

Varsha Seshan's Creative Writing Programme

WORDS

Issue 4 | January 2024

by writers
aged 9-14



Poems

Memes

Listicles

Stories

Stories: Comic- Page Style



WITH
NANDITA BASU

THAT WAS
FUN!



Varsha Seshan's
Online Creative
Writing Programme
Guest Session
November 2023

The Diary as Story

WITH
SOWMYA RAJENDRAN



Varsha Seshan's
Online Creative
Writing Programme
Guest Session
December 2023



Guest Sessions



Green Stuff and Nonsense

WITH BIJAL VACHHARAJANI



Varsha Seshan's Online Creative Writing Programme
Guest Session
October 2023

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Hello!

We're back with the next issue of WORDS, our very own e-magazine. This time, explore a few forms we've tried out for the first time, including memes and listicles. Happy reading!

Varsha Seshan

children's book writer
creative writing trainer

Meet the writers

Aarya

Mostly like weather,
Maybe stormy or windy,
Hurricane, gale, cyclone, tornado
or calm.

Aabha

Thoughtful, exuberant
Creative, brave, innovative
Lying on the grass, weaving a story
Inspired


Aarav

Creative. Grateful.
Art, music and sports
These are my favourite things
Books too

Ahana

Creative. Kind
Imagining, solving, thinking.
I am almost always playing with cats
Good friend

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?



For each issue of WORDS, the writers introduce themselves using a short form of poetry. This time, read about them in cinquains!

Clumsy
Goofy, funny
An actual Disney character
Always reading, sleeping or eating
Anaaya

My life.
Ecstatic. Gloomy.
Punishing but rewarding
Moments crash on to my life
This is **Atharva**.

Human,
Chaotic yet calm,
Studying, playing, writing,
Running around like a little child,
Devangshi.

Himarsha
Lawfully chaotic,
Overlord of random facts,
Always looking for an excuse to read,
Gloriously alive.

presenting:
exceptional slowpoke,
bearer of unwise ideas,
simultaneous genius and moron--
janvi

Kabir
Kabir
Funny, energetic
Reading, playing, drawing
My favourite things are animals
Passionate

Ronikaa
Inquisitive. Enthusiastic.
Writing. Travelling. Dancing.
Lounging in pyjamas, lost in a story.
Exciting.

Ruhaan
Compassionate, trustworthy
Drawing, reading, writing
Most of my teachers really like me
Affectionate

Sunandini
Comic and worrier
Writes, sighs, and deletes.
Needs food, music, and friends.
Bookworm.

Vivaan
Intelligent, tall
Playing, gaming, creating
Loves adventure, hunting for danger
Vivant



WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

A triolet is a very defined form of poetry. There are just eight lines in all. Lines 1, 4 and 7 are the same. Lines 2 and 8 are the same. Plus, line 1 must rhyme with lines 3 and 5, and line 2 must rhyme with line 6.

the slow lane

janvi barman

life in the slow lane is a beautiful thing
when everyone else is driving too fast
i take in the winter, the summer, the spring
life in the slow lane is a beautiful thing
it makes my heart swell, makes my skin sing
living in the moment and reflecting on the past
life in the slow lane is a beautiful thing
when everyone else is driving too fast

Tears in Autumn

Sunandini Sen

The sky's golden and the trees, red,
Tears and leaves, the wind they follow.
Memories spinning round in my head
The sky's golden and the trees, red.
"We'll meet again," that's what they said
Then why do I feel so hollow?
The sky's golden and the trees, red.
Tears and leaves, the wind they follow.

Triolet

Modest Glory

Himarsha Mulchandani



All eyes on me, while I shake,
Is this the kind of glory I want?
Too many expectations are at stake;
All eyes on me, while I shake,
Coming here was a huge mistake
Will my downfall be theirs to flaunt?
All eyes on me, while I shake,
Is this the kind of glory I want?

Night Dance

Devangshi Duttagupta

In the night sky, a silver boon,
The moon, a radiant, gentle grace,
Its glow, a soothing, calming tune,
In the night sky, a silver boon.
In dreams, it dances to a wistful croon,
A celestial dancer in vast space,
In the night sky, a silver boon,
The moon, a radiant, gentle grace.

Opposite Olly

Aarav Khandelia

Opposite Olly, Opposite Olly
He lives way down on opposite alley
He wears a shirt around his feet
He's vegetarian, but he eats meat

He runs so slow and walks so fast
He hates coming first and adores coming last
He ignores his friends and hangs out with strangers
He hates safety and loves great danger

The basement's up and the attic's way down
The king wears a hat and he wears a crown
Opposite Olly, Opposite Olly
His friends are happy but he's not too jolly.

Back Lightning

Vivaan Chaudhry

Back Lightning, Back Lightning
Slow as a snail
People like the Light Force
Back Lightning they hail!
Always so happy
He fights with no skill
If you say something nice
He'll cry until
You call him a bully
Then he'll jump up and down
If you ask him a question
He'll reply with no sound!

Uta Pulta Person

Kabir Srinivasan



He sleeps all morning and is awake all night
He's very peaceful in a fight
He walks with his hands
He loves terrible bands
He runs when he's lazy
I think he is very crazy
That is ulti pulta person from ulti pulta land:
People say that his head is full of sand!

Doing Things Sdrawkcam

Seven Most Interesting Books in the World

Ronikaa Vijan

Books ... The most wonderful things in the world. But let's face it, we readers do come across this question once in a while, 'Which book should I read?' That's why I've come up with a list of seven books that you have to read. Let's dive straight into it.



Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie

When I think of murder mysteries, only one person comes to my mind, Agatha Christie a.k.a the Queen of Crime. Her **Murder on the Orient Express** is my favourite and her best book. I am a huge fan of Hercule Poirot mysteries and this one has a special place in my heart. I love curling up with this book on an eerie evening—a must-read for crime lovers.



Uncontrollable by Varsha Seshan

Admit it, most of us have not read verse books, including me. But I was in love with **Uncontrollable** as soon as I read it. A beautifully penned story about Rohini and her fight to destroy the Machine (spoiler alert!) and save her mother.



What Not to Do if You Turn Invisible by Ross Welford

Ross Welford is one of my most loved authors as his books are filled with emotions. They make you laugh, cry and wish you could turn back time, to start rereading it. One of my beloved recent reads of his is **What Not to Do if You Turn Invisible**, and it was wonderful. I mean seriously, I don't have words for it. This book will be enjoyed by all ages, especially kids.



Playthings: Toys of Terror by Neil D'Silva

When it comes to my preferred genres, hands down horror is the best. But I don't find good books suitable for my age and so when I found this masterpiece, I was jumping with joy. I had goosebumps when I finished this book. This wonderfully written book by Neil D'Silva will leave you screaming and terrified!



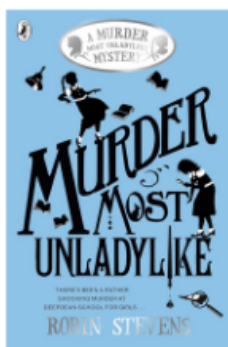
The Sisters of Luna Island by Stacy Hackney

I was travelling in the summer and as luck would have it, I finished reading all the books I had brought with me. So I checked out the local bookstore, which was filled with some amazing reads, but the book which caught my eye was **The Sisters of Luna Island** by Stacy Hackney. I love reading adventure, crime and paranormal thrillers, and I hate to try a new genre. But this book was amazing and it encouraged me to read more magical adventures. It is a delightful story about sister love and magic.



The Girl Who Drank the Moon by Kelly Barnhill

A delightful New York Times Bestseller by Kelly Barnhill, **The Girl Who Drank the Moon** will write itself into your heart forever. This beautifully written, darkly funny story will enchant and entertain. As Luna's thirteenth birthday approaches, her magic appears and she has to fight to save her family. But will Luna be able to save her family and magic? Read the book to find out!



Murder Most Unladylike Mystery Series by Robin Stevens

This a rare thing: a series that gets better with every book. I enjoyed this series and being sent to the 1930s to watch two girls, Daisy Wells and Hazel Wong solve some of the most amazing mysteries. Friendship, boarding school and a murder worthy of Agatha Christie!

Well, I hope these few books will get you reading and wanting to go back in time to read them all over again. Happy reading!



Life's Like That

janvi barman

Oliver's peers criticise his every move. No matter how much he wants to find better company, he will remain surrounded by the others' negativity for the rest of his existence.

'Why do you look ... like that?'

'Stop being so gloomy, come out into the sun more often!'

'Can't you be like the rest of us?'

'You're such a failure.'

'Stop hiding behind everyone else all the time.'

'You're full grown and you can't even cook yourself a meal.'

But Oliver's learnt not to complain. That's just the way life is for a mushroom living in the bushes.

A Pair of Poems

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Based on my book
'Uncontrollable', we wrote a pair
of poems--one that asks a
question, and another that
answers it.

Jumpscare

Himarsha Mulchandani

"BOOM!"

I jolt upwards, my heart beating fast,
Why did that sound like a deadly bomb blast?
I run out, praying for dear life,
And then the smoke hits me, sharp as a knife.

"BOOM!"

Breathing out a sigh of relief,
I laugh.
Bless my delusional little heart,
It was just a firecracker blast.

The Wait

janvi barman

lethargy
procrastination
inertia
how urgent is this?

eyes widen
jaw drops
realisation:
it's due tomorrow



Endless

Devangshi Duttagupta

My ears are paining,
My head's aching.
All I want to know is:
How much longer?

I lift my head
look at the screen,
And to my surprise, I see
It's only me and the teacher.

Five Things that Exist (But Shouldn't)



Ruhaan Garg



My school

I genuinely believe, from the bottom of my heart, that my school should not exist in any form or shape whatsoever. Let me explain ... First of all, the teachers don't know how to teach. Secondly, when we don't score well on a test (because they can't explain the topic), they start yelling at us. They don't understand that they are the problem and the reason as to why we aren't scoring well. Thirdly, they are hypocrites. The school teaches us about how the environment is being ruined and how we should save paper. But two minutes later, they hand us 5,000 worksheets that we have to complete, not understanding that the worksheets are leading to deforestation.

Mosquitoes and flies

There is no reason for them to exist. Let's take an example: bees are important for the ecosystem because they spread pollen. MOSQUITOES DON'T DO ANYTHING EXCEPT STEAL OUR BLOOD WITHOUT OUR PERMISSION!



Pollution

Come on, do I even need a reason for this? Like, who in the world--no, not world--WHO IN THE UNIVERSE needs pollution? It is harming innocent living creatures for absolutely no reason!! I have a solution to pollution; we should ship all humans off to Mars and let the creatures on Earth live peacefully.

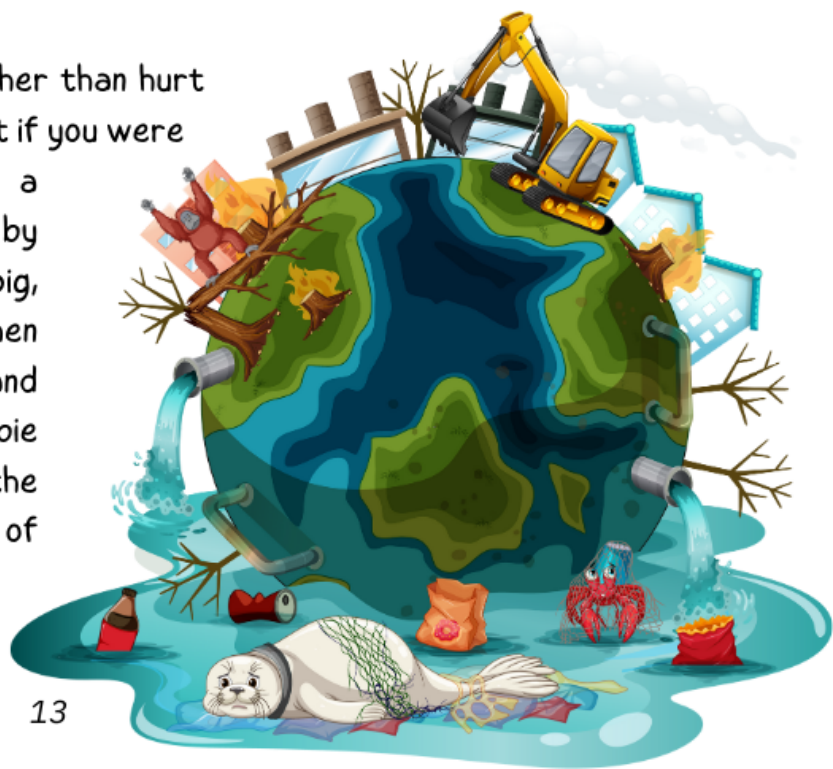


Cavities

Cavities are the most irritating, infuriating things in EXISTENCE!!! Okay, maybe I have exaggerated a little bit. They make your teeth hurt so much, you can't even eat! And if you have adult teeth and the cavities EAT your teeth away, then you'll never grow those teeth again!

Storms

I hate storms. They don't do anything other than hurt people, and that makes me terrified. What if you were roaming around one day and suddenly a storm came and then you got struck by lightning? Or what if lightning strikes a pig, and that pig turns into a zombie, and then turns other animals into zombies, and suddenly there's an electric zombie apocalypse all around the planet?! Since the above incidents have a great possibility of occurring, I hate storms.



Granny

Sunandini Sen



Ugh. Bengali could be SO confusing at times.

Sighing, I headed to my grandmother's room. I needed her help, yet again.

She looked up at me, smiling, as I entered. Her eyes twinkled, and it seemed like they had shining stars in them. She asked me what the matter was. I flopped down on the soft, orange bedspread, and yawned. "What's the difference between this letter and THIS letter?" I asked. "They LITERALLY sound the same."

As she took the textbook from my hands, I settled down. She picked up the pen with her aged yet agile hands, lined with wrinkles of the past. Although she was more than five times my age, sometimes, I felt that she had a mind as sharp as a blade, with a memory that could recall everything and anything.

She explained to me, "Look, this letter has a softer sound than the other one. And as for this one ..." Her voice sounded like liquid sunshine, joyful and enthusiastic. Even at 84, she still had the soul and spirit of a teacher, and I doubted it would ever leave her.

I snuggled up to her, nodding my head at everything she said. It seemed so simple when she explained. I looked up at her. A simple earring adorned her ear, and thick glasses perched on her nose. Granny was never one for ornaments. Yet, she still seemed to glow like the sun without any.

I clasped her arm almost gingerly. She smelled like cinnamon and sandalwood and happiness. Being with her always made me relax, almost like my energy was being recharged. I found a grin making its way on to my face.

She asked, "Moyna, why are you smiling?"

I shook my head. "It's nothing."

As I sat there with my grandmother, the warm afternoon sunshine streamed in through the windows, lighting up the room with its dance of light.

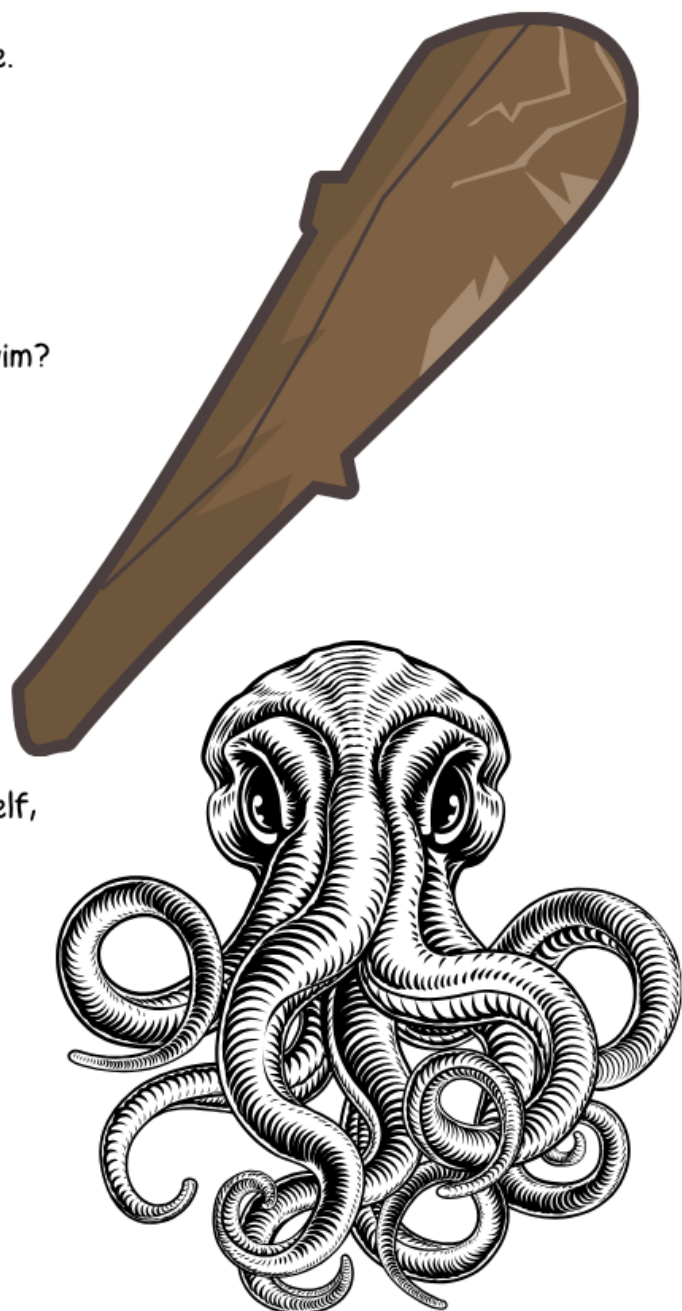
Adventures in Rhyme

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Inspired by Ogden Nash's "The Adventures of Isabel", we wrote poems of our own, defeating monsters calmly and courageously!

The Adventures of ... Aabha Sardesai

The air was cold, the night was black,
There was a certain aura, a monster was back.
A scuffle followed, a howl was heard too,
My heart started thudding, my mouth sealed with glue.
I turned around quickly, my heart turned to stone,
The world seemed so quiet, with mysteries unknown.
The monster was there, with a grin on her face,
"I've got you now!" She started to pace.
I clenched my fists; my face was grim,
As she started ranting, about how well she could ... swim?
She was a squid-like monster, with a horrible stench.
She drank up the ocean, her thirst to quench.
Her seven-course meal had octopi and spiders,
With sharks and mermaids, and human law abiders.
But I didn't worry or scurry, or think I was toast!
I did what I thought would scare her the most.
I laughed and I giggled, and I pointed at her.
"Oh! What a wierdo!" I said with a chitter.
Now her flaw was insecurity, she wasn't sure of herself,
As fear ran down her spine, I bashed her in the head.



Five of the Cutest Pets You Can Own

Aarya Jain Baldawa

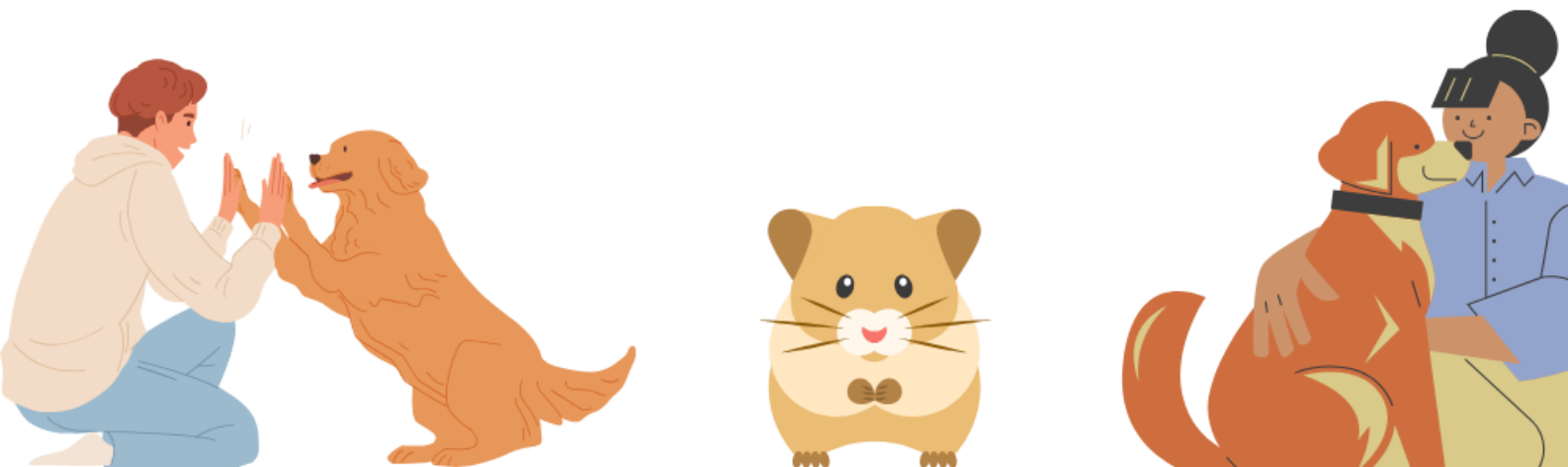
Pets are very cute, but have you ever wondered which pet is the cutest? They all are very cute in their owner's eyes, aren't they ...? But if I had to shortlist the cutest five (it was very hard), I would pick these ones ...

Guinea Pigs

Guinea Pigs are soooooo cute and among the fattest pets around! The root of the name 'guinea pig' comes from England where in olden times they could be bought for one guinea each. Some people believe the 'pig' came because they resemble small, fat pigs. These come on my list because guinea pigs are very cute and for me, a dream pet.

Shih Tzus

The Shih Tzu is a pet dog breed originating from Tibet and is believed to be bred from the Pekingese. Shih Tzus are known for their short snouts and large round eyes, as well as their long coat, floppy ears and posture. How cute.



Samoyed

The Samoyed is a breed of herding dogs with thick, white coats. They are dogs which take their name from the people of Siberia. They're domesticated animals that assist in herding, hunting, protection and sled-pulling. A samoyed cannot adapt well to Indian climates which is why they are not seen much in India. Samoyeds came in my top five because of their snow-white, fluffy, too-good-to-be-true fur and their loving deep eyes ...

Cats

Cats are among the most favoured pets in the world (second only to dogs). The cat is the only domesticated species in the family Felidae. Cats are favoured all across the world but mostly in Canada, China and Russia. Some of the most popular cat breeds are Siamese and Persian. Cats feature on my list because I think that cats are cute!



Chinchillas

Chinchillas can be sweet little companions, which make for wonderful pets. They are very social animals. Like guinea pigs, chinchillas are native to the mountains of Peru where they are used to freezing temperatures. They have thick fur and they stay clean by giving themselves dust baths once or twice per week. Cardboard boxes, pieces of non-treated wood, and toys are usually options for chinchillas to play with. Chinchillas are adorable and definitely feature in my top five!

Now you know my top five pets but I'm still stuck wondering what yours would be ...





Just Another Day

Anaaya Rathi

Will's favourite way to spend a Sunday afternoon was sitting comfortably in a tree. It often earned him stares from passers-by.

Nevertheless, Will loved climbing trees. This skill came in handy for Will as he was a bit of a troublemaker. Upon seeing anyone with a shiny thing or something that seemed of interest to Will, he would stealthily take it and scurry up a tree so quickly that they wouldn't realise what had happened until a few seconds after.

The best trees to climb, Will had discovered, were at the park. Will loved the park. It was almost like his home. He spent most of his time exploring in the afternoon sunshine or running through the grass to scare people. He found it quite entertaining to see them jump with surprise and fear. Will loved the children's area of the park. He loved sliding down the old, plastic slides and swinging on the black tire-swings. He dreamt of having the park all to himself. How much fun he would have!

Will always seemed to entertain people. The regulars of the park would smile at him and offer him food. The tourists, however, always gave him funny looks.

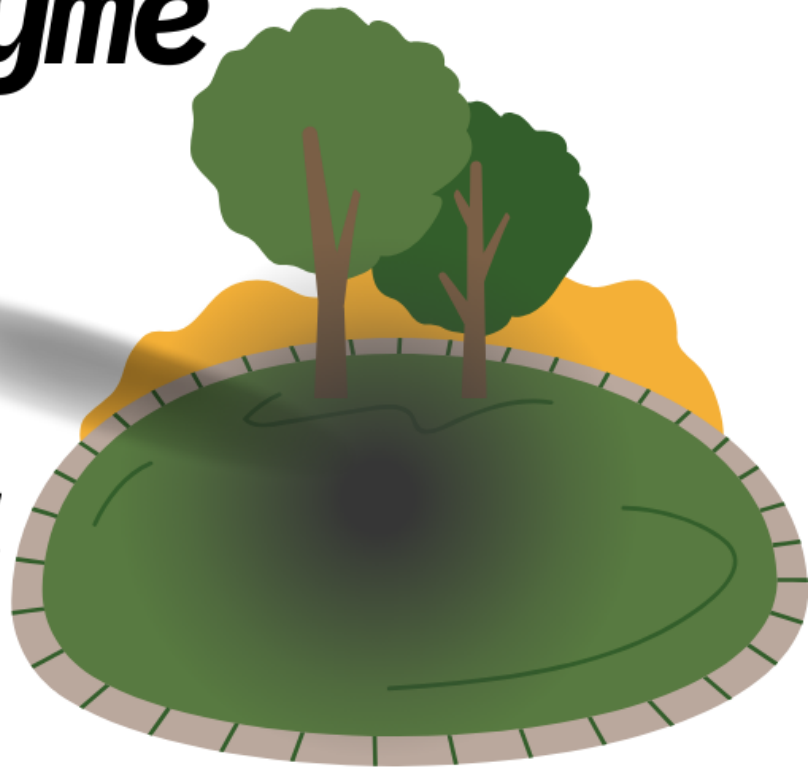
It was as if they had never seen a monkey before!

Adventures in Rhyme

The Adventures of ... Vivaan Chaudhry

Vivaan was chilling in the park,
As a shadow emerged in the dark.
The Shadow Master had arrived, he knew,
Each second his power immensely grew,
His numen, it was more destructive than most,
More than Black Lightning, more than a ghost.

Vivaan, however, had the last laugh
He needed no army, no soldiers, no staff
The Shadow Master died, hooray!
Vivaan was glad he saved the day!



The Adventures of ... Aarya Jain Baldawa

Aarya spied a tiny dragon,
pulling a tiny, tiny wagon.
"ROAR," the dragon yowled softly,
"Are you thinking of insulting me?"
The dragon let out a blast of fire,
He asked, "Does this make you perspire?"

Aarya, Aarya didn't worry,
Aarya didn't scream or scurry,
She quietly took out two slices of bread,
The dragon got 'sandwiched' before he was dead.

Top Five Most Infuriating Texts to Receive

Himarsha Mulchandani

Sometimes, you receive texts that make you want to punch the nearest object at hand. Fellas, I hear you.

And this listicle (I hope) shows the same thought process you go through when you see such texts.

k

Really, tell me why you typed in 'k'.

I am dying to know why you chose this particular letter to adorn the end of the chat. For your information, 'K' is a pretty reactive element unlike the inconsiderate and dull response you just gave.

Thanks for nothing.

hmm

No, no, and a thousand times no.

Dear *insert name of choice*, you are not Sherlock Holmes. And I'm not Dr Watson. This is absolutely not a thriller mystery movie--and we are not using detective words. Snap out of it.

Either use full sentences that make sense or just go offline.

The ghost text

Humans are an intriguing species. They'll initiate conversations, and then won't reply to you for the next two days. All right, maybe the person who sent me the text is busy, but a heads-up before disappearing into oblivion would be nice, and would prevent me from staring into the screen for a solid ten minutes, thinking about if I did something wrong.

Do you just text a random person and throw your phone across the Equator into the Southern Hemisphere?

Please don't.

It's really mean.

The response that contains nothing but emojis/stickers/GIFs

All right, let me get this straight.

We are not living in the Ancient Egyptian era and we are not experts in deciphering nonsensical modern hieroglyphs that are irrelevant to the topic at hand.

If you don't want to chat, then please say so.

If you're trying to annoy me, congratulations, it worked.

Now get lost.

Texts that just sound uninterested

This is even more painful than a stubbed toe.

After a long process of pouring out my heart, I don't want to receive a 'k, cool' or a 'ttyl' text.

Really, anything but that.

I'd rather have you not reply to my texts at all, thank you very much.

Even though texts are just random letters put together and delivered at your digital door, they always carry a feeling, a sound of sorts.


And when that sound gets annoying, people snap.

It's not a pretty sight, folks.

Better gear up before the **texts of your past** catch up with you.

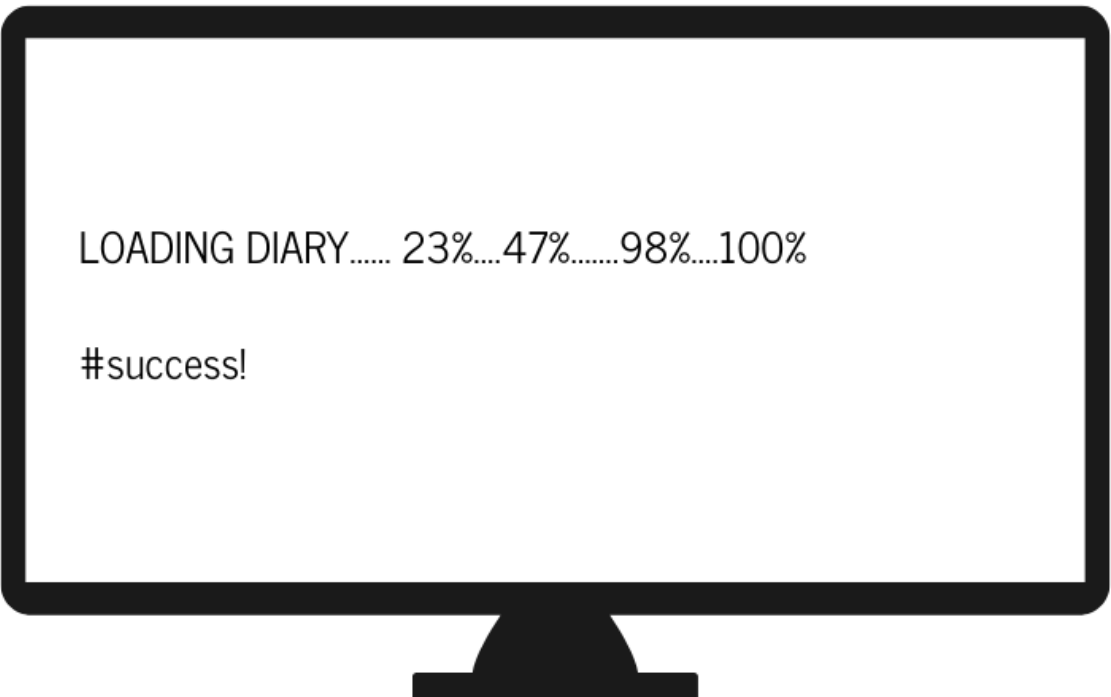
Secrets from a Lost Valley

Aabha Sardesai



**New Discovery: Diary of a teenager found in the depths of
the Maltar Valley in the Alven civilisation!**

Click on link for diary excerpt: <http://f#tsAS.FCDSabqqq.open>



LOADING DIARY..... 23%....47%.....98%...100%

#success!



Day 1

I've been here exactly one day and 47 seconds, and I am one of the most confused people on Earth. If I am on Earth, that is. There seems to be a mistake in the climate around here. These people wear such simple clothes of wool! They use cocoa beans to buy food. By the gods! If I taught them to make chocolate, they would die of amazement. And if you talk about these people's taste ... ugh! Who listens to acoustic music anymore? If you say "these people", then you're right. When you have a world of Eminem and Taylor Swift, who listens to guitar solos? And there are NO teenagers here. Well, there are, but there's no one who's my age! Isn't that weird? I'll try to find out soon enough, but not today. Maybe tomorrow. 'Cause even if I am 16, I'm not nocturnal. 'Night.

Day 2

I went exploring today. The place is heavenly. It's nestled in the lap of nature, between a serene river and an enchanted wish tree. Beyond the city there are beautiful blue mountains and rich waterfalls. On the other side, there is a stunning wildflower field, filled with cornflowers, asters, chicories and wild geraniums. It looked beautiful with the lilac, yellow, red and white. I sat there for ages admiring the beauty and wilderness. I'd quite forgotten about nature's silent, modest elegance. Oh, and since I need to eat, I went over to the city to search for a grocery store. The prices! And the carelessness of the people! All I had to do was gather a couple of dented coins from the roadside, and voilà! I bought a month's worth of rice, prawns, coconut and broccoli. I wanted to buy a unicorn, but I don't know how to take care of a horse! I gotta eat though. I dunno how to cook, but I'll learn! C ya!

Story

Day 3

I tried to talk to some of the people around here today, and it turns out some of them speak English. Also, I must say, they have extremely bad security! In fact, NO security! Nobody stands at the main gate, nobody guarding the perimeter! I got in and out without any trouble. Anyway, here's what I found out:

1. Curfew – all must be inside from 10pm to 4am.

It turns out there is security: at night! From 10pm to 4am.

2. On your 16th birthday you must start to fend for yourself in the wild.

Once a week, a training instructor visits the teenagers, and tells them about how they should behave in the city and in the wild. He lets some of them go early, but never before eighteen. I'm SO not a part of this social circle!

Also, that explains the disappearance of sixteen, seventeen, eighteen AND nineteen year olds! I can't pass myself off as twenty, which is the age they are supposed to have learned to fend for themselves. I'll find out a way to sneak in and out! Maybe make a friend who is twenty? Maybe??

These people don't have any wigs, or disguises. So the twenty-year-old friend is my best bet!

I also learned that the people are ruled by a committee, who the commoners believe to be gods. Yeah right! Some people carry a slate around with them, (they don't speak English, or any actual talking language really!), and write in dots and dashes. I didn't try to decipher it. No one would, if they saw it. Impossible it was! I'll try to start learning it tomorrow. Bye!

Day 4

The system of dots and dashes is called Murder Code. Cool, right? I wonder how the name came into being. Ohhh ... bruh! I should have paid attention when Ma'am Ariana was teaching us Morse Code. It could have been similar! Now, I can't understand what most people are saying. This is even worse than my friends' silent treatment when I get mad. It's like everyone is giving me silent treatment when I don't even know them. I'll try to learn, though. Write to you tomorrow? Toodles! Bye.

Alven in Murder Code!
(Written on Day 7)

Day 5

I've given up. WHO knows how to read that!!! Tell me, if you wanted to learn ... I don't know ... Russian, without any textbooks, or any guidance, could you do it?? Obviously not!! Then how do you expect me to learn!!!???? I'm sorry for all the punctuation!!!! But I am FRUSTRATED!!!!!!

Day 6

I've finally found a guide! Her name is Juniper, and she's 15. She writes Murder Code very fluently, and speaks English, and is very talented at playing the ukulele.

After every session, we made a pact to sing a song. She loves the Christmas carols and Taylor Swift songs I sing. Today's lesson was about the foundations of Murder Code. Juni says that if you want to learn Murder Code, you 'learn it from the basics.' She taught me about what Murder Code "actually" was. She even made me take down notes! Here:

- Murder Code was created in the early 400 BCE.
- Kids used Murder Code while playing a game.
- The adults took it seriously, and used it often while travelling.
- Nowadays, some people take a vow of silence and use only Murder Code to communicate.
- Those people are called 'Pholiages', and NEVER open their mouth! (I will die after 30 secs of being a 'Pholiage'.) (She made me write that too!)

I'm glad I've finally made a friend. I prefer the singing to the learning, but Juni makes it fun. I can't wait for tomorrow's lesson!

Day 7

A guy of about eighteen wandered towards my treehouse today. He is one of the early graduates, and he has a brilliant voice. His name is Soren, and he sings in a different language. I must ask him what the language is. Anyway, we're a band, the three of us. It's official. I can't wait to introduce us to the public. Maybe in four years, when we're really, really good. Or maybe next week, when we're okay. We'll see. See you tomorrow! With updates!!

End of diary excerpt. Rest of the diary is yet to be found. Stay ready for new news reports! Signing off.

More Poetry

october

janvi barman

R-9vol-ution

Himarsha Mulchandani

The sky rumbles.
clouds roll in,
harsh winds bite,
then turn into a downpour of grief.
This isn't a simple storm,
nor a dreary winter,
It's the rage of two seasons,
two worlds,
two lovers,
being torn apart--
The rage of wanting to stay,
but leaving too soon,
The kind of rage
★ where heaven trembles with thunder,
and the world wears a cloak of white.
★ It's a time of change--
you can't trust the seasons,
Because soon,
one must let go,
for the other to survive.

in the blink of an eye
october is here
bounding through the door at full speed
painting dark sofas with its golden fur.
days are warmer
brighter
sweeter.
new habits sprout
but they're ones i've grown before--
long walks, a leash tight in my hands
treats and tennis balls thrown far
swimming becomes routine.
but deep down, i know
october;
a real-life movie,
a respite from chill and rain,
a ray of summer cutting through the gloom;
is bound to come to an end.
the rash on my palm heals and habits wilt
sweaters are dug out of the wardrobe
skin becomes dry

in the blink of an eye,
october is gone



Memes

ME WHEN I REALISE THAT I DIDN'T
COMPLETE THE WEEK'S FORUM WORK
AND IT'S 4:59 ON A MONDAY.



Ruhaan Garg



ME WONDERING,
"WILL I EVER BE
ABLE TO WRITE A
TRIOLET?"



ME, FIVE
SECONDS
AFTER WRITING
A TRIOLET, "HA
SO SIMPLE."

Sunandini Sen



ME WHEN I'M
WAITING FOR
MA'AM TO UPLOAD
ASSIGNMENT 3
BECAUSE I DIDN'T
ATTEND CLASS



ME WHEN IT SAYS
WE WILL WRITE
ANY TYPE OF
POETRY WE WANT

Vivaan Chaudhry

WHEN I REALISE THE LAST DATE FOR
THE ASSIGNMENT IS TOMORROW AND I
STILL HAVEN'T STARTED THE TASK



Devangshi Duttagupta

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Increasingly often, I've been
meeting children who tell me that
they enjoy writing memes. So, for
the first time, we created memes
during our writing programme!



MY CLASSMATES

when ma'am takes
us to the library
during P.E class.

V/S



ME, when ma'am
takes us to the
library during
P.E class:-

"YES, YES, YES
YES ... WHOO!"

Aabha Sardesai

;))

Wall

before

No!

Me when someone tells me to read a book
with no pictures.



After

10-20 minutes later after reading
the book.

Kabir Srinivasan



Me reading the best book
ever written

V/S



Me reading the worst
book ever written

Aarav Khandelia

Six Reasons Cats Are Cuter than Dogs

janvi barman

Ahh, yes--we've all participated at one point or another in the age-old debate of cats versus dogs. We've all spent hours pondering the seemingly unanswerable question of which are cuter. But in this article, I'm going to settle this debate once and for all--CATS ARE BETTER!! And here are six reasons why.

They're low maintenance.

You need to give a dog constant attention, leave the house every other hour for a walk and have a full blown wrestling match every couple of months just for a bath. But cats? None of that required! They take care of themselves, which makes them a whole lot cuter.



They're stink-free.

When you get a dog, you don't get just the dog. Moisture, slobber, flatulence--all contribute to the ugly stench that comes with your dog, like a package deal. Cats? No such stench. They smell nice and cosy and, well ... cat-like!

They sleep. A lot.

Every animal and person alive is cuter when they're sleeping--and that applies to cats too.

Sure, dogs are cute when they're asleep, but they don't nap nearly as much as cats do. And their little cat snores? They'll melt your heart right into a puddle.



They make great memes.

Every third meme you see on the internet involves a cat picture. Every picture ever taken of a cat can probably be used as a meme template. Dog memes exist too, but cat memes just ... hit different, don't you think?

They give you space.

Cats are understanding and they know when not to be overbearing and give you a little alone time. Dogs are ALWAYS up in your space! They cannot go five minutes without a cuddle.

You KNOW they love you.

Dogs love everyone. They don't pick and choose; they just smother the first person they see with affection. But cats are a little more picky. If a cat loves you, it **CHOSE** you. Yes, you, specifically! Knowing that makes their affection so much sweeter.



When the breakout rooms close, but we still haven't finished our task.



When the breakout rooms close, but Varsha gives us 3-5 more minutes to finish our task.

Devangshi Duttagupta



Now, I hope you can see why cats are very clearly cuter than dogs. After all these years of controversy, I hope your mind is cats vs dogs debate-free.





Dear Diary

...

Sunandini Sen



6th December, 2012

Dear diary,

Today was my birthday. Mum got me this new notebook, she said it's for recording my thoughts so that I can grow up and look at my entries later!

How funny it is that it was TODAY we had to move to a completely new town and a new school! I'll have SO MUCH of work to do because it's mid-term.

Anyway, at the new school, no one talked to me. I felt lonely, until a girl called Mira spoke to me. She was so nice and kind to me and we shared tiffins. She's great!



6th December, 2013

Dear diary,

I was SO busy for a year that I completely forgot that I was supposed to write in a diary. Silly me! Projects, homework, assignments. The teachers just heaped piles of work onto me. And, of course, I was busy with Mira.

Mira's my best friend. We always hang out at school and talk a lot. I asked her if she wanted to come to my house to play, but she said she had Bharatanatyam classes. That was pretty sad, but she promised she'd visit one day.



6th December, 2014

Dear diary,

I really need to make it a habit to write in this diary whenever I can. But that's not very often.

Today Mira asked me if I wanted to be best friends with her forever and ever. I replied yes. So, we promised each other that we'd always be best friends!

Later, Mum took me to a doctor. She said it's for a checkup. I don't think so. The doctor asked me questions about school, friends and studies.

I told her about Mira and how we were best friends.

She looked at me strangely, and spoke to Mum in a corner of the room. I don't know what they talked about.

At school, when I told Mira about my visit, she made me promise to never tell anyone else about her. A bit weird. But, I agreed because she's my best friend.

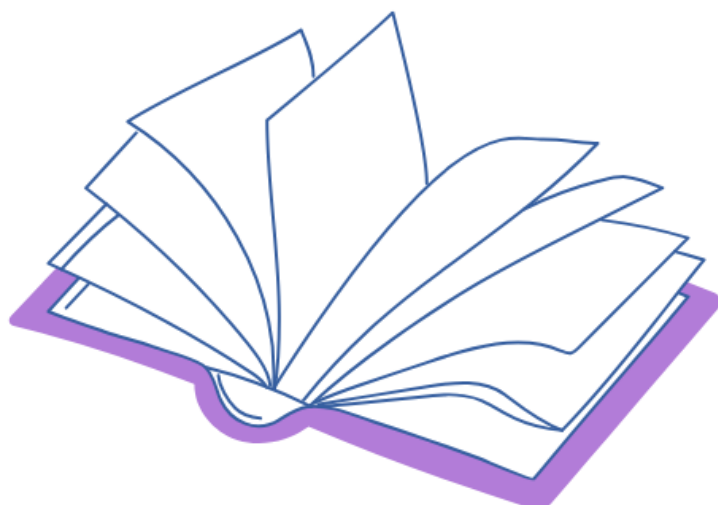


6th December, 2015

Dear diary,

Mira finally visited my house today! She said it wouldn't be necessary to ask my parents, we were best friends after all! We played in my room for hours and then snacked on chips while watching TV. When Mum came home, she really didn't seem surprised at all that Mira was home. She smiled at me and then went upstairs to do something.

It was an awesome day! Mira said she loved it.





6th December, 2016

Dear diary,

I feel like there's something strange about Mira.

Whenever I ask her about her family, she just kind of shuts down. We've been friends for 5 years, but I still feel like she tells me nothing. Of course, she's always really sweet to me, but I still get weird vibes from her. I'm beginning to question why she asks me to not tell anyone about her, or why she doesn't tell me anything. She's never invited me to her house, either.

When I threatened to tell Mum about her, she broke down and made me promise I would never do so. "You're the only best friend I have!" she said, crying. Quite strange, but I consoled her.



6th December, 2017

Dear diary,

I've made up my mind. There's something unusual, almost eerie, about Mira. She doesn't allow me to tell anyone about her, and doesn't respond about her family or home. I've never gone to her house, and why do none of my other friends or family ever notice her?

I don't think she's what she claims to be.

I've decided that I'm going to confront her. I need answers. And I'm going to get them.



I get into the car along with Mira in the backseat. Mum is driving, and Mira and I chat quietly and play video games together. I decided a year back that I was going to confront her, and get my answers, but I can't seem to build up the courage to do so. Mira's my best friend, and she has been that for a long time. It's strange to think that she's hiding something.

"Mira, I have to ask you something."

"What is it?" she asks casually.

"I think you may be a--"

I am cut off by the sound of screeching of tires. The world seems to spin around me as panic sets in.

Glass shatters, tin breaks. After ten minutes, it's over. I touch my cheek. Blood, slick and wet. I think I'm going to die. My entire body hurts like it's been stabbed with a thousand knives.

Ambulance sirens echo in the distance.

I worriedly turn around, as some people try to get me out. "Mira, Mira, where are you?" I scream. I couldn't bear it if anything happened to her.

A lady shushes me. "Where's Mira?" I ask, crying. "And Mum?"

"Your mother's fine," the lady replies, gesturing towards my mother, who is being consoled by a group of nurses. "But I don't see a girl there."

I whirl around, only to see Mira standing a few meters away from the car wreck. Her body seems perfectly unharmed. No cuts, bruises or blood.

Puzzled, I try to call out to her, but only for her to back away. She suddenly disappears into a cloud of mist. Panicking, I shout and howl, but the people drag me away. "You'll be fine, my dear," the lady says. "There's no one there."

Whoever you are, Mira.

I WILL find you.



Adventures in Rhyme



The Adventures of ... Ronikaa Vijan

Ronikaa saw a ghost under the moon,
Humming a very sorrowful tune.
The ghost was wearing a garb of white,
Shining under the pale moonlight.
But when he saw me, his amazing treat,
He thanked god for this magnificent feast.

Ronikaa, Ronikaa didn't worry
Ronikaa didn't scream or scurry.
She applied some salt on his ghostly head,
And then quietly ate him up instead.



The Adventures of ... Aarav Khandelia

Aarav spied a zombie eat:
Its chin was covered with heaps of meat.
Chomping a bite of elephant feet,
It grumbled, "This is no treat to eat!"
It snapped a twig and turned around
It bellowed, "I'll shove you in a wheel so round."

Aarav, Aarav didn't worry
Aarav didn't scream or scurry
He took out his knife and chopped the zombie in half
But its stinky hair made Aarav barf!

The Adventures of ... Kabir Srinivasan

Kabir spied a dragon on his right
The dragon smiled, eager to fight.
Then when he saw Kabir go pale,
He whacked him with his enormous tail.
The dragon scoffed and said to Kabir,
"I'll grill and stew you like paneer!"

Kabir, Kabir didn't worry
Kabir didn't scream or scurry
He sprinkled some lemon juice on the dragon's head,
And ate him up for supper instead.



Sijo

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Sijo is a Korean form of poetry I explored at a workshop with Linda Sue Park. Like the haiku, a sijo has three lines. Each line has 14 to 16 syllables. The entire sijo must have 44 to 46 syllables, making the poem challenging and fun to write. Notice, too, that the last line always has some sort of twist!

Exam

Sunandini Sen

Anxiousness. It's exam day. Sweat, forming rivers on my face.
The bell screams. Breathe in, breathe out. I tell myself, I can do this.
I sit down. Grip my pen. Oh no! Instead of sums, I see maps.

Flowers

Ronikaa Vijan

Pleasant breeze. Flowers blossom, dancing among weeds of pale green.
Fragrant, they attract everyone around. Petals, multi-hued.
But the children run over the flowers and just like that, they are gone.

Lavender

Aarya Jain Baldawa

For many weeks, I've been looking forward to this day.
The purple lavender have bloomed, their petals a heavenly blue,
But, like every good thing they will fade and crumple too soon ...





Top Five Most Awkward Family Situations

Anaaya Rathi

No family is perfect. In fact, many core memories that families share are often those which lead to embarrassing or funny situations. Here is a list of top five most awkward family situations.

The “I don’t know who you are” at family reunions

Let’s be real. Most of us are guilty of forgetting our distant family members at reunions. It gets even worse when they seem to know every tiny detail about you and it feels like you’re talking to a complete stranger.

Fighting with your sibling/family member when you have visitors

Pretending that everything is fine when you’re furious at each other makes for THE MOST awkward moments. It gets progressively worse if the visitors ask, “Do you two get along?”



BLASTING your music at 2 a.m. and then realising your Bluetooth was connected to the speaker not the headphones

It results in a crowd of angry, sleepy family members dressed in pyjamas in your room.

Pro: They all look like angry chipmunks and it's the cutest thing ever.

Con: You get grounded for eternity and have your music taken away.

Giving a concert/interview in the shower and then realising people outside were listening to you

It gets incredibly awkward knowing someone heard your secret conversation with Taylor Swift about which potato chips are the best and why. I don't think they ever look at you the same again.

Being caught on your kitchen midnight raid routine

First of all, before realising it's your family you think it's a ghost from the 1800s trying to possess you. Secondly, it's horribly awkward to face them with a Reese's peanut butter cup in your mouth. Makes for one INTERESTING night.

These situations, which may seem awkward at the time, will probably lead to a running inside joke which you will laugh about at pretty much every family gathering (BELIEVE ME, I KNOW) and bring your family members closer together.

If nothing else, at least you know that if you ever end up being a stand-up comedian (it's a possibility ... just saying) or thrown on stage during any gathering (which is also HORRIBLY AWKWARD), you'll have the perfect stories to tell, and I bet your family will be in the audience, laughing and cheering you on.





The Anomaly

Himarsha Mulchandani

Monday, 13:16:00 IST, The Manuscript

The long-awaited customer is finally here.

She'll ask for a cold brew coffee.

I'll introduce myself as Laksh, hand her the bill and cheerily say, "Have a great day," even though I feel like my heart has sunken into my feet--because that's how I was written.

That's how I'm supposed to live my life--the same day repeated over and over again, living in between the pages of a manuscript, handing out coffee orders to the protagonist who had a terrible day, and saying the same line to her: "Have a great day."

Funny how a life can be limited to a two-dimensional page and four empty words.



Tuesday, 13:15:57 IST, The Manuscript

I ready the cold brew coffee. The protagonist, Rashi, will enter in about four seconds with bloodshot eyes.

Three.

Two.

One.

I stare blankly at the door. It doesn't open. She doesn't come.

Instead, a dashing young man dressed in black enters with a mischievous grin, as a gust of hot summer air hits the air-conditioned bistro.

What's happening?

He struts towards me and says, "I'd like a Masala Sandwich and a Hazelnut Frappe, please."

"This isn't supposed to happen," I mumble incoherently.

"Excuse me?"

"Who are you? You're not supposed to be here." I take a step back.

"Uh ... this is a bistro, and I believe that anyone can enter here?"

"NO! WHERE'S THE PROTAGONIST? WHERE'S RASHI?" I'm freaking out at this point--anything out of schedule could mean a very, very bad thing.

The man pretends to think hard. "You mean the one that cries about everything?"

"YES."

"Oh, don't worry she only broke a leg or two. She'll be fine in a couple of months."

I unplug the coffee maker and lift it in my hands, preparing to throw it at the intruder's smug face, Rapunzel-style.

"WHO ARE YOU?" I scream.

He playfully smiles and flicks his hair back, "Why, of course, I'm The Anomaly."



Story

Tuesday, 13:30:00 IST, The Manuscript

"So what you're saying is that our author--the one who fabricated this whole reality from scratch--has abandoned the manuscript?"

"Odhg aawt fhm zhe sughoshusnep," says The Anomaly, while trying to gulp down an entire sandwich.

I stare at him, disgusted. "Speak or eat, idiot, one thing at a time."

"Can't help if I'm hungry," he mumbles. "What I mean is, I'm a part of the author's subconsciousness. I'm not permanent--just a fluid thought, floating in manuscript-limbo. Which means, I have the liberty to do anything I want." He winks at me.

"Okay." I shrug. "Get lost then, why should I care? Also, this whole meal costs money, which I hope you have."

The Anomaly drops his sandwich in mid-bite and stares at me incredulously, shakes his head and laughs. "You've got to be kidding me." Before I can stop him, he grabs my hand, drags me out of my café into a world I have never seen before and pushes me on to the sidewalk. "Look around you, dammit! The world as you know it is changing and all you want is money?" The Anomaly screams.

My own breath is all I can hear while I float in a black pool of anxiety.

Because in the middle of the road, is a pale white void--a segment of fiction blasted into oblivion.

"No, no, no, no," I mumble and slide down on to the ground, hoping to find anything solid, anything real that could hold me up.

The Anomaly gingerly settles down beside me. "I get why you didn't bother to go out and see our city, Laksh. But now is your chance. Do you want to live? Show the people out there that we're worth reading? Show the idiot of an author that what she's writing is not crap?"

"I don't want to agree with you. You're too annoying," I mutter.

He chuckles softly, gets up and offers me his hand. "You'll get used to it. Now, we'll need a motorcycle; it's time to get out of here."



Tuesday, 16:31 IST, The Real World

Skye has been working on her novel the entire day.

Writing.

Deleting.

Re-writing.

Editing.

Then deleting the entire thing again.



"This is no use," she snarls, draining her entire cup of espresso in one, aggressive gulp.
"I'm not doing this anymore."

As soon as she's about to close her laptop, her gaze meets something in its bluish haze that she certainly does not remember writing.

Rashi had broke leg. Hand, too. Bad condition in Sandwich Hospital. Now, it were Anomaly's turn to conquer the narrative. Pardon, Laksh too would narrate – I mean, write own story.

Hence, Laksh + Anomaly + Idiot Skye – Cry-baby Rashi = **BESTSELLER NOVEL!!!!**

PS: Skye, if it weren't for you, we wouldn't be alive.

Don't give up on us.

Don't give up on yourself.

And don't you dare give up on me – admit it, I'm a pretty good idea.

Bye!

Story

"I think I've had too much coffee," Skye mumbles, and dozes off on her desk.



Tuesday, 16:34: 00 IST, The Manuscript

"WHAT DID YOU BROADCAST INTO THE REAL WORLD, YOU NEANDERTHAL!" I shake the Anomaly's shoulders vigorously.

"IT WAS NOT MY FAULT, OKAY? YOU KEPT INTERRUPTING THE BROADCAST WITH YOUR IMMATURE QUESTIONS! THE GRAMMAR WAS ABSOLUTELY. NOT. MY. FAULT," The Anomaly yells in return.

I let out a huge sigh.

A rainbow waterfall gushes playfully down the granite rocks in the distance. The outskirts of the jade-green forest rustle in the breeze.

"Who knew there was all of ... this," I loosely motion at everything around me, "outside of the city?"

"You just forgot to look in the places that mattered most." The Anomaly shrugs.

A moment of silence ensues as I sink to the ground and absent-mindedly pluck out grass from beneath me. With a jerk, I spring to my feet.

"Wait a second – you said, 'places that mattered the most', right?"

"Yeah?"

"When we were coming here, almost every place had a pale-white void adorning it. But this place, it's different. Serene. Almost like, Skye has forgotten about it."



"Or maybe, doesn't want it gone; like the rest of the city."

"Exactly. And you can broadcast your thoughts to Skye, change the course of the story, like breaking Rashi's leg--"

"Cut me some slack, she was irritating," The Anomaly mumbles.

"Which means you can broadcast clear images into Skye's manuscript too?"

"I could try. But what are you trying to do?"

"I'm trying to save our damn city, what else?" I huff.



Wednesday, 00:00:00 IST, The Real World

Skye wakes up with a start.

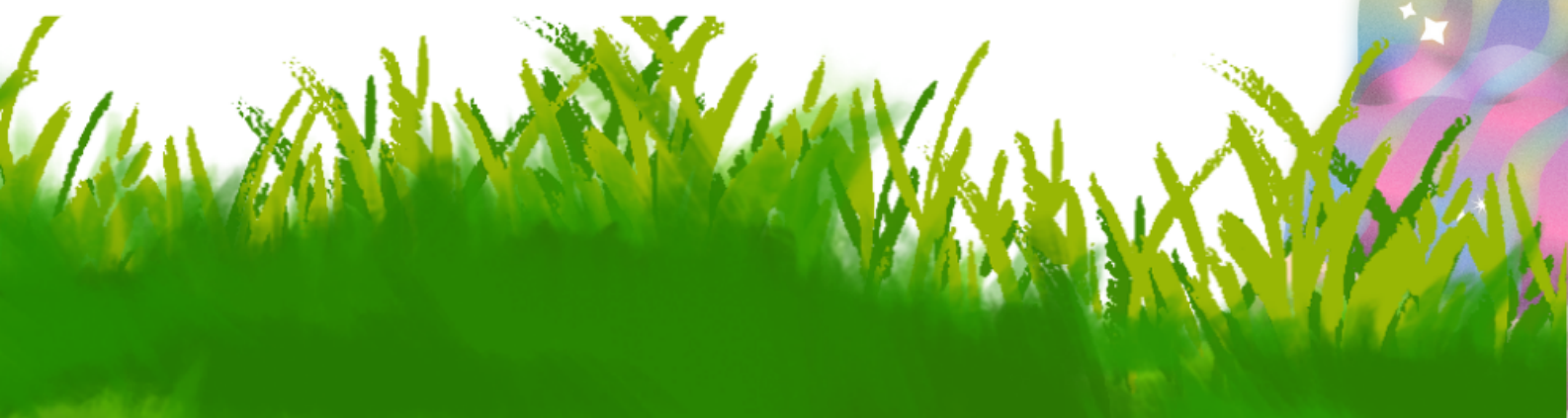
She had a dream about rainbow waterfalls, weird anomalies and lush forests.

One of her averagely normal days, at best.

But her laptop has better plans.

Picture after picture, illustrations of the best kind, display on her screen, flashing at an alarmingly fast rate.

Blue lagoons, melting clocks, the café's employee Laksh saving the city by unleashing a tornado of memories from Skye's childhood, another character; the one she'd been thinking about adding in the story, cruising along with Rashi, flying atop dragons, and in the end, a picture of her signing a copy of her published book.



Story



In a moment, they're gone, fizzling out of reality, leaving a spark of wonder in Skye's imagination. Maybe this wasn't so hopeless after all, she thinks.

Slowly, the sun starts to rise, and so does Skye.



Wednesday, 00:15:00 IST, The Manuscript

The Anomaly is lying face-down in the grass, exhausted.

I hesitantly say, "That was actually one hell of a broadcast you pulled off."

He groans in response.

"Also, I can't keep calling you The Anomaly, it's a bit of a mouthful."

"Was that a question or a statement?" He rolls around to face me.

"A statement. How about 'Siddhant'?"

The Anomaly snorts. "You do know that means the exact opposite for what I stand for? You're practically naming chaos, 'rules and principles'."

"Which technically, is chaos in itself."

He looks at me carefully and then goes back to his thoughts. And just when I think he's fallen asleep, he says, "I like it. I like Siddhant."



Wednesday, 05:31:00 IST, The Manuscript

The sun hits my eyes as I wake up with a huge yawn.

And beside me, instead of Siddhant, is a void of white.

Mediocrity in place of magic.

What have you done, Skye?

**Wednesday, 06:00:00 IST, The Manuscript**

I park the motorcycle outside the café and settle behind the counter.

I hope to find familiarity in my original place, but all I find is a longing for the life I had just lived.

And all I can do now is wait in this forsaken abiditory of mine.

**The Next Monday, 13:16:00 IST, The Manuscript**

I feel like I'm living in a dream.

Because at the exact time Rashi is supposed to walk in, Siddhant does.

Smiles his roguish smile and says, "I'd like a Masala Sandwich and a Hazelnut Frappe, please."

**Two Years Later, 13: 16:00 IST, The Real World**

Skye takes a deep breath as she types the words, 'The End'.

Hence, Laksh + Anomaly + Idiot Skye – Cry-baby Rashi = BESTSELLER NOVEL!!!!

This equation had really worked out after all.

Five School Subjects that Should Exist

Kabir Srinivasan

Sleeping

In schools, people are not taught the importance of sleep. Sleep affects many things: energy, concentration, memory and health. In these lessons, people should be taught practical and theory.

Wildlife Survival

This is an important life skill that can be used if you go to the forest to get away from the busy city. The things you should learn in a subject like this would be lighting fires, making hammocks out of vines and foraging for food and water.

Playing Pranks

Playing pranks is not taught in any school in the world. I think it could be like another recess. This lesson will make life better at home for kids (not adults).

Dog Walking

Dog walking as a subject would help if you have a dog at home or really want to get one (everyone should get a dog). It is also very helpful if you are feeling lazy and do not want to walk the dog so one of your school friends can do it for you.

Making Excuses

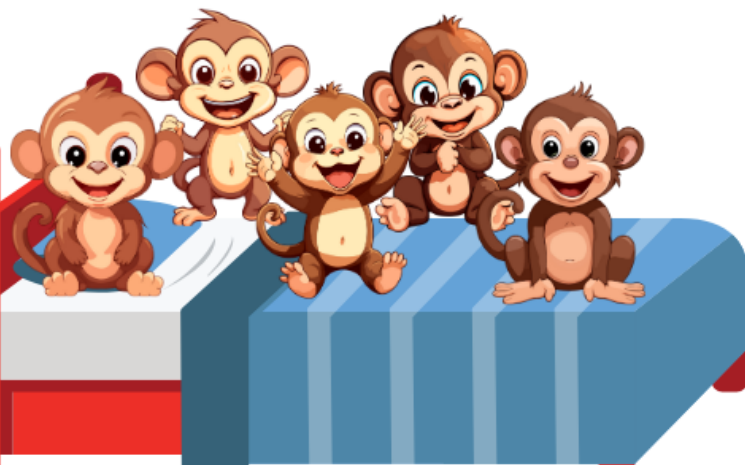
There should definitely be a subject on making excuses as it is a necessary life skill for kids. We need education on excuses so we can avoid doing things like chores, homework and more. It is compulsory as not in a trillion years will a parent teach you this.

Fun with Nursery Rhymes

Five Little Monkeys

Devangshi Duttagupta

Five little monkeys
Fighting in their room,
Someone got stabbed,
And had to face his doom.
The others hid the body,
But Mother found the dead,
And soon there were none,
Jumping on the bed.



Humpty Dumpty

janvi and Atharva

Humpty Dumpty
was laid by a goose.
His momma had realised
his shell was quite loose.
Often, she warned him--
'Be careful, don't fall!'
Then why on earth was he
sat on a wall?

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

This was a fun exercise where we took one line of a nursery rhyme, split it into two parts, and wrote a few lines in between, letting the two parts of the first line of the original rhyme begin and end the new one.



Murder, Thievery and Adventure

Ronikaa Vijan

I never knew a real-life murder could be so horrifying. If you are wondering, yes, I have seen a murder happen in my boarding school and it was ... creepy. Of course, though, my bestie Anya wasn't scared it all. She was rather inspired to investigate this case. You see, Anya wants to be a private detective when she grows up and run her detective agency called 'Super Sleuths' with me. Although I used to disagree with this idea before, I now like it. It all started on a fine evening ...

I was snuggled up in a chair on the school ground, enjoying the beautiful sunset while eating Mumbai's famous misal pav.

While Anya was busy repeating, "How silly! Of course it's Annie Wilson!" while reading **Gaudy Night** by Dorothy L. Sayers. This is the type of evening I love. No one's there to disturb us, and me and Anya can happily enjoy the evening in peace. I love studying at Greenville Boarding School for Girls; it's always so much fun.

Suddenly, something ruined my happy thoughts and we heard a loud shriek. And that was the start of some very horrible and unfortunate events ...

We ran to the gym (where the shriek had come from) and saw Ms Kavya, our PE teacher, sitting on a chair and taking deep breaths.

"Ms Kavya, what's the matter?" Anya asked.

"My medal! My most prized possession has been stolen! What do I do?" Ms Kavya wailed. Just then, our headmistress, Miss Malini walked in and took charge.

"Anya and Anushka, please return to your dorms," she said sternly.

We nodded and obediently walked away. But while walking back to our dorms, Anya nudged me and smiled. From the look on her face, I knew it was going to be the Super Sleuths Society's first case.



I was happily dreaming about being in a chocolate world that night when Anya woke me up.

"Psst! Sleepyhead, wake up!"

I yawned and rubbed my eyes. I am a heavy sleeper. I can't afford to be woken up like this or I am grumpy for the rest of the day. "Whaaaat the madder?" I asked, yawning.

Anya slapped her forehead and said, "Watson! It's the perfect time for a detective society meeting! Come on, grab a notebook."

I pulled out a brand-new green notebook that Anya had gotten for me for my birthday last year and opened up to the first page. I reached out for my pencil pouch but Anya just pulled a pen from her ear and handed it to me.

"Let's start by making a suspect list. Make one," she said. I wrote down the list of people I had seen at the crime scene and passed it to her. "This should have motives and some notes as well. We'll have to investigate a lot tomorrow, Watson. We also have to take full advantage of the fact that most of the students and teachers are at their homes for the Diwali break. Okay?"

I nodded.



Story



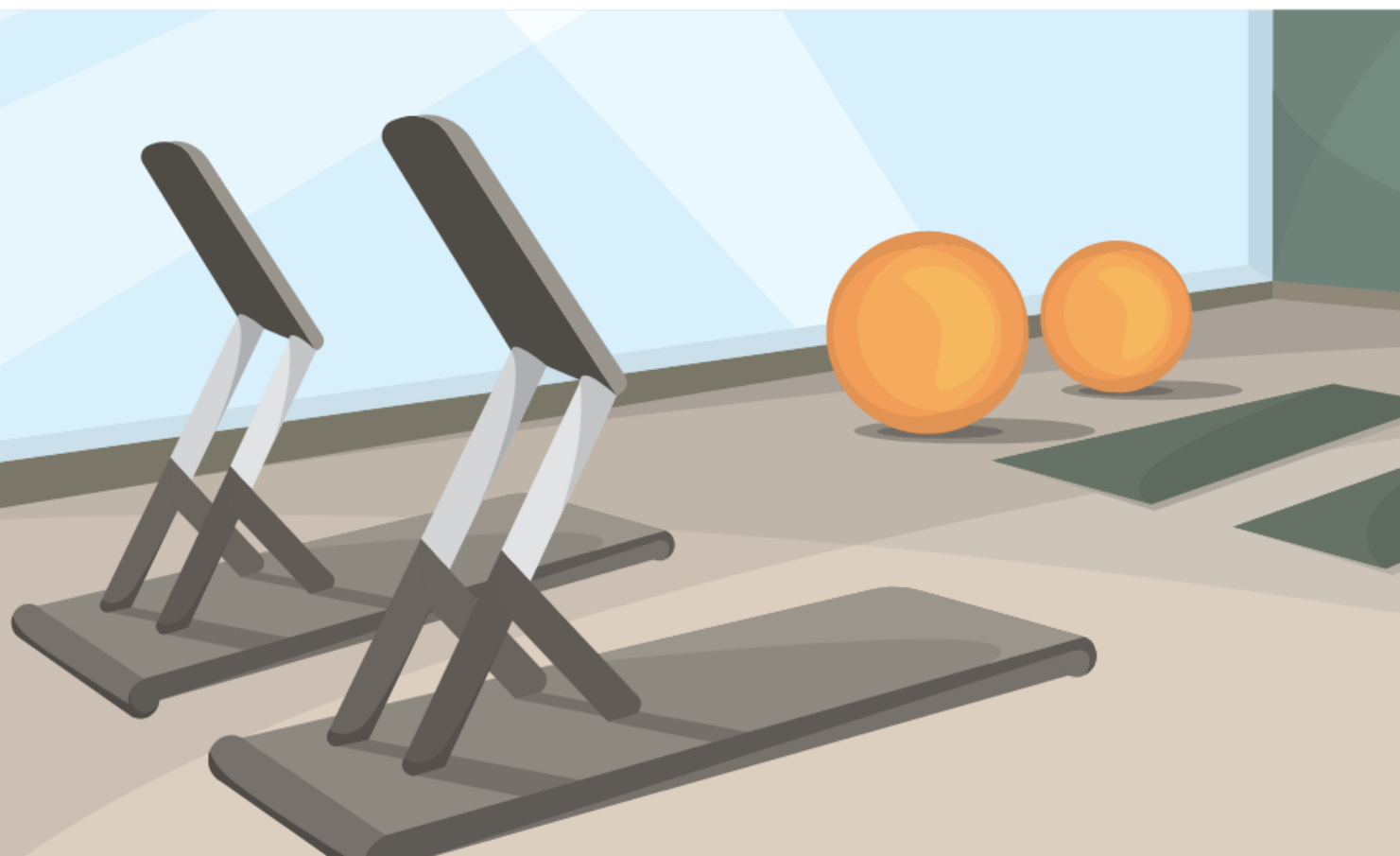
The next morning, I woke up to see Anya sitting in her bed, reading **And Then There Were None** again. But she wasn't reading. She was just flicking through the pages. That (if you know Anya like I do) meant she was thinking. Then, on her own, she snapped out of her thoughts, looked at me, and said, "Morning, Watson! Ready for a full day of investigating?"

I smiled and nodded. We got dressed into our normal clothes (we were allowed to during the holidays) and walked to the cafeteria for breakfast.

Anya chose her regular and favourite breakfast, parathas with makhan and some freshly squeezed orange juice, whereas I took some hot idlis with sambar (which was our cook's specialty, though Anya refused to taste it) and chutney. We sat down at a table at one end, where no would notice us.

"We'll start by interrogating Ms Kavya. Maybe she saw something important," Anya said. She gulped down her juice and threw the paper plate in the dustbin. I was still eating. Anya sighed, ate my last idli and threw my plate in the dustbin as well. We then went to the gym, where Ms Kavya was sitting. She was crying but as she saw us entering, she sniffed and wiped his tears.

"It's all right. We'll find your medal soon," Anya said, and patted her on her shoulder. Then, she turned towards me and mouthed, 'Ask her!'



"Um ... Ms Kavya, could you tell us if you saw anything suspicious while entering the gym last evening?" I asked.

"I don't want to talk to anyone, darlings," she replied and walked out, but we heard her wailing as soon as she left.

"Let's investigate the crime scene while we're at it," Anya said.

We looked through the entire gym. And there, lying near the awards shelf was a lipstick. I signalled to Anya to come and she took out a glove from her pocket and picked up the lipstick.

"Evidence! Do you have a pouch?" Anya asked me.

I dug through my purse and found a zip-lock bag big enough to fit the lipstick. After that, we headed towards our dorm.

"I've seen this lipstick somewhere, but where?" I repeated to myself.

It was a nude shade and it looked quite expensive. Anya grinned and went outside. There, she found a shrimp walking in the corridor. You see, all the shrimps (first graders) were in awe of Anya as she was just so ... perfect. But Anya was nice to them just to get gossip out of them.



Story

"Excuse me, but I wanted to ask if you remember any of the teachers wearing a nude coloured lipstick. I want to buy one for my mum and I love the shade that I saw one of the teachers wearing, but I don't remember who it was! Do you?" she asked.

The first grader was quite taken aback to be speaking with "The Anya Kaur" but after she snapped out of her world, she replied sweetly, "Uh ... yes. Miss Elena wears a beautiful nude shade, though she was frantically searching for it this morning."

Anya said 'thank you' and walked back to our dorm.

"Miss Elena, eh? Well, that was easy. We'll give the lipstick to Miss Malini tomorrow and tell her that we found it in the gym. After that, Miss Elena will have to turn in the medal," I said, happily. But Anya was still frowning.

"Something about this isn't right. It's just too easy," said Anya.

I shrugged my shoulders, and we were about to walk back to the corridor when we heard a loud shriek again.

The afternoon sunlight fell on my face as we both ran to see where the shriek had come from. "Miss Elena's room?" Anya frowned. We went inside to find Miss Elena, dead.

One look at the dead body and a chill ran down my spine, whereas Anya looked more eager than ever to investigate the case. Miss Elena was lying on the floor, pale. Anya leaned closer to me and said, "She's been strangled; look at her neck." I saw the marks on her neck and knew that as always, Anya was right.



That night, we sneaked out to investigate the crime scene, which was being guarded by two hefty guards, who were fast asleep. We looked around. I found nothing, but Anya found a small hairclip lying just where the body had been that afternoon. She suddenly dashed back to our dorm and I, cluelessly, followed her.



She took my face powder from the bathroom, tape from her stationary pouch, a paint brush and some dark paper. Anya used her homemade fingerprint kit to see the fingerprint on the clip.





"Watson, give me your English book and use a glove to give it to me," said Anya.

I didn't have a glove so I used the microfibre cloth that I use to clean my specs to pass it to her. She took the fingerprints on my English book and then matched them.

"Aha! I was right, Watson. It's Miss Sanvi! Remember, this evening, she returned your notebook and thankfully, you didn't touch it because she left it on your bunk bed? Well, I put all these things together and here's what I think. Last week, some shrimps had heard from the Older Girls that Miss Sanvi was heavily in debt and was doing odd part-time jobs to earn money. So, when I identified her clip near the dead body, I thought that she must have stolen the medal and planned to frame Miss Elena, but when she realised that Miss Elena was about to turn her in, she killed her!"

Just then, I heard someone clapping. I turned around; it was Miss Sanvi. "Oh my gosh! I am so scared!" she said, sarcastically. "Miss Sherlock Holmes, congratulations on solving the case! Everything you said is correct, but now that you know, I need to get rid of you. I would have left you, Kapoor"--she turned towards me--"but, alas, your stupid friend told you everything. Now, the headline tomorrow will be, 'BREAKING NEWS: Three murders in Mumbai's Greenville Boarding School For Girls'. Sounds nice, doesn't it? Oh well, now who wants to go first?"

Unfortunately, for her, Anya was faster. She kicked the knife, which went up in the air and I, by chance, caught it. Then, she swiftly climbed on Miss Sanvi's shoulder and pinned her down. "Watson, rope, in my tuck box, quick," Anya called. I passed her the rope and she tied Miss Sanvi up.

Minutes later, we were standing in the corridor and Matron was dragging Miss Sanvi away to hand over to the police.

"I am proud of you girls for solving this case but this has to remain between us. I don't want to hear any more of your detecting adventures in this school. Understood?" Miss Malini told us. We beamed at each other. Anya squeezed my hand and I squeezed back. We were not just members of the Super Sleuths Society, we were best friends, and we both knew that very well.

Memes



ME WHEN I
HAVE TO MISS
VARSHA
MA'AM'S CLASS.



ME WHEN I
HAVE TO MISS
SCHOOL.

Ronikaa Vijan



ME WHEN VARSHA
MA'AM IS ABOUT
TO ANNOUNCE
WHAT WE'RE GOING
TO DO TODAY.



ME WHEN VARSHA
MA'AM SAYS IT'S
STORY WRITING.

Ronikaa Vijan

ME WHEN SOMEONE BEATS ME TO THE
LAST COPY OF THE NEW BOOK IN A
BOOKSTORE.



Ronikaa Vijan



Me seeing so
many pending
assignments on
the forum



My mind procrastinating
and giving me temporary
pleasure

Atharva Rishi Khemka



ME WHEN I HAVE
TO DO SCHOOL
HOMEWORK.



ME WHEN I HAVE
TO DO VARSHA
MA'AM'S
HOMEWORK.

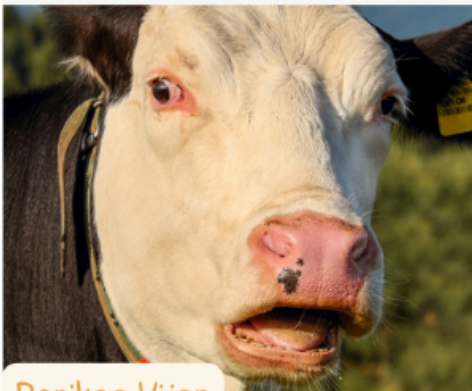
Ruhaan Garg

Me when I accidentally click submit
without actually finishing my work:



Devangshi Duttagupta

ME WHEN I SEE THAT MY BOOK MAIL
HAS BEEN DELAYED BY 2 WEEKS.



Ronikaa Vijan



Me when I have to read
three pages to complete my
history coursebook.



Also me when I pull an all-
nighter completing a 1000-
page novel.

Himarsha Mulchandani

me staring at the forum waiting for
someone to give me feedback on
the piece i posted 7 seconds ago



janvi barman

Sijo



Winter

Ahana Badani

It is cold. It is winter. Snowflakes dance about. The trees are bare.
Jackets out. Snowballs are made. Snow-boots go crunch. We all snow fight.
The bright sun. Flowers bloom. Birds start chirping. Jackets away!

The Principal's Office

Anaaya Rathi

Scared to death, I walk to the principal's room, heart beating fast.
Trembling in fear, my hands shake as I enter the compact office
Her face breaks into a warm smile, "Congrats, you ranked first in class."

Scuba Diving

Kabir Srinivasan

the freezing water pierces into my fingers and toes
a tingling sensation swirls inside my shivering body
under the surface, a sky of live rainbows rises from the blue.





The Cursed Cup

Himarsha Mulchandani

The Victorian Era teacup stared back at me from the tabletop.

It was the summer of 2003. A well-planned heist was executed in the streets of Mumbai by my ten-year-old self, a heist which included a very preoccupied Mr D'Costa.

Lore had it that this cup was a cursed one. My foolhardy instincts had led me to steal it on account of a dare--but somehow, the uber-rich D'Costa family never noticed a missing cup from their shelf.

Then, things took a turn when I found it snuggled in the storage closet two years after I had moved across the country.

I had lost my job. My cat had died.

It was then when I realised that the cup was responsible for it all. It had ruined my life--I shuddered to think of what more could happen. The only people who had the right to decide its fate were the D'Costas.

And that is precisely why I was standing in front of Mr D'Costa's door in the scorching sun to return the damned cup.

In Mumbai.

After a delayed flight from Kolkata.

So I rang the bell, left the lone cup on the porch, and ran as fast as I could to the refuge of my waiting taxi.

But when I turned back, a familiar receding figure had already taken it in.



Oh no.

The house I was looking for was two streets farther. This one, unfortunately, belonged to the wrong family--the Choudharys.

I was going to have to pull off another robbery.

This was starting to feel like 2003 all over again.



The moon kept watch as dogs barked, people screamed and sirens wailed in the distance.

I ran away, holding the cup in my hands and praying that no one had seen me because what I had down was for Mrs Choudhary's own good--I couldn't let someone who was like a mother to me get harmed by this cursed thing.

Then, I waited for the sun to rise.



I made a few calls and got in touch with the eldest daughter of the D'Costa family. I hoped she remembered me enough to not make this awkward.

Jenny D'Costa's voice crackled on the phone, "Hello?"

"Hey, it's Aditya, remember me?"

She laughed, "Do you mean the kid who had boldly accepted a dare to steal our Victorian cup? That too ages ago?"

If she knew, then why on earth didn't she ever take it back?



Story

"Y-yes?" I stuttered. "How did you know that? Is it true that it was cursed?"

She laughed even harder at that, "Rumours like that used to spread like wildfire in our colony, Aditya. Why on earth would you believe it was cursed?"

"I lost my damn job because of it, that's why," I said indignantly.

"Well, maybe the cup's not to blame. Because we still have the real cup intact with us. We couldn't let that precious a cup keep lying around in the open, could we?"

It took a moment for me to digest that.

Before I could say anything more, Jenny chuckled and the line went dead.



I did what I longed to do the moment I had laid eyes on the Victorian beauty.

I threw that nincompoop of a cup with such force that it smashed on the gravestone of the dead person who had made me travel back and forth across India.

The so-called 'million-dollar' cup Rested in Pieces all around Mr D'Costa's grave as I walked back to my taxi.

"Bhaiya, Mumbai airport please."





Sijo

chilled

janvi barman

i wake up. chills down my spine. slowly freezing. death feels so near.
eyes squeeze shut. hands become fists. every bone aches. i can do this.
the bed creaks. i roll over. reaching out, i switch the aircon off.

Krieg (War)

Aabha Sardesai

Gunshots, bullets, all across Germany, struggle and strife,
Fire blazing around me, sweat beads line my brow, I'm shaken.
Mum's faint call reaches my ears. I look up from the book, somber.

War and Peace

Aarav Khandelia

The skies turn dark, an army plane drops hundreds of bombs
Gun shots fill the sky with despair, blood leaks to the battlefield
A treaty is signed, everybody goes on with their lives again



Five Outfit Ideas for When You Have Nothing to Wear

Devangshi Duttagupta

Feeling like you have nothing to wear can be a common dilemma, but often, it's more about rediscovering the potential of your existing wardrobe. Here are five outfit ideas to inspire you when you're facing the "nothing to wear" conundrum.



The Classic White Shirt and Jeans Combo

Grab your favourite well-fitted white shirt and pair it with your go-to jeans. Roll up the sleeves for a relaxed vibe and add a statement belt or a pair of stylish sneakers. This timeless combination is effortlessly chic and suits various occasions.

Monochromatic Magic

Choose one colour and build an outfit around it. This can be a sophisticated all-black ensemble or a vibrant monochromatic look. By sticking to one colour, you create a cohesive and stylish outfit that's easy to put together.



Layered Comfort with a Sweater and Leggings

Opt for a cosy oversized sweater and pair it with leggings or jeggings. Add ankle boots or sneakers for a casual look. You can accessorize with a chunky scarf or statement earrings for added flair. This outfit is both comfortable and stylish.



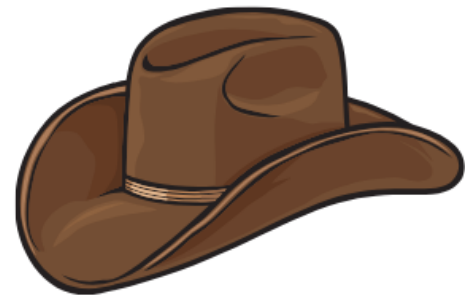
The Denim Jacket Upgrade

Grab a classic denim jacket and layer it over a simple T-shirt or a casual dress. Pair it with your favourite sneakers or ankle boots. The denim jacket adds a touch of cool to any outfit and can easily elevate your overall look.



Midi Skirt and Graphic Tee Combo

Combine a midi skirt, which can be flowy or fitted depending on your preference, with a fun graphic tee. Tuck in the tee and add a belt to define your waist. Complete the look with flats, sandals, or ankle boots. This mix of casual and chic elements is both trendy and comfortable.



Remember, accessorising plays a significant role in transforming any outfit. Don't hesitate to experiment with scarves, hats, belts, and jewellery to add your personal touch and revitalise your wardrobe. Sometimes, it's not about having new clothes but about rediscovering the potential of what you already own.



Lost!

Kabir Srinivasan

One sunny morning, a man called Michael started screaming that his darling baby, Tom, was lost.

Michael had looked everywhere. He had gone to the bathroom and the kitchen and the backyard. He had even gone to his neighbour's house to check. When he couldn't find him anywhere, he bolted to their favourite spots: the beach, the park and the terrace. The beach was packed. It was a Saturday morning and there were people playing with

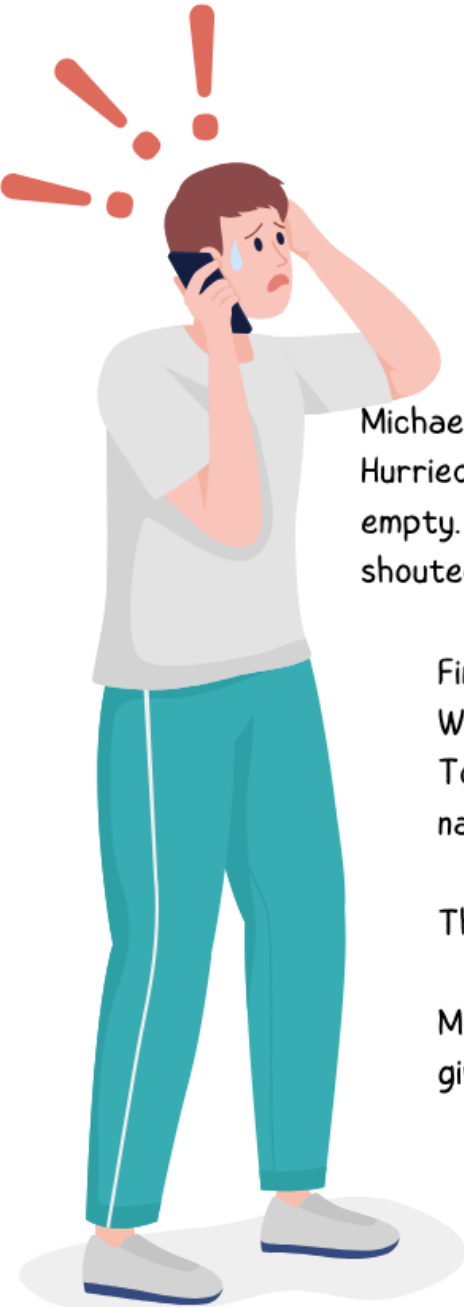
frisbees, kids making sand-castles and grown-ups cycling. Michael looked under the beach umbrellas, he searched in the beach shack and even scanned the children's play area. Frustrated, he trudged through the meandering path towards the park. Michael used to go to the park quite often with Tom. He searched on the rope bridge, underneath the rope bridge, in the bushes which lurked like panthers waiting to pounce, and even after all that, Michael could not find him. Still adamant,

Michael rushed out of the park and took the passage back to his house. Hurriedly, he climbed up the stairs to the terrace and yet, the terrace lay empty. Heartbroken, Michael sat down with his head in his hands. He shouted in frustration, "I have no idea what to do now!"

Finally, seeing no other alternative, he dialled the police on his phone. When they arrived at his house, Michael started describing his little Tom: brown eyes, black hair and about three feet tall. He also narrated how he had frantically searched everywhere.

The police asked, "Where did you last see each other?"

Michael replied that he had last seen him yesterday when he had given him dinner.





The inspector, John, requested a photo. Michael instantly whipped out his phone. He went through his photo album and showed the inspector one of his favourite pictures. The inspector looked at the photo, puzzled. He asked, "Why are you showing me a photograph of yourself?"

Michael snatched the phone, zooming into the bottom right corner of the picture and said to John, "This is who is missing."

John was stunned! He had just realised that the photo was of a black and white, tiny border collie! "Oh! Why don't you come to the station so you can speak to the officers who handle missing animal cases?"

Michael grabbed his car keys and rushed to the garage and when he opened the door, lo and behold, there sat Tom, his beloved dog grinning like someone who had just played a prank which was hilariously successful.



Kabir Srinivasan

Me when I realise a book has no cliffhangers

Five Things You Wouldn't Expect Humans to Do (But They Should)

Vivaan Chaudhry

Humans are unpredictable creatures. The reason I call us 'creatures' is because to all other organisms (aliens, insects, animals, etc.), we are creatures. We do things such as teach children about things that they shouldn't do, which teachers do themselves. My words to people like this are: LEAD BY ***** EXAMPLE! Sorry for the outburst but this is the most annoying thing in all the multiverse. So without further ado, I present to you: five things you wouldn't expect humans to do (but they should).

Make water free

We need water to survive and it is scarce. However, to most people this is another way of cashing in. I wish we would learn something and not be the greedy creatures we are. Hey, if anyone of you comes across a genie please wish for this.

Stop all wars

No offence, but if I have to explain why this should become a reality--
USE COMMON KNOWLEDGE. War is a source of violence and death. 'I say we all should never have a war again and all convert to Buddhism' --my history teacher's words. I agree and if Russia, Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, etc. are seeing this--LISTEN TO MY TEACHER'S WORDS! Unlike all of you people, my teacher is smart.

Destroy the existence of money

This would actually be a good thing. If money didn't exist then the barter system would come back, which basically means trading. We could trade Pokémon cards for iPhones. However, we are greedy, and no one would agree to this so I guess we have to suffer. Unless I buy an island and start my own country ...



Stop deforestation

Despite the lectures heard in school about the fact that no one should cut down trees no one will ever stop. Even our teachers love to torture us with exams and therefore support deforestation. I'm telling you now, if aliens ever try to hold us captive, I will support them. PLEASE, ALIENS, HELP US!



Use nature as our power source

Now everyone knows coal is our PowerSource and it's also the source of pollution. We have made many natural sources of power but never use them; I have only one thing to say-- we are stupid.

I hope all of you agree and if you don't, I hope the best for you in life. And for all of you agree, I hope you never die! Unless you want to. Anyway, I'm sure there are so many more topics that could fall under this category. And if any one of you wants to add more-- make your own listicle!

Struggling Awake

Sunandini Sen

Darkness.

Silence.

More darkness.

I whimper, tossing and turning. There seems to be no end to it. The pain. The exhaustion. The quiet.

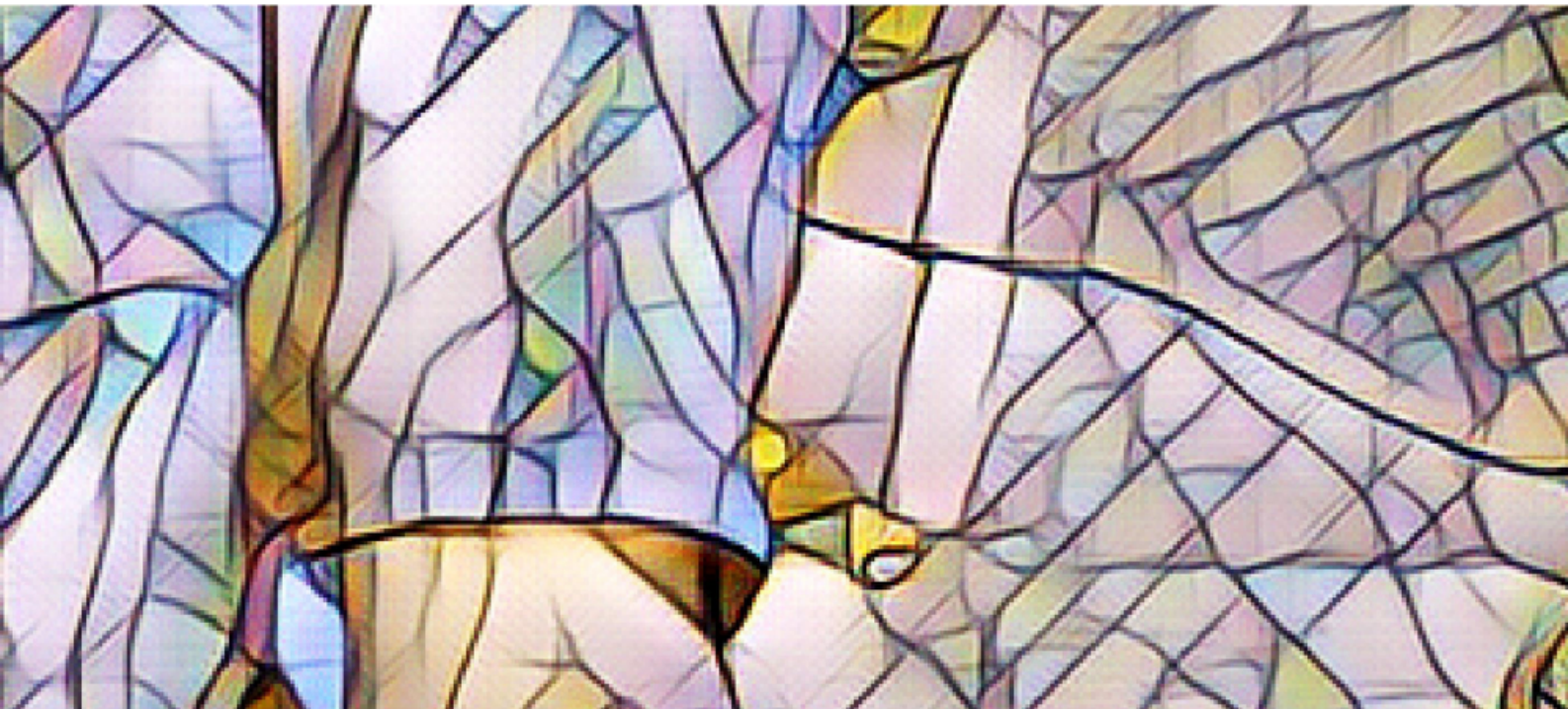
I'm tired of it.

It's ... hard to explain. It's best if I start at the beginning.

Two months ago

I was on my way to football practice. Dad was driving. We were joking in the car, singing along to the radio.

Then, suddenly, all went quiet.



A crash. Screams. And blood, lots of blood.

After what seemed like an eternity, I kind of came back to consciousness. Mind you, I still couldn't open my eyes and see anything. But I knew what was going around me. I know it sounds crazy, but I really could understand everything. I just couldn't interact with the people around me.

Oh, and pain. So much pain. It felt horrible as I was poked and prodded with needles and surgical instruments. Slowly, day by day, I grew numb to the pain. Almost invulnerable, if you look at it in a good light.

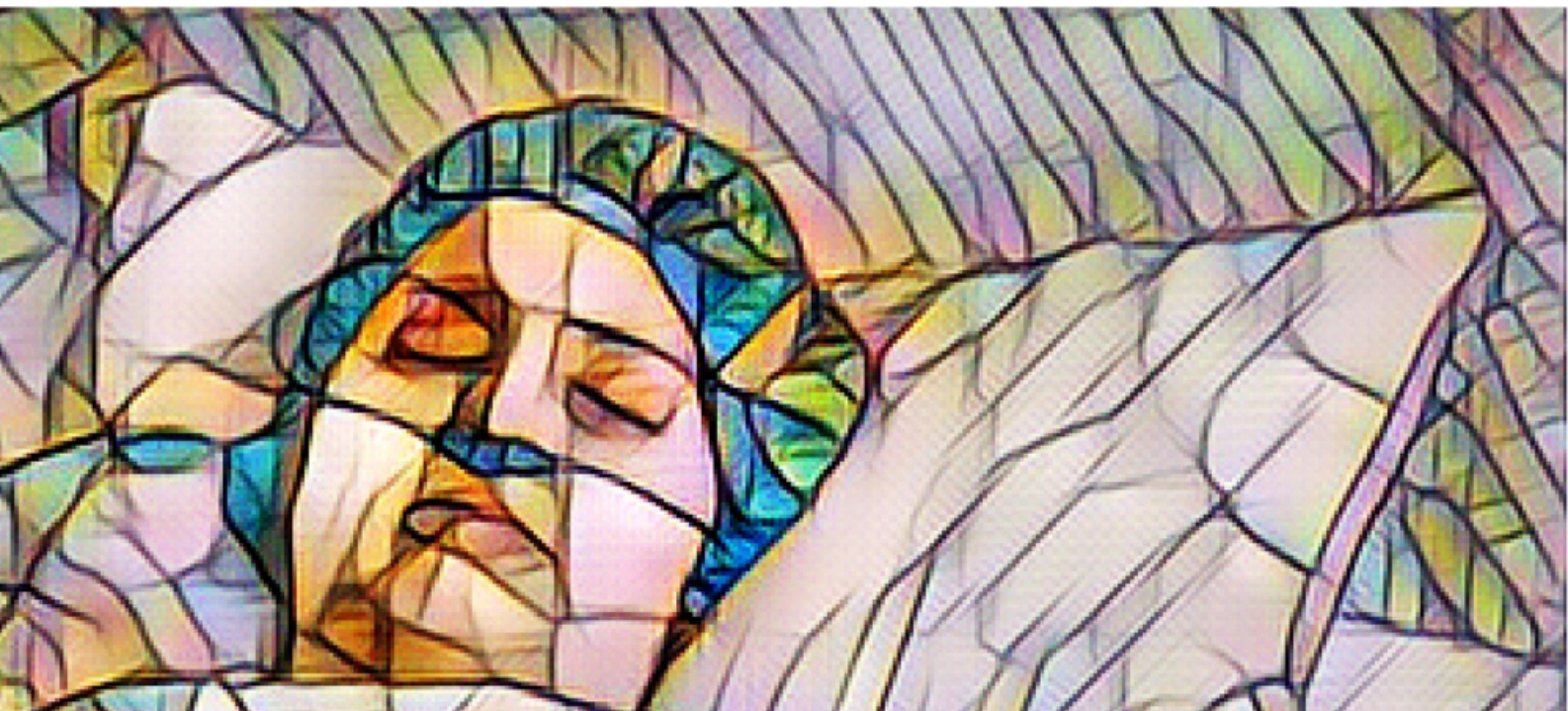
My mother and father would come every day and cry by my bedside. They didn't know how much pain it caused me, just to listen to their hoarse voices, sobbing, knowing there was nothing I could do.

Well, you may ask, haven't you tried waking up?

You think I haven't tried? For days, weeks, months, all I did was try and try. Did anything happen? No. So, I simply gave up and waited, biding my time.

Family members, friends, teachers. Flowers and gifts would be left by my bedside. The smell of orchids, my favourite flowers, would waft over to me every day. I nearly cried at the thought that my friends would remember that.

Even the doctors had given up hope. "Your daughter's physical health is perfectly fine!" they said. "It's just something mental that is hindering her from getting up. And we don't know what it is!"



Story

Every waking minute (ironic, kind of) was the same. I felt like I was stuck in a huge tub of glue, with my brain and consciousness completely intact. I couldn't move. I could just think.

So, I thought.

And I remembered.

The smell of spicy egg curry being cooked by Dad in the kitchen.

The touch of the sunshine on my back as I cycled through the streets.

The taste of instant ramen as I sat behind the sofa along with my sister, giggling.

These simple things. These easy, simple things. Now that I couldn't wake up, they seemed so precious to me, so out of my reach.

Just when I had nearly given up hope, THEY came.

I didn't know who they were or where they came from. But when they came and sat beside my bed, softly touching my palm, I felt a sense of peace and calm. "Hello," they said, gently. "I've heard a lot about you. Will you be my friend?"

Of course, I had no way of replying. So, I felt them squeeze my hand tightly and say, "Well, I take that as a yes." And then, they talked about themselves. They told me that they had two brothers who drove them mad, that they hated sweets (me too!) and loved reading.

At first I was suspicious. What kind of doctor had my parents sent to cure me? A psychologist, perhaps? But how would that even help? As days passed, this question puzzled me more and more.

However, with time, I grew to look forward to their visits. I would never reply, but I felt a connection with the person, like they were a kindred spirit. I would silently lie on the bed, listening intently, while they chatted on about everything under the sun. I didn't feel so lonely anymore.



One day, they brought a book. "Look what I've got!" they excitedly said, placing the book on my hand. I could feel that it was something hard and rough, with pages. While they chatted on about how it was the newest book they were reading, something happened.

I could feel the glue-like feeling melt away from my hands. I reflexively tried to move my fingers and something magical occurred. I felt my pinky finger hesitantly rise and tap the book. They gasped. "Oh my god!"

Excitedly, they got up and asked me to do it again. I obliged and lifted my finger. "This is amazing!" they gushed. "Somehow this book is bringing back your sense of movement!"

I was utterly bewildered. After such a long time, how had I finally got some control over my body back just by touching a book?

"There is something I haven't told you," they confessed, a bit sheepishly. "When you used to volunteer in the library, I was a regular customer. And you were the one who used to always find the perfect book for me. So, when I heard what had happened to you, I came here. I felt so guilty that I had never properly thanked you. And so, I wanted to be your friend."

I tapped my pinky on the book again.

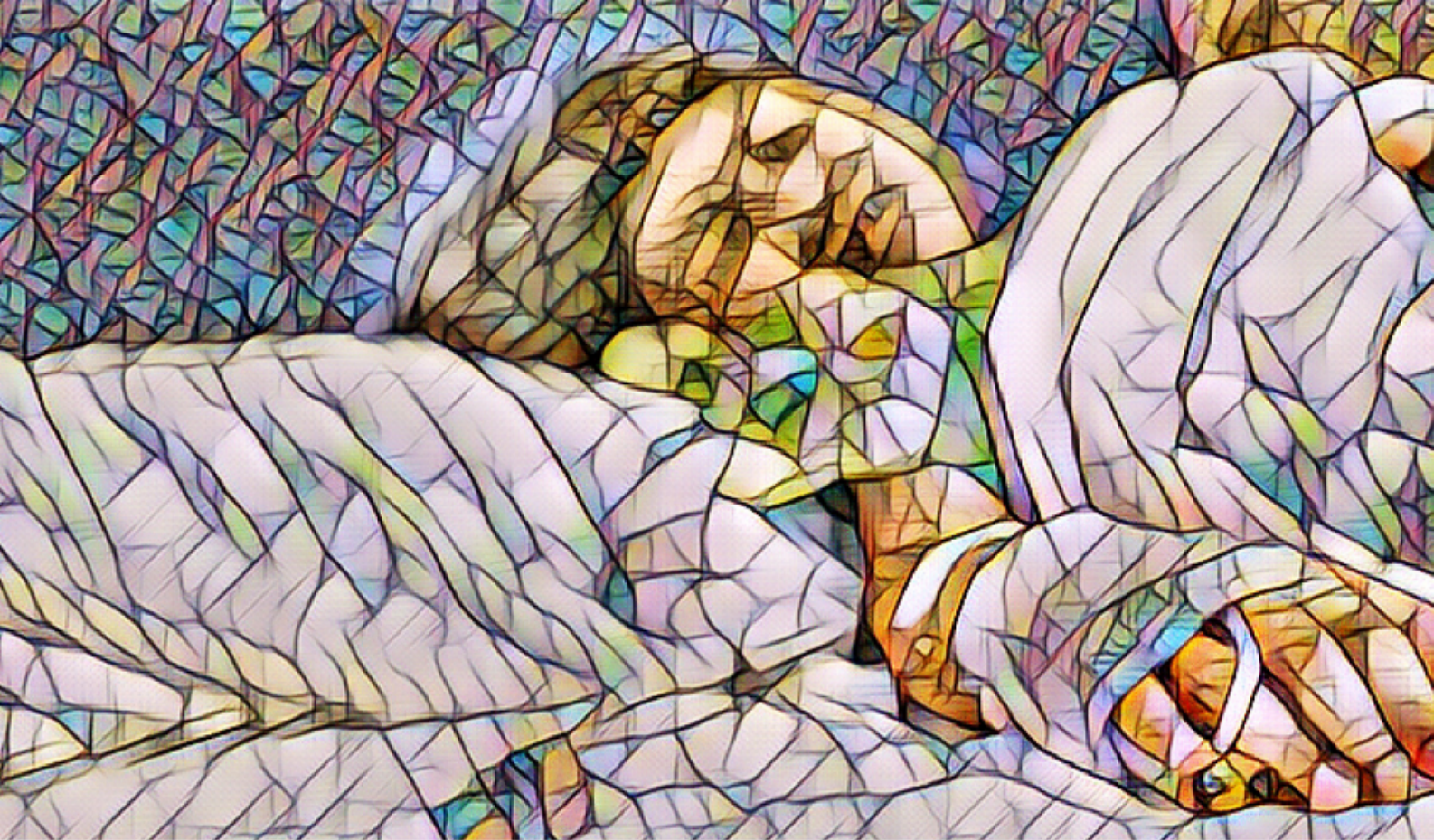
"That means you're listening!" they said, a smile in their voice.



Days pass, and every day, we try to regain some movement over my body.

Finally, the day comes when they tell my parents about it.





I can almost hear the scepticism in my parents' voices as they stand by my bed, waiting. "Come on," they tell me in an encouraging tone. I struggle, I really do, but that feeling of glue enveloping my body comes back again, after so many days, right at this moment. I feel embarrassed that I cannot do it. Tears threaten to prick my eyes.

"You have wasted our time!" Mum starts shouting at them.

"What is this nonsense?" Dad questions them, rudely. "What have you been doing to our daughter?"

"You must leave immediately!" my parents scold them, and I hear the sound of sobbing.

"I-I only wanted to help!" they say.

I can hear my parents escorting them away. Amidst all the shouting and screaming, no one seems to notice the tears coming out of my closed eyes.

Long after they have left the room, my tears evaporate and dry.

In that moment, I take a decision.

Whatever it takes, I will do it.

I WILL wake up.

More Poetry

Spring!

Atharva Rishi Khemka

Spring whispers, colours bloom,
Flowers unfurl, dispelling gloom.
Robins sing with a joyful might,
Leaves unfold, a green delight.

In the gentle breeze, satisfaction flows,
Nature awakening as it steadily grows.
A symphony of life takes flight,
As Spring paints the world in soft light.

Remembering

Anaaya Rathi

Lonely isn't the word for this,
Warmth mixed with the solitude,
Memories rushing through my head
Is this indeed nostalgia?

An inevitable sense of déjà-vu
Cosy feelings of love and gratitude
Moments I won't forget till my death
Is this indeed nostalgia?

What is Summer?

Sunandini Sen

Summer,
Stuffing yourself with ripe, juicy mangoes
Lazing in the cold waters of the pool
Yearning to hear the bells of the kulfi seller
Taking off to cooler climes to beat the heat.

Summer,
The last drop of water drying.
Crops withering.
Burning heat waves.
Blistering heat.

As rain winds announce their arrival,
The heat prepares to leave.
The green leaves gently sway,
Waving the summer goodbye.





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