



the assam valley express

29TH FOUNDERS' ISSUE

2024

In the 5:00 pm tint, in the sunlight between the leaves,
Autumn breathes upon the petals; the raindrop of summer grieves.
One more of branch of memories dried, each day of childhood takes its leave,
One more day of stories for us to weave, one more day given glory to seize.

-Emidaka Rapsang, Editor-in-Chief, Batch of 2023



foreword.

Cocooned in the spine of the magazine, lie bits and pieces of our souls—of our writers, poets, artists; all dreamers. Now when the bleeding has dried, the songs have been sung, the words have been spoken (and more remain unsaid) and the ink has faded, a lingering reminiscence lies within these pages. Look carefully and see the weight of a painting on our bones or the drying sweat behind a photograph. Amongst the pieces of our souls find yours too—a glimpse of your figure on the shiny black ink, a tiny recollection of your raging emotions be it grief or joy and everything in between. Herein lies an ode to the beauty of chance, of it all, to our souls and to you.

*Foreword and Afterword Illustration
by Anushka Jitani, XII*



A wide-angle landscape photograph capturing a sunrise over a valley. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a warm, golden light across the sky and the land. The sky transitions from a pale yellow near the horizon to a clear, light blue at the top. Several hot air balloons are visible in flight, their silhouettes and colors (including red, orange, and dark tones) contrasting against the bright sky. The foreground and middle ground show a rugged, hilly terrain with sparse vegetation, winding dirt roads, and some small structures or tents. The overall atmosphere is serene and picturesque.

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in memoriam *mrs. julia magor.*

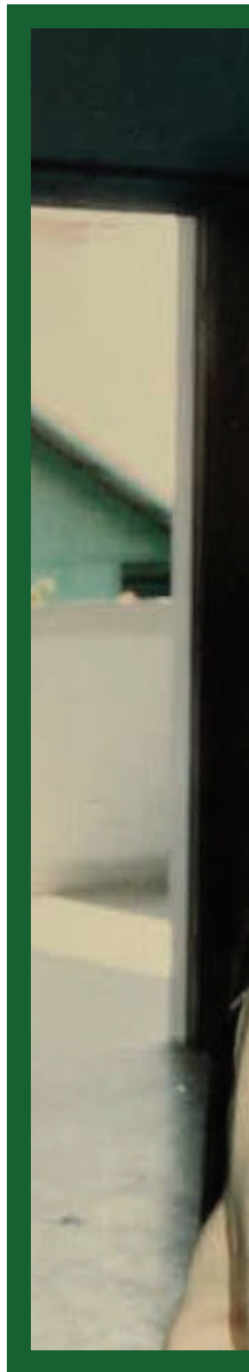
*-Mr. David Summerscale,
Chairman of the Governing Body*

So this is where it began - at least for me. One evening long years ago, the comparative calm of a Westminster evening was broken by a telephone call. 'This is Richard Magor. You don't know me, but I am told that you do know India and you know a bit about schools. I seem to have landed myself with starting a school in Assam. Help.'

So my wife and I met with Mr and Mrs Magor at the splendid Oriental Club in London (all curries and caramel custard); an occasion which was to enhance the last 35 years or so of my life. We had a marvelous evening, full of anecdotes of life on the tea estates, in jungles, wildlife in India and Africa, people past and present, and a bit of talk about schools. The idea of a school for the North-

East came from Mrs Julia Magor, and she had already persuaded her husband and Mr B M Khaitan that the idea should become reality. There was, in effect, no school back in 1990 for the children of families living and working on the tea estates; when I first stayed in Harchurah, the Manager had to send his son to live with grandparents in South India. Richard Magor and BMK spoke to each other every day on the telephone about the affairs of Williamson and Magor. Plans for a school were already in existence: it was to be in Assamese style, all one storey bungalows (which, sadly, had to be modified because of cost) except for the main school building, and lots of ways to seek to fend off the rain. The Foundation stone was laid: photographs in the Archives record the event - a barren corner of a tea estate cleared for the day, a colourful shamiyana, local dignitaries, a posse from Kolkata, the company elephant, speeches, hopes for the future...And then the work began.

Meetings were held in London (where Mrs Magor was always present - a shrewd, discerning, and purposeful presence with her strong belief in family values), Delhi, Kolkata, and on site in a shed near the present kitchens. Richard Magor stood no nonsense as the proceedings unfolded (I remember vividly a telephone call in the Kolkata office to a potential headmaster who





was prevaricating - he was not appointed!); and we had throughout the unfailing interest, experience, and support of Mr B M Khaitan. Together they agreed that the first Head of School should be from the UK, and the School was duly launched with Mr Paul Carling as our founder Headmaster (after a rather terrifying interview with the Magors in London).

There are many aspects of the School which reflect the care and precision with which Mr and Mrs Magor and Mr Khaitan carried out the project. For example, the ditches and fence which border the School, intended to make it difficult for elephants to encroach; or the minute details of the elephant and tea leaves on the School's heraldic emblem, duly approved and recorded by the College of Heralds in London. We tried out so many possibilities for the motto, and I still have the correspondence with Mr and Mrs Magor which confirms the suggestion of 'Truth is strength'. (My argument had been that 'truth' carries with it the old word 'trouthe' of 600 years ago, meaning keeping your word, fidelity, honour, principles, virtue).

All now part of history and legend. The creation of something entirely new yet built securely on time-honoured foundations. My own debt for being able to participate in the embryonic story of AVS is immense. We can remember our Founders with pride and affection and gratitude.



“...a shrewd, discerning, and purposeful presence with her strong belief in family values.”



nothing in life is accidental, after all.

-Dr. Amit Jugran, Headmaster

There aren't too many things in life that are coincidences. There are many such moments in life that may have taught me this lesson, but the greatest of them all takes me back to my days as a student at The Doon School, when I was in 12th grade, or as we referred to it then, in the SC form. Mr Gulab Ramchandani, my Headmaster then, called the SC form to his office and laid in front of us a chart that resembled a blueprint. It was the blueprint of a school that was going to be established in the Northeast and was going to be named "The Assam Valley School". I was 18 then. Another 18 odd years later my tryst with The Assam Valley School began. And today, it has been over 10 years that I have been associated with AVS. Perhaps it's true- nothing in life is a coincidence.

My initial years were at Welham Boys where I remained until grade 6th. I tasted the first tenets of a disciplined life there. Although I was very young, I can vividly recall my matron

Mrs Torres who took care of all the boys in the holding house. It was here where I initially learned the importance of grooming myself to be a presentable public school boy- shoes polished, shirts crisp, trousers ironed and blazers buttoned. A lot of the teachers who taught me including my housemaster and my headmaster played an imperative role in shaping my formative years in a public school, lessons I now hold close to my morals and principles. Many of those lessons are words of wisdom for me even today in numerous decision making instances.

I moved to Doon in 6th grade. It was no secret that I loved being at the sports field more than I ever did in the classroom. I played almost every sport the school offered, always returning from the sports field drenched yet satisfied, just in time for prep. Ultimately, I found my passion in football, cricket, and hockey. If it weren't for the long hours in the field and subsequently having to rush to go study immediately after, I'd have never learnt the art of multitasking. Studying in a boarding school taught me

how to multitask for life, and more importantly it taught me how to adhere to a schedule. Learnings that seemed insignificant at the time but were absolutely crucial as they taught me discipline and the value of time—life lessons that formed the backbone of my first job when I entered the tea industry. Many at Doon played a key role in shaping my formative years. Mr. RP Devgan, my housemaster, had a huge impact on me as he guided me on my journey from a young boy to a young adult. Mr. and Mrs. Painuli, my Housemaster and Dame during my first year, made school feel like home for me. Mr. Philip Burrett taught me lessons that reverberated far beyond the pitch.

I was certain that the first job I take up will not be limited within the four walls staring down at a computer while chasing the 9-5 rat race. My love for sports and being in the fields was a pivotal factor in the job I chose. Consequently, I joined the tea industry. Despite the difficult terrain to work in and the strenuous schedule of waking up at 4 am, come hail, rain, or snow, I truly enjoyed my time in the tea industry. The highlights for me would always be the opportunities I got to play competitive soccer, cricket, tennis, and golf in the clubs and in tournaments representing my estate, my company, and even the state. Tea went on to reinforce my belief system that had been built while I was in boarding school—discipline and loyalty are the ultimate cornerstones in life. They are the oars that propel your boat and take you far ahead in life.

It was while I was working with the Williamson Magor Group in the tea estates that a role came my way where I was offered to head the administration of the school. At that age, to transition from a career that had already spanned a couple of years wasn't an easy choice, but perhaps it was a challenge that attracted me. I followed the instinct of the public school boy inside me and forayed into the field of education. Eventually, under Ms. Sonya Mehta's guidance, I began to teach as well and eventually became the Deputy Head here at AVS. Being amidst the children on the games field or in the

classrooms took me back to my own school days—a beautiful reminder that I was reliving the best years of my life, as if I were in school again.

Eventually, I was presented with a new opportunity again, and I was offered the position to head Mussoorie Public School. Life played its cards coincidentally once more, as I found myself heading a school under the umbrella of my alma mater, Welham Boys' School. This brought another learning experience of balancing school policies, administration, and students, all in a place closer to home. Patience, perseverance, and numerous lessons brought me the opportunity to return to AVS. When I look back at the years at all the years I've had in all my experiences, my time at AVS is the one I hold the closest. I discovered within myself an ardent disciplinarian, yet also a deep and abiding love for this school. I've learned a multitude of things on this 200-acre campus, but what will stay with me as steadfastly as the iron gates at the campus's entrance, are the students who make me believe in the happiness and innocence of childhood and the staff from whom I continue to learn.

When I look back at the last two decades of my life, I recall memories, people, friendships, and countless lessons, but above all, I cherish the diverse experiences. If someone were to ask me, I am still unsure if the curveballs and challenges will cease in life. Perhaps they won't. But through it all, one thing has consistently stood out—the public school boy in me who always believes in honesty, discipline, and taking challenges head-on. I sometimes still wonder if the sunny morning in Mr. Ramchandani's office, when I was an 18-year-old boy watching a blueprint of AVS unfold in front of me, was a coincidence. Today, as I reflect on the years that have passed by, nothing feels like coincidence. Perhaps, nothing in life is accidental after all and maybe, we are all part of a larger design and plan.

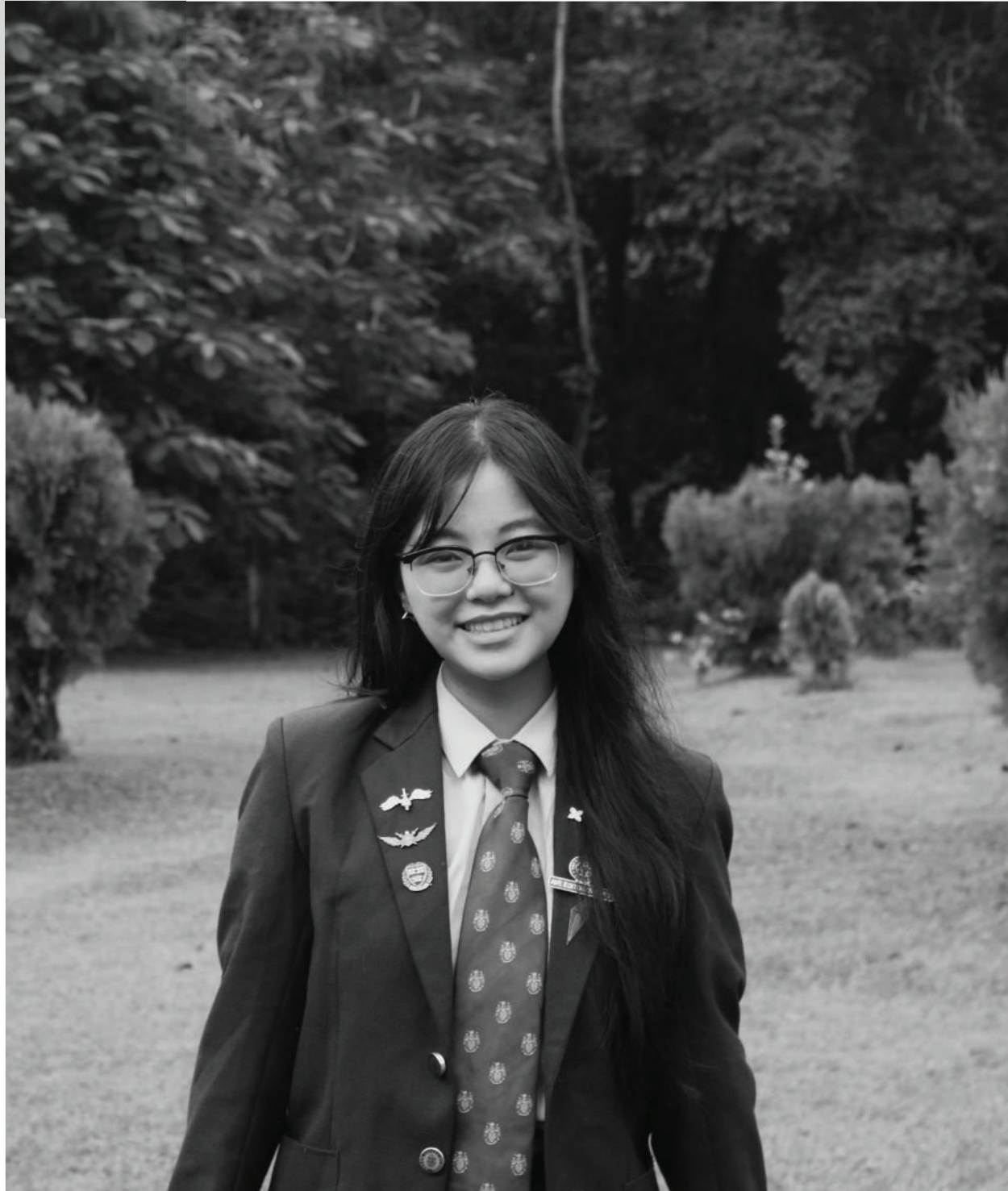


*maybe,
we are all part
of a larger design
and
plan.*

*-Atoti Zhimomi, Editor-in-Chief,
Batch of 2024-25*

seventeen.

of being





many times do you reckon we will fall in love—with a new film, book, person, a new game, a new artist? How many times do you reckon we will fall in love with a new version of ourselves and then grieve over it when it dies? And then we do it all over again.

As the end of my tenure as Editor approaches, I anticipate the lamentation that will come with giving the identity that I've held close to my heart for the past year away, the pang while engraving my initials onto the tiny badge that holds the weight of the many editors before and after me. I will look on as the Room I love morphs under its new Editor, just like how it did when I took charge and the way it did when my Editor received her badge, and her Editor before her.

After the grief has waned and my tears have dried, after the musings of my people have turned to distant chatters, the music that used to play on the old Grandfather nothing but a tantalising memory that lies at the tip of my tongue, I will sigh off in gratitude for the ache is proof that I have loved and been loved back.

I will pack my clothes neatly, count my pens well, zip up my bags, and sit tight as the air conditioner in my dad's car spreads the chill across my skin, as I leave it all behind, only my love and fading memories persevering through the disarray of what lies ahead. In my pockets I hold the exhilaration of knowing the uncertainty of the future, the losses, the passions and everything in between.

Seventeen is truly an odd age to be, at the crossroads of being a child and an adult. But I will take my time and be patient because as I pen my thoughts down, I am still only seventeen. I am not 29 or 47 yet, reminiscing about the "good ol' days" and all that. There is still much to behold, and throughout it all, in a very special corner of my heart, the initials AVE will forever remain engraved.

*“and then we do it all
over again.”*

Seventeen is an odd age to be. Sometimes it feels like people all around me say that it's the the best time to be alive, to enjoy it as much as I can because 5 or 10 years from now, I'll be looking back and wondering where it all went, wishing I would've taken the chances, the leaps. But as the end of my high school life approaches (and in retrospect, my childhood), I cannot help but feel the sizzle of excitement brewing from underneath my bed.

The past year has taught me many things about myself and the tiny bit of the world around me but most importantly it has taught me loss. It's taught me the impermanence of people in our lives, of our emotions but most importantly the fleeting nature of ourselves. Change, dear readers, is innately human. Constantly we change and grow, we laugh and cry, scream and sob, we live. And to me, that's more than enough reason to make it worth getting through.

Loss warrants grief of course, but along with change, it is all a part of being human, is it not? Just the very fact we grieve over anything is beautiful. Grieve, ache, and mourn because that is the price of having loved and it is the price of being human. Does the very thought of it not make you lie in excitement for what lies ahead? The knowing that you will have loved something so deeply that you ache at having lost it. Over the course of the short amount of time that we live, how



Photos Edited by Rianna Irom, X

GALLERY

COLLECTION

SPACES











“The years gone by have etched their stories onto me. And yet here I am, blank again. Waiting.”

PHOTO ROMANCE

Written by Aanya Paul Sarkar, XI
and Tanveer Ahmed, XI
Photo Edited by Khichu Kath, XI
Photography by Rianna Irom, X
Designed by Atoti Zhimomi, XII

“This room has begun to feel like a prison. My colours have darkened like shadows. But I see you and I feel hope.”

“You and I, together we have journeys to make. But for now, the sky we dream of remains unfinished, a murmur of blue.”

“My bristles yearn, as I rest heavy in this ceramic cup. Sunsets bled into the window, a palette I can't reach. Not even for you.”

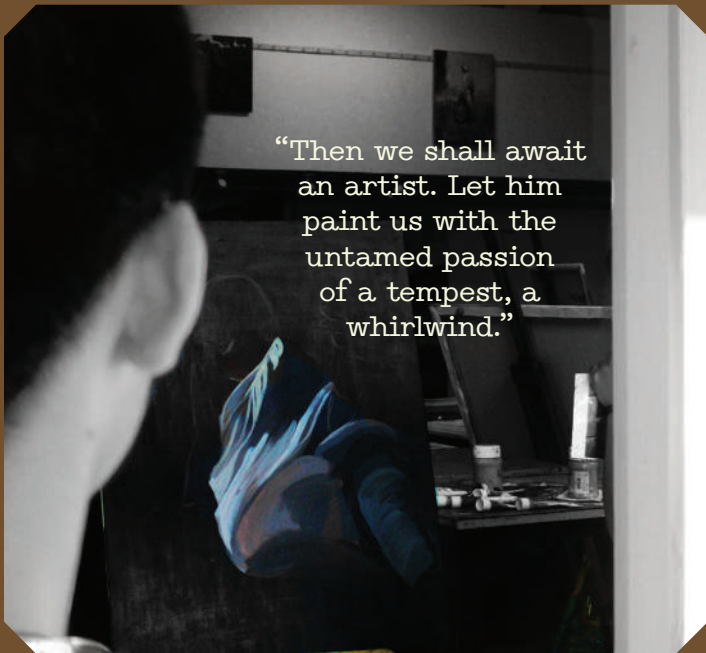


“We were always meant to be a masterpiece. Your colours on me, a story waiting to be told.”

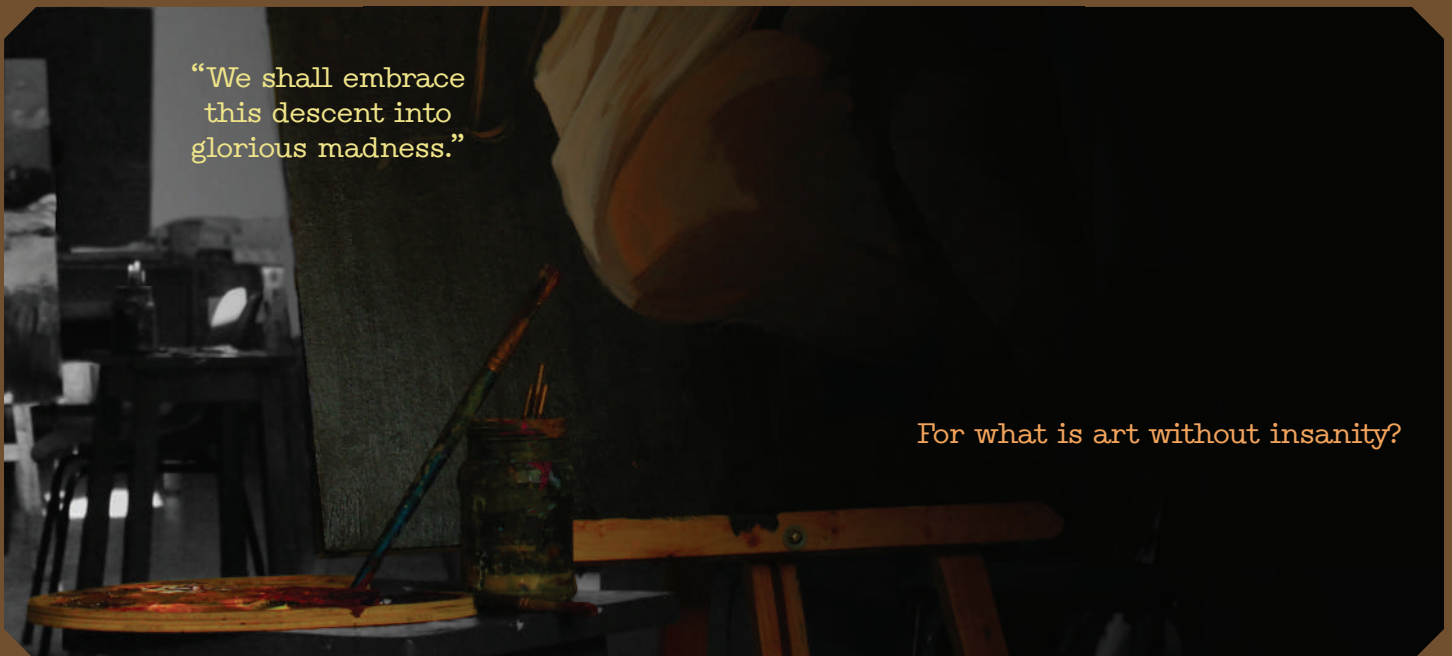


“Stories have to wait for their writers sometimes, don't they? Even ours.”

“The stories that last, do.”



“Then we shall await an artist. Let him paint us with the untamed passion of a tempest, a whirlwind.”



“We shall embrace this descent into glorious madness.”

For what is art without insanity?



FOUR COLOURS
MANY IDENTITIES
ONE SPIRIT

HOUSE SPEAKS

Designed by Atoti Zhimomi, XII

Photos Edited by Khichu Kath, XI

Creative Direction by Erik Angie Riba, XI and Shradha Jha, XII

Photography by Pradyumn Bhajanka, Electronic Media Captain, XII and Rukben Dulom, XI

JINARI
MANAS

PERSEVERANCE



Vivienne
Westwood



KOPII
DHANSIRI

GUCCI

STRIVE TO SEEK AND
NEVER GIVE UP



DARE TO EXCEL



SUBANSIRI

VERSACE

NAMDANG

BHOROLI
LOHIT

TIFFANY & Co.

EVER ONWARD



TRAVELOGUE

I know that wherever I go, my soul will be waiting for me to find it on the way. Crowds bustle and I am only one of many who yearn to find a home among the stars where they stay.

Photograph Contributions by:

Ujjala Sonowal, XII
Rinie Taipodia, XII
Shruti Dutta, XII
Atoti Zhimomi, XII
Puna Kanya, XII
Lomitoli Jakhalu, IX
Nongthobam Chingkheiganbi Devi, X

Photographs Edited by Khichu Kath, XI

Designed by Atoti Zhimomi, XII





EPHESIAN SUSS

Ripples Written by Aanya Paul Sarkar, XI

In the marble streets, under the
scorching heat,
Sun-cracked lips part a silent plea,
In the grandeur of the ancient
library,
His calloused fingers trace
forgotten dreams.
Ephesian echoes, lullabies for a
weary heart.



PRINCES' ISLANDS



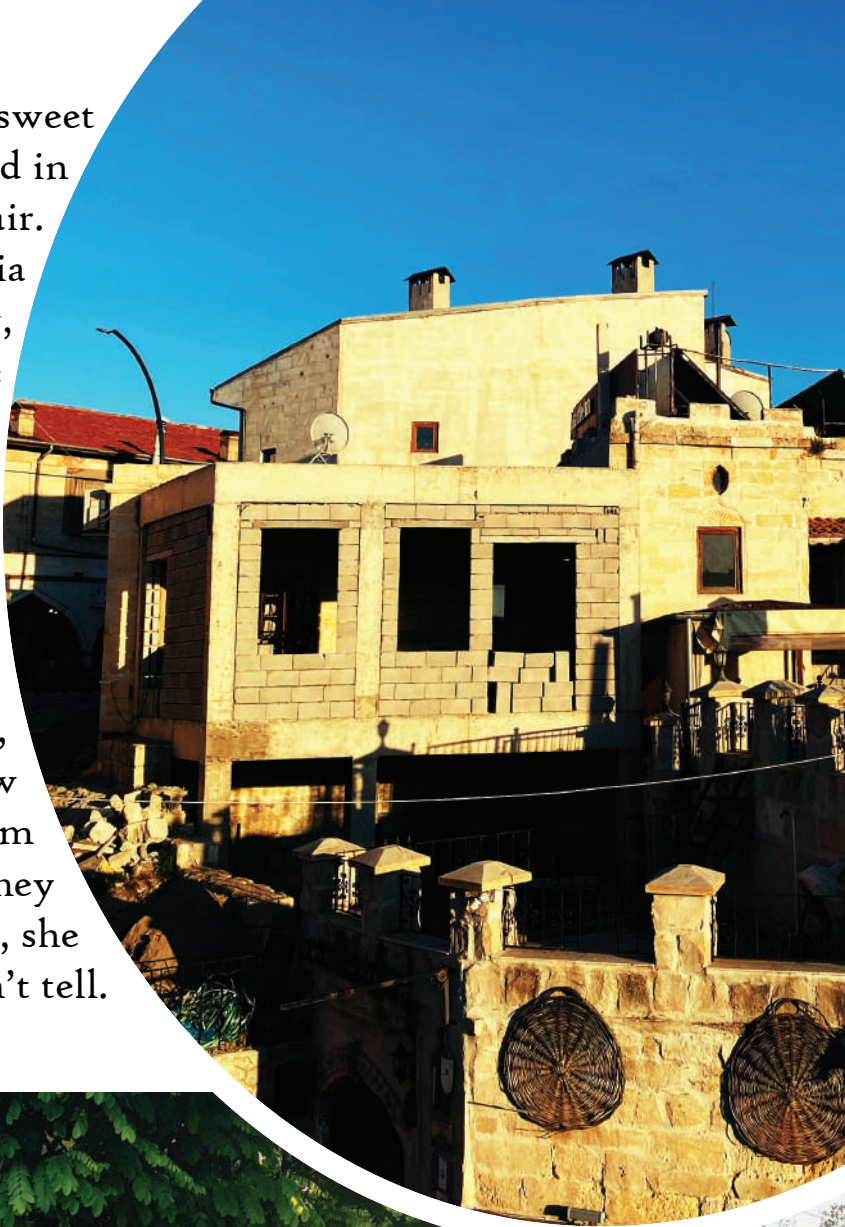
CAPPADOCIA

The scent of sweet
apple tea lingered in
the air.

Cappadocia
shimmered below,
tiny beneath the
hot air balloon.

“Look,
Mama!” the
girl whispered,
tugging her
sleeve.

For a moment,
she swore she saw
someone glide from
a fairy chimney
—wings or wind, she
couldn't tell.





KUSADASI

In Kusadasi, Theseus sailed the Aegean's silver-blue,
His ship glides, its ancient timber creaking.
As dusk fell, the sea sighed, pulling him beyond sight.
Some say he vanished;
Others believe he dances still beneath the moonlit waves.
And as for the sea? She knows but doesn't say.



ISTANBUL

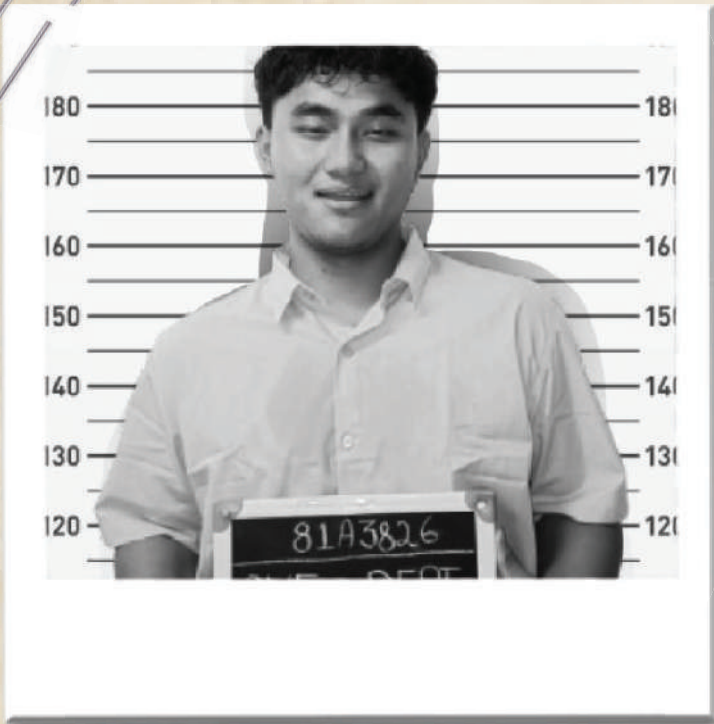
Silk robes brush cobblestones, hymns to the past
Incense mingles with spice
As twilight eyes drift through lives and lore
A distant flute calls, pulling him deeper
In Istanbul's bazaars, the genie slips back into his
ancient lamp.





AVE Department of
Criminal Investigation

CASE NO 29: THUGS OF AVS



Alias: Scarface NT
Threat Type: Public Nuisance

WANTED
FOR BUTCHERING BACKSTREET
BOYS' "I WANT IT THAT WAY"

Status: Sentenced To A 200
Mark Sociology Paper



Alias: Rapunzel
Threat Type: Assassin
Weapon Of Choice: Ponytail

WANTED
FOR RUNNING A VERY VERY
VERY UNDERGROUND BOXING
ARENA. CHAMPION EVERY YEAR
BY DEFAULT.

Status: Escaped.
Tower Under Surveillance.



**Gang Name:
D-Blinders**

**Leader: Vikika
"The Kingpin"
Chophi**

**Threat
Type: Mild
Inconvenience
and Irritation**

WANTED

**FOR ACADEMIC MAYHEM AND
GENERAL LACK OF COMPLIANCE
TOWARDS AUTHORITY**

**Status:
DPL Suspension
For 5 Years**



**Alias: Ladoo "Big Money" K
Threat Type: Money
Lauderer**

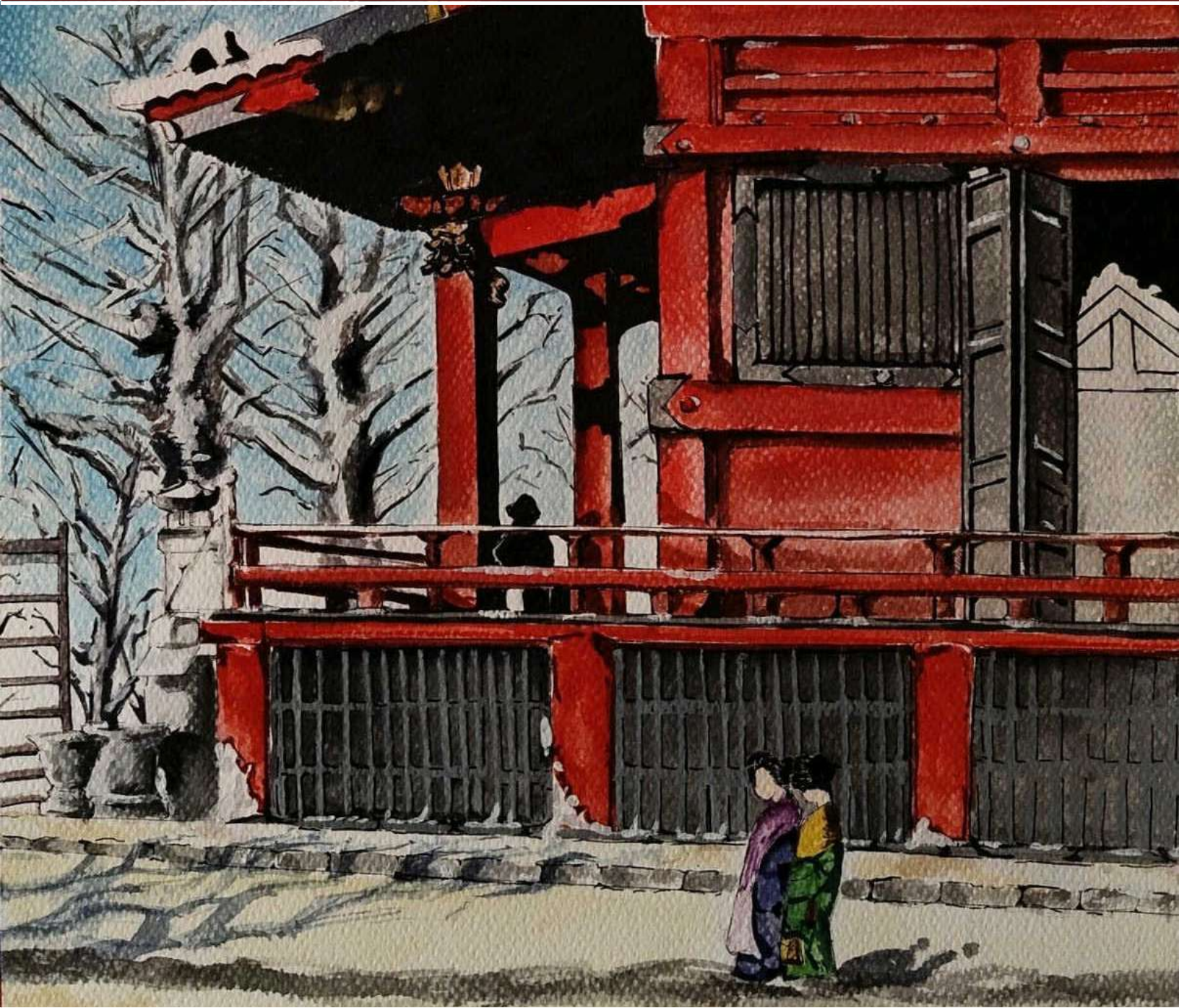
WANTED

**FOR MONEY LAUNDERING AND
FRAUD COMMITTED THROUGH
EVENT MANAGEMENT PVT LTD
CORP. (A SHELL COMPANY)**

**Status: Sentenced To
6 Years Of Lights For
Inter-House Dance**



*Written by Aanya Paul Sarkar, XI
Illustrated by Gaurish Saikia, ICSE Batch of 2024
Designed by Atoti Zhimomi, XII*





The Call of the Blade

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows across the rolling hills of the countryside, Yumi Obaasan stood at the threshold of her new home. The centuries-old house loomed before her, its wooden beams darkened with age, and its windows clouded by time. Her grandson, Hiro had insisted that she move in with him after the passing of his mother, her only daughter. Yumi had agreed, knowing that the loneliness of her tiny village home would only deepen in her old age. The smell of dry old wood fueling the fire that heated her bathwater. The bubbling and sputtering of rice cooking on the small stove. The bamboo floorboards that made up her village home. She had lived there her entire life, the Makkari home.

But as Yumi gazed up at the ancient structure, a shiver ran through her, like the touch of an unseen hand.

The house was far older than she had expected, its history whispered through the creaking floorboards and the crumbling tatami mats. Hiro had purchased it for its charm, enamoured with the rustic elegance of the Edo period architecture, but to Yumi, the house felt more like a mausoleum than a home. It was as if the spirits of those who had once lived there still lingered in the walls, watching and waiting.

Her room was on the second floor, a small chamber with a low ceiling and a single window that overlooked the overgrown garden. The air inside was thick and as she walked across the floor, she noticed a curious sensation beneath her feet- a slight rise in the

floorboards that she could feel even through her soft slippers. At first, she dismissed it as nothing more than the settling of an old house, but as the days passed, the bulge seemed to grow, subtle but undeniable.

Each night, as the wind howled through the cracks in the walls and the moon cast its pale light through the window, Yumi found herself staring at that spot on the floor. She would lie on her futon, the covers pulled up to her chin, listening to the groans and creaks of the ancient structure as it settled into the darkness. But amid the usual sounds of night, she began to hear something else—a faint, rhythmic thumping, like the beating of a heart, coming from beneath the floorboards.

Unable to take it any longer, Yumi decided to investigate. Slowly, she rose from her futon, her joints protesting with each movement. She took a small lantern from the bedside table, lighting it with trembling hands. The warm glow illuminated the room. With a deep breath, Yumi knelt beside the bulge in the floor and pried the first board loose, to find a slim box that reminded her of a coffin, blackened with age, yet strangely intact.

Yumi lifted the lid of the wooden box, revealing a pristine katana resting atop a faded shroud. The heartbeat she had heard was coming from the blade itself, pulsing with a life of its own. She stared at it, the weight of recognition heavy in her chest—the house was indeed a house of ninjas, and she had not escaped its grasp.

Grasping the katana, she whispered, “Kage wa watashi wo yobi modosita.”

“The shadows have called me back.”



Illustration by Daisha Emi Diengdoh, XI

THE RAMBLINGS OF A HERMIT

A Collection of Stories by Atoti Zhimomi, XII





OF SHYLOCK

the father

i

There was nothing much in Shylock's life that warranted much love. Orphaned and made to find his way through the bustling and cobbled streets of Venice, he found much to hate instead. Everywhere he turned it seemed as though his faith was a disease, there was nothing worse than being a Jew. But with his ingenuity, the boy made it through. He made a vow to himself never to bow to the respite and learned the art of the trade, he learned that he could make a profit out of dealing with money. His Christian counterparts wanted nothing to do with that, "work of the devil" they called it. There he found a way to earn a spot amongst those who spat in his face, he worked in lending and borrowing money, and over the grueling years, it indeed pushed him to a position where he could hold his head up high in the face of the city that loathed him.

It was during one of his dealings when he encountered the enigmatic sister of his debtor. When Shylock saw the wit glistening in her hazel eyes, he felt a shiver from the midst of his ribs for he knew that it was she who he belonged to. "Meet my sister," the man said with pride, "Leah."


The entire wedding preparations spanned over the longest few months Shylock had ever experienced. Newlywed life, however, did not suit Shylock very well. The hat of a husband did not flatter him as well as the hat of a businessman did. He loved Leah and while her stomach swelled, there was nothing more he longed for than to have their child inherit her stubborn smile and her sturdy shoulders, he wished for their lovely child (anything that she bore would be lovely) to be more similar to their mother than to him. He prayed that the little one wouldn't be born with his nose or his dark and curly hair, he had gone through the scorns and the dirty looks and knew

that it was not what he wanted for his lovely child. Yet he found himself incredibly occupied in the days leading up to the delivery. Everything had to be perfect for the babe and in order to do that, Shylock set out settling years-long debts, doing everything in his power to secure a safe home, a rich home, a comfortable one. In doing so, he had picked at the scabs of old wounds and made new enemies in the dark alleys of Venice, but when beautiful and lovely Jessica was born, he knew it was not in vain.

Her charming daughter Jessica was everything he had prayed long and hard for. When he first held her, for the first time in his life he worried about the harsh smell of copper on his fingers, handing her back to the midwife. He washed his hands carefully, scrubbing in between his fingers and nails, hoping to remove the horrid stench of greed from them. As gentle as he could, he held his little girl in his arms once again, anxious about the sleeve of his coat being too rough on her delicate skin.

It was not long, however, before Leah breathed her last in his arms. Gripping onto the ring and the daughter she left him, Shylock made his second vow—to protect both, the last of his beloved's memories that remained. Now years later when his daughter had grown, he shielded her from the evils of the world that he had known and grown in spite of. Little did he know it actually pushed her away, into the arms of a Christian named Bassanio.

When he learned of Jessica's elopement, every breath he took felt like it had to be pulled out of him with all the strength in the world. The air grew heavy and his heart ripped at its seams. There he made his third vow—to give back to the Christian world ten-fold the torment and agony of everyday of his Jewish life. He would gnaw and gnaw until there was nothing left. He needed his pound of flesh.





OF PROMETHEUS

the lover

ii

After the Great War, titan Prometheus and his brother, Epimetheus were tasked with populating the earth with animals and man to serve the Gods. Unlike the latter who was quick to create creatures of all sizes, strength, and distinct features, Prometheus created each one of his with all the care he could muster. Gently, he formed their fingers, their feet that he sanded down with a rock nearby, their ears, made to look like seashells were tiny and fragile, and to him, each one was perfect. Humans, they were called—small and insignificant but perfect to him.

Then he held them close to his lips and breathed into them, and when he watched their eyes slowly light up in consciousness, limbs flailing as a response to coming to life, he understood love. Long before the fiery-tempered Goddess of Love Aphrodite had made her entry into Olympus, before any poets had written verses about it, before any bards had sung ballads and long before anyone had found themselves in front of a blade in the name of it, Prometheus had understood love. Looking into their little eyes and brushing their tiny patches of hair, he understood what it meant because he felt it from the depths of him.

The days melted into each other and one day, angered by a trick played on him by the titan, Zeus took the magic of fire away from the humans. Slowly they lay dying and Prometheus decided to steal it for them. Scaling onto the workshop of Hephaestus the blacksmith God, he placed the fire in a hollow fennel stalk and brought it back to his beloved humans. With it they forged weapons, cared for one another, and cooked, they felt warmth long after the sun had set, and with it they were happy. But the God of the Sky was not.

Enraged by the second deception, Zeus punished Prometheus by eternally chaining him to a rock in the Caucasus river. Every day an eagle was to fly to the chained titan and gnaw at his flesh until it gained access to his liver, biting and chewing until there was nothing left. And every day his flesh would grow back, his liver forming itself again and this agonizing experience was to repeat for the rest of eternity, as long time existed—the punishment for angering the great Zeus.

Over the days the Titan befriended the eagle. “Hello again, friend.” Prometheus said, “I hope you find my liver appetizing, it’s your only meal for the rest of eternity, after all.”

“It will do,” the eagle said before it started pecking once again. “Say, Titan. Why did you do it?”

“Why did I do what?”

“Sacrifice everything for them,” the eagle said.

Prometheus thought and then responded, “Well I suppose I don’t really need a reason for it. Do we need reason to love or sacrifice when they are one and the same?”

The eagle nodded in agreement as the golden blood once again began spilling from the tear of flesh. The Titan did make some sense. “Would you do it again, knowing the punishment it earned you?” The eagle asked.

“I would,” he answered with a wise smile, “Besides, from it I gained a good friend for eternity.”





OF PRINCESS KAGUYA

the dreamer

iii

One day an old and desolate bamboo cutter found a three-inch baby sleeping within the hollow of a bamboo with gems and silks he could have never dreamt of. Knowing she must be celestial, the princess was taken in by the aged and childless couple, and she was named Kaguya—the shining princess, reminiscent of her innate glow. Thus she lived on as a human girl. She became one with the soil of the earth, truly feeling alive only when she felt the thud falling from the branches of the trees she climbed or when she felt the chill from dipping her muddy toes into the water of the river. She got on with the children of her village, singing of the cicadas and the fresh melons and the love of the forests.

However, knowing of how divine her origins must be, the bamboo cutter whisked her away to the capital, using the gems he found her with through the purchase of a mansion, lessons and workers to make her live like the princess she was supposed to be. Kaguya despised her new life in the capital though it was difficult for her to understand why the etiquette lessons always felt familiar to her, why it was never difficult to learn how to play the koto despite never having seen one before. As Kaguya grew, talk of her grace and beauty spread throughout the island. Thus five nobles found their way to the gates of the bamboo cutter's mansion, all vying for her hand in marriage. She set them out to do impossible tasks to marry her knowing they would fail. And as expected, the clever Princess Kaguya could see through their deceptions. Intrigued with the talk of the beautiful daughter of a bamboo cutter, the King's interest was soon piqued and he arrived, expectations high. However, soon realising that the young lady had no intentions of getting married, he retreated, choosing to be friends instead.


As the days blurred into each other, Kaguya began to feel lonely and found solace gazing up at the moon—

the glow of it felt homely, she felt her heart incessantly tugged towards the celestial radiance. She loved the moon because it reminded her of herself. One night as she watched, the memories that had been snatched from her came in a wave, as did the truth of her identity and the booming voice of her father, “You will form connections, you will find love. And you will have it taken away from you. You want to be human, don't you? You will see that being a human means having your heart broken.” Then the realisation that she was to be soon taken back home came to her like a flash of bright light, and the anguish of it all pushed her towards her mother's arms, and she sobbed like the first day she was brought home.

Kaguya revealed everything to her parents and red-faced, her father began preparations to prevent the people of the moon from taking his beloved daughter away, sending letters to all that he could for help, for troops, preparing for the dreaded fortnight. The people guarding Kaguya heard the drums before they saw the radiance of their chariots. The light was blinding, and not long after witnessing the incoming chariots did all the soldiers fall into a somber sleep. The light illuminated each room of the mansion and even as Kaguya ran through the rooms with all her might, deep in her bones she knew her fate. Her mother ran with her, shielding her from the people of the moon but it was all in vain when she collapsed as well.

Kaguya could do nothing but clutch with all her might onto the hem of her mother's kimono, she felt her heart being pulled apart at its seams as she sobbed. Her legs began levitating and the sound of the flute rang through her teeth as she felt her grip loosening. As she slowly saw her friends' faces fade in front of her eyes, she remembered the songs they would sing and the words of her father, “To be human is to have your heart broken.”





OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

the traitor

iv

As he placed the gentle kiss on the cheek of his saviour, Judas savoured the warmth of his flesh onto his, tasting the bitterness of His forgiveness seep into him, allowing for the scent of his skin to strike him. He felt the clank of the weighted coins in his pocket as he stepped back for the men of Sandhedrin to seize the Son of God, looking deep into His eyes Judas saw the unmistakable cast of love in them—they said, “I still love you, despite being worth only 30 silver coins to you, despite your betrayal that you sealed with your kiss, I still do. I forgive you. You were paid 30 coins for the stone to be rolled away, it is not your fault, Judas. It never was, you were always meant to be Judas Iscariot the traitor. And I still love you.”

But Judas did not know the meaning of anything else that His eyes said other than, “I forgive you.”

And so the grief exploded within him. With sweaty palms he gripped onto the coins like a child clutches onto falling rocks and begged on his knees to return the blood money back to the executioners, “Take them back!” Judas cried as he pulled onto the hems of their clothes, grime and sweat mixed with his tears, “It was a mistake, it was never meant to be. I do not want to be responsible!” The men stared at the desperation before them as they felt nothing but pity, the guilt lay only on him and him alone. The truth of His fate made Judas rise to his feet as he threw the coins onto the ground, “I have no

need for these!” He declared, red-faced from his weeping. The traitor found himself questioning. The man questioned his fate, the purpose of his birth. Was he always meant to betray his love? Judas was born with the hammer that nailed Jesus on the cross, wasn’t he? He was made to live with the unknown tang of iron on his tongue, wasn’t he? God made him for this purpose, didn’t he? If so, how was he guilty? The Iscariot boy was doomed from the moment he felt the air of the earth, fresh from his mother’s womb, he was doomed from the moment he was named Judas, from the moment in that fateful day where his mortal flesh met his saviour. Judas was not to blame, was he? He was innocent. Forever he would be, yes. Innocent.

In that moment however, Judas saw the look on Jesus’ eyes in front of him. And he shrank remembering the love in His eyes, he felt himself getting sick at the thought that he could be the one placing the thorny crown on his beloved’s head and He would still look at him like He always did. Judas hated that even a hundred years from then Jesus would still smile at him and say, “I forgive you” before inviting him back inside. Deep within his ribs Judas knew that the guilt was his to carry, it was his hands that accepted the silver, it was his lips that pointed Jesus out. But it was the knowing that he would always be forgiven that tightened the noose around the neck of Judas Iscariot the Traitor in the cold, desolate potters’ field.



*slipping through my fingers
i try to capture every moment
through my flash*

Batch of 2024-25, The Assam Valley School



*my fingers all the time,
every minute, slipping
fingers all the time.*





batch of 2024–25

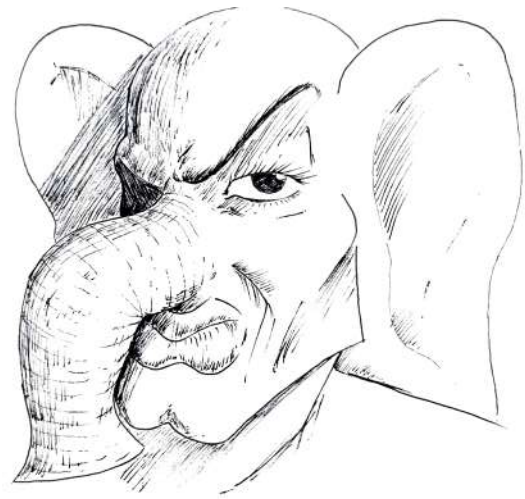
Designed by Aliden Jahzara Oving, XI



The ink you see is not just me
It is us, the Team, our family.

ABEY AWARDS

Illustrations by Mashunsing Keishing, X



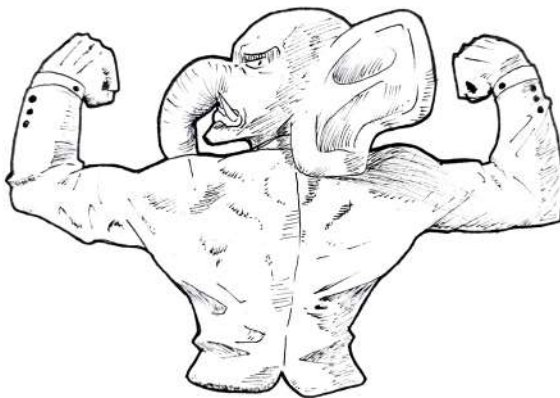
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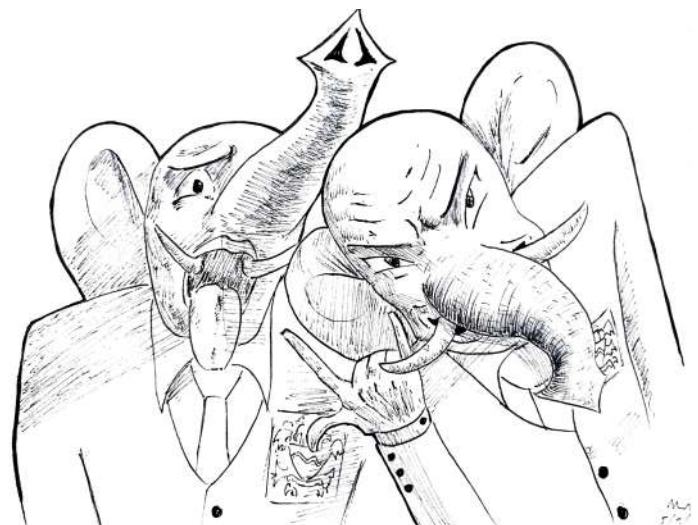
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Remeeya Mithi



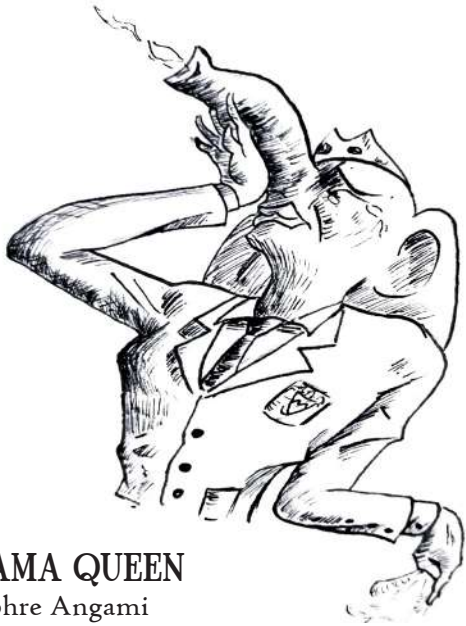
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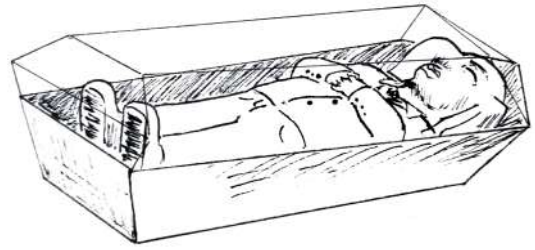
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Bhabarnab P. Sandilya



PARTNERS-IN-CRIME
Hanggoulal Haokip and Bhabarnab P. Sandilya



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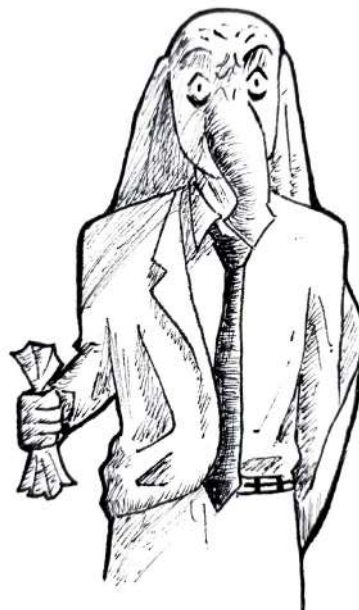


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Soohakani Law



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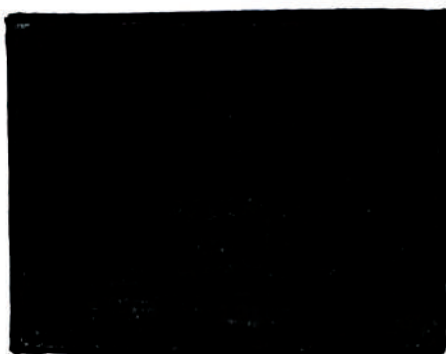
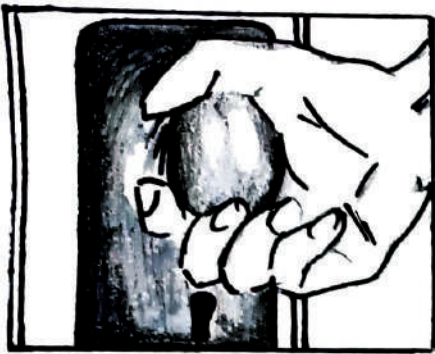
STRESSED OUT INC.
Anushka Jitani



DON'T ROUSE WHAT HAS BEEN LAID TO REST

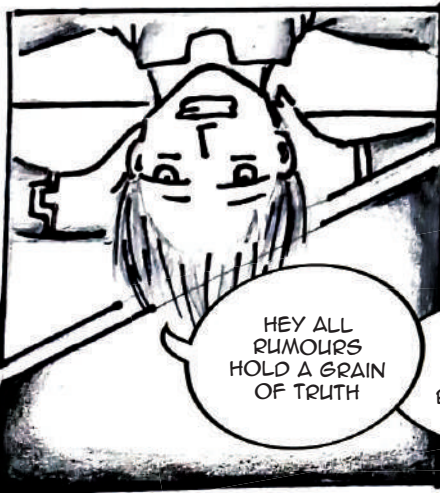
*Written by Rianna Irom, X
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AREN'T YOU GLAD WE FINALLY GOT TO GO ON HOLIDAY?

WHICH WE'RE WASTING BY INSPECTING SOME ABANDONED HOUSE BECAUSE OF A BASELESS RUMOUR.



HEY ALL RUMOURS HOLD A GRAIN OF TRUTH



AND YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WAS ENSARED BY THE RUMOUR FIRST.

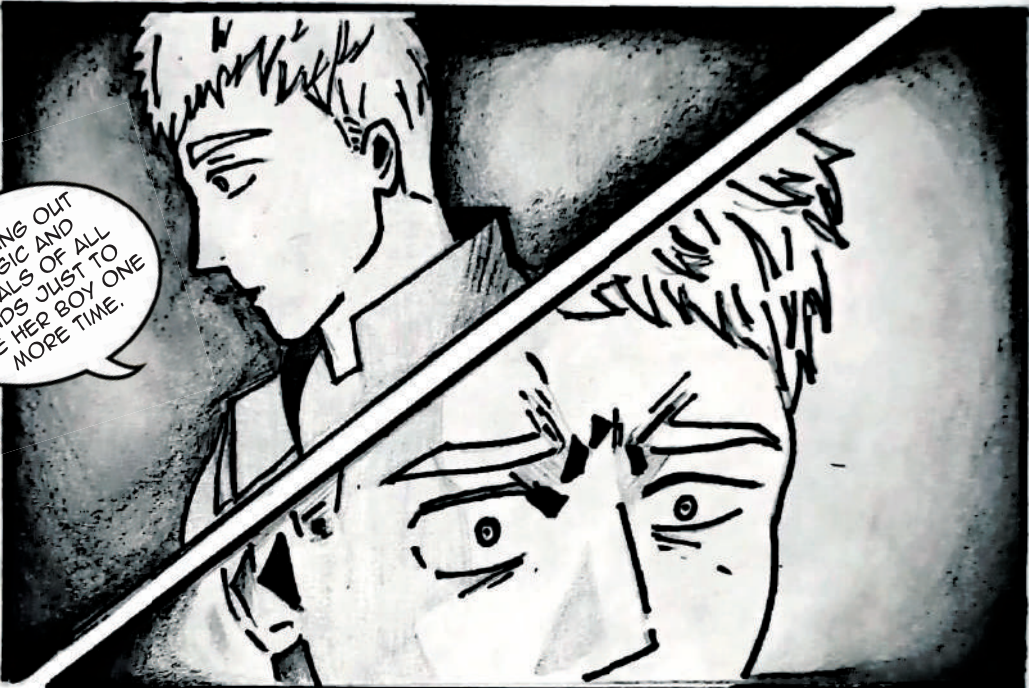
THEY SAY THE WOMAN WHO LIVED HERE WAS A WIDOW.





THE ONLY COMPANY SHE HAD WAS OF HER SON, WHO SHE LOST LAST SPRING.

APPARENTLY, SHE'S BEEN TRYING TO GET HIM BACK FROM THE GRAVE EVER SINCE...



...TRYING OUT MAGIC AND RITUALS OF ALL KINDS JUST TO SEE HER BOY ONE MORE TIME.





...THE DEAD
NEVER COME
BACK THE
SAME.

THE END



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afterword.

To be forgotten is inevitable. I know it well, with more intimacy than I know the back of my own hand with. These halls will forget how my feet tread, and the mirrors will forget what it was like to contain my reflection — but I know my memory will linger still, among walls draped with stars and decorated by painted tributes. I have existed once and the proof of it remains permanently engraved on the pages my ink has embraced. I have painstakingly sewn together stories and when your gaze skims through them in the archives, you will find my name embroidered in between the lines time and time again. Perhaps the sound of my name will die out on everyone's lips, but my ghost shall forever remain in a coven that lies behind teak doors, tucked away in a corner unseen.





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Publisher: The Assam Valley School

Email: ave@assamvalleyschool.com

Printers: Swastika Printers



Publisher | The Assam Valley School
P.O. Balipara, Dist. Sonitpur, Asom-784101. India

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