

Somewhere
OVER THE
Rainbow,
YOU'LL FIND...

SBS MAGAZINE

MAY EDITION

NEW BEGINNINGS





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2. Devi Gopinath
3. Akaisha Aggarwal
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11. Ashmita Jain
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Somewhere Over the Rainbow

by Anaihita A.

You know that feeling when you're standing at the edge of something new and exciting, unsure of the possibilities that lie ahead? Imagine that anticipation, with a splash of colour and the promise of an adventure. That's what 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' symbolises - a hopeful start for a new beginning. Just like a rainbow that appears after a storm, new beginnings emerge after periods of uncertainty, promising brighter days ahead.

A new beginning can be both thrilling and daunting at times. It's like stepping into a world of endless possibilities, where every different colour of the rainbow represents different adventures. Whether it's pursuing a passion, trying something you love, or embracing change, every new start offers a chance to grow, learn, and explore new horizons.

'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' reminds us that new beginnings are like vibrant rainbows - full of promises and possibilities. As you journey through life's colourful spectrum of opportunities, remember to value and cherish each step, and embrace the magic of change. After all, just like Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz*, the most extraordinary adventures often begin with a single step over the rainbow!



Almost

Muskaan Gupta

Jack of all trades
King of none
Friend of many but
True friend, not one

They say the most painful word
in English is 'almost'
and I'm one of those
who has experienced it most

Almost a class topper
Almost a good singer
Almost a great player
Almost an achiever

How horrible the feeling is
only the hurt can tell
you put in effort but
not enough to do well

It's funny how we are compared
yet expected to stand out
to run the same race
but get new ideas to sprout

It's a stage where double standards
and hypocrisy know no bounds
where good enough becomes
not enough
and pressure, tons and pounds



If only I knew what to do
I could actually do, not just plan
but I don't so I'm caught
making and remaking, hoping this
time I can

Since is life been so philosophical
that no question has an answer?
Where money can buy happiness
but happiness is being a dancer?

Even my thoughts have no flow
no head or tail to this poem
reflecting the chaos in my head
which my teacher would surely condemn.

We'll Go to a Place

by Akaisha Aggarwal

we'll go to a place
eons away,
where time ceases
to exist
and
the world seems
riveting.
and
the grass reaches our knees
and
we won't
kick
or scream
and we'll look
for quiet
oh, so rare.
come
and i shall tell you
of the place
where i dwell.





The Wanderer's Rainbow

by Devi Gopinath

A lonely puff, a wispy seed, from a dandelion's head,
He drifted high on a gentle breeze, a wish on a silver thread.
But lost he was, this feathered friend, no meadow green below,
He yearned to fall where colors danced, a place he didn't know.

He wandered far, through meadows wide, beneath the azure sky,
Each step a dance, each breath a song, as time went drifting by.
With every dawn, a new desire, with every dusk, a rest,
In fields of gold and skies of fire, his journey was the quest.

He hailed the wind, a playful gust, "Oh, tell me, if you please,
Where rainbows touch the distant hills, and dreams find sweet release?"
The wind he sighed, a rustling sound, "Follow the sun's first kiss,
Beyond the clouds, where shadows hide, a land of vibrant bliss."

He questioned then the ancient trees, their branches reaching high,
"Have you seen the place of rainbow hues, where wishes learn to fly?"
The wise old oaks, in whispers deep, replied, "Seek where sunlight falls,
Beyond the mist, where secrets sleep, in waterfalls that call."

He drifted on, a curious speck, and met a cloud so white,
"Oh, fluffy cloud, with silver trim, have you seen that wondrous sight?"
The cloud replied, a muffled hum, "Follow the moon's soft gleam,
Beyond the stars, where whispers come, a land not what it seems."

He reached the mountains, tall and grand, their peaks kissed by the dawn,
"Oh, mighty peaks, can you reveal, where rainbows might be born?"
The mountains rumbled, voices deep, "Follow the river's flow,
Beyond the bend, where secrets sleep, a land where dreams can grow."

Disheartened and lost, the little seed, with questions yet to ask,
happened upon a gentle mist, who seemed able for the task.
"Oh, morning mist, so soft and kind," he whispered with a sigh,
"Where can I find a rainbow's touch, where wishes learn to fly?"

The mist embraced him, cool and wise, and spoke in words so true,
"The rainbow's not a distant place, it's waiting just for you.
For wherever you choose to land, and let your journey cease,
The rainbow forms within your heart, a promise brought by peace."

The little seed, with eyes alight, understood the truth at last,
The rainbow wasn't just a place, a dream that held him fast.
It was the hope that filled his core, the journey he'd begun,
A chance to bloom, forevermore, he set off at once.

With every dawn, a new horizon, painted in hues so grand,
He soared above the rolling hills, across the ocean's span.
In every sunset's golden glow, and every moonlit night,
searching for the answer to his quest, in nature's timeless light.

He drifted down, a happy seed, and settled on the breeze,
No longer lost, he found his peace, content among the trees.
For in the mountain's song, soft and low, the rainbow colors gleamed,
A promise whispered, soft and slow, a future brightly dreamed.

He'd take root deep, where sunlight fell, to watch the seasons change,
His journey's end, a happy spell, a story to arrange.
For in his heart, a rainbow bright, forevermore would stay,
A testament to endless light, that guides us on our way.





Haiku

by Mehtab Singh Anand

Five little birds, little,
Hungry like a massive eagle
Small birds, hungry birds

The yellow sketch pen
Like a yellow highlighter
Also, a large pen

It started off nicely,
A hot chocolate latte,
Became cold in an hour.

The Truth

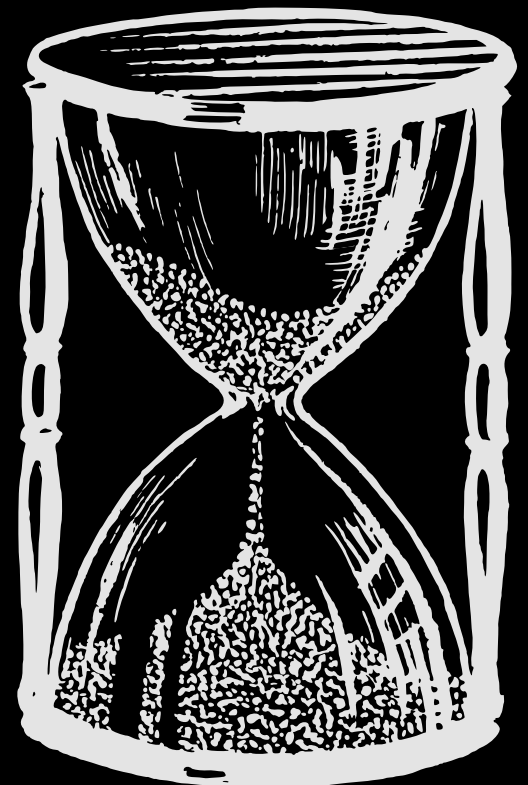
by Manya Attri

There is an 'end' in 'friend',
So the only time we have
Is the time between a hello and a goodbye.

All that begins must end
All that flies will eventually fall
And all that lives shall breathe its last.

The past is gone...
The present is ticking by,
And the future may not exist.

This is the concept of life,
Without the sugar coating, without the lives,
Just the plain, cold, hard truth.



Hell Hath No Fury Like A Woman Scorned

by Aliya Sarkar Verniers

She
Wears a noose for a necklace
A shroud for an evening gown
The colour of war on her lips.

Everything she does is,
A scandal, unacceptable,
But what of that tattered reputation,
Tarnished as her deathly rags?

For high society can escape everything,
The grind and grit of the quotidian,
The dusty streets with barefoot children,
But the slash of the scythe.

No, she sleeps well at night,
In her tall veneer coffin,
Still and steady,
As a stillborn child.



Untitled

by Jia Mathur

With our very first breath we open our eyes,
welcoming the sun's warm rays.
With the sky painted with hues of red and orange,
not knowing what awaits.

We start exploring little by little,
each second of thousands of days.
Gathering memories inflicted with love,
and hoping childhood stays.

We run a life both long and hard,
with excitement in every mile.
Where tears would drown our sorrows,
and joy would sow warm smiles.

By the time we reach the end,
our lives will have many chapters.
Filled with notes both high and low,
and questions left unanswered.

We might feel that we've lived to our fullest extent,
and tried our best throughout.
Though some of us, might hope for more,
when that final light is snuffed out.

Voice of the Prey

by Krishnav Arora

The falling fruits of my tree
can no longer be salvaged.
They have revoked from my bark
and there is nothing
i can do about it.

The detachment was swift,
Drowning in my own smeared silence
as water moves about like sharks
in the unsuspecting dark.

Falconry they call it.
Prey of the weak,
the tired
saddening cores of rot
helpless after yet another hour of
life in the jungle order.
collapsing frameworks of trees
green, leafy offshoots of horror.

Like some equestrian hunt
i felt the chase party drawing
nearer and that's when I recalled
the dreams of death the child
in me had: shot, down,
In an open meadow.
I fear I manifested this.
It was my fault.



Jolting and thrusting to escape
in a locked room,
drawing all my sap
to make fruits stick back
Pushing helpless water away
to escape the sharks
Dodging the trees: one after the other
to prevent being caught
Running in an open meadow till
the meadow becomes space
and outer space of time.

Circle back.
Cycle repeats.



The Drowned Fly Stuck to the Floor of My Room

by Krishnav Arora

I returned at 3:30 in the noon
from a tough day of toil:
mind games and burnt midnight oil,
and as I placed my bag on the couch I saw
a fly, delicate as glass menagerie, stuck
to the floor on a rug in my room.

At first I paid no attention to it,
i napped on my bed laid on the ground,
dreaming of fantastical fantasies where I would
travel the world around and
lie wistfully on that ground.

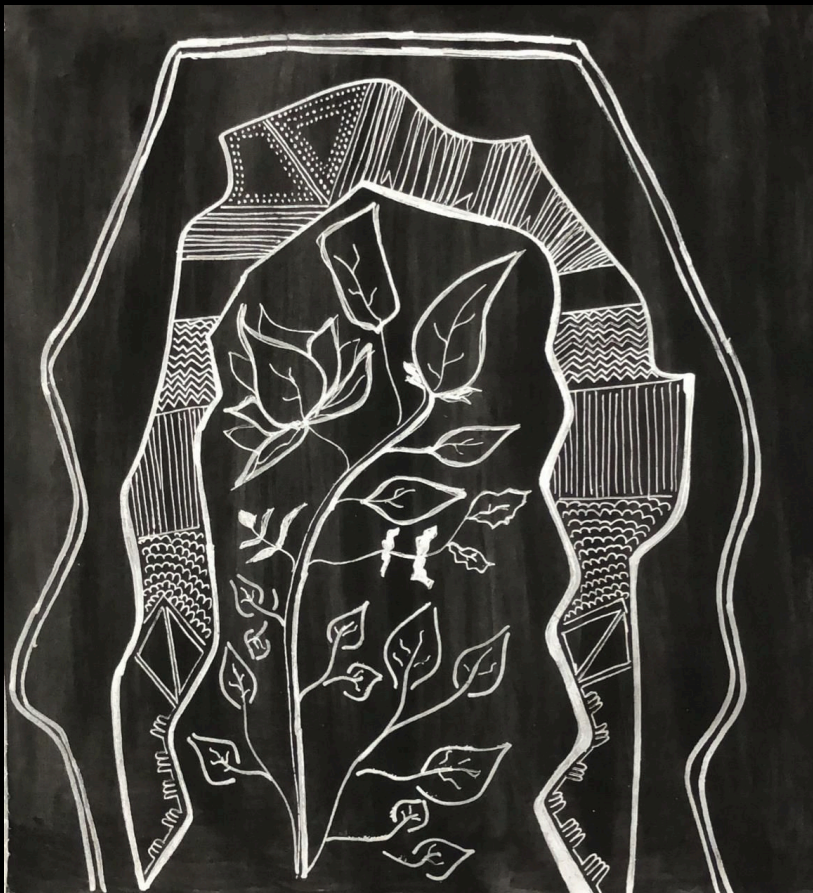
At 4:30 I got up, chugged down some coffee and
got back to work.

(the fly was still there, stuck to the floor of my room
so to put it out of it's misery I decided to
squish it,

i could get myself to do that,
i thought it would be inhumane
and also it would stain the rug, a less cruel way would be to
spray bug spray down on the wretched creature,
drenching its wings drowning its gloves.

And then I moved on)

5:30 frustration, I danced in my room to
alleviate the gloom
and as I moved and swayed about
i saw that same fly, motionless, alive still.
i wondered why it survived
even after is crushed its will
and rendered it immobile?
(that's when I considered drowning it:
wash it down with water
plastering its fragile wings,
breaking an appendage or two)
6:30 I knew it was dead,
it couldn't have possible survived.
i went with a paper in hand to
swipe it off the ground.
It was still moving
and it still hadn't drowned.



Aniyora Shukla Tiwari



Words to Verses

by Sharanya Singh

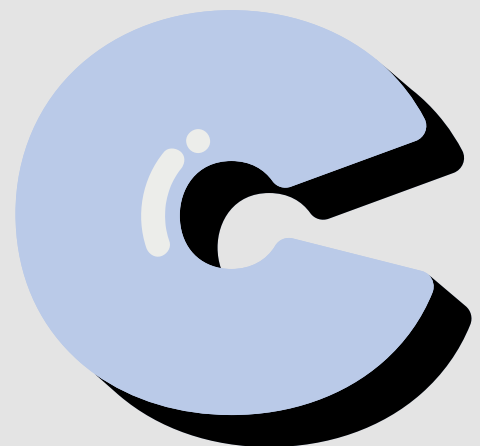
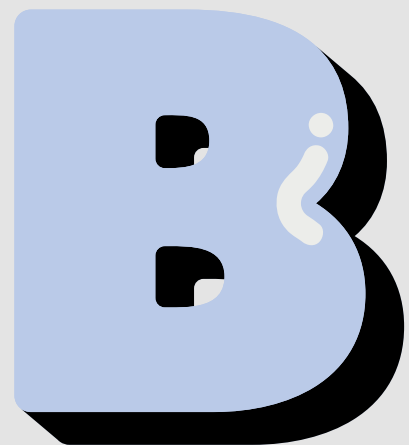
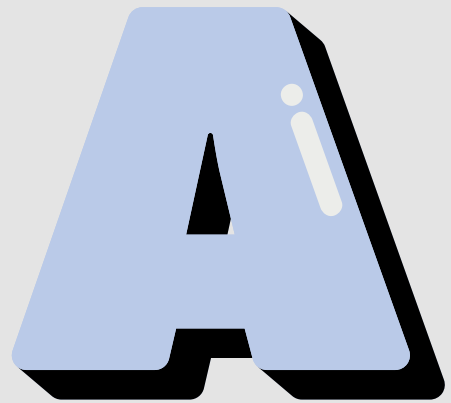
Individuals coming together
to form new words, then the end.
Yet the thought goes on forever—
many more ideas to find.

As we immerse ourselves
not in book-filled shelves
Instead w beautiful thyme
with topics so endless
as time.

Creating ethereal pictures
with poets' neverending fixtures—
the emotions alive on the page
about princesses trapped in a cage.

The thoughts, the pen, and the paper
flowing faster than a river.
Joy, darkness, gloom and glee,
all let out free.

All it takes is a simple verse
to be drawn into this beautiful curse.
Whether it's a comedic couplet
or a serious bet,
Only one way to impress—
In a poem, we digress.



The 21st Century

by Aarna Dhingra

Sometimes I really wish
To live in people's minds
Grasp all the opportunities I have missed,
And find out, where happiness they find
We live in a complicated world
With lines upon lines between the lines
No one quite means their word,
Harsh words are "opinions", not blows to the mind
"Humanity" was a principle,
Yet now it is a religion
"The human" has its disciples
Earth circles humans, not the sun
It is now 2023,
the year where you don't need permission
Actions are rough, people act like they don't feel,
opinions do not require justification
People become beautiful,
A necklace of pearls
They're flawless yet identical,
Identity has been scorned
Because no one is perfect,
And this may sound corny,
But if we are not gods, as of yet,
Why do we fake a perfect personality?
Because welcome to the 21st century
Where voices are the loudest yet the most oppressed
Where we all are the happiest yet the most depressed,
Come, feast on the sweet irony.



The Inexplicable Memoir of a Teenage Girl


by Ashmita Jain


Once, she looked around her and saw a tortured life
She looked above her and saw a lonely sky
She looked below her and saw a lifeless land
She looked within her and saw a struggling heart

She had been knocked down again and again
Fooled by the impressionist pictures of heaven
Stabbed by the feelings of fear, grief and loss
Imprisoned by the phantoms of her wounds

Her days were blue and nights sleepless
Her only company was the everlasting darkness
Time, all of a sudden stood still and
She couldn't find anything to fix herself

Lying in bed and dreaming
Thinking about what could've been
Maybe if she wasn't so deeply buried under her own thoughts
She wouldn't feel so stuck and foolish






What if all she needed was a spark
A momentary switch in perspective
That could help make it all go away and
Once again lift her burdened spirit

She looked again but this time with a different lens
She could see flickering lights through the mist
However weak and fickle
There was proof that sad things can be beautiful too

She thought maybe a star exploding
Is just its way of showing its true beauty
Maybe a rose wilting is just a sign
That something new is finally ready to grow

Maybe all she needed were a few stitches
To seal the wounds and embrace her scars
Maybe all she needed to do was breathe through the smoke
and befriend the ghosts that once haunted her past

Now, she looked around her and saw a colourful life
She looked above her and saw a glittering sky
She looked below her and saw a thriving land
She looked within her and saw a strong and resilient heart



Another Chance

by Dimeera Sachdeva

It is rare, they say
To be given another chance
To know you were once
Found as not good enough
A new beginning, they say
To live and experience another day

To leave the past behind
And forge a new path
To look at the horizon
And see something other than the unending dark

A way to prove
You have changed since time long past
A new beginning, they say
Or is it just another chance
For them to see if you can finally complete an impossible task



Forever: the Fake Promise

by Udi Sikri

Maybe forever is just a fake promise because you told me that's what we were. Yet here I am, sitting alone dreaming of a much better scenario. All this just because I don't want to believe that it was never forever with us.

Our differences drew us further apart rather than closer together. So now, instead of trying to fight a losing battle, I'm letting you go. For the last time.

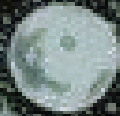
At least I can keep the good memories we had on a rainy day instead of the memory of you saying you didn't love me anymore. And hopefully one day we'll find what we are truly destined for, and that might be with different people.

Many say some people are here for a reason, some for a season and some for a lifetime. I thought you would be by my side till the end. but I guess you were only here for the summer.

You told me you fell out of love. But the truth is the pile of thoughts that never felt right outweighed the instances in which I was foolish enough to describe what we had as love.

Now I'm sitting here waiting for me to type something as I stare at the screen, but my thumbs don't move. In this moment I realise that I have nothing more to say to you.

The Moon and the Stars



by Udi Sikri

In this world of 8 billion people I had fallen for you
Silly of me who thought you fell for me too

In my eyes you were my moon In yours
I was just another star
Looked good together but yet so far

In this world of disasters
We were the worst one
In this world of impossibility
We were just another one

In the book of love, we were a chapter left incomplete,
Words unsaid, emotions bittersweet.

Paths diverge, hearts yearn to break free,
Maybe, just maybe, we weren't meant to be.

I loved so blindly
And burned so bright...
The flames that consumed me whispered...
Loving you wasn't wrong... nor was it right.



Downward spiral

by Udi Sikri 11A and Medhansh Seth 11C

People say we find happiness, we live and love, we shatter because of sadness and that's just us discovering every aspect of ourselves.

But the more you know, the more you want to not know. The same way the more I know some people the more I want to not know them anymore.

I'm better off alone than people who make me not want to be me. But the truth is there is nothing I can do about it.

When I look back I can't help but laugh. I changed every part of me to be exactly what they wanted.

But they didn't care if I changed because they were all busy changing themselves just as I was. Without even looking back once they just casually left. Leaving the new me, the unwanted me all alone.

The funny thing is, I was the perfect version of me the whole time. I just didn't know it yet.

Met Gala 2024:

Aadya



The A game



The Met Gala 2024, an event anticipated for its extravagant fashion and innovative themes, unfortunately fell short of expectations this year. With the theme set as "The Garden of Time," guests were expected to bring their A-game and interpret the concept in unique and creative ways. However, as celebrities paraded down the red carpet, it became evident that many missed the mark, opting for safe, uninspired looks that failed to capture the essence of the theme.

To define the majority of the Met Gala looks as 'boring' would be an understatement for what it actually was. With hundreds of possible interpretations to this unique theme, our celebrities simply failed to make a mark. Really? Florals in a garden? Groundbreaking.

But in the midst of this fashion disappointment, Tyla emerged as a beacon of creativity and originality. Making her Met Gala debut, Tyla turned heads with an outfit that redefined the boundaries of traditional fashion. Her interpretation of the theme as a sand hourglass was not only unique but also incredibly impressive, showcasing her daring style choices and willingness to push the envelope. In a sea of repetitive and lacklustre ensembles, Tyla's outfit stood out as a work of art that encapsulated the essence of the theme in a fresh and captivating way.

A Fashion Flop

Sinha

Unfortunately, Tyla's standout look only served to highlight the overall lack of imagination displayed by the majority of attendees. She reminds us of the essence of the Met Gala—fashion as expression. Instead of embracing the theme and exploring its creative possibilities, many opted for generic, safe, and frankly boring outfits that did little to excite or inspire. The red carpet was flooded with repetitive designs that failed to capture the magic and innovation that the Met Gala is known for, resulting in a majorly forgettable fashion showcase.

As the night unfolded, it became clear that the Met Gala 2024 would be remembered as a missed opportunity for the fashion world to shine brightly. Tyla's fearless interpretation of the theme served as a reminder of the transformative power of fashion and the importance of taking risks in a sea of conformity.



Echo Chambers

by Vedika Babbar

Echo chambers are environments that reflect your own viewpoints with little opposition. In these chambers, only your own viewpoints are supported, and hostility is shown towards any differing views. This can occur both online on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and offline.

Echo chambers are formed due to cookies and algorithms that detect your preferred content and show you only that, because AI does not know how to show viewers balanced views or facts. For example, if a person follows Andrew Tate, then it's likely that all their online content will be related to misogyny and hate against women and girls. They may also be formed due to a person's craving for validation. This happens because people are likely to want others to agree with their opinions and are therefore inclined to seek out people with similar thoughts. This creates an echo chamber where only the same ideologies are echoed, and any opposing opinions are shunned.

When echo chambers are formed, people are only exposed to selective information, and their own beliefs are perpetually reaffirmed. This is also called confirmation bias, which leads a person to believe that their own viewpoints are correct and widely accepted. When this happens, people become resistant to change and irritable to the possibility of other perspectives being correct over theirs.

Furthermore, these chambers result in the formation of homogeneous groups and polarized communities that give more attention to extremist viewpoints, as those are seen as more dedicated and authentic to the group's cause.

As these extremist views receive more attention, they become more prominent within the group, thereby causing the entire group to take on an extremist stance. This is far from inconsequential, as when people talk along extreme lines, they become blinded by their absolute and unwavering beliefs and develop a temper towards other opinions. They convince themselves that the opposition is wrong by oversimplifying their case in negative terms and show hostility towards them because of their rising temper.

The political domain is also affected by echo chambers in myriad ways. When an echo chamber is created within a political party, it becomes unwilling to compromise on any front or listen to opposition views. For example, in the USA, echo chambers have contributed to a significant divide between Democrats and Republicans, making bipartisan cooperation difficult, as neither party is willing to deliberate and compromise. This further causes gridlock in governance due to political stalemates, leading to an impasse where little to no policy or legislative actions can be implemented.

Finally, people must be cautious not to get into an echo chamber and be aware of how to get out of one should they find themselves stuck in it at any point in time. Some ways to get out of an echo chamber include fact-checking by looking at a variety of reputable sources before believing something you see online and engaging constructively with opinions that differ from your own by questioning your assumptions.





Navigating Academic Stress: The

by Deva

Heading into a new school year comes with its own set of challenges and pressures, especially in senior school. We all want to do well academically, boost our profiles, and also have fun. However, we often tend to succumb to stress, neglect our physical and mental well-being, or just pick up poor coping mechanisms to deal with it, further hampering our academic achievements and well-being. However, in my personal experience, finding a positive coping mechanism, specifically indulging in creative coping can often help alleviate this stress and also improve your current mental and physical well-being.

Dance became my positive coping mechanism sometime early last year. Despite having learned the art for most of my life, I became slightly disconnected from it during the pandemic and then began to miss classes months at a time once I began ninth grade because I had ‘too much work to do.’ However, midway through last year when I finally started attending classes regularly again, I realised the relief it provided me, providing me with a positive outlet to let go of any stress, center myself and just allow me to feel lighter. That feeling is something I believe each one of us should feel after a particularly stressful school week, no matter what our mode of expression may be.

As adolescents, we are more susceptible to daytime fatigue and psychological health issues, which can affect our academic performance and satisfaction, making the role of creative coping even more important, especially since it is unique to every individual. Most creative coping strategies cause us to pick up certain skills such as memorization of routines, improvisation, creative expression, and more, thus stimulating the brain and resulting in improved memory, focus, decision-making skills, adaptability, problem-solving skills, and cognitive function, the impacts of which reflect in our academic and social lives as well.

Power of Creative Coping Strategies

nsshi R.

This becomes especially important considering these years not only dictate our future academically but also on an emotional level, negative experiences we face today may hamper our emotional growth and prevent us from being as daring, explorative, or open in the future, thus limiting our opportunities. Positive psychological capital – encompassing an individual’s self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience – impacts their ability to achieve academic achievement, and their perceived academic stress is also noted to be benefitted through creative coping by developing one’s skillset and self-esteem. Along with the psychological benefits, creative coping strategies are also likely to improve physical health as the mind and body are considered to be interconnected. Thus with increased focus on our well-being, as we feel happier and less stressed, we are more likely to sleep better and eat healthier, resulting in improved physical health as well. Certain strategies such as dance also help improve balance, muscle strength, and flexibility within one’s body, resulting in overall better well-being.

I understand that it often may be daunting to take up a new activity and it may seem counter-intuitive to divert more time and resources to a creative activity to improve one’s academic stress, but sometimes an escape from the routine, motivates us to continue it. Participating in creative activities allows us to join new communities, develop our identity further, and find a solution that best fits us, whether that may be cooking, music, dancing, or even journaling. Finding your place in a new community is an amazing experience that has given me the chance to meet an excellent bunch of people with unique passions, perspectives and experiences, exposing me to a more diverse range of people and beliefs, giving me some of my closest friends today and causing me to learn more as a person as well. I don’t think I would be the person I am today without taking up dance and hope everyone is able to find their own unique outlet to help them through their academic journey.

A Love Letter

by Madhav

When a cricket match is on, the world around you seems to come to a standstill. During important matches, everyone seems to be under the hypnotic trance of the TV, anxiously waiting for the next ball to be bowled, each possibly yielding the next wicket, or the next run, that could win your team the match. If you're an avid viewer, your heart beats like your life's on the line, and the only way to save yourself is if your team has the skill - or the luck - to turn the tides of the match in their favour. In a stadium, this frenzied feeling is magnified even further. You see the brilliant game play out in front of your very eyes, engulfed by hordes of thousands of other fervent fans in jerseys of contrasting colours, and the field that looks so vast on TV is reduced to a small ground filled with players you idolise. You'll do anything to get their attention, or better, get the attention of the cameras. In that moment, the swift movements of the bowler, and the ready stance of the batsman, is all that matters.

It's hard to define India's national identity without bringing up cricket in some way, shape, or form. Your parents and grandparents will tell you tales of India's cricketing expertise, including those of Kapil Dev valiantly leading us to victory in 1983, Rahul Dravid's resilience and overpowering strength in Test Matches, and Anil Kumble's never-ending onslaught of wickets for the Indian team.

Our generation too has been constantly surrounded by a world of cricket, whether we choose to interact with it or not. Growing up, we've watched national heroes like Sachin and Dhoni emblazoned across the TV, their vigour and might continually on display for us to bask in. India's won a world cup, lost some more, and we've seen IPL after IPL endlessly seize the media cycle once a year, every year.

And the cricket craze in India hasn't died down at all. In the modern era, cricket has permeated into every inch of media available in our country. Now, we go berserk over the minutest of Virushka updates, we regard Travis Head like some sort of war criminal, and we throw full fledged riots in the comments of the Indian team's social media account, scrutinising every possible decision they make (I mean seriously, why is Sanju Samson in the playing 11 for the T20 World Cup?). Not to mention the fact that India-Pakistan is practically a more nationally significant event than Independence Day.

to Indian Cricket

Kochhar

But for me, and thousands of other fans, the adoration of cricket isn't simply limited to the thrill of the sport, instead, cricket has become a way for us to connect with our own national identity. Supporting India sparks a sense of patriotism that's incomparable, and each of our victories instils a unique sense of national pride and accomplishment. Seeing your heroes, your country, win anything from one-off series to World Cups is an electrifying experience. This is especially true due to the fact that, as aforementioned, many of us have grown up with cricket, and so our national identity feels somewhat interconnected with our childhood. In my experience, past cricket tournaments create a sense of nostalgia, and when these nostalgic emotions coalesce with the patriotism provided by cricket, it creates this unique feeling wherein you can't really forego your culture and your identity as an Indian when you think about your upbringing.

Cricket is also one of the only aspects of Indian society that is usually a unifying force, at least on the national level (IPL teams, on the other hand, are a bloodbath of disagreement). Celebrating wins and commiserating losses with other fans creates such a potent sense of community and unity. The entirety of India who watched the 2011 World Cup Final can bond over that thrilling feeling wherein Dhoni's sensational six won us the tournament, and everyone who watched the 2023 World Cup Final can relate to the sorrowful experience of realising that the championship wasn't ours to be won. Huddling in front of the TV for matches with family and friends alike creates a special bonding moment that brings people together like nothing else. And the mere idea that millions of people across India are experiencing the same joy, grief, and anxiety as you are, at the same time as you, is such a fulfilling prospect.

As I write this article, the semi-finals of the IPL are soon to come, and they'll hopefully be a buzzworthy cap off to what has arguably been one of the most exciting IPLs in recent history. You readers, of course, already know what the outcome will be, and so, just know that if RCB somehow manages to win nine matches in a row to win the tournament, there'll be a really ecstatic fan (me) bragging to his MI-supporting friends somewhere out there. Whatever the end result, it'll still be another unforgettable point in Indian cricket. Unless KKR wins. Then I am wiping all memory of this IPL out of my brain forever.

Tourette Syndrome

by Sumer Singh

Tourette Syndrome, or Tourette's, is a common neurodevelopmental disorder that begins in childhood or adolescence. It is characterized by multiple movement (and at least one vocal) tics. Common ones are blinking, coughing, throat clearing, shivering and facial movements.

The severity of symptoms varies from person to person. Tourette's is a lifelong condition but is not degenerative. There are a few ways to deal with Tourette's better, such as by getting involved in activities, lending a helping hand, building confidence, and embracing one's creativity through creative activities like writing and painting to enhance overall focus. People, schools, and children should be sensitive and accommodating towards people with this syndrome.

Hits Different

by Shashwati Singh

This night feels like a different kind of night. As though it's so cozy but it's not, the moon glistens and its beautiful little imperfections make it so much better. You brush past a field of dandelions feeling so at peace with yourself in the middle of the night when the only music there is, is the crickets chirping. Wild winds make your hair sway like you're in the middle of a movie. You wish to never forget this moment. You. The moon. And the calmness that surrounds you. The next day, the sun wakes you up and the sunlight glitters in your eyes. You walk through fields of grass that reach to your head and their swift movement moves you. Near the field, you hear kids playing, mothers talking and fathers laughing, they seem so at peace. Why would anyone want to ruin this? How could they be so enveloped in themselves that they forget the simple things in life? The only things that matter. Because in the end, it's just going to be you, the earth, and the memories you hold onto.

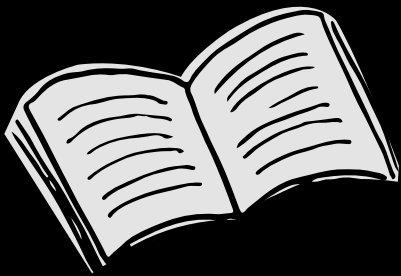
Beginning

by Akaisha Aggarwal



Scarlet over taupe. A horrible way to begin. Nothing is coming to my mind. The light thumps of your footsteps distract me. Back to the paper. Everyone makes themselves write. But what makes everyone make themselves write?

The urge to push yourself. "What an honour it is to love," he said. The cracked and broken pieces of my soul scattered across the pavement. Write like her, won't you? Do you love your art? It gets worse the longer you look at it, doesn't it?



Blank Word Doc

by Aarna Gupta

The pen clicks and clacks like it has been doing for the past hour, the bright white screen of my laptop on one word and one number. "Chapter" and a disappointing "1".

A Day in the Life of a Time Traveller

by Jia Mathur

My footsteps echoed through the silence as I walked down a narrow, dimly lit street with a sense of ease, as if I visited the eerie road every other day, especially at this time of night, when the whole town of Craden slept amongst glitter-like stars and a deep, mysterious silence.

As I kept walking, a stupendous, brick-red castle came into view. Its tall walls with intricate carvings shone in the night. I walked past them to a stunning pillar. With an animated feeling, I moved my pale fingers along to a huge lotus and gently pressed my thumb against its petals. White mist started to creep through the castle's cracks and a blanket of icy wind started to surround me. The great gust let out a roar as it hurled me from side to side and lifted me upwards. Among all the mist, my eyes leaked some tears as I thought about the moment that awaited me. I was going to meet someone. Someone who I had greatly missed all these years. My mother had left me when I was only six. And now, I would be seeing her once again.

Gradually, the mist started to clear and dropped me on my feet. I saw that I was in a snug bedroom, my old room. My younger self was there too, kicking her legs merrily against her chair. Oblivious of my presence. Her dark curls toppled over her shoulders, and her face wore a calm smile. Suddenly, a woman walked through the door. She, too, had dark hair and a generous face. "Ma!" the girl shrieked in joy and wrapped her arms tightly around her. Nostalgia flooded my veins and my eyes started to water again. As their shrieks of laughter flowed through my heart, I started to sob harder than ever, and I sunk deeper into their voices.

At last, I could take it no longer. I flew through the house, wrenched open the door, and dashed out onto the street. I started to run towards the same brick-red castle, wiping my tears as I sped. As soon as I got there, I jabbed my thumb against the lotus on the wall and levitated back to the present, where the crack of dawn greeted me merrily. I did this quite often, by the way, going back in time. And this was just another day in my life as a time traveler.

The Grain of Reality

by Gia Arora

Every so often, the world changes minutely when a person makes a split-second decision. A lost key, a cracked cell phone, a leaf skittering over a sidewalk. Broken hearts and kept promises. A lifetime of difference, wrought by a momentary lapse in — or revival of — judgement. Just as a person ducking back home to wear a different tie to office does not know they just missed a road accident, so too was I oblivious to the fact that when my attention was snagged by Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* one Monday afternoon, I had inadvertently changed the trajectory of my life.

I read *The Secret History* when I was fifteen years old and freshly enraptured by the world of art. There, nestled between picturesque horror and sheer absurdity, shone three words: *beauty is terror*. And, heart open and aching for fullness, I lapped them up. I was drawn to the book's languor and aesthetic, delighted by its opulent barbarity. I watched the characters lie, obsess, fanaticize, love each other and kill each other and die in each other's arms. I felt nothing for them save some abject amusement, and a bit of hatred. Naturally, then, when I picked up *The Goldfinch*, I expected something similar. I anticipated pretty words and morbid delight, death and deception and lies. To say that that is not what I found would be untrue, but it would be worse still to say that that is all I found. Because there was also so, so much more.

It started, as promised, with the painting of a little bird. A little golden bird, chained to a little whitewashed perch. It started also with a museum, and a girl with a violin, and an *Isn't it always the inappropriate thing, the thing that doesn't quite work, that's oddly the dearest?* A canvas, not painted over, but instead woven into a tapestry of everything and everything. Home: the loss of it, the search for it, the realization of where it can be found. Life: the ache for it, the hatred towards it, the peace of it.

And, above all, love. Love, all alone in a foreign land, in the middle of a desert with flashing lights and stars that spell out your name. Love, in split knuckles and split lips, stolen pennies and stolen smiles. Love, in the leaving, in the returning, in the never coming back. A broken Polish lullaby translated stiltedly into English, *A-a-a, a-a-a, there once were two small kittens...*

There, too, was childhood, slipping away; friendship, broken and mended and more, more; an overwhelming sense of history, of centuries superimposed, *1940s by way of 1640s*. There was sitting on the stoop of a home you didn't know you had, stargazing with her but having eyes only for the moon. There was Conversational Russian, and *The Idiot*, and the last four digits of his phone number, because you missed your best friend. *Ships passing*, but also, *coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous*.

This tapestry-canvas was woven through with golden thread, and this golden thread was that little yellow bird on that little whitewashed perch. It was chained to a blank wall, imprisoned for eternity with a few strokes of a brush. *One prisoner looking at another*. And what did it mean? Nothing, and everything. The length of its shackle was the same as the space between letters that separate two words, and the space between a person's lungs and a person's ribs, and the space which things crawl under and inhabit and make magnificent. *An individual heart shock*. Theo is an echo caught on a breeze, a quiet note of laughter, *and I had the epiphany that laughter was light, and light was laughter, and that was the secret of the universe*.

And beneath it all ran an undercurrent of beauty. In words, in silences, in the minute hand of a clock. Playground laughter, hotel room smiles. *We'll be eating breakfast in the cornfields when the sun comes up*. Not terror, but not *not* terror. Terror, accompanied by happiness, and misery, and hope. Beauty is in the knowledge that the finch Fabritius painted was unique, and in the conviction that if Theo could go back in time and see the bird first, he would set it free in a heartbeat. It is in Theo finally flipping to the final page of the book and watching the ink dry.

Beauty can't be terror, or at least, not just terror — after all, “Beauty alters the grain of reality.”

Lights Out

Kyna Mustafa

Teenagers, masters of disguise, adept at playing myriad characters. Adorned in low-cut dresses and towering heels, meticulously crafted with foundation, eyeliner, and lips painted to perfection. Faces sculpted into masks of resilience, as if taut as wire. Yet beneath this facade lies a tumult of emotions, impossible to contain indefinitely. Oh, teenagers! Walking a tightrope, one misstep away from plummeting into an abyss with no one to break the fall.

The allure of show business beckons, for a mere smile followed by laughter, can deceive even the keenest observer. But look closer, dear reader. Peer into our eyes, windows to the soul. There, amidst the shimmer of uncertainty, lies a flicker of pain, a silent plea for understanding. Contacts may obscure vision, but not the silent screams, the desperate cries of "I'm not fine." Yet, faith in you, in anyone, shatters like glass.

The longing in our eyes when we see little girls playing in the park, or the yearning for that piece of cake we refused. We pretend that remark did not hurt. Sticks and stones didn't break our bones. But your words made us starve ourselves until you could see all of them. Fitting in is an even bigger problem than before. We fake our tastes, our preferences, and end up losing our identities. We end up losing ourselves.

We must maintain the facade, trapped within its suffocating embrace. Why did we start this charade? The question lingers, unanswered, for nothing seems to matter anymore. So, conceal those tears with concealer, slip into the tightest dress, swallow the euphoric pills, and drown out that existential dread with a spritz of vanilla perfume. Go, now. Go, go, go, go. The show must go on.

Watson Turns Sleuth

by Amaaya Ramchandani

It is a regular Monday morning. I sit at the dining table with a cup of steaming coffee, reading the London times. However, something is different. Silence. Sherlock is away on a case, so there is no one incessantly playing the violin early in the morning; there are no horrific screeching noises; no one doing weird and gruesome science experiments; and no one staring at the lit fireplace talking gibberish non-stop. There is peace and sanity until some madman rings the doorbell, at least 15 times. When I open the door there are 2 gentlemen in black suits, wearing sunglasses, standing outside. They are middle-aged men who have walkie-talkies. They are armed.

Agent 1: We have come on behalf of the Princess. She is in great distress and needs Mr Holmes' help.

Watson: I'm afraid Mr. Holmes isn't available, but I can help.

They don't say a word and simply point me to the direction of a horse carriage. Of course, you will expect me to be terrified but this is sort of a regular thing when you are the companion of a high-functioning sociopath, who is known throughout the world for being a brilliant detective. I am getting used to the crazy and dangerous people that show up, either they come to kidnap me for leverage or, as in this case, to take me to Buckingham Palace. The princess wants Sherlock's help as her precious and priceless painting has been stolen. Since Sherlock is away they are taking me in as I am the next best thing, so they think.

I reach the Palace and who else do I find but Mycroft Holmes; the "British government", to be exact, as Sherlock has often mentioned.

Mycroft: Dr Watson.

Watson: Mycroft! It's good to see you.

Mycroft: I wish I could say the same. Now enough with the small-talk let me fill you in on the case.

About 15 years ago there was a Prince Abdul Jabbar, who had come to London for the king's birthday. During this visit, he got close to the king's daughter. He asked for her hand in marriage, but because of his religion and other extenuating circumstances, the king said no. Prince Abdul was asked to leave the country but before doing so he gave the princess a priceless painting with a special gift inside. The painting was extremely precious to the princess, so for a long time, it was not put on display, until her money-minded brother convinced her to display it in the Artefacts room of the palace. Nobody knew what was inside this magnificent piece of artwork but rumour had it that there was a cheque for a million pounds hidden somewhere. Last year, this painting was stolen by Jeffery Smith and found by Sherlock. Yesterday, the same painting was stolen again, and the exact same techniques were used. It isn't Jeffery, as he died in jail a few months ago. There are no traces, no evidence, and the alarms didn't even go off. This is the most perfectly executed crime that I have ever worked on.

I am at my wits end. I go to the crime scene to investigate, hoping to find a good friend of mine doing the same, and sure enough, he is there.

Watson: Ah! Good morning, Lestrade.

Lestrade: Watson! How do you do? Is your psychotic friend joining us?

Watson: No, not today. Sherlock is away on business. *(trying to sound very official)* Walk me through the case.

Lestrade: Well, the painting was kept under lock and key in a vault, it was going to be displayed tomorrow. The vault in which it was kept was guarded at all times, but the guards were drugged and put to sleep. The alarm he disabled had a reboot system, but by the time it went off, 5 minutes later, the crime had already been committed. Whoever this man is, he covered his tracks superbly.

Watson: *(trying to sound grave)* So we have nothing to go on.

I spent two hours at the crime scene role-playing with Lestrade and putting myself in the shoes of the criminal, to no avail. I don't want to look like a fool in the presence of Lestrade, so I pretend to have a breakthrough, make some excuse, and get back to Baker Street.

(entering the house) Mrs Hudson!

Mrs Hudson: Dear God! Watson! You don't have to shout, I'm right here.

Watson: Sorry, can you make me a cup of tea, please? ...The way Sherlock takes it?

I ransack all the cabinets looking for Jeffery Smith's file. Whenever Sherlock finishes a case, he puts the file safely in a cupboard. Usually, one expects these files will be stored alphabetically or numerically, but no, the genius Mr Holmes files according to, and I quote, "whichever case pleases my extraordinary scientific mind." The Jeffery Smith robbery, according to Holmes, was an easy and boring one hence it was at the very end of the cabinet. Here, I discover that Jeffery Smith was a widower and had two children. Mycroft mentioned that the family wasn't that close. The daughter, Jacqueline lives in France, and the son, Fernando, lives here in London. Whom did Mr Smith leave his family inheritance too? His son or his daughter or both?

Mrs Hudson: Here is your tea. (slams teacup onto table)

Watson: Thank you.

I take a sip of Sherlock's ghastly tea and it gives me a sagacious idea. Sherlock does all sorts of ridiculous things—what if one of them helps me think like him? It's worth a try. First, I sit on Sherlock's kingly chair and smoke his pipe. Good god! It's nauseating. Next, I light a fire and stare at it in pin drop silence for a good 5 minutes. For a little extra melodrama, I pick up Sherlock's gun, shoot the wall, and talk to the skull on the fireplace. None of this works! Now I bring out the big guns: his violin. That thing brings back countless memories of Sherlock staring at the window and imagining he is playing some melodious tune when, quite frankly, it is the opposite. The second I start playing a screeching noise emanates that is ear-shattering, almost as if the violin itself is praying and screaming for me to stop. But I can't. All of a sudden, I have a Eureka moment, and I start jumping up and down like a mad man.

Watson: I got it!

Holmes, *entering*: What on earth are you doing?

Watson: I figured out the case! It is the daughter! Her father didn't leave her any money and she felt neglected, so to prove herself she finishes the crime her father failed to complete. Right?

Sherlock, *casually*: Good job, Watson, but we aren't done yet, there is still a lot to do. Hand it over.

He takes the violin, says absolutely nothing, stares at the window and begins playing one of his tunes. My ears can't take any of this nonsense so I put my ear muffs on and start doing some useful work for the case. Everything is back to normal and all is right with the world.



Varya Jain



Noyonika
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