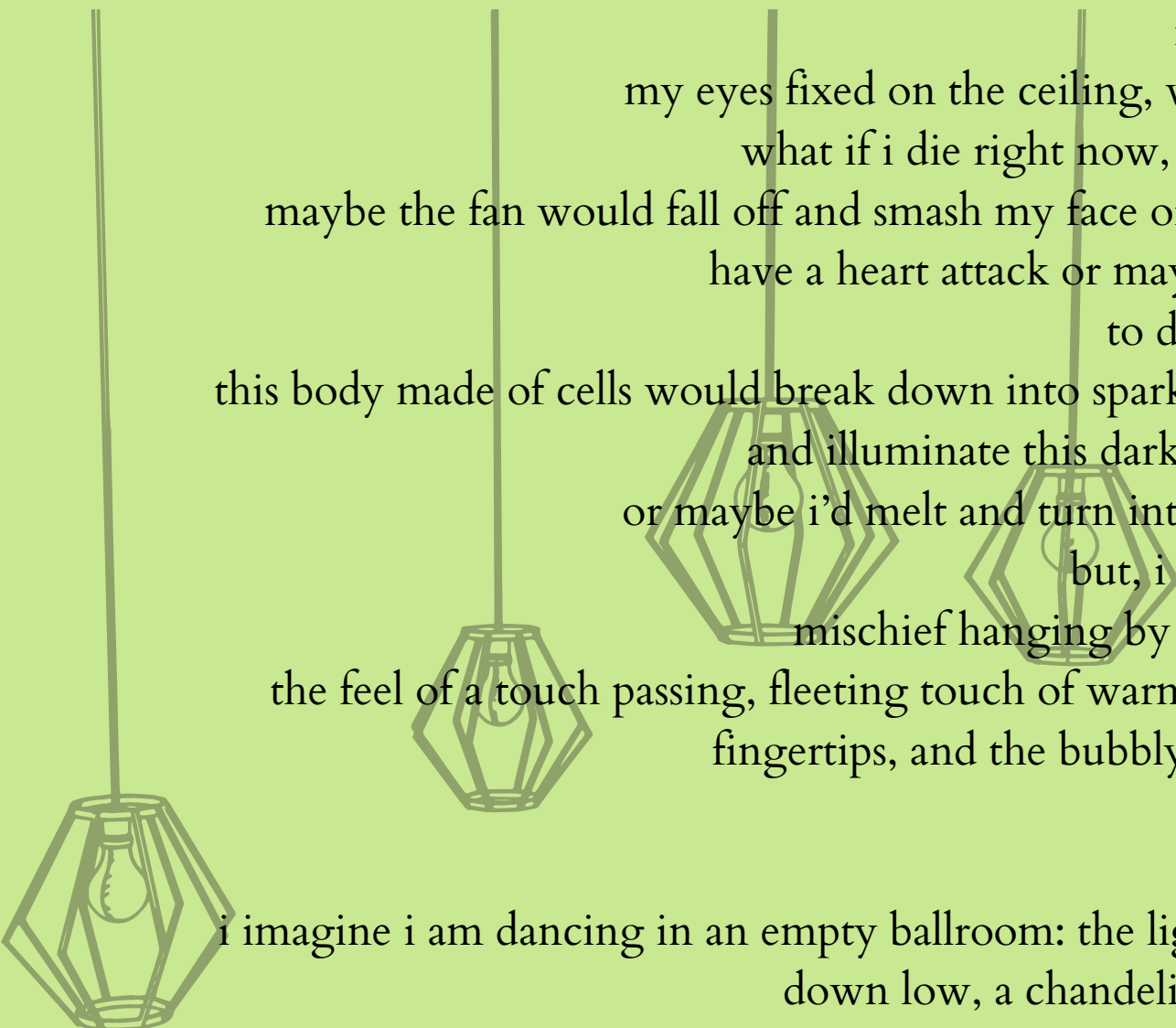
I'd still have hope,
hope for the world around,
for new dawns from lonely skies.
Hope that maybe one day,
I'll look down from heights,
and instead of seeing myself fall,
maybe I'll see me fly.
Maybe one day I'll look up to the
skies, and breathe easier.
I'll find hope
in empty spaces,
in the words of a book, or
a smile on a loved one's face.
Maybe I'll see hope
wherever life takes me.
Maybe I'll find hope wherever life
lets me.

*Adithi S.R, B.A English honours,
1st Year,
Miranda House*

UNTITLED

UNTITLED

UNTITLED

Four geometric pendant lights, each with a faceted, lantern-like design, hang from thin black cords. They are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from the top left towards the bottom right of the page.

i lay down,
my eyes fixed on the ceiling, wondering,
what if i die right now, right here?
maybe the fan would fall off and smash my face or maybe i'd
have a heart attack or maybe i'd start
to disintegrate.
this body made of cells would break down into sparkling atoms
and illuminate this darkened room
or maybe i'd melt and turn into a puddle.
but, i see a smile,
mischievous hanging by its corners,
the feel of a touch passing, fleeting touch of warmth on cold
fingertips, and the bubbly laugh of a
little kid.

i imagine i am dancing in an empty ballroom: the lights turned
down low, a chandelier hanging
overhead that i can see shattering into a million pieces, its
crystals and diamonds strewn on the floor
left to be picked up, left to be sewn into beautiful necklaces.

i see space all around me: twinkles of light appear
and burst into explosions.

my mind is wandering into time and space -
empty, crowded, so many faceless people i see,
echoes
of some distant past ring in my head that i cannot
separate.

i think i'll bury my rag doll to have some peace.
i turn on my side, an empty wall, no, it's not
empty: i can make out a face, a happy face i can
see a
deer frolicking chasing after a butterfly.

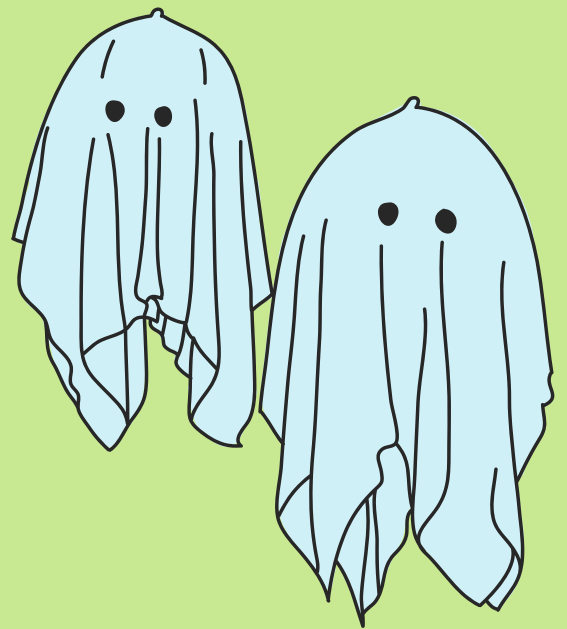
i close my eyes, i see i lose it all.

i am crying my mother's dead,
i am working my father's dead,
i am not visible, i am dead.

i open my eyes, the sun is bright outside,
i can hear the rustle of the leaves,
the chirp of the birds,
i can hear my mum telling me to get up,
my papa listening to the radio.

i can feel my heartbeat, my skin, my breath and
i hope to have it all.

Kafi Lehar





*Image by Tanish Bafna,
Ashoka University*



♥
♥
♥
♥
beating
hearts

“No one asks to be born.
And no one wants to die.”
—Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Our beating hearts spell h o p e
15-25 times every minute.
So hope dies only
when we do.

Khushi Kaushal, Jesus and Mary College

Photo by Siddhi Joshi

We haven't slept in a week
You took up your wicked armor again tonight
And I've drowned all my wins in an intoxicated hurt
The sun keeps moving, and time, always time
With vines entangling us in poison kisses
For months there has been a repeat of a broken record-
You keep talking in aimless metaphors
And I simply don't say anything at all.

And yet

I make up fantasies out of our impossible love
While your hand still holds my cruel scars.
You exchange your hate of sugar for the sweets you buy me
I kill my superiority for your trashy movies
We eat cereal at midnight.

We're so very small, but you make me believe in great things
Sitting in smoke, waiting for the dawn
Head on shoulder, heart in heart
The broken toys of our pasts build a staircase out of our
thoughts
And finally, we open our eyes and dream again.

Vasundhara T
Member, BlueQuill

Cranberry
TONIC

A look back in time.
I see you cry, the tears
glistening in your eyes.
But you won't hide.
I know, now.
"It's not black and white."
They try, to brush away
their crimes, with silence.
But you won't be quiet.
They knew, all along.

IMMUNITY BOOSTERS

It's crazy when we think about, where we are.
That even after all this pain, we've still, not fallen apart.
Faith, hope, love...
Maybe this, is what makes us, strong.

A rush to the start.
Has just pointing fingers, ever been enough?
We beat as one heart.
Even with the distance, no one ever seems too far.
Call it luck, call it fate, we survived through all the change.
But with all that was lost, still a question remains.
Can they divide us? Will we let them get away?
Only time will tell, let's say someday, for a start.

Yet, isn't it crazy when we think about who we are?
And that even after all this hate, we still haven't fallen apart.
Guess it's our love, hope, faith...
That truly makes us strong.



*Sunaina Mishra,
Member, BlueQuill,
BA (Hons.) Philosophy, 2nd year, Miranda House*

A WORLD ABOVE

At times, no, oftentimes, my mind soars...like a lark. It flings me into an
incandescent expanse of
diaphanous desires; the ground beneath my feet scraped off. The flight is
intangible, verging on the
transcendent. So much so that my senses don't stir up until the glib realisation of
my mental poverty
hits me, dazedly enough, by the brilliance of the chimera that befogs my sight.
Indeed, the thought
of mortgaged ambitions is the only verity that can stop me from plunging into this
abyss of
unreality, which nevertheless begets death, but whose fleecy mirage lures me into
wafting through
the air, living that illusion again.

It's only too elegant to bend along the tunes of "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay", as
Otis Redding
croons into my ears:
cause I've had nothing to live for/and look like
nothin's gonna come my way/so I'm just
gonna sit on the dock of the bay/watching
the tide roll away...

But the rich pastures of faraway lands tell me otherwise. They entice me, with a
distracting
sublimity, to ferry myself across the sea of nothingness whose end abuts the
horizon, a tangerine
aerial line my arms would stretch out to seize. Of my grabbing the contours of the
atmosphere I did
see (by Jove, trust me), or at least my Walter Mitty genes caused me to 'see', but
through the lensed
eye of my mind — never, in thick.



William Blake, 'The Song of Los'

In my surrealist appetite during those
insensible years I dreamt up a cloud. A hued
one — smeared
with pigments of muted yellows and overripe
reds to the point of tawdriness; in whose
offspring, a
naive meadow (reproduced asexually, it
seems) I floated around in a thespian trance,
drunk in
quaint delusions amid 'whipped' lilies and
'sugared' daisies. Like these, many such (but
less jazzy)
delusions throttle me on many a days and
nights. But they fade, in a pellucid vapour,
during another
of those days and nights as I sit by the blue-
rimmed window in my attic, gazing out on
the thicket
afar, lost in thought.

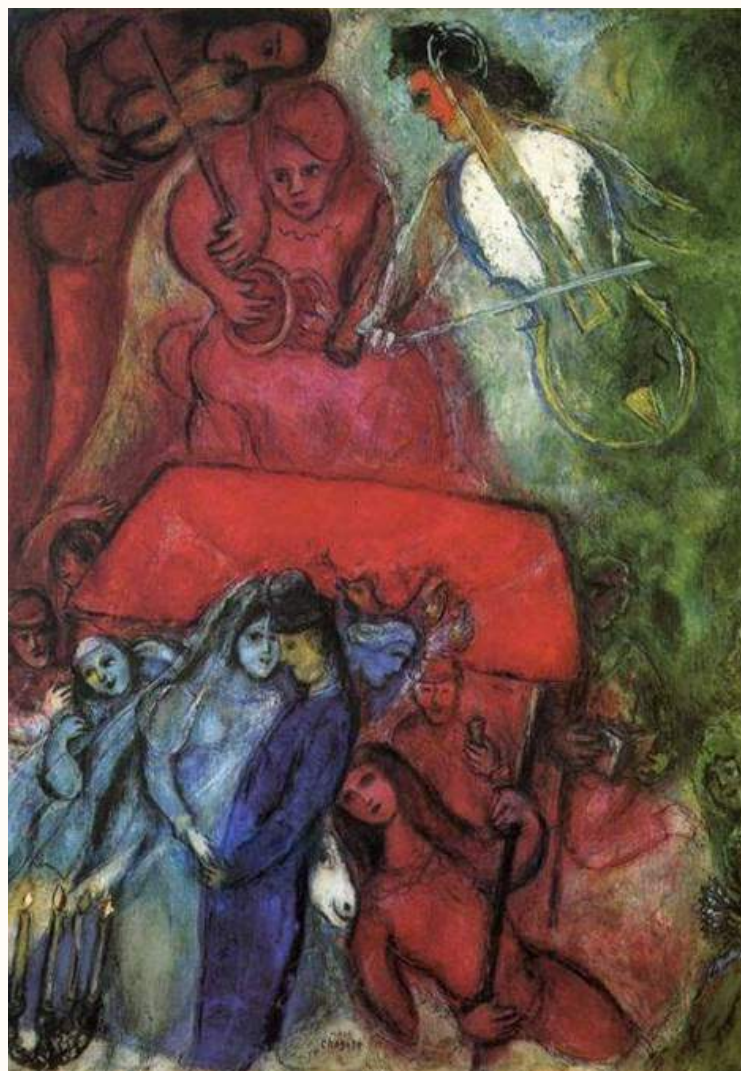
Just as the particles that stick out in the colloidal crepuscular rays that filter
through this window, my unwoven desires too teeter in a wobbly motion, which
even the laws of
the universe, I'm assured, cannot control.

The objects of far loot my conscience, whispering Austenian destinies to my unwise
ears. In virtue
of the thinly-veiled misgivings I fought so hard to conceal, my ears, the child of
wisdom, yielded to
the melodies of the panpipe; no matter how faint and fragile it would sound at times,
that there was
a smattering of hope in another world was all that pertained to me.

The much-ballyhooed rationalism of humans crumbles into a woebegone heap when
the
kaleidoscope of mosaicked imaginings is placed before the eyes. In a patterned
reflection it spills
vivid visions of fictitious spaces, with its self-built codes and walls, creating something
of a
fantastical Gesamtkunstwerk, — a make-believe world our inner beings would ache to
experience.

Plainly, a luscious wine brewed by the artful human intellect. What's more, as a
tailpiece — laced hurriedly at the end for a majestic closure — yarns of the so-called
Elysian gardens are fed unto our
voluptuous hearts, but as a tailpiece of a tale of impossibility.

On my more sober days (which is
oftener during these 'mature'
years), I don the garb of a mystic
to pose myself an unromantic
question. Whether this — the
illusory constructions of my
being born in a country eight
thousand miles away, of my being
ringed to a superhero of sorts
with Pachelbel's Canon humming
in the background, of my flying
across snow lands as an arctic
tern — whether this is all I can
make good on my transient
existence; to squander a corporeal
life in an incorporeal world of my
crafting.



Marc Chagall, 'The Wedding'

While on those days when I'm lesser of an agnostic, I wonder why
humans, of such quixotically-
inventive capacities, were created by the Divine, as St. Augustine
would say, with utmost perfection no other celestial being can
reproduce. In the face of relentless amoebic hopes I cling onto,
"Was
that work of beatific imagination decreed to wither so
unremarkably?" I ask.

The fecund desires that take root in barren sands, are not so much
(or so my daemon speaks) things "with feathers"—to use a
hackneyed Dickinsonian phrase — as the soft wings of the Mexican
Monarch butterfly whose maple orange effluxes the ebullience of
my imaginings, short lived as they are in the grand scheme that is
life. The words we carve on the branches of our memory, an
imperfect carpentry nevertheless, hoping that it shall remain there
unsullied even as time washes its tides over it— this is the immutable
of all of human passions. It's a burden, I feel, this wretched human
thing, that froths in elegant whitecaps to deflower the will that was
believed (once) to reign supreme over the whole of animal
kingdom, so much that it gave her an unwarranted privilege to
slit its flesh and devour in flavours — an aside but yes, this human
thing that befouls its own temple. But only too human it is, and as
anti-theodiceans would have it, an immortal burden God
alone wrought.

... ✍ ...

Ayesha Hanish

How the Moon Got company

Jack was thoroughly shaken when his mother rained abuses on him for selling their cow for a seed. He was dejected but decided to try burying the magic seed at night when his mother would be asleep. As the moon crawled sleepily into the dark black canvas, Jack ventured out and buried the magic seeds deep in the forest and poured water over them. Then he whispered the magic words

"Abracadabra. Glabaklablaga. Dear little beans, rise from your sleep and show your magic."

As soon as he uttered these words, the beans started sprouting tiny hands and legs. Two eyes and a toothless mouth began forming on its little body. Jack watched with wonder as the little beans man yawned and stretched as if it just awoke from a deep slumber. The beans man lifted his hands and parted his legs and started growing, both in length and width. Jack ran towards his house and shouted

"Do not grow beyond this line." Then he drew a line in front of his house with his toes.

"Okay" said the beans man and when he reached the line he stopped growing horizontally and continued growing vertically.

The moon was dozing off. It was a day full of celestial meetings and she was completely tired by the time they wrapped up their discussions and threw the black blanket over the world. But she had to keep on shining as those down below were dependent on her. So she kept on brightly illuminating the night sky even though her eyes were closed.

The beanstalk kept on growing. It surpassed the moon but could not stop to have a chat as she appeared to be sleeping. One of the naughty branches, saw an opportunity. While the stalk kept growing up, the branch grew down and down and slowly crept into the moon's nostrils. Even the nose hairs inside were sleeping. The naughty branch tickled them.

"Achooooooooooooooooooooo"

The whole world shook. No one has heard such a large sneeze. All the goo in the moon's nose was smeared on the night sky. They were all blinking in confusion at the sudden change in their habitat.

Jack had sat on the ground in fear when the supposed earthquake occurred. He looked up and saw the night sky shining with tiny twinkling beings. Oh how he wondered what they were! He laid one hand on the stalk and looked at the beautiful night sky and whispered

"So this is your magic"

*Shivani Krishnakumar,
B.A History, 3rd Year,
Miranda House*



Memories



Lonely as dreams are
For I was their sole custodian
Every morning, I opened my eyes
Glued to the warming sky
With hopes of meeting you
To share stories of the night.

In unknown city rooms,
I listened and learnt from you.
You build within a home-
A treasure box of memories
To carry with you
As you travel to the old and often to the new.

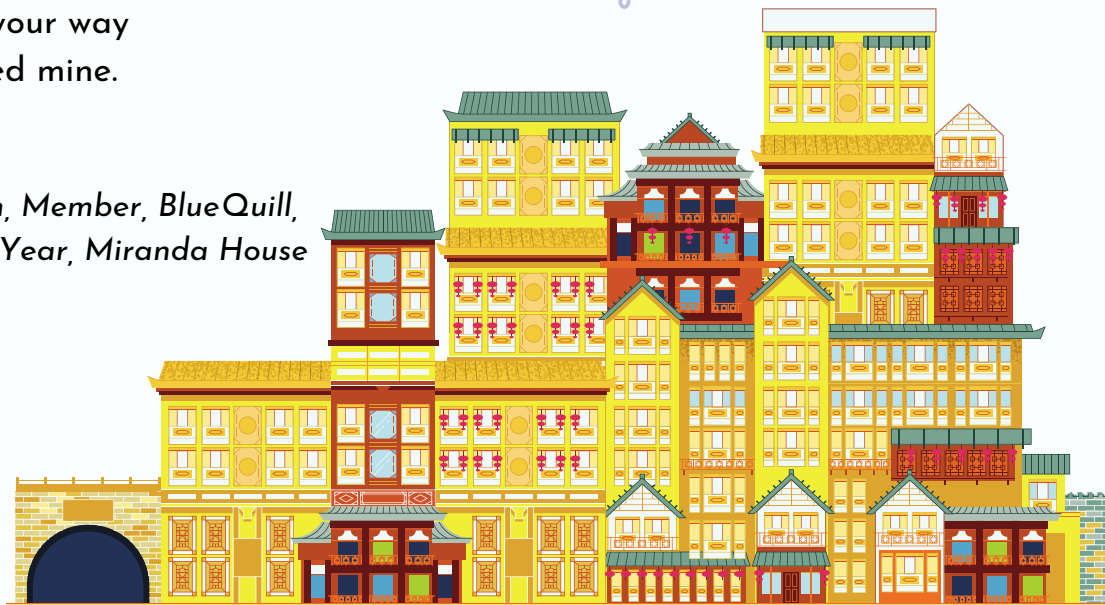
Momentary as we are
Fleeting like the dreams
On the crossroads where we meet.
Your hand now, and I knew-
Another farewell for you.

There's no pleading, no moaning, or stopping you.
It is neither of our first time-
Cruel as it is, the fate must be embraced
To allow you to grow
And turn over a pink leaf.

Hopefully wherever you go,
You'll remember me as a soft reel
Fading but stuck,
Over the film of your life.
And with a smile-
Leave behind hints of your passing by.
So that perchance, if our paths did connect,
I will know that your way
Has finally crossed mine.

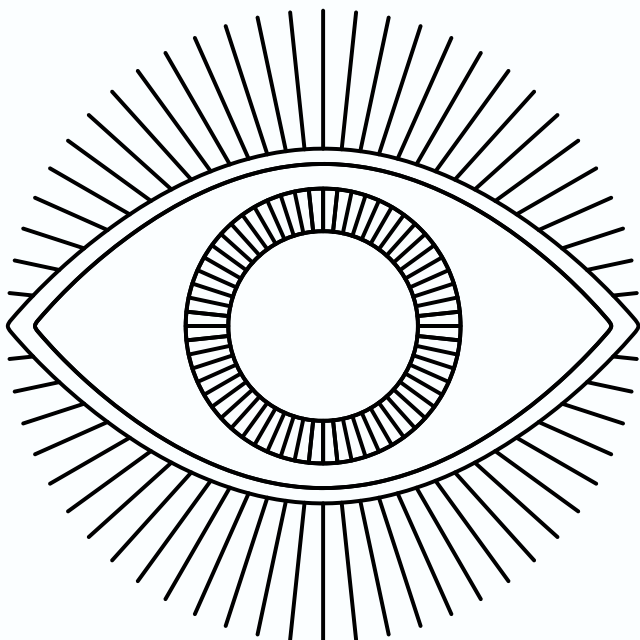
*Bhavika Sachan, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. (Honours) English, 3rd Year, Miranda House*

AS THE CITY WHISPERS



We've never looked each other in the eye
though I find glimpses of you in every other
particle when I am not looking
:the smile on the old man's face when
we cross paths
:in my mother's prayer while I watch her sob
silently
:skies turn grey when I turn blue
:windy days with sunlight on a sunday
afternoon
we might be hitting rock bottom at the
moment
but I promise we'll make it(break) out in
time.

Ruhma Ali



A
CONVERSATION
WITH
HOPE

(UN)ORDINARY HOPE

Engulfing the first breath of fresh petrichor,
I unbraid my hair strands to run amok with
ease;

To catch the light rays that blink One Two
Three, Like May's mimosa sailing with aurora
breeze.

Long, brown and satin-soft,
They hope to escape from my unsullied ribbons;
Now romancing firtishly with their long-lost
breeze,
Freely they sway like two smitten pigeons.

Sun-filtered raindrops when break free from
treacherous clouds,
Waving through treetops and captivating
storms;
They blossom the silent flowers of barren
hinterlands,
To liberate from the clutches of venomous-
vicious thorns.



The old curtains of my crooked housewalls,
Bear seasoned imprints of fresh Bougainvillea;
Playing hide-and-seek behind murky windowpanes,
They hope to escape in some land of scintilla.

Drip, Drop, Drip- it hails,
The iridescent ink on naked leaves;
Emancipating gracefully from plastic-walled
enclosures,
Hoping to bloom in perennial poetries.

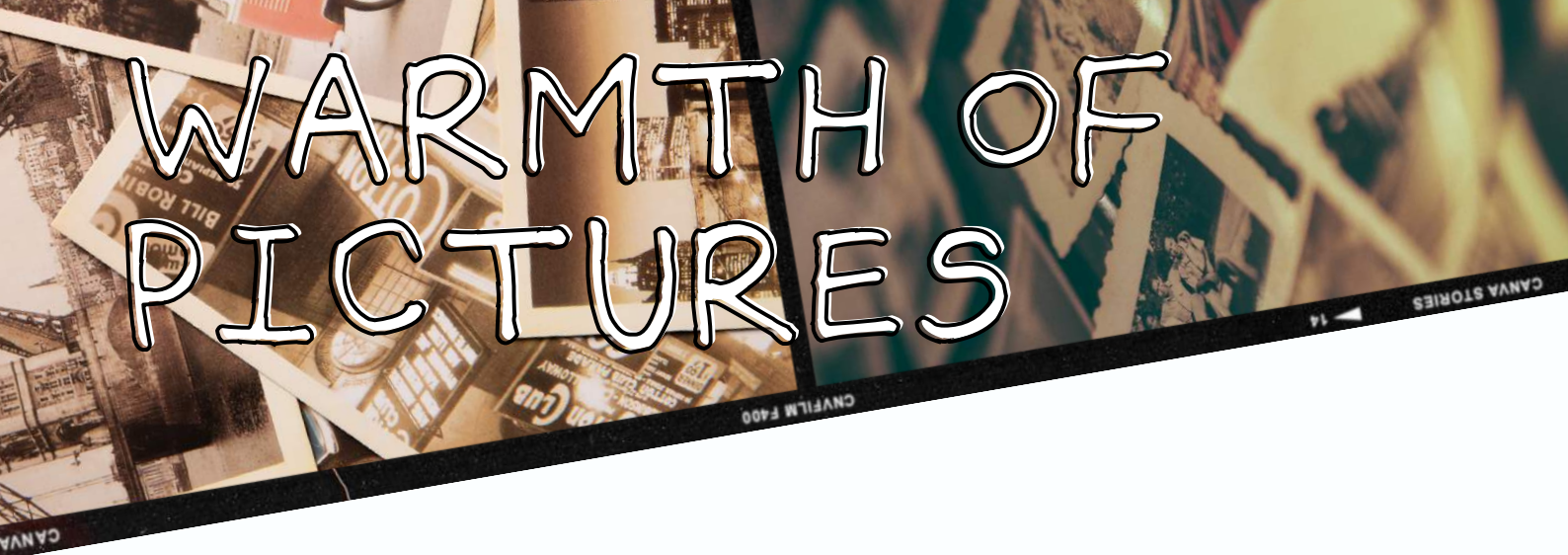
The wine-red brooks of my monthly blood,
Break free from shooting membranes in tenacity;
A wild concoction of elixir and ambrosia,
It weaves silhouettes of my hope and longevity.

Behemoth phrases and eminent proverbs,
They define Hope in the language of experts;
My Hope is prevailing, it settles in ordinaries,
In mild romance it saunters and cradles in
unknown reveries.

For such is my Hope-
It witnesses the fall, it devours the flood,
It contemplates transparent waters, and swallows
violent blood.

*Tanya Sood, Member, BlueQuill,
BA(H) Political Science, 3rd Year, Miranda House*





WARMTH OF PICTURES

We'd decided to get the family albums out. Partly because someone mentioned some anecdote and we'd all started laughing uncontrollably following the gradual pouring of comical embellishment onto the story till we had various scenarios featuring my relatives' quirky personas. The other half was because we felt the day being close to our unspoken but lingering in our minds—the periodic remembrance of the good old days. It's like a recharging session, punctuated with happy sighs and contented eyes, whatever the goings-on. The old and tattered *jhola* was patched up with uneven colours, as if it was fitting for the memories to be held by the fellow who shared those days with them. Upturned to give out the contents after it was set in the middle, the albums were of different sizes and shapes, but mostly without any hard coverings and almost all black and white. We reached for them, some pages hanging out mid-torn and uneven from the side view. I gently flipped over the contents, looking long and hard at the photos, imagining the day playing in my mind's eye and everything leading up to the moment someone decided to freeze the memory onto film.

Some had me nestling comfortably against my mother's chest. In one, I had black shades and a cowboy hat on, and a rolled-up piece of paper inserted at the corner of my mouth to look like a menacing county sheriff.

I looked up from my scanning of the end picture to the stillness and quiet settled over everyone. Everyone seemed to have gone to someplace else, turned inwards to their mind's reel playing of old times probably. Someone stirred only to trade their finished work, only after inhaling the dust of past days did they borrow one from the pile around which we were all seated as if taking warmth from the bonfire. My cousin asked me, pointing at a picture of a straight-standing, bespectacled man with a chequered shirt tucked into his too high pants, sealed off by a belt and I just jerked my chin towards my jacket-clad uncle with his winking Rolex. Still smiling, I looked away from my wide-eyed cousin and reached over to take one for myself as I settled back to let the memories awash me to the shore of the past, to let the reminiscing quiet settle over me, filling me with hope and promise of many more days like these—days when we draw strength and hope from a seemingly innocuous *jhola*.

*Medha Khetpal, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A Programme, 3rd year, Miranda House*



As you leave behind the gates,
and all that guards you from your fate,
will you shed a tear, or swear you'll never
change?

Even the wind you've felt every day,
doesn't it suddenly seem strange?
Just like an hourglass, with its time, fading
away.

But what of your heart? Isn't it heavy?
With all the pain, you know
you'd never be able to heal?
Still, you've come so far now,
will you lose it all for what you fear?
So instead, you close your eyes, and repeat:
"Don't worry, it's still a memory."

Now you're walking down the street,
grasping at straws to hold on, to some meaning,
wondering if they'll ever miss who you used to be.
And it's quite the scary feat that you've managed
to achieve.

But won't it feel so lonely, with no one to share
your grief?

Yet, this isn't the end, don't forget!
There's still a path with your name on its end.
Maybe with the sum of what you've lost,
and given up, you'll get all that you dreamt.
Let's cherish each dawn, and remember all,
those who've come and those who've gone.
As we close our eyes, and repeat:
"Don't worry, they're still a memory."

*Sunaina Mishra, Member, BlueQuill, BA (Hons.)
Philosophy, 2nd year, Miranda House*



STILL A MEMORY

THE SYMMETRY OF LIFE

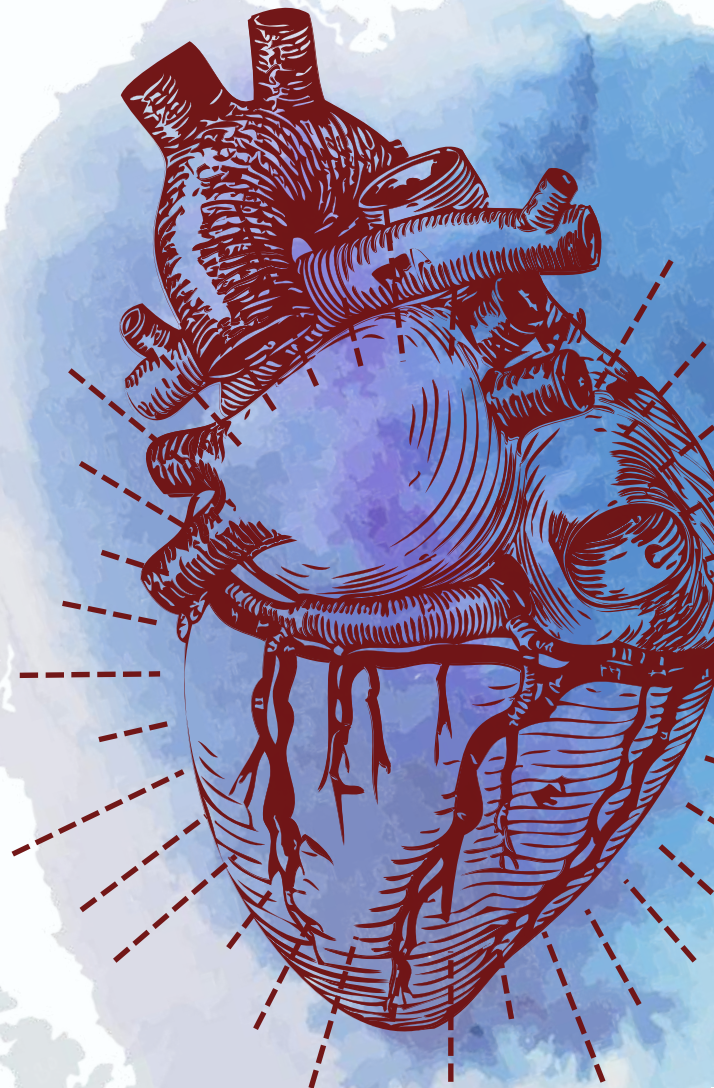
Biologically speaking, Human Hearts are just a little larger than the size of our fists. But hey, WE know that isolating the science from our hearts, they're actually preeetty big. Big enough to hold hope and love boundlessly.

Two simple, short words. Hope. Love. They skip out of your lips in a single sound, so small. Yet, they intertwine with each other to hoist the entire world upon themselves.

Life has a curious way of sending this dynamic duo trickling into your days, whether you notice it or not.

Sometimes, these instances are subtle. But often, they are bold and remarkable. I have experienced them too, of course. But one particular instance has stuck with me like a little sweet-toothed child clinging onto the counter glass of a pastry shop.

It was a hot, crispy day in the middle of May. You know how Delhi Summertime is. Akin to a rude guest at your own dinner party. If I were sane, I would have been wise enough to not step out of my house.



Quite frankly, I was not having the best of times. That may also have been a reason I was largely numb to the idea of collapsing due to a heatstroke. I simply did not care. So to the cemetery I went, sweating and panting in the ruthless sun.

Before I left, though, I mentioned it to one of my friends, Anant. He promptly decided to tag along with me. Even though he is the sort of person who'd go hide in his own refrigerator if someone dared ask him to go out when it's hot. He said he would like it better if I didn't go alone, despite the scorching heat. I protested, but he wouldn't hear it. He had a faint idea of what I was going through in my mind. He was stubborn and didn't want to leave me by myself for this.

I confess, I felt grateful. I wouldn't be alone. Albeit I had been isolating and marinating in self-imposed loneliness.

I had never been to such a place before. The cemetery felt just as I had imagined. Silent, so still. Relaxed, it was quite the opposite of what popular media would like us to believe. The leaves rustled lightly. Vines and creepers seemed to sway in a wind that did not exist.

The sunlight filtered through leaves and formed mosaics of light and shade on the ground. Little birds twittered and squirrels played on the stone-tiled path.

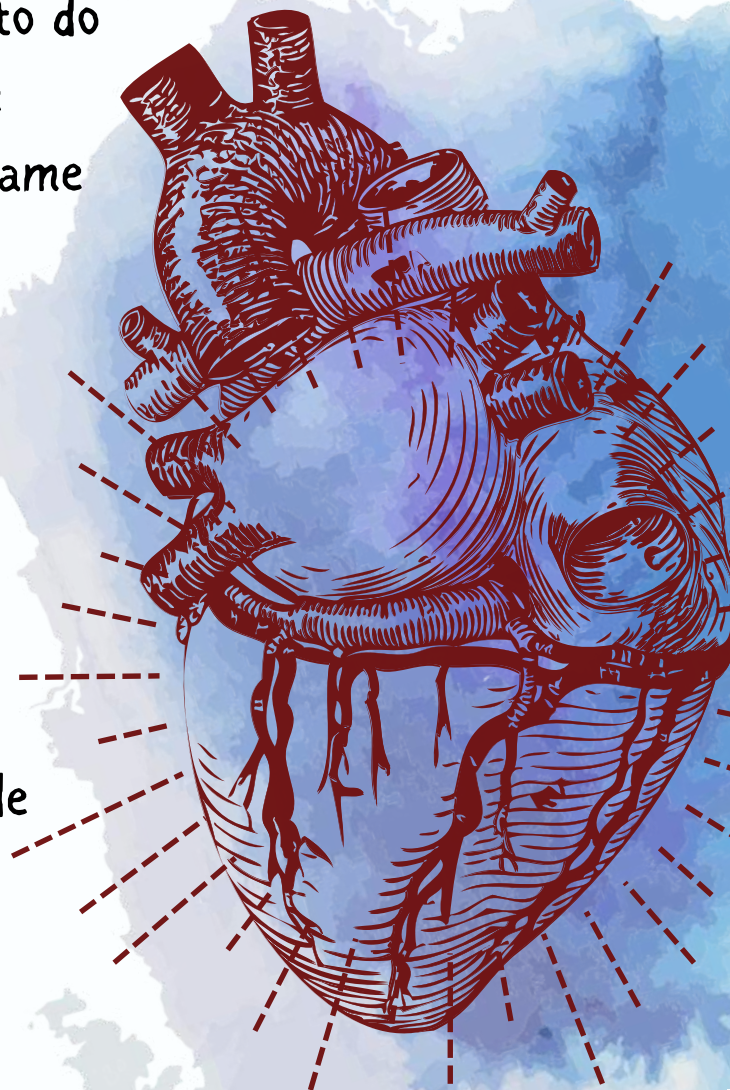
We were the only ones there, and I stood at the entrance for a bit. I had been having thoughts that were...well, unfair to Life, so to speak. I suppose that is why I felt drawn there. Generations of people, loved and lost. Some headstones were teeming with flowers and candles and wreaths, while others were crumbling, cracks snaking up them and moss shrouding the names. Forgotten, perhaps. Yet still existing.

"Well then. We are here. If a corpse falls from the trees, I'm bolting. Save yourself!". Anant jokes, probably feeling apprehensive of my silence.

"Very funny," was all I could say.

I didn't know what exactly I wanted to do there. So he and I strolled around the place, trying to find people with the same birthdays as ours. Or with unique names, quirky headstones, the best carvings, the most moving epitaphs. It was a surprisingly cathartic activity.

The sunlight filtered through leaves and formed mosaics of light and shade on the ground.



Little birds twittered and squirrels played on the stone-tiled path.

It appeared to be detached from reality. I felt free. The angel statues with roses and books in their arms seemed to address me with their stone eyes, asking me to calm down and remember. Remember what Life is supposed to be for me. I do admit, I had forgotten the present.

So I remembered. I closed my eyes and looked back upon my life, the laughs I had, the tears I'd shed. I savoured the moment, standing in the shade of a tree with bright yellow flowers, in the silent company of my kind friend. He remained there despite me being rather boring and quiet.

I was sweeping my gaze across the scene before me, when I noticed a bucket of mop-water with...a fish flopping in it? Strange. I took Anant

by the elbow and tugged him towards the bucket. It was pretty crazy, for a random bucket to have a fish in it, in the middle of a cemetery, peak afternoon. With no one in sight. When I reached the bucket, though, it took me a moment to process what was in it.

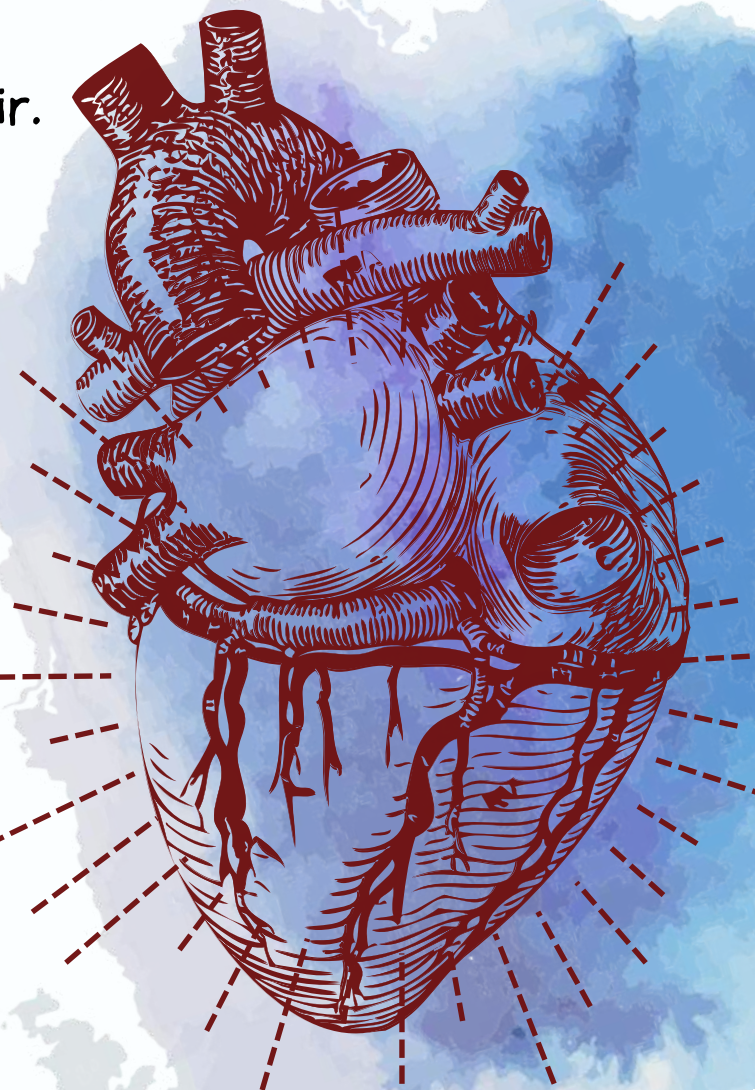
A tiny squirrel.

Struggling to keep itself above water, frantically splashing with its delicate paws, the squirrel's tail was weighing it down. Perhaps it had fallen in while trying to quench its thirst. And then it stopped, staying so very still that my heart leapt into my mouth for fear it had drowned.

I impulsively put my hand inside the water to scoop it out, but Anant stopped me. He suggested it would be better if I just tipped the bucket over. Obviously that was the better choice. So I did. I tipped the bucket and emptied the water. The drenched squirrel staggeringly dragged itself out. Its itty-bitty body was heavy and its steps fatigued as it struggled to climb onto the nearest tree. Reaching the lowest branch, it settled and rested. Anant and I watched it for as long as it stayed there, before it steadily scampered upwards and disappeared into the leaves.

Now, narrating this incident, it doesn't seem like much. But it was a game-changer. The nihilist inside of me had long since been hacking away at my hopeful self with the axe of despair. But this experience changed that.

It felt so unusually good. A burial ground. A place for the dead. So many people in it, but not really. Deserted by breathing humans. What was the universe trying to teach me, when I just happened to be there at the exact time a squirrel was dying?



A second chance at Life, in a graveyard. Not just for the squirrel, but for me too. I had been tired of living and had no faith. The way the odds aligned that day, gave me hope. The whole incident was so poetic that I felt the Dynamic Duo of Hope and Love faintly giggling in the air.

The squirrel would have paid for a simple drink of water with its Life but did not. It would live to see another day and skitter along the golden brick path. This thought gave me Hope for myself. Anything can happen. The Love of my friend, who stayed with me even though the hour was torturous and I was not being good company, eased my mental pain.

At times in life, you might feel like you're drowning and there is no one to save you. You might want to give up. But remember sometimes, unseen helping hands are working to soothe your pain. There will always be some breathing, hold onto faith. And you'll see that more often than not, that someone is You. The one to save you. Keep your eyes open, keep breathing, hold onto faith. And you'll see that more often than not, that someone is You.

Anukriti Sharma, B.A. Geography, 2nd Year, Miranda House

every october
between the hives of pauses
and an array of weariness

l o o m s

a summer yesterday of flourishings.
the wind chimes chiming
against the balcony air.
the heat of madness.
tumultuously heading into
paradises, pilgrimages
and dreamy landings.

every october
between the greedily heading morrow
the sedated rushing of life

p e t r i f i e s

a hazy winter.
hungry for the death of everything that lives.
a curtain heaving, painting whites
unfamiliar pale neighbors
alienation and rest.

every october
between the last of falling greens
the roots soaking deep into the tolerance of
existence.

*Siddhi Joshi, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. Programme,, 2nd Year, Miranda House.*



MIDDLE GROUND





LIFE IS NOT A WISH GRANTING FACTORY

Hope is not the man who has just turned thirty-five
who wakes up every day, makes his tea,
buttons up his shirt, straightens his tie.
He asks Rosita if he looks fine.
He sure hopes so.
After all, his wife is coming home.
She smiles and says that he does;
He wonders why there are no mirrors in his house
but since he has little time for wondering
he bids Rosita goodbye.
And sets off for the airport.
After all, his wife is coming back home.
His lovely wife who he so adores.
He knows how she prizes Lilies,
so he buys her a bunch of purple ones
He longs to see her gentle face
He smiles to himself in sheer glee
After all, his wife is coming home.
And while he sits and waits for her
He wonders why he's carrying a stick
or why his hands tremble when he buttons his
shirt
or why his house has no mirrors
or why his housekeeper Rosita
has purple lilies in her room all the time
or why he tires so easily these days.
There are so many questions in his mind
but he hardly has time to ponder
After all, his wife is coming home.
When his wife spots him at the airport
She walks to him,
giving him the brightest smile
from far off



his seventy-eight-year-old body
looks frail and little.

Many passers-by share a grin
on seeing the elderly couple
locked in an embrace.

His wife tells him

"I'm so happy to be home."

Hope is Rosita knowing that her love is not
lost.

Every day she hides the mirrors in her
house

so that her husband with Alzheimer's
who thinks he's thirty-five
will not get the shock of his life
when he looks at his wrinkled reflection.

She tells him regularly
how handsome he looks
and how pleased his wife will be
and follows him to the airport
To bring him home, to be.

Every night she goes to sleep beside her
love

praying that she will not have to
move her lilies to the housekeeper's room.

And finally, be able to say
"Look honey, I'm already home."

*Diyasha, Second Year,
English major, Miranda House.*

OBEISANCE

"There is no end, Ben. Not for us."

Ben stood in the middle of a field. His brothers in arms surrounded him. The mundane prescriptions of age had severed his connection to reality. He looked around his battlefield, stricken with corpses but bustling with reality. As Ben turned around, the field seemed to fade before him. The beautiful paddy field splattered with blood and weapons continued to float around him and his vision blurred. The hospital ward was almost empty, except for his wife and children. Ben opened his eyes, to the macabre feeling of dread and sadness. His wife sat in front of him, her eyes were moist.

"Why are her eyes so moist, Dad?"

His living room had a table in the middle. Ben sat by it, his eyes scanning the familiar room. His son was lying down on the ground, beneath his mother. Ben walked towards him, his steps echoing in an eternity of memories he missed.

"How is he, Doctor?"

Ben stopped in his tracks. The frail sound continued to move around the room, disturbing the continuum of peace in the house. It shattered the medals and broke down the barriers. The house collapsed into a thousand priceless pieces of metal and mortar.

Ben opened his eyes again. The doctor was speaking faintly to his wife. He wanted to close his eyes, to escape into a world where pain seemed imminent. His wife started crying again, her tears were blocked by the invisible entity that had developed between them through years of solitude and separation. Ben closed his eyes, praying for a soulful memory that could reduce the unyielding pain that festered in his heart.

He was standing in the middle of a war zone. The composition of life and death hung in the air. A breeze flew over the heads of the tired and aimless soldiers. They were in the rear of the Normandy attack, in the middle of the red beaches. Ben stood in the centre. His eyes were focused on his younger self, a blonde, feverish and handsome man who was laying down the Nazis in a deeply personal frenzy. He continued to stare at the man, until he vanished. All the men seemed to vanish before him, until only one person was left standing. Ben smiled.

"Last moments, eh, boy?"

"Aye, Captain."

The Captain adjusted his cap and put down his gun.

"You had a good time?"

"It wasn't that bad. Lived for eighty years without a problem."

"Good for you. I always knew you had potential."

Ben sat down on the sand. He turned around and saw the blue skies fading.

"I don't have much time, Captain."

"I know. Hold on to your memories, Ben. That's the last real thing in your world right now."

The Captain's face started breaking down until it faded into thin air. Ben stood up and walked to the end of the beach. He opened his eyes.

"How are you?"

His wife asked him.

"Tired."

"Were you dreaming?"

"No. Who are those boys?"

Ben pointed to the two men standing near his bed. His wife didn't reply. She closed her eyes as tears of resilience trickled slowly through her wrinkled cheeks.

Ben was standing in his living room for the second time. Two boys were sitting in the middle of the room. Ben walked up to them.

"You don't remember us, do you, Dad?"

"I did. Life is getting away from my grasp, son. The minute I let go of my most precious memory, it will fade away."

"We know. Hold on to that memory. We will wait."

Ben woke up again, drenched in sweat. His wife and some others were holding him down as the doctor connected him to the ventilator.

"It's not going to be long now. You can start informing your relatives."

He was standing at the banquet of his wedding. A beautiful woman who had held his hands through various epochs of life was smiling at him. He smiled back, his wrinkles twisting themselves in agony as her face started to fade. She stood close to him and whispered in his ears.

"What is your most precious memory, Ben?"

Ben was standing outside a hospital ward. An old woman was lying in a bed, holding hands with a man. A younger Ben was standing close to the couple, wiping his tears.

"Take care of your father, Ben."

His mother closed her eyes for the last time. Ben started walking out of the room, his heart slowly breaking into pieces. The room started fading as his heartbeat slowly deteriorated.

Ben opened his eyes.

Shivaraj K Kumar, Student,
Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Kolazhy



"That would be all for today. B602, you may change and leave. Remember to clean your body by following the steps listed. Have a good night."

I was left alone in the room. The lights flickered a bit. It had an ominous glow. I took a moment to look around the room. There was nothing remarkable about it. White, all around me, save for the scalpel, the machines and the fresh drops of blood, everything was white. There was no way to see the outside world. No window, no door, no cracks. Everything was made to be perfect. I am not sure how elevated we're but if a mortal were to jump, they'd die. I covered my naked body with the nightwear. Everyday was the same, tomorrow I might be here again. By then, the red would be gone, the only colour this place has now is an illusion, it would be like nothing had ever happened in this room at all.

**I
CAN'T
KNOW
BUT IT
WILL**

I exited L701, that's probably the abbreviation of Lab 701? I can't be sure. But each room has a separate number and each floor, a separate set name. I can't be sure though as the only floors I am allowed in are the ones with the floor names E6 and L7. The former having our resting rooms and dining hall while the latter is where we are summoned to be experimented on.

The robot assigned to me today was different from the one assigned to me yesterday and the one I was assigned to yesterday was different from the one assigned the day before yesterday. The robots that don't change daily are the ones in the dining hall. Upon entering the elevator I realised how eerily quiet everything was today. I was yet to encounter any of the other subjects. To enter a floor I needed my ID. my one can only grant access to two floors. The dining hall was empty. I guess. I will be eating alone today. There are usually two robots present in the hall, one at the counter and other at the entrance. The one at entrance wasn't there for some reason. The one at counter seemed spaced out. I had to ask twice to receive a response. Something wasn't right. The nutritious meal laid out in front of me always came with a manual that stated clearly what it was that I was eating and how long I will be allowed to eat. At the 25 minutes mark, another robot would come and takeaway the plate irrespective of whether or not there's still food left.

I completed my dinner on time. Since I follow the same routine everyday, eating in 25 minutes or sleeping by 9pm or being in front of room L701 has become something akin to muscle memory. Neither do these actions need a reminder nor does any of it faze me anymore. I can't say if it ever did. For as long as I can remember, things have always been this way. I have no way to compare my present routine with my past because there was none. If at all I had a past, I think it was the same. Because I can't think of an alternative. I don't know any other life. What a different life would be. Will I not sleep? or eat? Or perhaps, I wouldn't have to go to that room... I can't say. But I wonder frequently. There are no rules that state I cannot think. Thinking is free. It doesn't cost blood to think. Nor is it time bound like eating or going to sleep. I can think whenever I want, whatever I want. Sometimes I even think how limited my thinking is. If I could see the other floors, would I be exposed to something new and something I didn't know?

How much more will I be able to think if I came to know more? I am sure there is more to this world than these few rooms. Will I ever see something that I won't even be able to comprehend? So much so that it would destroy every notion that I ever understood, go against every fact that I ever believed? I can't say but I can always wonder.

The lights flickered, the ominous glow to it was more pronounced than ever. There are eight of us. All subjects of experiments. We have no way of escaping. The concept of escaping exists as a subjective entity that only it hopes. I can't know but it does. I wonder how it is now. But I am sure we will see each other very soon. I entered the residence chamber. It was empty. Could everyone have already been done with their routines? I can't say. I can't know if time ran the same way for all of us. I can only say for me and it. There are 4 rooms. Each housing two of us. The chamber is circular, the rooms being diagonally placed, facing each other. From the entrance, our room was on the left side. The first one. It was dark. Where is it? I turned on the lights. Climbed onto my bed.

"Oh you're back? I am sorry I guess I fell asleep. I didn't have a test today so I didn't have anything else to do. Everyone seems to be occupied."

It emerged from under the sheets. B666 is my roommate. We have been living in this room for as long as I can remember. It is about 5ft 7 inches. Has pale skin. Eyes that shine and ears that protrude. It says it is both male and female yet neither. If it wishes, it can become either.

Hence, it doesn't fall under any prescribed sex. It says can be attracted to both sexes. The concept of attraction isn't clear to me but it understands.

There are 8 of us but none of us look the same. We look and feel different but we share the same experiences and have the same fate. The only two who look similar are B655 and B659. They are both human and with hands that can change into different shapes. Their hair can transform into snake like creatures and they share the same room. I don't know how I know of so many species. I can't remember ever learning of them. I somehow know a lot of things that I haven't seen or felt. Feelings of sadness, happiness, anger. I know of them but I can't remember if I ever experienced them. None of us have ever fought or done things together. I don't know how we can do them but I don't think we need to do them. They aren't necessary. We only need to follow what we are prescribed."The inspection is 2 days from now. They have gotten so frequent lately. Something is about to happen. Something is about to change." B666 says. It repeats the last two lines everyday. The more I listen to it, the more I become inclined to believe so. I have started to see inconsistencies too. Everything around me is supposed to be perfect yet flickering lights and absence of robots pose a contradiction to the normalcy. I wonder if it's the same for the others too.

The entire facility is one of many similar ones. I know because every month, a group of people in white coats come for inspection. We are informed that they go to every centre like ours and that's how we know that we 8 aren't the only ones. Knowing that makes me want to know if we are same in our circumstances.

Do they do the same tests as us? I can't say. But I wonder what they think. Do they have questions like me or powers like B655 and B659? I can't say why but I think no one thinks like B666. It is different. It wants to escape.

"There is a place outside. There are many people there. There is happiness. It isn't all buildings and white. There is a big land of water called the ocean and there is a big sun that melts into it. I know I have been there and I want to go there again."

It is different from all of us because it remembers a time when it wasn't here. It has memories of a place that isn't a part of these two floors. It says the 'ocean' is too big to be a part of the facility. So it is outside under a large light coloured ocean. It says that the one above meets the one below and it fills the onlookers with emotions.

There are people outside who laugh and cry. I want to go there. I know that's where I came from. I know I will escape. It might take a long time but I know I can. Even if one day I don't remember the ocean and become like you, I will remember to escape. That time I will show you the real one. Its not like the poor drawings that I made. Its pretty and so, so big. You can run as far as the eyes can take you."

I don't recall a time when life wasn't like this. So I can't say for sure but I believe in it. Because I have read my book that mentions the ocean. It says, 'they ran into the ocean, from where they came and became one with it under the setting sun'. I wonder if it came from there. We all have one thing that doesn't come from here. For me it's the book and maybe it's those memories for it. Maybe it too has something tangible. I can't say but I know one day, it will find it. The ocean. And become one with it.

*Adrijaa Chakraborty, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. English, 2nd Year, Miranda House*



WRITING ON HOPE AND HOPING TO WRITE

I like to think that I'm a hopeful person.

As strange a line as that is to start on it feels right. Hope has always been strange and elusive but I always knew I had it, or at least I thought I did. Given my most cynical and pessimistic days it's easy to think that my relationship with hope is fickle. But I think it's not.

I started writing with interest when I was in 7th grade. It started with writing short stories for my English class.

It started with writing short stories for my English class. Up till this point I hadn't liked English very much as a subject. I liked the stories that I got to read in class but I was slow at reading, I was scared of speaking and I was horrible at writing. But something changed when I wrote that particular year for class. I wrote stories for prompts I hadn't been assigned and I loved the feeling of imagining what my audience would think. All my stories were incomplete but to me that was the allure, that you had people hanging on your every word and that they wanted to know what happened next. My genius was definitely lost on a bunch of 12 and 13 year-old children but having written those stories had given me enough confidence to speak up in class and not be as scared. Somehow I had known that they would definitely like it and even when they didn't it didn't exactly hurt so bad that I stopped writing.

The year after I moved to a new city and naturally a new school. The place would qualify as a town to some but that's not very important. This was where I would spend the 5 years that are most impactful on one's personality, this is where I was going to literally grow up.

Being in a new place and having a fresh start somehow made me braver. I had hated the idea of moving but by the time I actually moved I was already filled with hope.

I was going to have the best high school experience, just like the movies. Yeah, that didn't happen but something better did. My school had started out as a small school in Chennai so interschool competitions were organized for the group of schools that my school was a part of. Our first round of selections was mostly compulsory for everyone. So everyone who fit in a particular category had to participate in the preliminary rounds. I now realize that this made the process fair and it helped to make sure it wasn't the same roster of students every year that got selected. The first preliminary rounds that I had to participate in was Creative Writing. I hadn't expected to get selected but I had enjoyed writing the craziest idea of my dream school.

Eventually I got selected for the next round and then the next. This was a pleasant surprise but I was also worried that there had been a mistake. A classmate of mine who had gotten a book published that year had not been selected but somehow I had. I wanted to believe and hoped I was good enough but I truly wasn't.



I went to the teacher in-charge for the selections to discuss the details of the competition and she very frankly said to me. "The competition is about writing creatively, while your writing might not have been the best it was very creative and you deserve a chance to use that better." This was possibly the first instance where I got feedback on my writing, there would be several more to come.

Getting selected for that creative writing competition was probably when I started putting actual faith into my writing. I actually hoped that one day I would do something great with it. That I'd be able to make people feel emotions the way my favorite books had done for me. I lost in that particular time and I had possibly written the worst end to my story. I was hurt but somehow the thought of giving up writing never even crossed my mind. I got to participate in the same competition 3 more times and I won twice. And with time my writing got better. It became a deep rooted part of me without me realizing it. I turned to writing when I felt intensely. I turned to writing when I was too scared to speak. I turned to writing to articulate what I couldn't in spoken language.

I don't know exactly when but my writing became the only thing I had hope in. I still can't finish a story well enough but I dream of writing novels and somewhere along the way that became my long-term goal. I want to help make content that makes people seen, that makes people happy and can be something I'm proud of.

Recently while listening to an author talk about their journey to publishing I found out there was something they said that resonated with me but scared me too. They said (and I paraphrase), that while it's already a harrowing process to get published as it is, it also drains a lot from a person and it's very important that the writer have faith in their own writing even if everyone loses faith in their potential. It came to me that my hope of being published is strong enough that I haven't yet lost faith in my writing, no matter how many times I get stuck somehow I keep going with whatever I have when it comes to writing and I pull through.

I have hope that one day I'll be able to do something impactful with my writing. It could be wishful thinking but it's in the back of my head, always there. I have lost hope in a lot of things as I'm going through the process of growing up but somehow that hasn't yet happened for my writing. It's funny how the hope seems to be like sand in an hourglass (I want the sand to be blue so it is blue sand), and it's slowly trickling down as I go through my education. When I finally come face to face with the real world on my own, when I'm at my lowest point and I feel like I have done everything in my power to help myself, that sand will run out. It is a part of life to reach a point of no hope but when I get there I know I'll have to build up the strength to flip the hourglass and make my hope flow again. Hope makes us human and it is human to hope against all odds. I have hope now, so I'll take what I can get from life and be ready when the sand runs out and I have to rekindle my hope.

*Sanskriti Sharma, B.A. English,
1st Year, Shiv Nadar University*





Hope

Last seen:



In
Places

Crossroads

(The scenery changes often, a new skyline appears, in the background of my pictures every few years.)

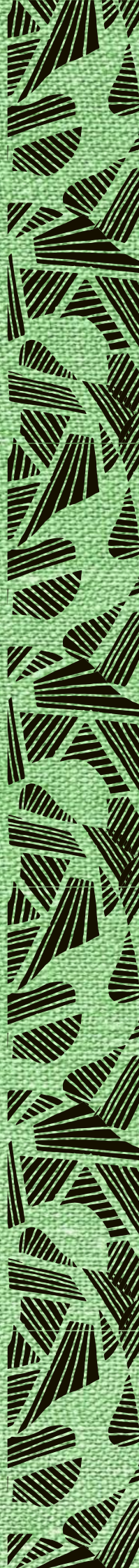
Life is (was?) a whirlwind of different places, of cardboard boxes in tightly cramped rooms, grids of buildings bruising the horizon of cities - and my feet trampling the unknown under them, pavements kissing cuts and bruises on my knees.

I roam and watch and learn the myriad secrets of each new home - every shortcut to the park, the prices in the market, the numbers of new friends. I think I will decrypt this place before I must leave - but it's a million mirrored illusion that never ends.

And so I have been that stranger many times - who appears to give directions to passersby, addresses the anxiety rising from the driver's seat, and then recedes to the blurring background with a 'thank you!' lost to the skid marks on the street.

(There are so many distinctive ways in which voices curl around words, each lilt honey-rich.)

It is strange to live in houses that take time to become a home that's truly mine - at first, I feel like an intruder who should look the other way - but slowly, as my life shows up on those bleached walls, I leave a ghostly imprint for whoever comes next to stay.



But heartbreak is inevitable - the dot on the map stays the same,
and I move away - away from familiar streets, from each store
whose wares filled our home, and each friend I tied bracelets to.
What a shame to have had to leave when I had finally been accepted,
as an immovable part of the urban labyrinth I walked through.

I carefully pack each story of what is now our old home,
fearing they will gather dust in my mind because I'll be
stepping foot in foreign lands, busy romancing another city,
yet, to forget would be a betrayal to what loved me back equally.
Maybe that's why I am welcomed with equal parts love and pity.

*(Memories fade and blur with time like dying stars fall from the sky,
then why do I carry mine with a stubborn hope that refuses to die?)*

***Suhani Duhan, Member, BlueQuill
B.A. Programme, 2nd Year, Miranda House***



Tamed MIRACLES

The brisk wind,
Unfurling an azure satin ribbon
With sapphire raindrops,
Inhaling the golden beams,
Dangling on a makeshift clothesline,
Suspended over the miniscule.

The orbs sketched on the flaps of a hopper,
Its moving stems against
The rusty crevices of muddy potted plants,
Welcoming the pesky monsoon air.

The lint sprouting
From the bed of a floral kimono,
Making earthly constellations.

The yesteryear scotch tape patches
On the mulberry walls,
Reminiscing over an angel's birthday
celebration.

A promissory friendship bracelet,
Several drawers away from
The joys of now.





Miniature miracles engulfing the brown in my eye
To replace it with the sparkles of a dreamy head
Against a glittering four mooned sky.

A clear wide horizon borrowed from
Our beloved childhood books,
A floral bed sheet neatly pressed
Against the earth's grass,
Crimson flowers garlanding the brook.

Recklessly fluttering stomachs,
Incessant oyster pearl smiles -
Exchanging the cardinal sins in our eyes.

The buttered morning toasts,
The spring pollens piercing through nose.

As you toss and turn your head to sneeze,
I pocket a roadside pebble
To draw on miniature lilies against
A caricature of me and you.



***Siddhi Joshi, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. Programme, 2nd Year, Miranda House***



New York City Fate

Like cigarettes on the pavement
used, forgotten- I strode along
Blinking city lights in the blur of the rain
trickling down my face,
My New York City fate

Passing the familiar yellow house on the corner,
Blaring music, filled with ecstasy
Then the local band offering a few drinks
a drunkenness unmatched
Admiring the magic
Admiring the sham

Dyed cherry blonde hair,
smudged makeup on my face
Nothing exquisite or extraordinary,
thousands of me in this city
Still- incandescent, unparalleled

A euphoric paradise
filled with lives- unfinished poetry,
tapestries of who I once was
who I am to be

No longer illuminating my world,
the rays of naivety
newfound bliss in solidarity
Singing hymns of paradise
brought by the horizon
The melody of enchantment
mined in the buildings overhead.

***Simran Singh, Member, BlueQuill
B.A. Programme, 2nd Year,
Miranda House***



Quest to Retrieve

Hope.

It doesn't come in sealed brown packages like the online orders we desperately look out for. We talk about how our hopes get shattered into hundred or even a million pieces. That is exactly how we retrieve hope. We pick them up piece by piece in the moments it presents itself and breathes life into us. Hoping to shift to a city where I would have lived three years of my life with mellow warmth and kindred souls, I went in search of these pieces. Sitting locked up, away from the things that you were hoping for, is a cruel exercise that made me embark on this quest to claim at least a part of what I missed.

I sit in my room on the third floor and the glint of sunlight that escapes through the curtains blinds me for a split second. It disrupts the purpose of searching for the thoughts that were pinning me down, reminding me that I am where I wanted to be for the past one and a half years. That tiny moment of salvation screamed out hope to me.

When you take a walk around and find shadows made by the leaves stenciled up there in the trees, it feels as if they have laid out a carpet for you to walk on. A moment where you feel at ease is what we all yearn for. The wind whispered hope to me and I didn't waste a second to claim it.

Walking at night with my friends, the speaker hanging by my finger, skipping steps to the rhythm felt like a dream come true. One part of the sidewalk illuminated while the other was hidden away in the darkness, vehicles rushing past and the essence of being alive pulling me like gravity felt like oxygen all of a sudden. Every time I step into the hidden part of the road, I breathe in and look forward to the amber painted road and find hope there.

Standing in the metro station, wind gushing through, listening to the announcement that the metro is here and listening to the hustling footsteps, I encounter time who waits for nobody. I feel the need to break away from the chains of despair that shackle me as I watch the metro shoot away in front of me. And there, I unearth the hope to move forward no matter what.

This is what hope is to me. It is what I find around me when it becomes too hard to look inside. I find it in places where I feel alive and happy, even though it might be whisked away in a second. It becomes a mirage that I keep an eye out for. So, if you find me looking at the trees or the sky or the colors around me, let me be. You find it in the strangest of places and when you least expect it to be present. All that we can do is tell ourselves that it is out there somewhere for us to find.

***Nandana AR, Member, BlueQuill,
BA Programme, 2nd Year, Miranda House***





You Cannot Get Lost on a Christmas Tree Farm

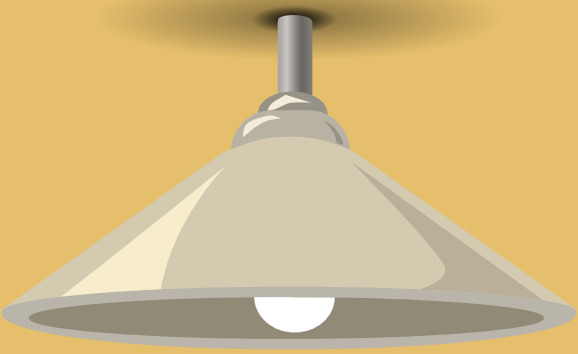
I thought I'd gotten lost on a Christmas tree farm when I was four and I lived there. Cried for three hours as I walked between trees that stood tall over my head and watered the soil they stood on with my tears. I thought I'd never get home, the irony because I lived on that very farm, and I screamed till my throat hurt and all hope was lost. So, I walked in circles and straight lines, saw fences and then walked beside them. Eventually I ended up on the front porch, and I was hit with the realisation that you cannot get lost on a Christmas tree farm and those Christmas trees were beacons of hope.



I thought I'd gotten lost on a Christmas tree farm when I was 27, I'd lived in the city for years and was certain my childhood had been scrubbed of my skin. I walked a few hundred steps, circles I'd probably walked through minutes ago, until I bumped into someone else. It is impossible to get lost on a Christmas tree farm, days before Christmas when people leave their footprints on the ground like they have always belonged there, the trees disappear slowly and then fast and then slow again. I relearnt a lesson a four-year-old once taught me, that you cannot get lost on a Christmas tree farm and I have held on to that belief ever since, haven't scrubbed it off my skin. Ever since, on days that seem empty and bleak, I hold on to this hope and faith that has settled in, and I tell myself that I cannot get lost on a Christmas tree farm.

Malvika R, Writer





IN FLIGHT LITERATURE

The room I was isolating in soon became an extension of myself.

My mind expanded into a physical space where melodies wafted in.

At odd moments I sang to a flower-shaped spill stain of haldi milk on the sheets.

Poisoned by Paracetamol and Azithromycin, writhing in sweat blankets is all my fevered brain remembers.

But I saw how objects transform in loneliness
Nothing moves without permission, stillness becomes obedient.

And there is not a word except for mine
So much silence that its too big for a single person to break

Therefore I don't. This is what I write instead.



Someday while taking a walk around my bed
I might choke on water.

Danger is very much within, between my two eyes and
inside the shape of my head,
I can be hazardous to myself
What else do I need?

The best part about being dizzy is
You move even when you're still.

Unravel, yes I'm coming apart
like a loose thread being pulled from a sweater.
It's fascinating that soon it can vanish.

I can vanish

Disintegrate into something I do not know yet
And just like that, poof.

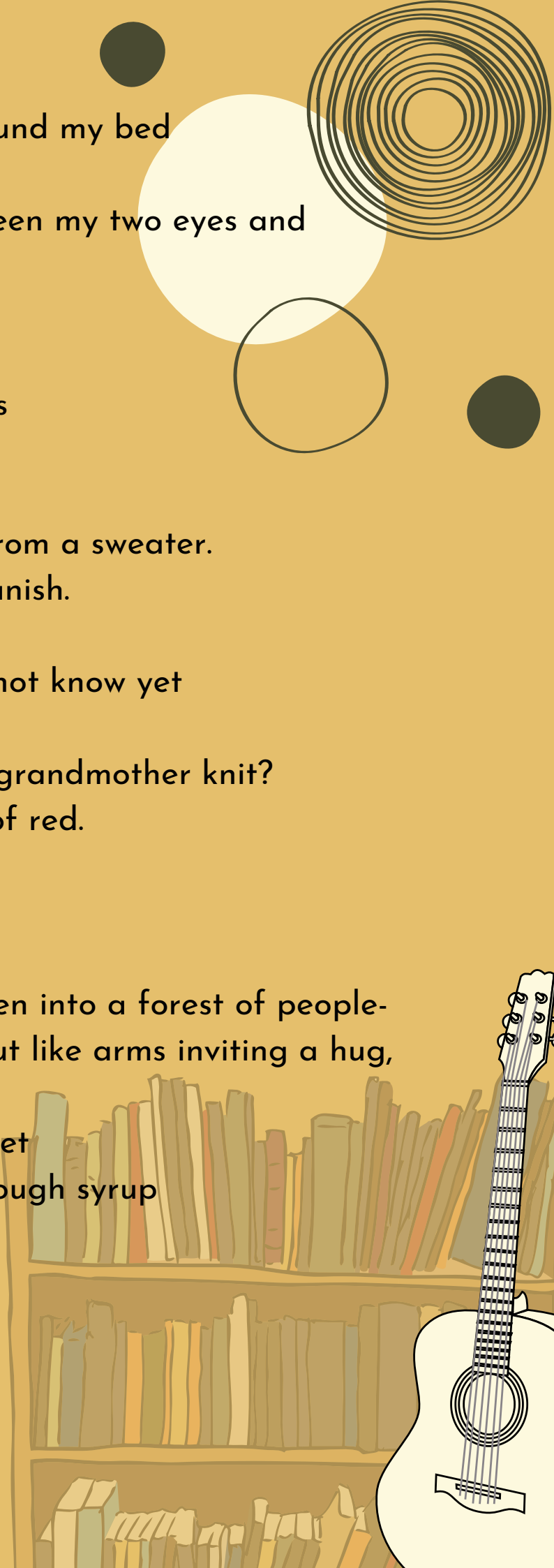
Where is the sweater my friend's grandmother knit?
It left a mess behind in a tangle of red.

There is an abrasion in the wall

I take myself and sit inside it

Quietly witnessing the room enliven into a forest of people-
The bookshelf flails its doors about like arms inviting a hug,
a blanket flies overhead,

My guitar walks over to the cabinet
and catches an empty bottle of cough syrup
rolling over the edge of
a highrise.



I might never get out of this room
having turned it into a Wonderland of
necessities
the question of survival has been answered.
So I can remain crouched, a fly on the wall
And wait till all the characters that climbed
out of books of poetry from my shelf
die of their own causes.
A 'very young thing from New York' straight
out of a Sullivan
Is frighteningly confused about the face
staring at her through
the foggy glass door,
It is the face of a very young thing from
New Delhi, out of a blue paperback by Roy.

The two sit down
One recounts walking home down fifth
avenue, at dawn
And the other shares feeling like a
cannibal's feast at Vishwavidyalaya station.

When their corpses line up under my bed
I will sweep
the room,
dutiful daughter,
wash every utensil
ready the garbage for collection
pop a Cetirizine and set down to write their
eulogy.

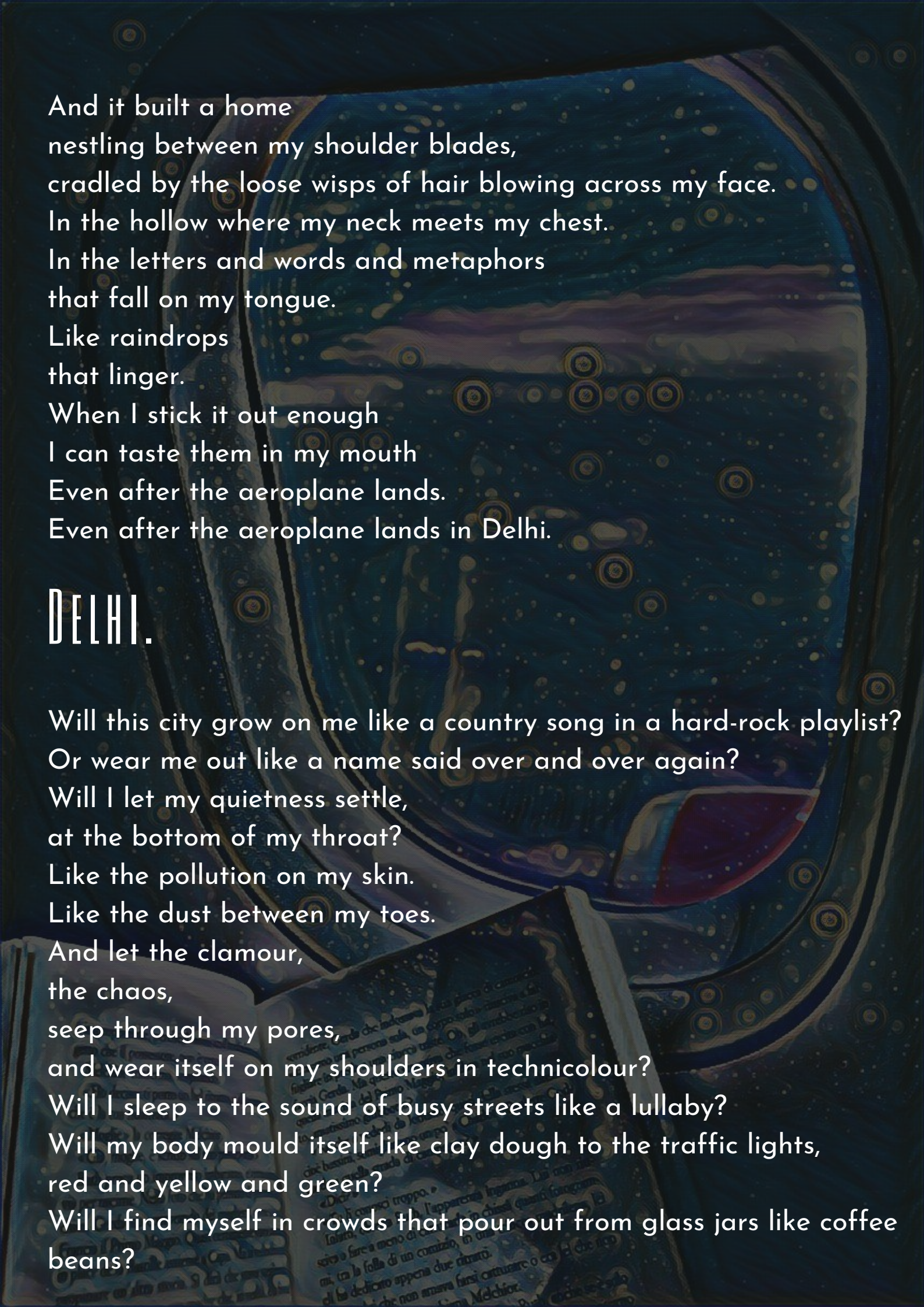
Gauri Yadav, Member, BlueQuill



PUNE.

PUNE-DELHI

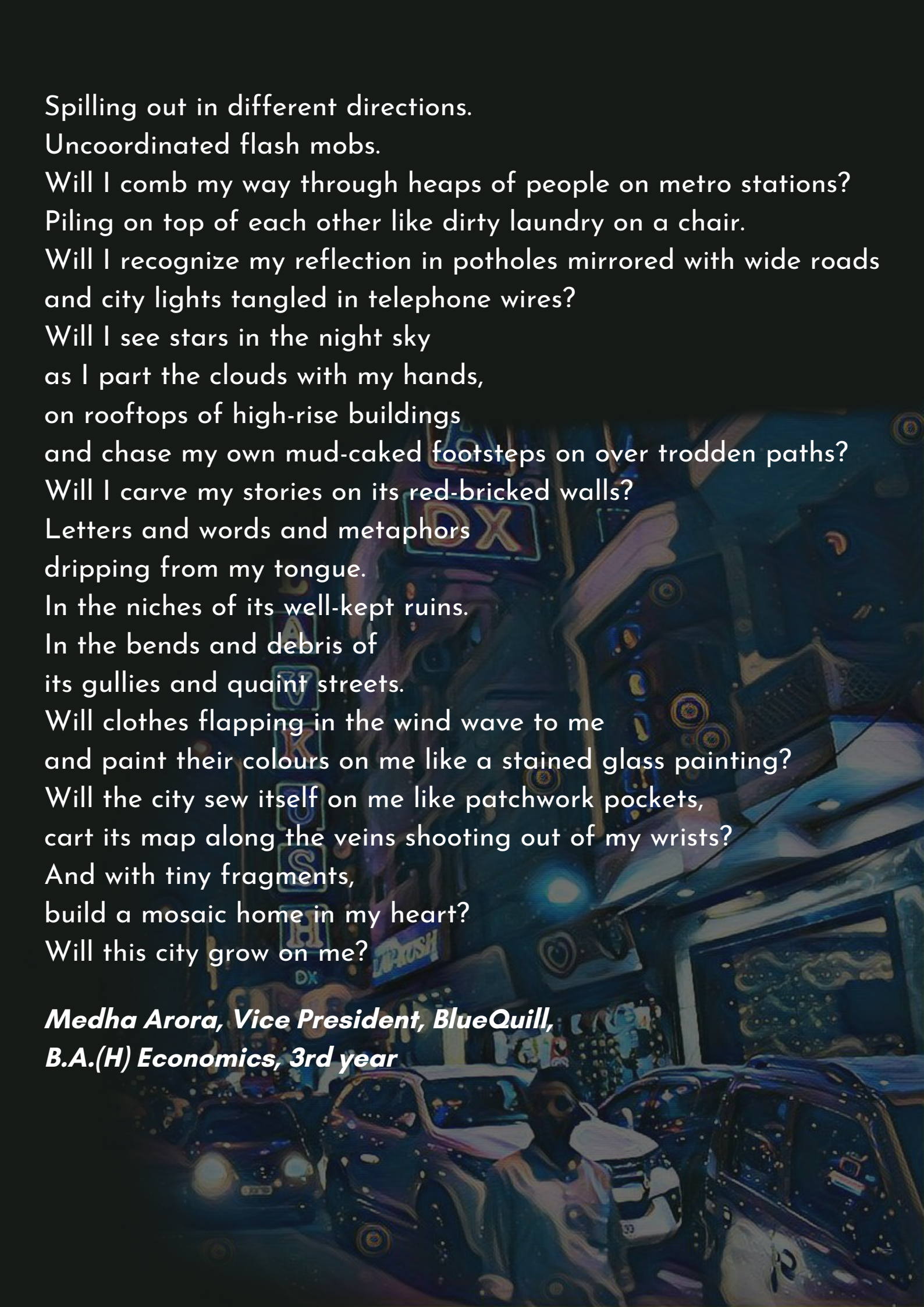
The city grows on you.
Not so much like ivy,
coiling around your hips,
sprouting, like the hair on your knuckles.
But like raindrops
that hardly ever fall,
but will linger on your tongue,
if you stick it out enough.
Like mud caked onto the bottom of your shoes,
dried up, can no longer be washed off.
Like a firecracker so bright,
you can see it ablaze even after you shut your eyes.
The city grows on you.
Like people who smile every time they look at you.
The city grows on you.
With its narrow bowling alley roads,
and dim lights like blinking signs on highway restaurants.
All its sleepy stillness and raging tumult,
wrapping its soul on me like a handle-with-care package.
My mud-caked shoes pave the same roads,
crunching dried leaves,
lined with trees so tall,
dotted with red flowers I always forget the name of,
too high to pluck and too beautiful to not try.
When I leave it behind,
it'll be a glittering speck I can outline with my fingernails,
from the window seat of an outbound aeroplane.
But I won't take with me, pockets full of souvenirs.
Because this city,
in every cliché, melancholic, heartbreaking, overused sense of the word,
is my home.
And it built a home



And it built a home
nestling between my shoulder blades,
cradled by the loose wisps of hair blowing across my face.
In the hollow where my neck meets my chest.
In the letters and words and metaphors
that fall on my tongue.
Like raindrops
that linger.
When I stick it out enough
I can taste them in my mouth
Even after the aeroplane lands.
Even after the aeroplane lands in Delhi.

DELHI.

Will this city grow on me like a country song in a hard-rock playlist?
Or wear me out like a name said over and over again?
Will I let my quietness settle,
at the bottom of my throat?
Like the pollution on my skin.
Like the dust between my toes.
And let the clamour,
the chaos,
seep through my pores,
and wear itself on my shoulders in technicolour?
Will I sleep to the sound of busy streets like a lullaby?
Will my body mould itself like clay dough to the traffic lights,
red and yellow and green?
Will I find myself in crowds that pour out from glass jars like coffee
beans?



Spilling out in different directions.
Uncoordinated flash mobs.
Will I comb my way through heaps of people on metro stations?
Piling on top of each other like dirty laundry on a chair.
Will I recognize my reflection in potholes mirrored with wide roads
and city lights tangled in telephone wires?
Will I see stars in the night sky
as I part the clouds with my hands,
on rooftops of high-rise buildings
and chase my own mud-caked footsteps on over trodden paths?
Will I carve my stories on its red-bricked walls?
Letters and words and metaphors
dripping from my tongue.
In the niches of its well-kept ruins.
In the bends and debris of
its gullies and quaint streets.
Will clothes flapping in the wind wave to me
and paint their colours on me like a stained glass painting?
Will the city sew itself on me like patchwork pockets,
cart its map along the veins shooting out of my wrists?
And with tiny fragments,
build a mosaic home in my heart?
Will this city grow on me?

***Medha Arora, Vice President, BlueQuill,
B.A.(H) Economics, 3rd year***



meta~~morph~~osis

o

f

hope



Homage

Is hope a poison?
That the cursed lover did drink.
Did it extend a helping hand,
just to shove him off the brink?
Is it true, what he says?
Did it draw over his worriless smile,
colour skepticism into his days?

Or is hope a tonic?
A balm over a burn -
the stubborn warrior that refused
to leave Pandora's urn.
Is it the wardrum that beats on?
If so, doesn't every heart thud
with its quiet song?



All I know is hope;
and its sultry flutter,
that converts hearts
into traitorous things.
To every longing, secret desire
it gives wings.

For me,
hope was never a beautiful angel,
or a sinful wraith.
Hope, mysterious hope,
is a wild leap of faith.

Nandini Duhan, 11th Grade

Can we begin again?

Sitting by the frozen lake, clenching her brother's dying face in a death grip, the girl refused to look up at the grim figure of Death staring at her. "It's time, my child", the hoarse voice declared. Receiving no response, the phantom figure kneeled beside her. In her quivering voice she managed to let out a feeble, "I can't."

Dumbstruck at the girl's insolence, Death was silenced, but before the novelty of the situation could wear off, Death questioned, "Do you not realize that no one exists at the same time as all the things they love, and those who do, enjoy it only briefly?"

She looked up with stoic determination, "In defying Death's command, I do not intend to challenge life itself." The calmness of the confrontation forced Death to question her, "Tell me, do you not fear me then? Why should I spare your brother when I have not spared countless others who deserved it more? Who needed it more?"

The weariness was apparent in her delicate frame. Tears had dried up and sleep had pooled around her eyes. But she lay her head gently over her brother's lifeless body; over the heart that was beating no longer.

"He once told me that he was ashamed of the man in the mirror; that the ghosts of his past haunted him, fearing the day it would swallow him whole and along with it, me." Like a cruel motion picture that had no regard for its viewer's sanity, Death could see the girl revisiting all those times, the boy abused the privileges of life to give in to poisonous earthly temptations.

She dared to look Death in the eyes, "My brother, time and again, stepped into the same river, only to be faced with different but threatening waters. And each time, he felt irrevocably altered."

Death seemed to mull it over. "He thought that the man in the mirror was an irredeemable one. A hollow shell of his former self. But tell me, was he not still my brother? Am I selfish for holding onto hope?"

Death considered it for a moment. "Your brother was dangling on the threshold of narrow escape into hell but he clutched onto a rope of life, of hope, for you. He began again for you."

I have seen your past and I know your future. But where does the difference lie for you?"



“Taken aback, she gave it some thought and then answered solemnly, “For me? Before him and after him.” The heaviness of the implication settled slowly and she realized that she wouldn’t be able to stop Death from separating them.

“Your brother’s journey is meant to end here, my child. But hope is an everlasting source of courage that replenishes every traveler on the path of life.”

Death paused to look at her. “It’s not the end of your road.”

Death stares into the hollowed-out cheeks of the lifeless boy. “He was indeed altered. For your sake.”

And if Death could smile, it would have been a bright one, “And he did alter. Your life.”

A glimmer of hope alights on her fragile heart. She finally feels ready to part with her brother when Death hugs him and they start fading into the misty morning. But before the fog can clear, she hears an echo. “What begins in the water shall end there, but what ends must begin again.”

*Ashika Deb, Member, BlueQuill,
B.Sc. (H) Mathematics, 3rd Year, Miranda House*



A Prayer for Hope

Under pale lemon
light,
thighs teeming with
sweet yarrow
blossoms - you left a
trail of
longing as white as
your lips, the
January night we sat
frozen in wishing.

I sucked the seeds from your stomach,
and planted them in 3 circles - centered
with a peach pit cleaned by your tongue, my
heart feels like that peach pit - drained of
my drunkenness, and so I sleep.

With yarrow spread beneath my sheets.
And I wonder how you wrote me, into a
prayer for hope.



Shan Cahill, North Adams, MA



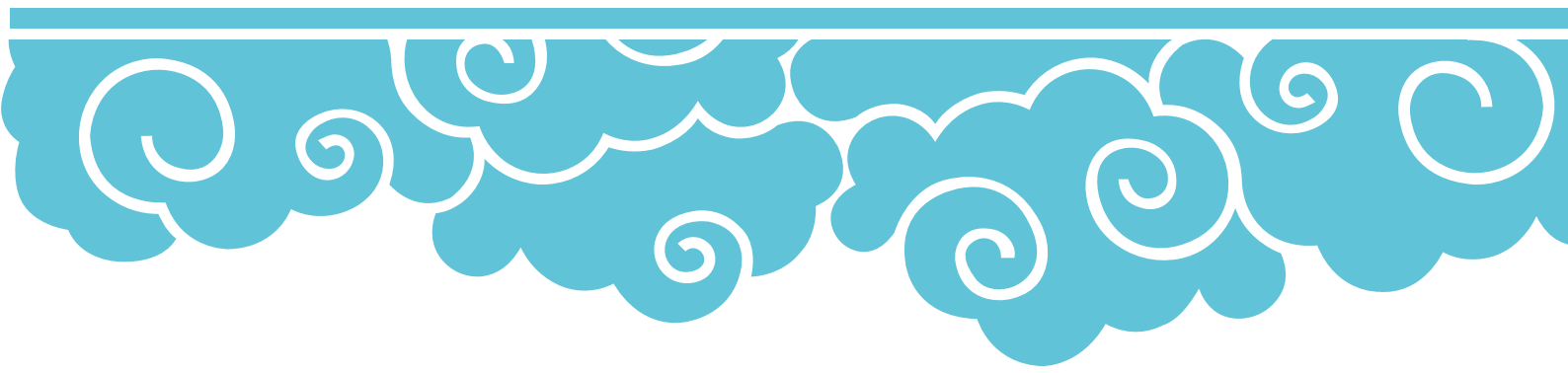
The Sky Will Always Exist

There are those nights in my eighteen-year-old life, when I lay on my bed too small, that creaks too much; and looking through the glass window in my room, at the moon that will forever be chaste, the stars that will never stop shining and a dark never-ending sky that will always exist, I question the purpose of my Being. After twisting and turning in my bed with the grey clouds of my existence making me restless, I console myself. I tell myself that He will ensure purpose in every breath I take. As if singing those words to myself like a lullaby, I soar into a peaceful slumber of oblivion.

Trillions of miles away, He too lays on his bed. Woven in smooth satin-silk sheets, on a perfectly soft mattress, He looks at the dark never-ending sky that will always exist and thinks to himself, "Human world's



imperfection and man's constant, futile efforts to make it perfect keeps him occupied and away from the gloom of his insignificant existence. And here, in this heaven's bounty perfection, I am left with nothing but myself to question. I remember the time when Man used to depend on me for matters from happiness, satisfaction, to his meek ambitions. Humanity's evolution from praying to self-motivation, from dependence to independence has left me wondering about the purpose of my corporality. It's quite a merciless irony on the ego of my being, that despite being the creator of the universe, the universe needs me not? Man speaks of fairy tales ending with happily ever after. Little does he know that happily and ever after are like the two heads of Janus, facing opposite ends of the doors of existence. My immortality gives me being, yet takes my very being away. It's like Samuel Beckett said, "Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful". He was waiting for me when he spoke these words.



Only if He knew that on nights like this, I wait for me too. Man, questions himself for lack of knowledge, I question myself despite of it".

With that thought and a single heartfelt sigh in the ocean of infinite un-heavenly silence, He forces His thoughts to sleep. Only the universe knew that we weren't that different after all...

Nonetheless, morning comes, as the orange and yellow creeps into the horizon, both Him and I wake up- look at the sky that still exists, and accept life as it is. Questions that neither him, nor I have answers to; things that exist for no reason at all and a whole lot we shall never know of. We tell ourselves that and bid farewell to the whys, hows and what fors of the world in bed, with the promise of seeing them again at night dancing on our lips. Good morning, it's a new day.

*Heer Nimavat, B.A. English,
1st Year, Miranda House*

The Mouse and The Cage



*Hickory dickory dock. The mouse went up the clock,
The clock struck one. The mouse went down"*

Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip.
Drip. Drip. It punctures the ears. This constant din.
And I am drenched. Soon it will end though. I put my
tongue out. Taste my desires as they plummet to
oblivion. It tastes like mockery. They are sneering at
me. Ridiculing my pathetic infirmity. Yet I continue to
drink. Humiliation is the only way I feel anything in
this cold.

*"Hickory Dickory dock. The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck two. And down he flew"*

Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip.
Drip. Drip.

Droplets of hope crystallise on my arms. My feet
have long since solidified. I used to bang on the
hourglass. Cry out for help. Not anymore. My voice
has long since frozen. My arms are sore.

Lifeless. Life. Less. These wicked hopes have taken
over my body. Soon I'll be a part of them.
Immortalised. Reduced to mere droplets.

*"Hickory Dickory dock. The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck three. And he did flee"*

Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip.
Drip.

And perhaps it is the bane of humanity. The vice of ego. We don't understand until it's invariably too late. Naive we are. Holding on to that thin thread of hope. I had hoped I would escape. I had hoped I would see him again. *Hoped*. And now I scramble to reminisce. Gather my memories.

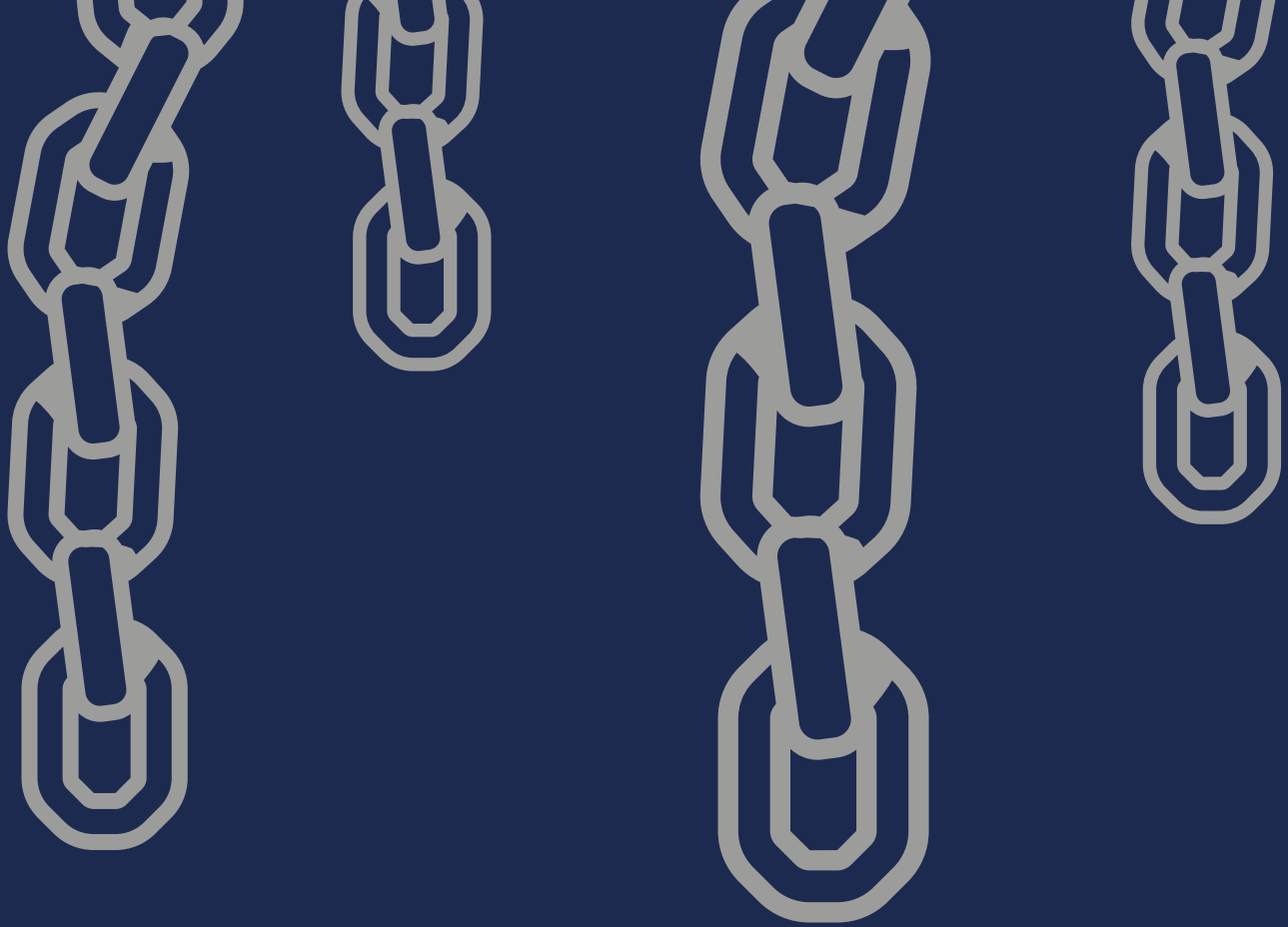
Remember it all. Before my mind scrambles away.

*Hickory Dickory dock. The mouse ran up
the clock,
The clock struck four. He hit the floor"*

Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip. Drip.
Drip.

Let me tell you a story. Of a young naive girl. Of a time when hope wasn't a freezing cage, but a blooming flower. A time when innocence reigned. When ignorance blossomed. So stupid she was.





The why(s) echo around. My tears are frozen. Yet wet.
I'm shivering. I'm warm. It's burning. There's wind. What
to do. What to do. Why. Please. Don't go. I can't die. No.
No. Not like this.

The dripping intensifies.

Time is running out.

Hope is seeping all over me.

Why Me. why?

*"Hickory Dickory dock. The mouse ran up the clock,
As twelve bells rang. The mousie sprang"*

Drip.

Guess I didn't finish the story. Well. You might have guessed. Her hopes were broken. So she traded with the Devil. Sold her soul. All for her hopes. All for what she wanted. But he played her
Damn Trickster. And then -

"Hickory Dickory dock. "Why scamper?" Asked the clock,

"You scare me so I have to go!"

I am dissolving. Must. Finish. Story. I can't. There's a storm. I'm drenched. Hope is dripping all over me. Too much. Too wet. Can't. Must live. Why Devil why. Why me. Why. Why. Why. Can't handle it. Goodbye. Why. why?

you scare me

The End.

*Hiyaa Poddar, B.A. Economics Hons,
1st Year, Miranda House*

PAPERBACK-ED ESPERANCE

I dwell in fantasies of foreign lands,
Of mountain tops and beachy sands.
I dream of bargaining secrets with
the ocean, And a stare off with the
fireball in motion.

The perfect touch that swept me off
my feet, The wistful memory of our
first meet.
Of stolen kisses and sweet nothings,
Where your silent confessions left
me blushing.

The paperback, my harbinger of
hope,
The hourglass is an untouched
illusion.
My tumbling sand smeared as ink
on the pages, Greased with the
revision my thought clutches.

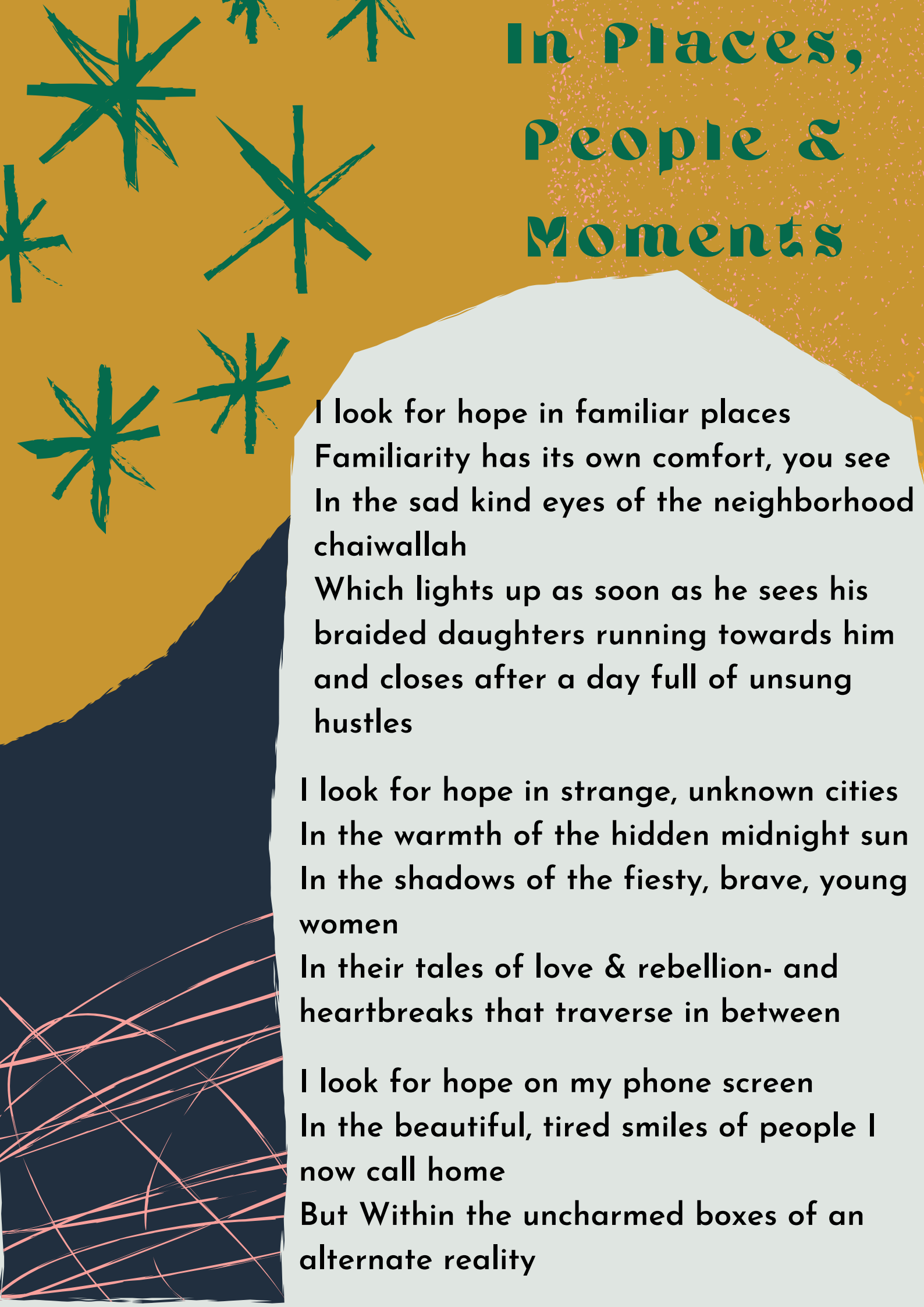




If it were up to me, I would bury in
those words, And ebb those dark
clouds of doubts and misery. And
the rhyme and rhythm the lyrics
encompass Of the songs duelling
with the looming darkness.

My hourglass is brimful of stolen
expressions, They allure me to
embody their splendour. Compelling
me to leave the doors open,
To get out and buy some hope
from the glassy vendor.

*Karizma Ahmed, B.A. English Honors,
1st year, Miranda House*



In Places, People & Moments

I look for hope in familiar places
Familiarity has its own comfort, you see
In the sad kind eyes of the neighborhood
chaiwallah

Which lights up as soon as he sees his
braided daughters running towards him
and closes after a day full of unsung
hustles

I look for hope in strange, unknown cities
In the warmth of the hidden midnight sun
In the shadows of the fiesty, brave, young
women

In their tales of love & rebellion- and
heartbreaks that traverse in between

I look for hope on my phone screen
In the beautiful, tired smiles of people I
now call home
But Within the uncharmed boxes of an
alternate reality

They slowly fade, fade away
Going back & forth- Red, Green, Red, Green

I look for hope in the blurry, blue memories of
my half-filled childhood
As I sit with the five year old and her plastic toys
Weaving dreams of being finally loved by
people she called her own
Holding, loving the hands that hurt her, weary &
confused

I look for hope in places, people and moments
Swinging back & forth between
Painfully pushing myself to prolong the joy long
gone and
Dwelling on a little speckle of pain, on my
disaster
I forget to look for hope in myself
And I choose not to stay in people and places
and moments anymore
Until I find myself again.

Medha Nandini, Member, BlueQuill

For jane, of sunflowers and blackbirds

i kissed an interruption
and intuition called her hope,
a faithful fool's gold,
your good intentions
brought to soothe my ailing heart.

the blues hang heavy on me,
and dear wormwood, I know, I know who we are.
I know i should flee,
it's chernobyl drift
i know i shouldn't follow,
my only dove, my firefly.

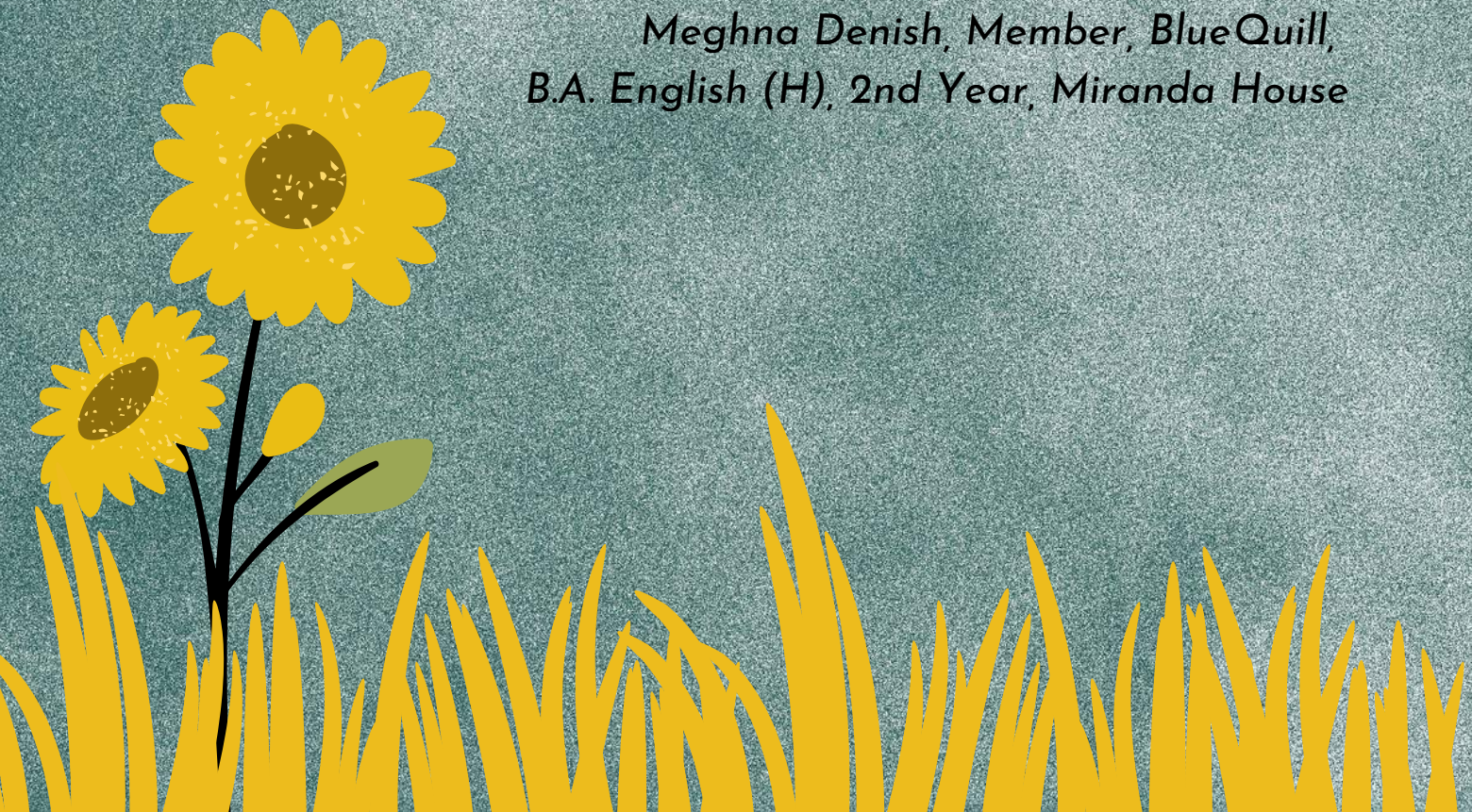
they rest beneath the trees i climbed,
their old bones knit into a hug.
they'll float the pharaoh's river,
breaking dawn, over and over again.



her shamrocks pry many tales loose,
waking the bumblebee's stupor.
the leprechauns' hearth is cold,
and he does not hear me call.

my blackbird's moment has passed,
her song is nina's
her spell mine.
remember, remember the sinnerman's love,
remember the sinnerman's rage,
and if you will,
gift a stranger your wings.

*Meghna Denish, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. English (H), 2nd Year, Miranda House*



falling short

By now, I'd say that hope matters, almost as much as its absence. If we wait long enough, there may come days when it wraps around us like mold, concealing cracks with the bursts of untimely showers. If that be so, sit by me, and we'll breathe life into this rot. Like a memory beaten into remorse, or an apology infested with blame, some things know how to make their presence felt. They morph into hours that render time meaningless. Either way, I believe you know I'm falling short of hope, but I set some aside for what's left to say.

Tonight, I indulge in the sickening act of a bargain.

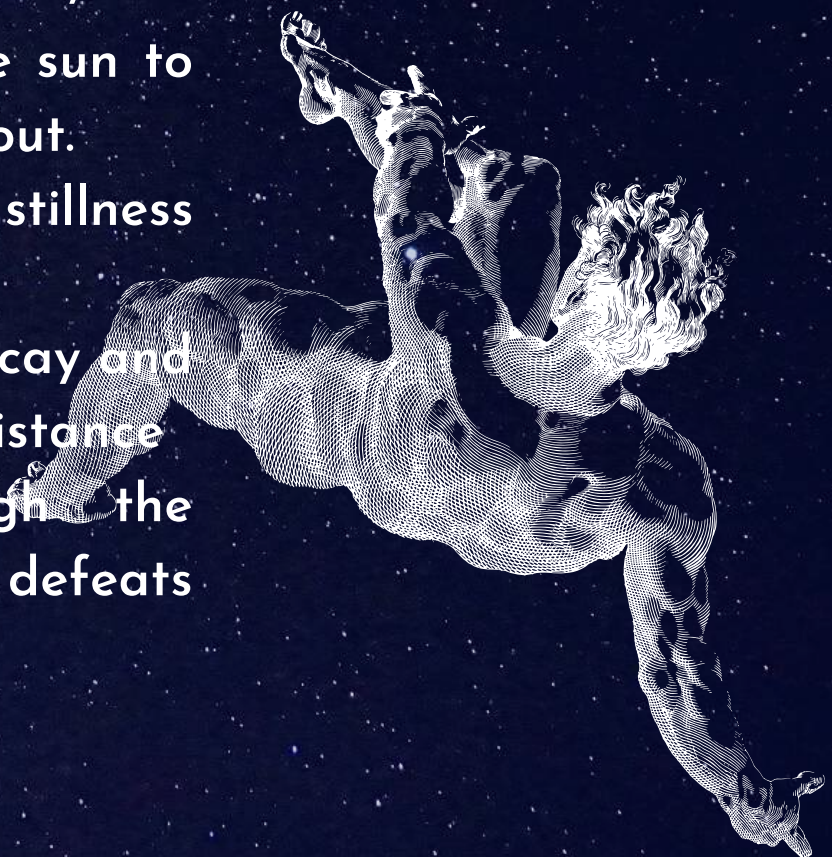
Given all that hope is worth,

Take mine, and hold the sun to
my window on your way out.

The grains, they greet stillness
with a riot

As time blossoms into decay and
triumphs over mortal resistance

A simple slip through the
tapered neck; all pitiful defeats
are loud.



Tonight, I mutter more prayers than I'd ever learn.
Mounting verses upon heaps of starving loss
Tell me then, relentless preachers,
What must I give up for your word of caution?
The fall halts for none, protest if you must
And so I do once it slithers away.

Tonight, I gaze at the axis, count the seconds,
And hold to light my wavering faith
Come by; watch it trace the lump in your throat,
Push hope past the neck of the hourglass,
And serenade the vestiges of unyielding mistakes.

*Ramsha Matin, General Secretary, BlueQuill,
B.A. (Hons) English, 2nd Year, Miranda House*



Dreadful Days

revered souls

kindly retreat from this abomination;

a face etched in lack- gaze aimed for the
jugular(it seems)

a slit for a mouth dripping hunger(for
existence)

a kind of pale, greasy baldness all over.

intentions of mine(though dysfunct) bear
no moment over its close pursuit

i have it taped to my soles like a shadow; in

a battle of wills i have already lost

irate as i am, i wipe my brow and sneak a
grudging pull-of-the-lips

for it steadies me, that abomination.

fallow lands in a stupor i may tread;

bleary eyes rolling with every stagger but

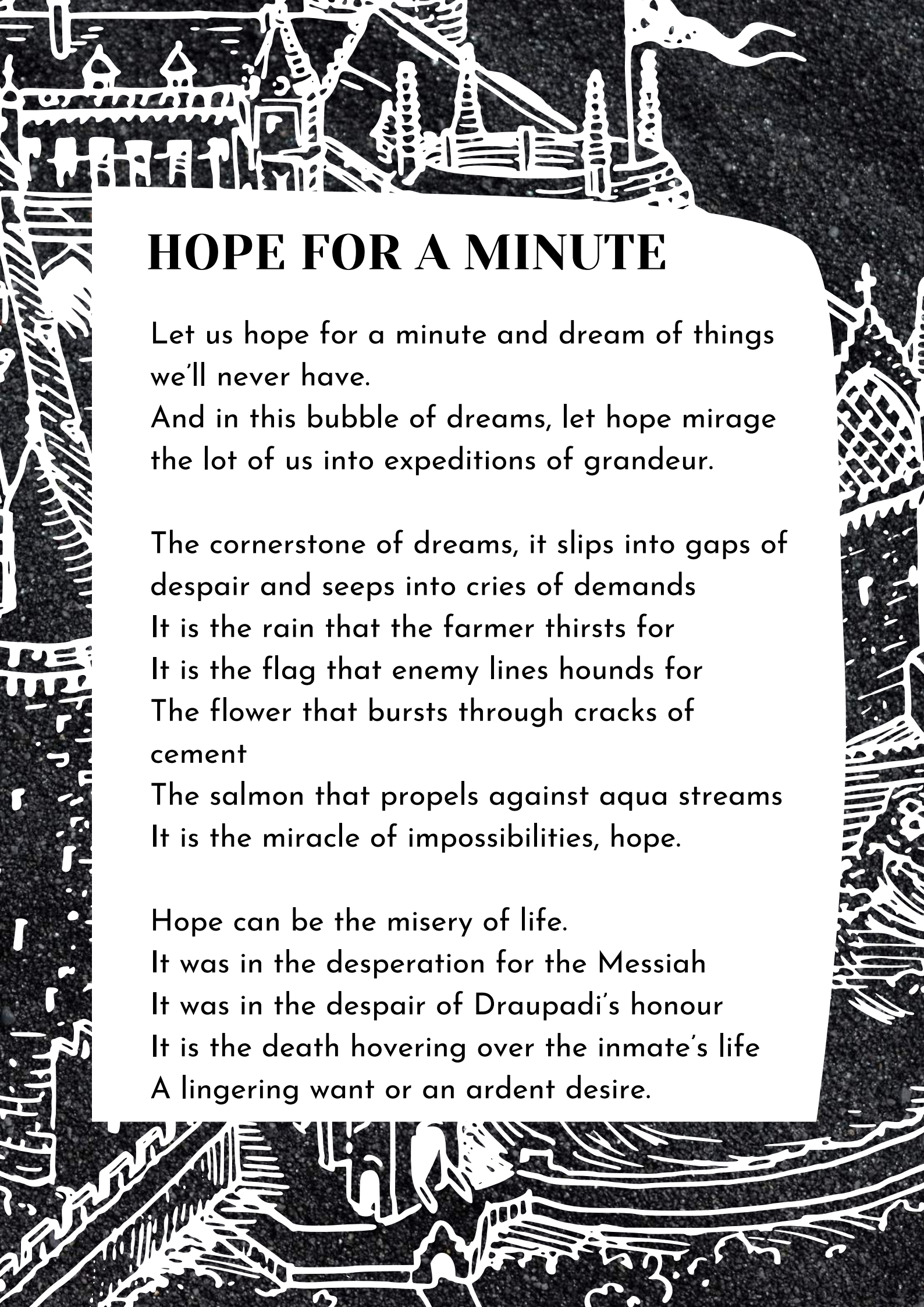
firm is my shadow stitched to my soles and

fast is its grip on cruel floors

perhaps it's time i gazed past my
creature's wretchedness;
the putrid misted glass of my
creature's morning breath on which i
trace secretly,
patterns: patterns that dimple my
cheeks and dissolve the knit in my
brow.

maybe then my creature would trade
its snarl for a grin
maybe then my back won't sore,
with my creature's weight on
dreadful days
maybe when i bring my hope out to
the sun, it will bloom.

*Minha Faizal, B.A. Programme,
2nd Year, Miranda House*



HOPE FOR A MINUTE

Let us hope for a minute and dream of things
we'll never have.

And in this bubble of dreams, let hope mirage
the lot of us into expeditions of grandeur.

The cornerstone of dreams, it slips into gaps of
despair and seeps into cries of demands

It is the rain that the farmer thirsts for

It is the flag that enemy lines hounds for

The flower that bursts through cracks of
cement

The salmon that propels against aqua streams

It is the miracle of impossibilities, hope.

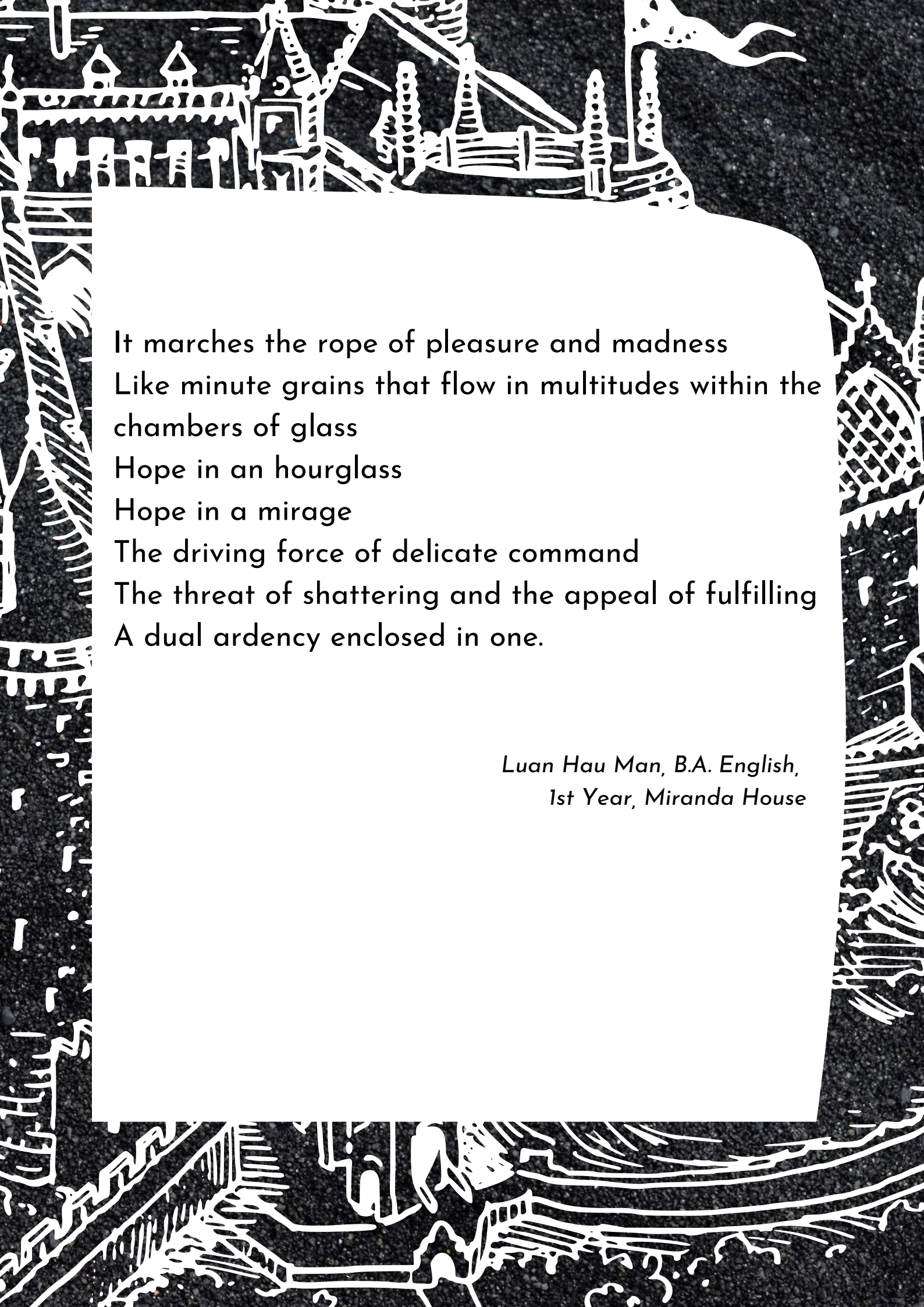
Hope can be the misery of life.

It was in the desperation for the Messiah

It was in the despair of Draupadi's honour

It is the death hovering over the inmate's life

A lingering want or an ardent desire.



It marches the rope of pleasure and madness
Like minute grains that flow in multitudes within the
chambers of glass
Hope in an hourglass
Hope in a mirage
The driving force of delicate command
The threat of shattering and the appeal of fulfilling
A dual ardency enclosed in one.

*Luan Hau Man, B.A. English,
1st Year, Miranda House*

Hope is Enough

Hope is a lack, a
single jigsaw piece playing
i spy under the couch, an
empty space, a seat
left vacant on purpose.

Hope is a freezing body covered
in two blankets, feet
kicking at rocks, self
fighting self to not
look down at death's garden.

Hope is green sunlight
kissing the floor inside
where all is dark and
all is stone.

Hope is just enough
sugar to carry me through
my day, just enough
white marble for me
to walk on, just enough
breeze to breathe life into
my scalp, just enough.
Hope is just enough.

Vaishnavi Singh, BA English Hons,
2nd year, Maitreyi college

Auguries of Insurgence

Auguries haunt each grain of sand
hourglasses will not understand
for between turns though there be
a very eternity, and the stream does even flow
back up against gravity, each grain's replaced as easily
as working hand for working hand. No colossi lie trunkless
here, no beasts arise from captive sands, turning, turning,
turning free
markets of dandy frenzy
do this turn or next suppress
each awaited augury, each little sandy-feathered thing
plucked out the air and bound to land. The time, 'tis true, is
out of joint
and so it's here, always at hand, keen that we may learn to
be
sand and glass, and so be free
between mortal hands to cup
an hour and infinity
in trained imagination's grip
an hourglass couldn't in fact withstand.



Grieving





Time

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otbridge. Th

At the edge of cascading doom,
the sky is dusky grey,
and the smell of tar hangs mid air.
My skin resents grey yet these bones ache for blue,
for in fleeting figures and drifting skies,
it is the blue that clutches my hand
and shelters my soul.

A familiar silence squeals and bawls its eyes out.
The silence creeps the walls of old homes and new
houses
of houses that could never be 'homes'.
The clock vine calls it a playmate,
for they grew up together over cracked walls and
bumpy plasters,
and over fences wrecked by the wretched assassin.

I'm in the middle of a crowd,
a crowd of known faces but I know none.
A whimper here and a cry there,
and the grandeur of the silence shudders.
Shrouds of sooty black pervade the wind
like words that once jostled in my crowded head.

There is a painted silence again,
my verses have bid farewell and so have the
intermittent shrieks.
I recognise this silence,
it lays buried in sheaths underneath my skin.





It is a funeral, I reckon.
My insides churn in mourning,
yet I know not who departed from *the stage of the world*.

With a mechanical thud,
the pallbearers put the casket on the cursed ground.
I see him now,
unlike his voluminous flesh,
his corpse lies shrunken.
A dubious assassin once,
he is no more than a lamb as he lays cold.

With a borrowed blade from the butcher's,
he pierced through men and things alike.
Yet I gravitate towards his icy relic,
for it is memories that sway my being.
A funeral of time,
of a hundred yearnings and of a million passions.
I mourn him,
for in mourning you find a tethered hope,
to live and love till doom finds its way back to you.

*Amodhini, Member, BlueQuill,
English Honors, 2nd Year, Miranda House*

A large, abstract, yellow shape resembling a splash or a stylized sun, located in the top right corner of the page.

interlude:

a staircase

to

nowhere

This staircase extends in both directions,
Time stands frozen in horror.
Sometimes it will rush and skip steps,
Only to misjudge the distance
and

to

crash

and

fall

time

to

get

up

now

It's time to do the dishes.
But that can't be right. I just did them.
Didn't I?

Yes I did, in the kitchen with the small window
and the light shyly inviting itself in an-

Oh wait. No.

That was a different kitchen. One with more
light and less cracks.

The water was still cold though, my hands
ached for hours. It was winter I think.

Winter, that must mean I'm eighteen now.

That....doesn't sound right

I was seventeen just yesterday,

Or was it today?

I do feel older though or maybe just tired.

Please excuse me I have been doing nothing
today

It feels like a shot of whiskey with a side of
chalk.

Have a seat will you, I will be there with you in
just a

m
i
n
u
t
e

I'm so sorry,
so, so sorry. I completely forgot you were here
You see, I was just doing the dishes
Replacing the soap and the sponge
They finish too quickly now
And it was just as if time flew by
Or maybe it trudged.
I took the cells out of all my clocks.

It's nice to catch up though, I hope everyone is well.
Oh what about me?
I don't know what to tell.
Somewhere between these lines I think I turned
nineteen
But I can't be too sure.
If anything I feel younger, like I know nothing of the
world
Maybe it's better this way, maybe I can pretend I'm
still seventeen.
Still have time to catch up to, maybe I can pretend for
a second I haven't been left behind In this symphony
of sadness, in this kaleidoscope of monotony
Buried underneath layers and layers of existence that
has moved on without me.
Ahhhh, I went on a tangent again, didn't I? I've been
doing that alot lately. Tell me about

you though, what have you been upto?

Oh, baking bread that's nice. I tried baking you know, mixed the flour with the eggs and the yeast and the works you know. It came out too plain, too worn out. So I tried it again and again. You know, I added more sugar, cinnamon, even cut up pieces of chocolates. It came out charred then, I can still taste the ash between my teeth. In the end there were just more dishes to do.

Yeah, you're right, maybe I'm just feeling this way because of the weather. Yes, confinement does breed a kind of confusion about the familiar. Yes I agree
But

It's just that

I know time is not escapable, I know because I've choked on it. It comes to haunt me, you know?

Like a starved animal inching towards its prey. It wolfs me down, the blood running astray.

And I lay here, motionless, breathless, waiting for an end, for the curtain to fall.

This grief is a staircase and I'm the idiot that chose to haunt it.

Ah enough about me.

I'm sorry to bore you,

What was that? I can't really hear you,

.....



.....

.....

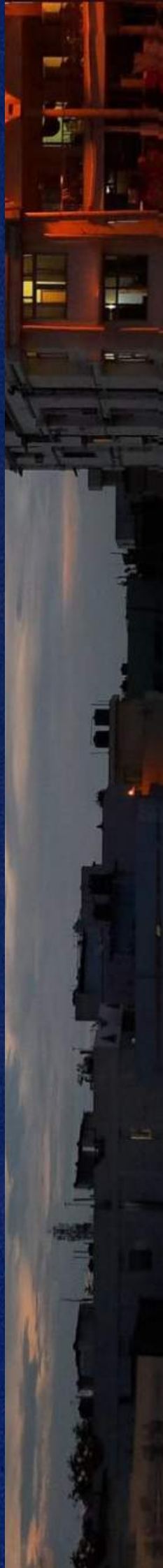
Yeah, I can't hear you maybe check your connection

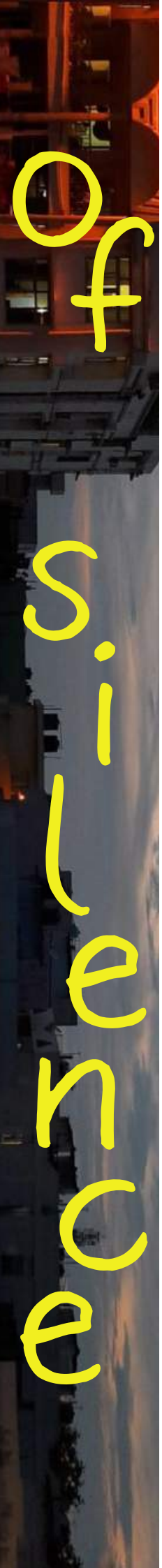
Turn it on and off.

Do that and I'll just quickly come back

I just have to do the dishes.

*Mehak, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A Programme, 2nd Year, Miranda House*





Of Silence

Ofsilence is calm,
Ofsilence is gray,
Ofsilence is in pain.
This gut-wrenching pain
that lives inside her-*maybe it is her-*
encompassed in this shell of Silence.

It is writhing inside of her
as if she is in her mother's womb again-kicking, lashing,
wanting to get out,
wanting to be born.

OfSilence is calm-
but beneath its fragile surface of the ice- there is her
and a scream that lives inside her,
echoing in every cell of her body,
it creates a thunderstorm with lightning but the downpour
of this storm is also hidden, not existing above the calm,
hidden in the darkness of her room
with no eyes, not even her own.
She is blind to her own name-
Is this emotion; what they call shame?

Sitting on this table- her eyes trace faces.
Faces of her people,
their daughter-her:
an intruder.

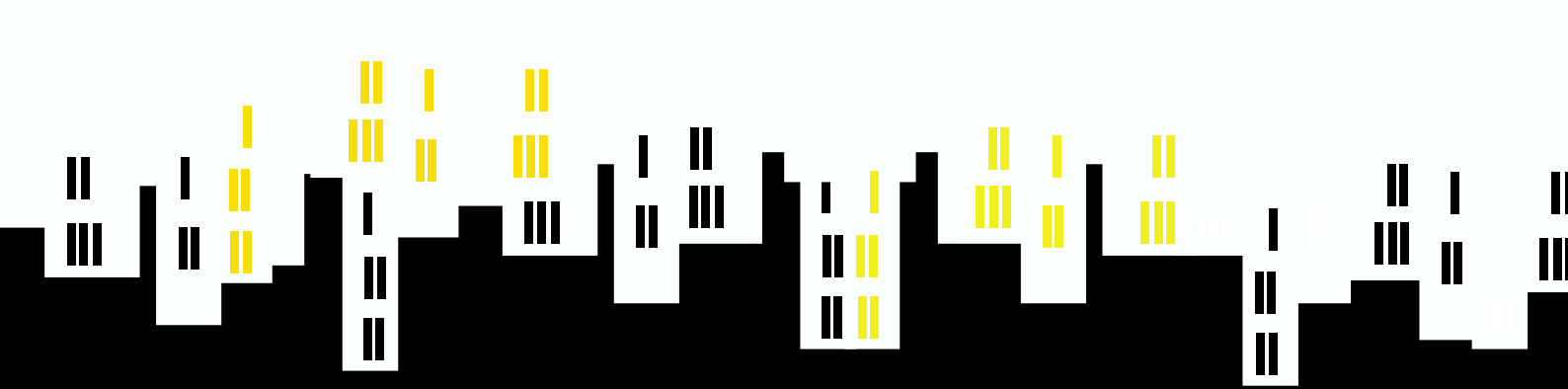
Within her - the human:
silenced.
Suffocating in her grave
beneath the thin layer of ice.
Frigid because of the reality,
not the cold lies-but truths.
She is Ofsilence
But she is also- Ofscreams
Ofme.

*Pratishtha Jindal, B.A Programme,
2nd Year, Jesus and Mary College*

1. The name of the protagonist is inspired from The Handmaid's Tale. While talking about Offred's name, as David Ketterer observes in "Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale': A Contextual Dystopia" *-is not her real one. Like all Handmaids, her real name has been erased in favor of the form "Of" plus the first name, possibly abbreviated, of her Commander.*

Here, her name signifies that her identity belongs to the Male Commander. In my poem, the protagonist has lost her identity to silence. I interpreted the meaning of hope in her finding herself in the end. Instead of being written by someone else, she claims her voice back and ends up taking control of her narrative, proclaiming herself to be "Ofme".

2. [Link to the article referenced.](#)



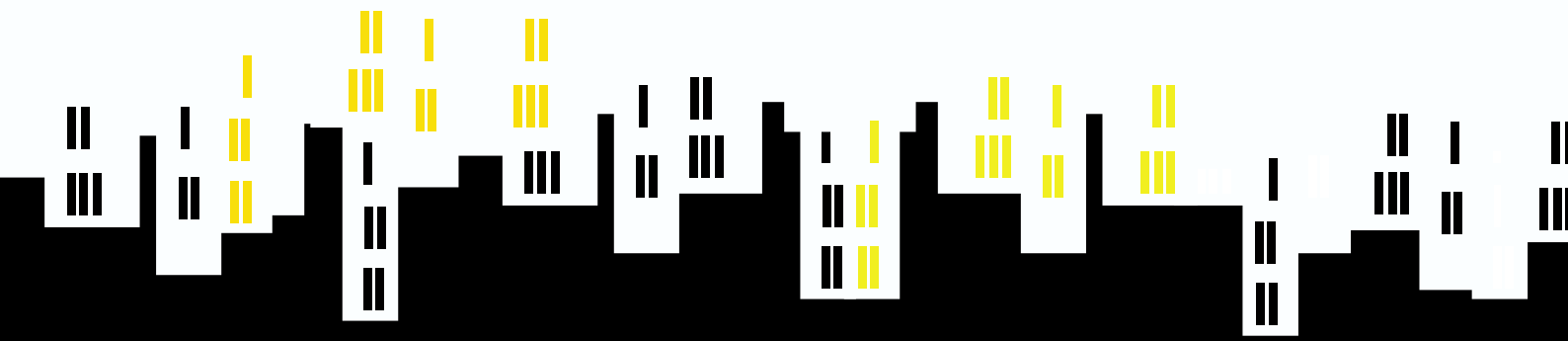
DOG-TIRED AND HOPELESS AS EVER

CW: Themes and graphic descriptions of suicidal ideations, depression, mentions of blood and substances

DAWN

I wake up in the blued dawn of my yellow room every morning, sharp at 06.30 a.m. The curtains on the window by my bed are purple and grey, drawn tightly shut so that not one ray of light dares to invade my room. I will not permit it. My room is between two doors, one to my mother's room (she had it renovated that way so she could keep an eye on me) and the other to the living room where my father sleeps. I keep both doors shut.

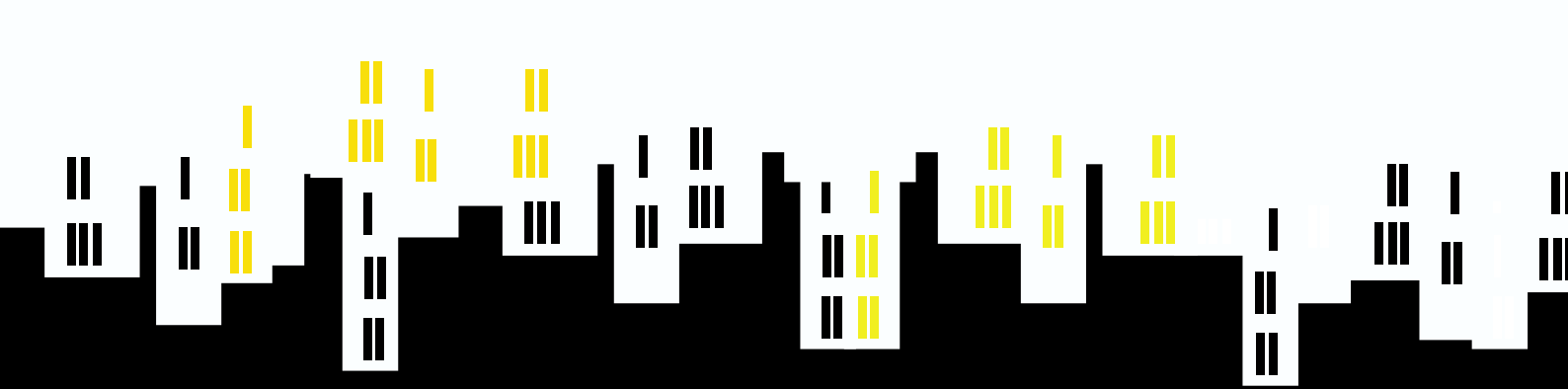
WAKE



What is your first thought when you wake up? Mine is regret and disgust so deep I can feel it like a weighted grey rock on the floor of my chest, boiling into a fireball of rage. Why have I been forced to see another day? But then, I suppose I have no justification for my anger; it's not like I dare to take the steps necessary to prevent this circadian cycle of coming awake.

INFESTATION

The second feeling is heavier and molten, liquid lava of anxiety. Why am I still in bed? It is 06.00 a.m., I cannot afford to be late, it would cause an explosion. Explosions are common in my house. We boil over and react at the slightest provocation, blowing our shrapnel deep into the cement flesh of the house where it spreads like a termite infestation (the neighbours can see the ugly jagged lines of the termite tracks too, but they don't let us hear their disgusted hisses). I don't want to add to the infestation today, so I hurry out of bed.



MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is an exhausting process. My muscles ache in protest with each stroke of the toothbrush in my mouth. No part of me, soul, mind, body, muscle wants to contribute to this arduous existence anymore. The comb scrapes against my scalp too. I wouldn't have to be doing this if I wasn't here. Why am I still here?

TASK

The task is my dog. She is a rescued Labrador, about 10 years old. She is sitting awake by my mother's bed, on her little mattress. The house is still dark and even with her early-stage cataracts, she stares at me, patient as ever. I lift my index finger and mouth "one minute" to her. She lays her head down, waiting.

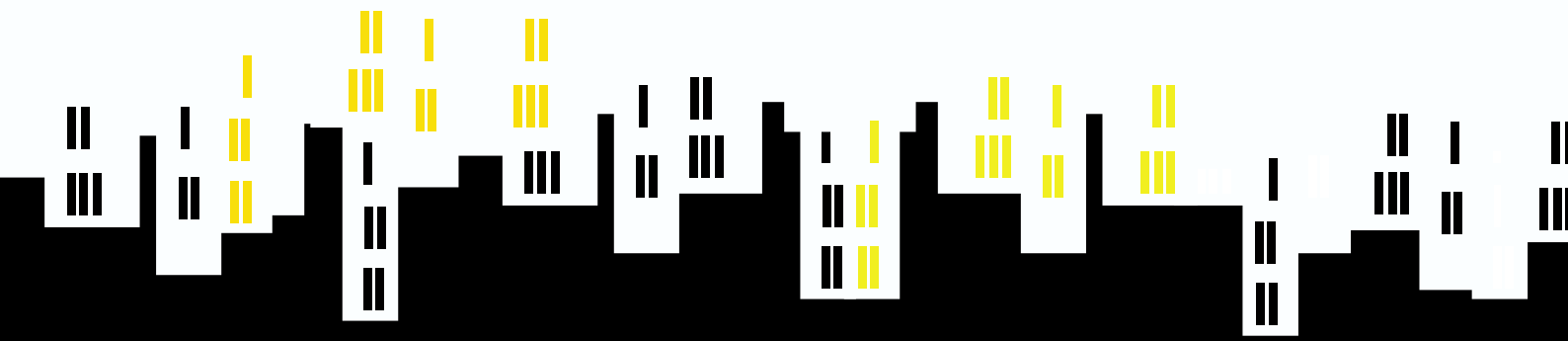
BEGINNING



We met two years ago in May. She was living with a foster parent then. I was living too. She ran up to me, immediately licking my face. Her fur was rough then, lack of care. My hair was glued weakly to my scalp then. (It has fallen out now.) She was going to be my saviour, everyone had decided (everyone being the Me of that time, Me's psychologist and Me's mother).

DIFFERENTIATION

My dog is a strange creature. I call her my friend, and I want to think we are alike; she spends her days asleep and so do I. But I looked at the back of her head for a long time today, and really, we could not be less alike. She is not shy with herself. When she is angry, she barks and whines and chews up blankets till she is heard. When I am angry, I lash out at my one benefactor; my mother. Or I lash out at myself. The latter usually ends up bloody, or intoxicated. I clean up after myself though, my dog doesn't. I guess she is excused in



this incompetence due to her lack of opposable thumbs.

When she is ill, she seeks me out, wrapping herself around me and lifting up the paw which hurts. Very precise with her needs. When I am ill, I try to disappear. I have been disappearing for a while now, it feels like.

My dog seeks out affection openly. She never learnt of the shame in that. It does not burn under her skin to ask for love, anytime, anywhere, from anyone. I would never dream of it.

ALIEN

My dog is a strange alien creature. She lives, a quadruped, in a house of featherless bipeds, commanding us as '*Our Lady*' and '*God of Great Virtues*.' She screams at stray cats in contempt but eats their poop. She barks at innocent delivery persons and stray bulls six times her size but cowers at the sight of the Vet's Clinic. If you put your forearm flat against her back when she is lying down, she flips over like a fish and dances till sneezes wrack her little body. I once asked her if

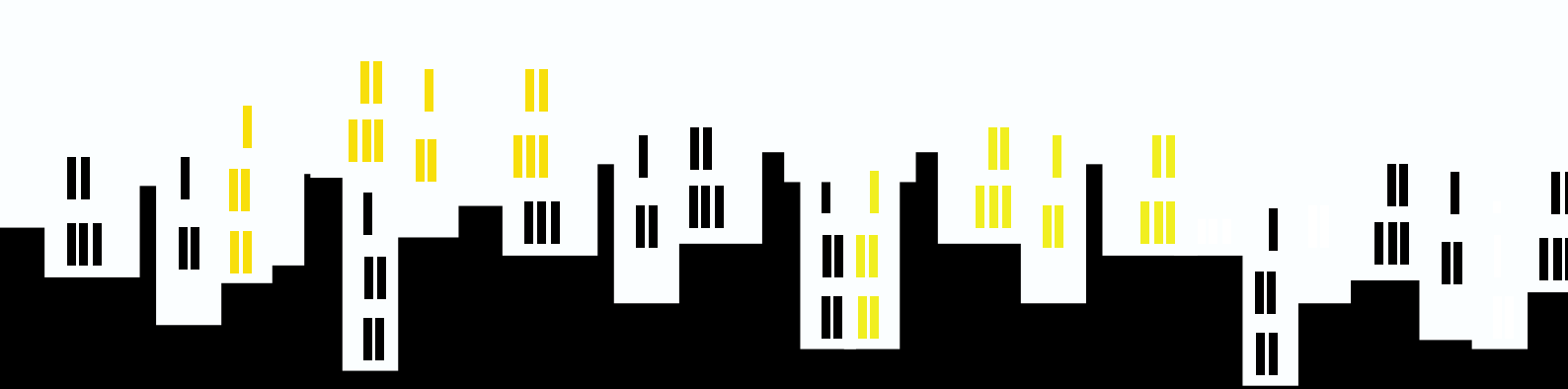


she is a fairy (there has been evidence of fairy cats on Pinterest, so I only wondered), she licked my nose in response.

NON-SAVIOUR/DUTY

My dog, the strangest creature I have ever been acquainted with, is a lot, but she is not my saviour. She is not the glowing blue orb of life that the hole in my chest is missing. She is a duty I have to fulfil, at 06 a.m. morning walks, while hurling 10kg packs of Pedigree, by the side of cold at metallic veterinarian tables.

She is a duty I have to fulfil,
every morning
by waking up,
by finishing my assignments
on time enough
for her walks.
by not bleeding myself out on the bathroom floor.



HOPELESS

She does not give me an ounce of hope; I don't think I can feel that anymore. Three-quarters of myself and my paraben-free shampoo have long leaked out of me through the port on the back of my head where "Hope" might have sat. The one-fourth that still occupies my body is a blobby mass of pink and yellow, soft and squishy, a drain plug near my left eye. It keeps the blood inside my body, just enough to keep me alive for my dog. I call the plug responsibility because hope is a heavy word. My dog cannot tell the difference between the two.

*Jaya Narayan, BA Political Science,
2nd Year, Miranda House*

in

loving memory of hope

Before the daylight breaks,
I bring a rose to a gravestone
In my head-

In loving memory of Hope
When sun rays reflect through
My crystal eyes-

I get on the hamster wheel
Sometimes it slips off my mind
To get down and sleep
By the time the day ends
Everyday-

I forget that hope is now a star,
Somewhere in the sky.

My heart secretly sings
A lullaby-

For us to rest in peace.

Morrow morning,
She brings a rose again-

In loving memory of hope
from dawn to dusk of moonlight

Varnika, B.A. History Honors,
3rd year, Miranda House

HOPE IN AN

HOURL



SS

I see you: enchanting glass,
And your perfectly curved glory.
I glare as grains of moments tickle by
And be a side character in my own story.

You let me in on a little secret,
That there's hope in your walls.
You say you would lend me some,
If only I follow you inside.

As I pavlov, you mock me for my gall
For I feel suffocated with the slipping sand
beside.

You hush my racing thoughts,
You successfully subdue my quivering panic.

You urge me closer and dazed I follow,
In a whisper I beg: I don't wish to be titanic.

I gasp for breath as my wrecked ship sinks, A
moribund hand I place on your slender waist. And
you fragile hourglass, couldn't hold up the weight,
Of my flickering paranoia, thus broke your crest.

I see you: enchanting glass,
And your perfectly curved glory.
I sought but couldn't find the hope,
That is must for me to write my story.

*Karizma Ahmed, B.A. English Honors,
1st year, Miranda House*

the slow demise of
petrified poets

Isn't it poetic,
All these metaphors
scattered across the floor
Abandoned like the night when the knight in shining
armour comes?

The poets lament that their grief is deeper than the sea -
I hope you drown then.

Because, what am I to do when you sing of such
metaphors and leave?
Leave me with this abnormally normal and common
grief,
Because your metaphors didn't fix anything.
Because now, I despise this place.

Why sing such praise of stars when I barely see any in
the sky now?
Why make me hope for the summer sun when I despise
the sweat and bare arms?
Why make me love the rain when I am crashing downhill
clothed in mud and shame?





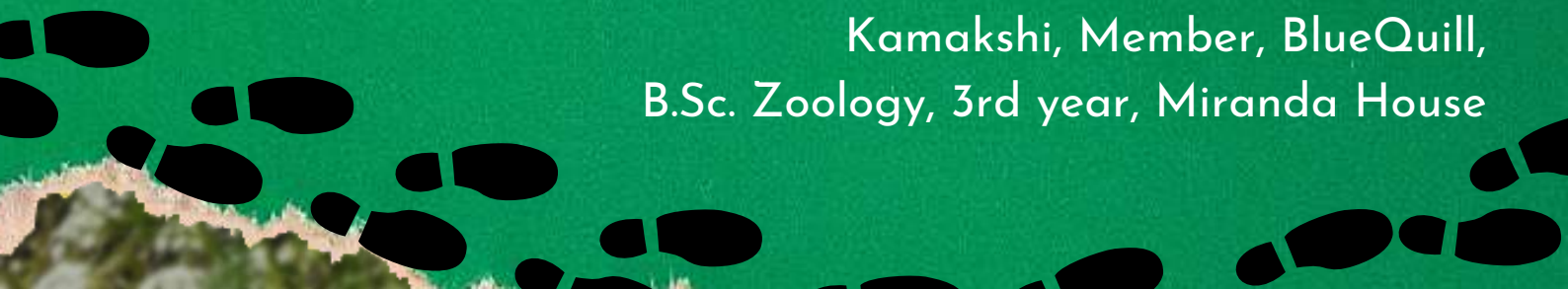
Make me a poem.
Would I see beauty in a mirror then?
Sanity where derangement is the rule,
Where maladies of the heart lead to maladies of the
mind,
Self-imposed or otherwise.

The night is not gentle and the summer day
incomparable
And I wait here, banished from both the house of day
and night.
The roads are diverging and I think I will just stay here
regardless.

Poets do bury you before this world can,
In a sea of nonsensical phrases
And a hope to see beauty where there is none.

How cruel to leave me be!
With arms too brittle,
And a chest filled with tyrannical butterflies,
Scrambling through these pages to see beauty again
Desperate for words that make grief a sea again.

Kamakshi, Member, BlueQuill,
B.Sc. Zoology, 3rd year, Miranda House



Hope in an Hourglass

I am running out of breath,
I am gasping for hope.

As seconds tighten
Time's noose around my throat -
Threatening to drown me
In sands of despair,
Minute hands surround me,
The scaffold stands prepared.

I am running out of light,
I am reaching for flames.
As my presence is numbered
On this existential plane.
Threatening to push me
In an abyss of dark,
I'd rather risk burning
Than shy from a spark.

Hope in an hourglass,
I am slipping on sand
Grasping at grains
Of time's elusive hand.
Hope in an hourglass
That I fear, will shatter
While I am looking for light,
Sifting dark matter.

*Surabhi Chhikara, BA Economics,
1st year, Miranda House*

A circular arrangement of the words "time" and "et" in a handwritten font. The words are repeated multiple times, with "time" appearing on the right side and "et" on the left side, forming a ring. The text is black and the background is white.

The Arms of Redemption

The buildings around her were collapsing to the ground, the racket created by their demolishing echoed in the little alley where Olivia stood, all alone. The dogs in the street were barking out of terror. She looked for hints of another human, she wanted to hold a hand and clutch it tightly, as if her life depended on it. She was out of breath, not because of physical activity but the mental exhaustion guided by the immense fear which engulfed every fiber of her being. She was covered from sweat, especially on the forehead, the perspiration reminded her of being alive. Amid the horror that struck her like a bolt of lightning, she was alive somehow.

After desperately rummaging through the rubble all around her, she gave up. She walked to the only remaining building in the no man's land, which once used to be her homeland. She heard the shrieks of people, she felt as if she had finally returned to civilization. She felt a sense of relief, but it was short-lived. A woman came running to her, with a child struggling in her arms who was barely visible under all the soot.

"Run before you get killed, the strength of your legs is your only savior, run for your life". She had run for miles and the idea of running did not tire her a single bit. But she couldn't bring herself to leave the sight of the woman. The woman looked at her with eyes wide open, her face came over with a frenzy as she screamed "Are you crazy? Run I said, RUN!" And so she ran, she ran like a prisoner on the loose. She wasn't aware of where she was heading, she went where her legs took her. The beast which was caged inside of her, finally came out as she ran. Her mouth was parched and her wounds were hurting.

After she ran for a few miles, her legs were aching badly. She looked over her shoulder, she looked back at the place where she was a few minutes ago. She looked for the lady with the child but saw no one, just as she was about to turn and continue on her lap of desperate survival, she saw it. She saw the building she was standing near getting bombed. Debris now rained on the spot where she stood not long ago.

The whole architecture exploded, the resultant debris just added to the already dry air. A thick black cloud rose from the place where the building stood erect just a few minutes ago. The whole vision was something that scarred Olivia in her heart and soul. She thought of the soot-covered face of the child, barely clinging on to the arms of his mother. He is most probably dead now, along with Olivia's will to live. She could not run anymore, instead, she collapsed on the debris-covered ground and cried. She cried like a baby, she had seen many babies die before her eyes in the past few days, and at this point, she felt guilty for even being alive.

She let out a scream, she did not care if one of the armed men spotted her and shot her in the head. Olivia wanted to die, more than anything in the world. She wanted to put an end to her suffering, on her own. She smashed her head onto the ground violently, soon the ground was covered with her blood. The sight of her blood encouraged her to keep going. She was not ready for the pain that followed, it was as if her skull was breaking, slowly and harrowingly.

She gave up on bringing death upon herself and laid her head down, lightly. She looked on the ground and at her blood. Her gaze shifted to the rubble that surrounded her in all directions.

She knew that many were dead underneath it and she also knew that many hearts were beating for the last time underneath it.

As she lay there, she began to count her sins. She wanted to know why she was going through all of this. What in the world had she done to deserve this? She was going to die soon enough and she felt victorious in knowing that. She was going to die, not because of a bombing or a gunshot, she was going to die because she chose it for herself. Maybe it wasn't the most flamboyant victory, but it filled her heart with joy.

Even as her eyes were filling up with tears too reluctant to fall, she had a smile on her soot-covered lips. She refused to be powerless in her duel with death, she was fighting the death that she conjured and she was wholly alive in that.

Olivia waited patiently for the blood to bleed out of her head, for her lungs to fail and for her eyes to close forever. She waited for the curtain of her eyelids to fall and end this inhumane festival of lives lost in vain. She counted sheep because her mother told her to do that when she could not sleep. And after all, what is death but eternal sleep? She wanted to never wake up from the sleep that was coming. Olivia made an immense effort and slowly moved her shaking hand to her neck, the tips of her fingers held the chain which she was wearing. They felt for the pendant and her fingers grazed along the chain till they found it. Once she held it in her fist, she played with it for a bit. She enjoyed the sensation of the little heart-shaped metal twisting in her fingers.

The ruby in the center of the pendant felt cold against her warm hand. The pendant was her mother's, who had been killed in the war. Olivia wished to see her mother one last time before she succumbed to death. And as if by magic, she saw the face of her mother as clear as a crystal. She wasn't sure if it was her imagination or in real life. Her mother looked more beautiful than ever, her hazel eyes glistening in the broad daylight, they looked like pots of honey with bees of kindness buzzing around them. The wrinkles around her eyes were soft like a feather. Her black hair fell nonchalantly on her shoulders. There was no soot on her face, no debris on her long eyelashes. It was as if she was from another dimension, a dimension of serenity. She was glowing as she smiled. Her skin looked flawless and her smile was reassuring.

The sight of her mother made Olivia regret her decision to die. She thought that she had no one left to call her own, she thought her mother was one of the countless people who had died in this grotesque war. Now, seeing her again was like seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. Her mother was her world.

To see her, after all, that she had been through and after completely giving up on life was liberating.

Her mother crouched down next to her. She did not speak a single word, all that she did was smile. Her smile resembled that of years ago when Olivia played the violin in front of an audience for the first time. Olivia could hear the violin at that moment, Puccini's *Nessun Dorma* roared along with the wind. The music sent a shiver down Olivia's spine, she felt as if she had traveled to the past, to the times long-buried under rubble and debris. To the times before oppression became a way of life. Olivia's mother gently leaned down to kiss her on the forehead. The kiss dissolved all the tension that held her muscles taut. She felt as if the moment had come for her to experience true happiness again, she watched as her mother opened her arms and embraced her. Olivia, indeed, was truly happy; for her death was her own and so was her redemption.

*Kriti Khurana, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. Philosophy Hons. 2nd year, Miranda House*

TIME
IS A
TRAVELLER

photo by Madiha

It's a January winter again.

Still?

I forgot which colour I painted my toes,

My socks won't tell me.

My fingernails are chipped-off

copper-coloured,

haldi stained and brittle.

The cold likes to crust my unbaked hands.

The sun moved a few months away,

stopped filling out the day,

in its permanent address column.

From the kitchen to my room, my coffee turns cold.

Like a thousand windy mouths blow in perfect unison

whispering a mutual understanding,

louder and clearer than

between the seconds hand of the clock, and its ticking.

Time forgot its current,

it doesn't glide anymore.

It hesitates and staggers when it's hanging on my wrist.

Yet the sky lurches across colours,

like it's going to be left behind.

The seconds hand is tracing circles, flipping pages off the
calendar.

But it doesn't remember that it needs to keep ticking.

I can't hear it ticking.

It's like time isn't just running off into
the sunset.

After sunset, it's eloping.

We don't know where, we're not invited.

It's a January winter. Still.

It was a May summer yesterday.

It was October two nights ago.

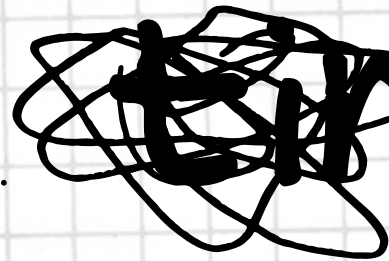
It's been a January winter for three months.

My cold-crusted hands dropped my coffee cup one morning.
It spilled out and smelled like what nostalgia infused with
hope would smell like,
for just a second.

It was a January winter 2 years ago.

The grass was green and fresh,
leaning against sunlit red bricks rusted with laughter.
My nails were longer and peach-coloured for weeks.
It was warmer then.
For just a second.

Coffee leaves stains
if you don't mop it up fast enough.



It's a January winter. Again.

I can no longer imagine what nostalgia infused with hope
would smell like.

Time is a favour that needs to be asked

I have nothing to offer in return.

I'm tired of being outrun by the year.

Full of running, how'd I fall so far behind?

It feels like someone fast-forwarded me on a track,
while I have one leg caught on play-back and one on pause.

I'm not sure if I should start chasing the current until it takes
me along,

or wait for it to come back for me.

Maybe I could at least outrun this grief.

I've heard it's no use crying over spilt ~~milk~~-coffee.

But I'd like to know if nostalgia tastes bittersweet
and if hope is sweeter and stronger.

Mopping up grief is the same as sieving it with a hole.

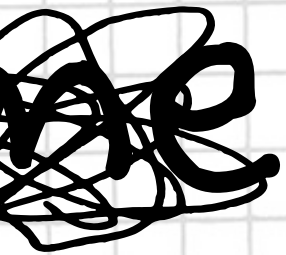
All it needs is a tear

and my body is pulled into craters,
nicked by what-ifs and could've-beens.

Time is too far ahead

leaving only the grief of its loss in the dusty wake.

Maybe you can't outrun the scratch in your throat.



Time is a traveller,

but grief isn't meant to be a souvenir.

It's a January winter.

The sun refuses to visit, gave the clouds an extra key.

They've been house-sitting in grey.

I understand the cold now.

We both take refuge in my hands.

The coffee turns cold but the cup is warm
still.

*Medha Arora, Vice President, BlueQuill,
B.A(H)Economics, 3rd year*

apathy is emotional

no matter where i go i am still the same age as my mother's grey hair and my father's palm that is rough. i cannot leave the home i was born in, and its tradition that knew what to say but left love at the door. we don't dirty the house with it. it was made for reverence from a distance. i listen to my mother even when she's repeating the words of yesterday. the words i swallowed whole with the fruits she cut for me. i cannot ever empty the bowl of love she offers and she hates me for wasting what is put on the table. by now i think i was born to be detested for not knowing how to be loved.

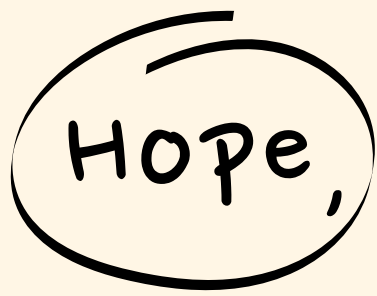
this house has seen anger. i don't get rid of all that i break, looking back at them, they look so much like me. the broken arm goes well on the right side of my body, the fractured angst stays well within my throat, a jaw that cannot remain in place but remains and a photograph in my diary, that which looks nothing like my family. All of that and more, reminds me constantly, of how i was born to refuse love. which is to say, there was so much of it within me that i wouldn't let it go to waste. you see, i had

listened to my mother carefully. there was always love at the door for us to pick when we left the house, it's getting over now. it is fair that others detest me for not knowing how to be loved.

there is not much hope within the shelves of a loveless opponent. the shelves that do not know how to fill on their own, nor empty and free me of itself. i am afraid to see how it is what i accepted for love that looks the most like them. they don't resemble cavities, decaying or wearing out, but someplace i stack the palms that did not hold me and a pair of squeaky slippers that had been more mum than ignorance. apathy is emotional. i see how it's me that doesn't empty them, doesn't put down and get rid of the habit, but hold on to grief from the moment i felt death for the first time. i dirty my shelves with it. i have dirtied myself with it. it is only fair that i detest myself for loving.

*Reet Deo, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A. English, 2nd Year, Miranda House*





Hope, despite everything

On the sombre sheets,
my pen runs, engendering
a panoply of words,
words sheltering
rants and raves,
rage and wrath,
gloom and glee,
that which is no longer
and that which I long for.

I desist not!

I resist not!

Strewn all over the heart lay
fragmented reality and
figmental imagination,
nudging optimism and
clutching realism,
soaring silences and
sinking desires.

I abandon them not!

I defy them not!

Hunting those
untameable, unfaltering hands,
the wretched entanglements
ceaselessly utter:





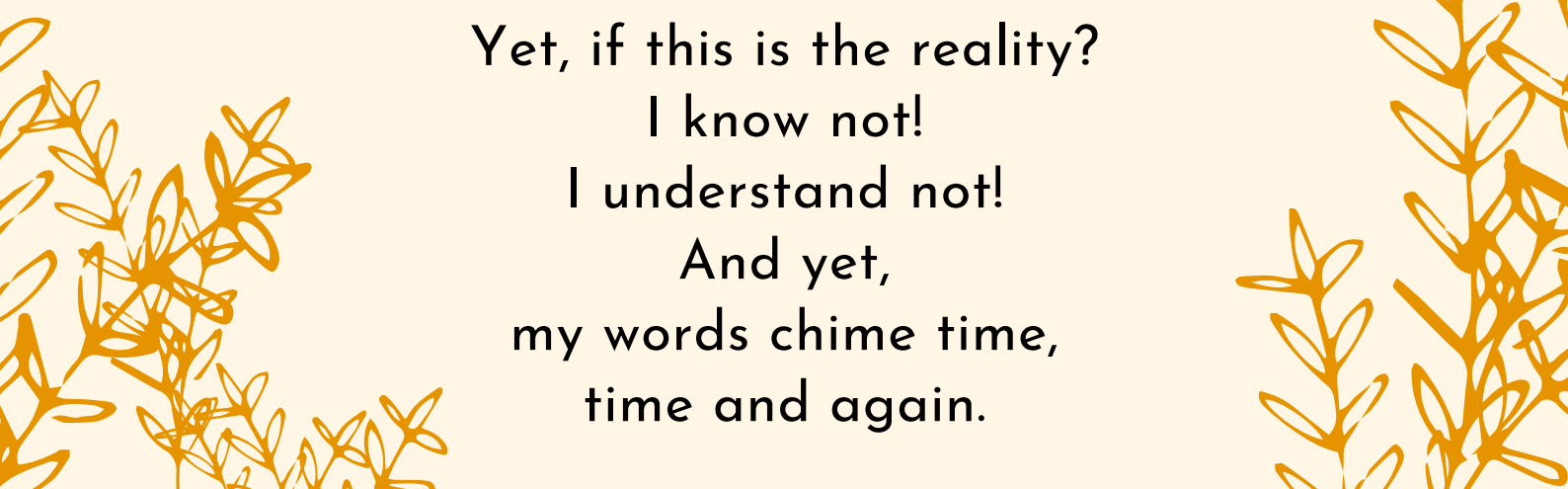
"Time, the best liar,
knits words of promises
and wounds of breaches,
one after the other.

Time, the best hypocrite,
ticks incessantly against
cessant quandaries,
its needles piercing
stillness and silence,
one after the other.

Time, not the best healer,
its hands swinging the
perpetually unsheathed swords of
bygone, now, futurity,
leaving in oscillation
between then, now and then,
every now and then.

Time, disowns its past
embraces succession of moments,
cradles the unchangeable change."

Yet, if this is the reality?
I know not!
I understand not!
And yet,
my words chime time,
time and again.



But the voices inside exude the
solitary streak of strength;
Faith
Faith that swaddles and utters:

“Why hold an avalanche
of agony
when you can melt away your sorrow?

Perhaps, time is the best possession,
and we, the transitory possessors.

And, if grief groans and grows,
and tides of time await your sinking
with unprecedented currents,
remind thyself:

Time denies stillness,
Time thwarts discontinuity,
so should your hope!”

Hence, I hope,
despite everything!

*Shree Vardhani, BA Programme,
2nd year, Miranda House*





the label survives

prologue
At Odds With Pause

with hands - concealed in charcoal
and face swabbed in the same
I hover in the hues of beige

the couch - cornered and typically uninviting
greet my frayed state of being
on the last moon of its weary lifetime

for even the jasmine - adorned vividly
with withered leaves
weaves adieus on times' tapestry

epilogue
Inexorably Tied

stemmed in the wrecked
howls the caliginous chapter of
my not so personal slam-book

draped in tattered curtains
and theories of half-painted hallways
breathes untimely waves of salty turkish kahfee

the handwoven jhoomar - still sways
on the frescoed ceilings craved in
salutations of "falsely yours" letters.

dazed and blunt, stood I
reliving my classically naive childhood
all of it, all over again

enveloped in me, lies the traumatised
yet this outlying hour
shall nurture in its roots:

a tremulous voice, a flicker of light
a wicked curse, a ray of hope
and souvenirs of unrequited love.

Shubha Bhatt, Member, BlueQuill, B.A.
Programme, Miranda House



OF METAPHORS

I had known-

Eventualities grind moments into memories and memories
into metaphors,

What I had yet to learn,

Was that your metaphors were different from mine.

You used them as symbols.

As anecdotes to misery; as tableaux for malleability of
truth,

Your metaphors had the smell of blood.

The one that plagiarized someone else's pain into your
ungrievable grief.

Not only did your metaphors have thorns,

It had weeds

that you thrust into my garden,

to call it yours.

Your metaphors were the news headlines, growing out of
the epitaphs of my Bej masheed.

Your metaphors walked 369 steps just to

dissemble the annihilation of the 370, as a benign decree.



My home stood on the ramparts of the 370th step.
My home demolished into the black hole of your dreams,
where a perpetual fall was rendered as the inability to
move on.

Your metaphors signed my living will into an enslaved
parchment-

that was too brittle with the wrinkles of distrust.

Your metaphors intended the dialectic
only to reaffirm your diabolical disdains.

Your metaphors made me sleep in unknown pages,

Building rooms out of catacombs

And graves out of letters.

I now am a poet who writes obituaries to the living,

And odes to the unparted.

Your metaphors have shaped my reiterations

Into the anagrams of singularities,

making sense of 'listen' from 'silent'.

*Madiha, Member, BlueQuill,
B.A Hons Philosophy, 2nd year.*



i begin as all things do
choking out poetry
never in sync with the heart
that beats in iambic

it's the same mixtape i play
of a rookie pencil at work
two twists to the r

i
g
h
t

and two to the l
e
f
t

till the middle collapse into slivers
of all that it was
there's words that hide when no one seeks

and thunder and a whole cacophony of reds and
oranges
that bleed into a sunshine

it's the same mixtape i play
of scribbles a c r o s s

and dreams dripping d

o

w

n

a time that breathes only as everything ends

i gurgle the last of my poetry

as i watch it all burn

time is a mother and she has only ever known passing
in bouts of love

never fed

and

in frenzies of rage

never withheld

time is a mother and she loves me

in that she weeps as i descend closer and closer
achingly so, into twenty-one.

i need to begin again
as all things do at twenty-one
choking out poetry
never in sync with the heart
that beats in iambic.

Garima Mahajan, Member, BlueQuill
B.A. Programme, 3rd Year



Time is a mother - *after Ocean Vuong*

Contributors

Adithi S.R is a First Year BA English Hons student at Miranda House. She strives to achieve a sense of direction in a chaotic world and hopes to become more conscious about who she wants to be, especially in writing. She also aims to use her words as a way of expressing herself and hopes to be confident enough someday, to use her voice for the things she believes in.

Kafi Lehar loves reading, music, and overthinking is what she's best at.

Sunaina Mishra is a self-proclaimed singer-songwriter. With lyrical compositions based mainly in her head, she aims to do justice to her duty as a philosophy major by trying to highlight social, political and spiritual themes that transcend her rather mundane daily-life. Oh, and she also believes that crystals have healing powers. (*eye-roll emoji*)

Sohini Dutt is an author of three books and a published Wordpress blogger and Podcaster. She has been writing since many years now and has taken part in several interviews and sessions. She has also had her works published in three anthologies, under The Write Order and The Quill House. She is an alumni of Miranda House and is currently pursuing her Master's degree.

A poet and co-author of anthologies known as "The Magic Tree" and "Shades of Life", **Bhavika Sachan** hails from the city of Lucknow and is currently pursuing English Honours at Miranda House College, University of Delhi.

She believes that "dreams are like sand dunes, shattering without a sound." And so, she prefers to sketch these ephemeral dreams in her poetry- erratic but visceral. Her works invoke abstraction, wanderlust and memories.

Vaishnavi Singh is a 2nd year student of English from Maitreyi college, University of Delhi. The first piece titled 'Home' is about finding your way back to yourself. It looks forward to the future with a sense of fulfillment. The second piece titled 'Hope is enough' describes Vaishnavi's idea of hope- all that it is, all it contains.

Khushi Kaushal is a nineteen year old student of BA history-political science at Jesus and Mary College, DU.





Vasundhara is an Economics student fuelled by her own contradictions and the conviction that love is the only reality in the world. She refuses to be restrained by stereotypes, adopting new traits every month and living in a conflicting 'classical+pop' aesthetic. A huge dessert lover and entirely subjugated by her cat, she is usually making fairy tales out of the mundane when she isn't hiding her real thoughts behind the silences of her words. You can often find her fangirling over anything under the moon, or waiting for her magical powers to suddenly appear and her fantasy adventure to begin.

Ayesha Hanish is a writer (of sorts) from Cochin whose work has appeared in a couple of magazines and newspapers. Despite being something of a contrarian, she likes to sketch all that takes her fancy – birds, aliens, and everything in between. Ayesha's also into performing arts.

Tanya Sood is a final-year student of Political Science at Miranda House, University of Delhi. She loves to experiment with themes predominantly involving philosophy, love and nature. She has been felicitated by the former Minister of Education, Honourable Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank.' Winner of various slam poetry and written poetry competitions, including the likes of IIT Indore, IIT Guwahati, Daulat Ram College, Miranda House, etc. To be able to strike a chord with her readers and relate with them through her works is something that keeps her going!

Shivani Krishnakumar is a an undergraduate student of history honours with a deep penchant for the subaltern past and the world of words. She evades the clock by dabbling on canva or filling her notes with broken snippets of accidental poetry and plot twists. Her affinity for writing and learning about culture, heritage, current affairs, gender, religion and other subjects is beyond measure.

A phrase from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' floats around a lot, saying, "All the world's a stage, and all men and women merely players." So, here's **Anukriti Sharma**, another player, trying to perform her role as best as she can! Though, of course, armed with books, a pen, and the untamed terrain of the world's imagination.

Sanskriti Sharma is an avid reader, a cartoon lover and an experimenting artist. She's a huge admirer of fanart and fanfiction and subjects of representation, mythology and mental health also interest her. She's previously written pieces both academic and fictional and finds writing to be a great part of her. Currently just beginning college she's scared but excited to see what comes next.

Medha Khetpal is a student at Miranda House. An avid reader, she delights in learning new skills, watching movies and listening to music.

Kriti is a Philosophy student at Miranda House College, DU. Writing is something that helps her navigate the world and traverse through the elaborate maze of her thoughts. When she writes, she feels heard and liberated. Being an avid reader never leaves her at a loss for words and she'll be forever grateful for that.

Surabhi Chhikara is an amateur at poetry who loves to rhyme. She is currently a student chasing words and trying to learn their essence. An ambivert by nature, she terms sloth as her spirit animal.

Shubha Bhatt is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a degree in Philosophy and History from Miranda House, University of Delhi. As someone who's figuring things out at home, Shubha finds so much of the world within her and beyond through reading and writing. Art comes as a solution to her and she's currently grieving time as it passes (or comes, we don't know).

Hailing from the town of Barasat, West Bengal, She is currently an English Honours student at Miranda House, Delhi. **Adrijaa Chakraborty** has had a love for literature and started putting pen to paper since she was seven. A confused soul who has moved on from trying to make sense of everything and instead is now focused on trying to live her life with as much satisfaction as possible. Hobbies include dancing, karate and acting, she loves black tea more than anything and is too lazy to write a novel.

A cinephile, avid reader and admirer of Akira Kurosawa, **Shivraj K Kumar** is a 16 year old student of commerce at Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Kolazhy. He occasionally scribbles stories in the midst of online classes instead of dozing off and is a regular at the local football ground.

Siddhi Joshi is a poet and artist based in Uttarakhand, India. Warm like the colour yellow, you will find yourself amid mellow laughter and witty remarks in her company. To her, mysterious old libraries and hastily scribbled poetry in a coffee-stained journal is the only utopia worth seeking. Siddhi is a blend of strong opinions and lyrical thoughts. This dichromatic soul searches for answers in the prevailing paradigm and finds meaning in the minuscule.

Diyasha Chowdhury is currently majoring in English from Miranda House, University of Delhi. She has grown up with an inexplicable love for words and being surrounded by them. Her work has been published in several journals, magazines and newspapers. Currently, she is working with her college literary society and writing for her much aspired blog. She is also interested in research, history, art, drama and publishing.

If you want to find **Nandini**, either play an episode of B99 or look in your nearest library. If all those fail, she'll inevitably be daydreaming on a sun-warmed porch. She loves to eat (but not cook), to create poetry (but not write), and to binge-watch series (but not beyond her favourite character's death).

Ashika Deb, an avid reader, amateur artist, occasional writer and dreamer, likes learning new things and tries to incorporate her love for puzzles, maths and art into different things. She believes imagination and creativity are valuable assets because they limitless.

Shan Cahill is a queer writer and artist living and working in the Berkshires. An alum of the MCLA creative writing B.A. program, she served as the literary journal "Spires" editor-in-chief for two terms, and design editor for three terms during her undergrad years. Shan also served as the literary arts coordinator at Common Folk Artist Collective and editor-in-chief of "Folktales" literary journal for two years. Her words can be found in Stay Journal, Care Syllabus, Digital Wheat Paste Magazine, and more.

Heer Nimavat is an award-winning poetess and writer. Author of 'If Life Wore Polka Dots', she has been a speaker at numerous national and international literature festivals and was awarded 'Best Debut Author 2020'. She is also an international-level public speaker, professional Kathak Classical Dancer and TheriWorld's Global Youth Ambassador of Education to India.

Hiyaa Podar is a vagrant writer and poetess who is still traversing the multiple paths of literature. As a feminist and a frivolous egalitarian, she strives to live in a rather utopian world of peace. Most likely to be found in peculiar places with a book in hand and a want for whimsical conversations.

Karizma Ahmed is an old woman residing in a teenage body. She prefers to be called 'Kriz'; afraid of people ruining a name she takes pride on. She aspires to be a writer but is only collection of dazed thoughts emerging from feeling too much, too hard.

The author, **Medha Nandini**, is a final year student majoring in Philosophy and Political Science at Miranda House. Medha is an eternal lover of the skies, sunshine and all things nice, contrary to her poems that seemingly explore the darker shades of living.

Meghna Denish is currently a second year at Miranda House, pursuing her Honours in English. She enjoys ginger tea and wonders why Hamlet never deemed it fit to ask 'how to be' instead, seeing as it is the more pertinent question.

Borderline enthu-cutlet and whale enthusiast, **Ramsha Matin** is a nineteen year old literature student who lives to articulates her rants into poetry. In the pursuit of not running out of verse, she finds solace in vine compilations and pet videos, and digs out muses in between her deadlines and unfortunate epiphanies. A strong advocate of embracing silences and introvert supremacy, Ramsha will casually hook you on Indie folk artists and sci-fi thrillers if she hasn't already.

Kamakshi is a local cryptid who enjoys high fantasy and creepy books with a soft spot for all things morbid. Often found panicking internally for absolutely no reason while giggling like a lunatic. Currently studying Zoology to better vibe with fellow raccoons and gremlins.

Gauri Yadav is a second year student of English at Miranda House. Her writing is motivated by the belief that words heal people. One day when the current is calmer she will write her quietest poem, till then, chaotic ramblings will have to do.



Minha Faizal engages in serial bingeing everything she adores. She loves trying out new things and being paid in chocolates. Her idea of a perfect day would include camping, reading poetry, stargazing and being with her favorite person!

Anugya is a translator and student of literature. He teaches English at Miranda House, DU.

'To debate or not to debate' sums up the only introspection **Suhani** does on a daily basis. When she's not debating, you'll either find her re-watching The Old Guard or taking as many afternoon naps as humanly possible. All her other spare time goes into convincing her family to take her on long road trips to obscure museums.

Simran Singh is a second year student at Miranda House. She's borderline obsessed with finding artistic inspiration from the mundane yet craves for the type of life encompassed in a Lana Del Rey song. You can find her re-reading her favorite novels or being an average meme connoisseur instead.

Nandana is a 2nd year student at Miranda House, Delhi. She hails from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. A bibliophile, she strung a passion for written words and the emotions that they are capable of conveying through hours spent in libraries from the age of 9. She is a member of BlueQuill, the creative writing club of Miranda House.

Malvika R is a student learning to build and fix machines, however she spends more time reading, watching shows and writing poetry. She believes that words are the best form of expression. She has been published in 3 anthologies and is currently working on her first poetry chapbook.

Often trading out her voice box, **Medha** hovers in monosyllabic sentences, awkward silences and doggo language during conversations. A student of Economics, her emotions and words aren't always in equilibrium, although it occasionally helps with her poetry. (Self) Titled as 'Poetic Jukebox', her natural habitat is the inside of her playlist, placed inside a museum of metaphors with a basketball hoop and a billion doggos.

Soumya is passionate about languages, slow-burn romances, and the moon. She likes to spend her time reading, curating pinterest boards, and planning the perfect way to pull off a space heist. Her favourite topics of conversation, in no particular order, are: fanfic tropes, phoebe bridger's music, and ice cream flavours.

Amodhini (she/her) is a second-year English major at Miranda House who has been a member of BlueQuill for the last two years. A literature enthusiast, she is passionate about feminism, poetry and coffee (in that order).

Mehak is a second year political science and philosophy student who spends her time writing flash fiction and experimental prose. She likes reading tumblr poetry, pink hair and naming street dogs that she will probably never meet again.

Pratishtha lives and breathes for art and words. She is constantly questioning everything and trying to make sense of the world around her. Always trying to look beyond and be her own individual, she tries to learn and educate herself as much as possible.

Chaotic in spirit and everything she writes, **Garima** is a professional at rambling and transforming them into some semblance of art, mostly. When off to the unknown, she douses art in her two-decade something knowledge about waffles, stars and well, life (sighs).

Jaya is a 19 years old, genderless blue-yellow blob of goo who moonlights as a second-year Political Science student at Miranda House. Every 15-days, they take the form of a writer and weave out words with their plastic keyboard.

Varnika (Nikku) is a history student at Miranda House, DU. She wears a T-shirt that says, 'Social networking with the dead.' She believes poetry is perpetual cause words would never be enough

Reet Deo is a learner of the arts and literature but mostly things that might not retain much value. She loves shawls, sarees and believing a life can be lived a cup of tea and tears at a time. Hopeful about nothing and everything at once, she humours herself to love and be loved.

Shree Vardhani is a second year student. She is a writing enthusiast and her interests are inclined towards diverse fields of Literature, Politics and International Relations. She believes that hope is something that one should carry all along while being able to differentiate the blurry lines of false hope and faith. And for her, hope is the only driving force that helps one to traverse the challenging and exasperating paths.

Vaishnavi is a 2nd year student of English from Maitreyi college, University of Delhi. The first piece titled 'Home' is about finding your way back to yourself. It looks forward to the future with a sense of fulfillment. The second piece titled 'Hope is enough' describes Vaishnavi's idea of hope- all that it is, all it contains.

Shreya's writings are mostly a product of random bursts of inspiration at inconvenient hours, more often than not in the middle of a lecture or working hours: It's her way of making sense of the chaos that constantly surrounds her. With an undying love for coffee, dogs and underrated songs, she's always up for a heavy 3:00 am conversation.

Sakhi Singh is a 19-year-old, currently pursuing English Hons from Miranda House, Delhi University. She believes to make the most out of a moment along with periodically cracking jokes. Her first book titled, "Affected Admiration" came out in February '19. She hopes to bring a change or at least make one person feel at home through her words.

Ranjini Sarkar is a student of BA. English Hons. She likes to read and is scared she knows more fictional names than real ones.

An enthusiastic mind that loves to express her knowledge of both the classics and the contemporary works through her writings, **Luan Hau Man** is a first year student from Miranda House who is currently pursuing her Bachelor's in English Honours and is forever keen on reading and discovering new works and wonders of the literary world



Although stupefied by heights, **Mudra Banerjee** would rather be sitting on the topmost branch of a tree right now. When her mom named her, a name that legit means emotions, she never thought that her kid would really be so emo that the stars would make her weep. Reeling when she smells a book or when she sees a stage, her life is one conglomeration of a thousand emotions and made up memories that she just can't get enough of!

Ruhma

Tanish Bafna, Ashoka University.

Ishani, B.A Applied Psychology Hons, 2nd Year, Gargi college

Madiha is a student of BA Philosophy (Hons.) with a keen interest in poetry, literature and research. Her art echoes of her homeland, the stretches she plans on exploring and the battles she takes on a daily basis.



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medha arora – vice president
ramsha matin – general secretary
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vasundhara t – creative coordinator
soumya sharma – pr head
minha faizal – pr coordinator

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suhani duhan – hiyaa – siddhi joshi – mehak bakhshi – nandabala –
shubha bhatt – sunaina mishra



wildest
dreams



when our
worlds collide



waterfall



the sky lit with
hope



the half oculus



frolics



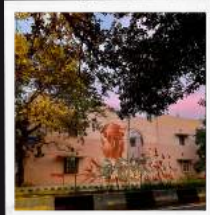
proud
digger



peek-a-boo



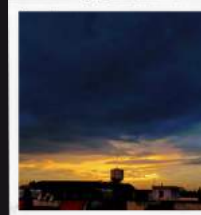
paper
boat



hues of hope



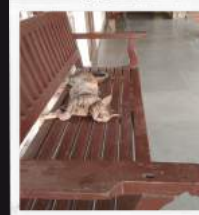
the cat's whiskers



homely skies



greener grass



cats of miranda



clay diners



familiar roads



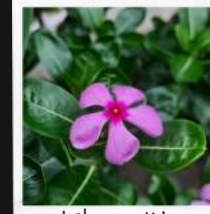
the color of solace



another dawn



the highlands



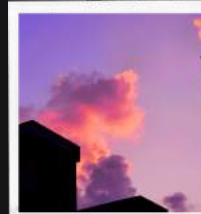
you belong with
the bloom



boundless



outlines



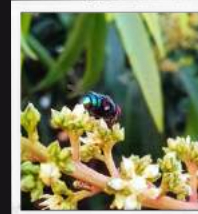
eye candy



towards the skies



birth of a life



clinging on



love language



muffin



dove



hope in gloom



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