

# Blossom

## Editorial

The word 'blossom' has many meanings. It could mean a fresh start like how the tender bud blooms into a mature flower; like how a change in time may mean a change in personality. To blossom means to emerge like a butterfly out of a cocoon, with its wings spread out, ready to fly.

All of us blossom at our own pace. A young floret needs time, care and nurturing to grow into something beautiful.

So does a human.

To blossom into what we are today, we've been dependent on a plethora of factors. Just as a young bud needs sunlight, a person also needs others to provide support and care. Sunlight needs to be present at every stage, just as happiness and support need to be present in a person's life.

A plant needs water to grow. We humans also suffer a lot in life. However, our tears, like the water for the plant, make us stronger.

This edition of Sparsh is a collaboration between the last year's and this year's Junior Sparsh club as in spite of their best efforts, the concept of this newsletter conceived and developed by them remained as a bud and could only blossom this year. This edition is an attempt to showcase the raw talents of our Manthanites, who are like buds in themselves, in the process of unfurling their petals and blossoming into beautiful humans. Take for example, the radiant drawing "Girl in a Garden Landscape" by Anchal Agarwal showing us the need to have a zest for life or the gripping story "The Locked Door", in which we see a traumatized young lady who is trying to escape a loop of sadness.

We, the team of Sparsh present this edition in the hope that all of our readers will find it both entertaining and enjoyable. As for ourselves, through our journey in creating this newsletter, all of us have blossomed into more capable individuals.



*"Flowers Don't Tell*

*They Show"*

*Stephanie Skeem*



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# The Loop

By Nithiyasanjana Karnam



Alyssa didn't want it to happen. She really didn't want her to go again. But she knew she could not stop it. This never-ending loop of-

"Should I make tea, Alyssa?" asked her sister, Niki, from the kitchen.

Alyssa was jerked back into the present. She hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "I'll go get some tea bags from the hotel service." She turned the knob of the door, but it didn't open. She checked if it was unlocked. It was supposed to be.

She aggressively shook the knob, irritated by the quality of the hotel, as she called, "Niki, the door isn't opening." Alyssa could hear Niki's footsteps before the darkness fell. Utter darkness. A cold wind swept through the room, even though the windows were shut.

"Stay where you are, you might fall," she said, concerned, "I think it's a power cut."

Suddenly, Alyssa's mind shrivelled with the sound of Niki shrieking. It was coming from deep in her head. Was this a sign? She couldn't comprehend what she was saying, but it certainly was not real, as Niki responded with, "Sure, you stay put too."

The shrieking stopped, but a howl - which was real - erupted from the kitchen. That was where Niki was. Alyssa began to panic. What could she possibly do? Swiftly but carefully, she crawled through the pitch-black house. She could barely see where she was going. "Niki? Niki!" she shouted, as she made her way towards the kitchen.

She didn't get a reply. Fear flooded her mind; coldness swept through her blood; love and worry suffocated her heart; tears drenched her long, brown hair. Alyssa made an effort to calm her breathing. She had to get to the kitchen.

"Niki? Where are you? TALK TO ME! I know you're not gone. I know you're not gone... again-" She herself did not know why she said that. Again? Alyssa paused. Something old and wet was on the ground. She felt around, still screaming for Niki. Her hand then met something soft and cold and... dead.

No. No. No. NO. NO! She found Niki's hand and felt for a pulse. There was none. Niki was dead. The tears refused to stop. Through the sadness, Alyssa felt strangely as if she had seen this before; as if this had happened many times. That was the least of her worries, now.

She shook her head, still crying. A slight movement in her peripheral vision caught her attention. She wiped her eyes and glanced to the side, towards the balcony. A dark figure with a cloaked silhouette jumped off of the railing... Who was that? She felt around, went to the balcony and looked down. There was nothing...

All of a sudden, the lights came back on, and she was pulled back to the door. Deja vu. Alyssa tried to count the number of times this happened, but couldn't fathom the dark depths of her psych where the numbers dipped down... Fifty-eight? Fifty-nine? She lost count after forty. She sat there, waiting for her to say it again.

"Should I make tea, Alyssa?"

There it was. She was once again jerked back into reality. "I'll go get some tea bags from the hotel service," she said.

She reached for the door and turned the knob. It... opened. The locked door opened. Alyssa, who was living in the present, took one step outside the door. Little did she know that this would solve - everything; that this would blossom into her new world. The real world.

The next moment, she was in a hospital bed. Alyssa glanced around, as her eyes adjusted to the lighting. She sat up, still confused. Was this the end of it? The end of all the pain? The agonizing loop of sadness?

She heard someone push the door open, and turned to see Niki walking in. At that moment, she realized that she had just woken up from her coma.



# Blossom

The wisps of frost have vanished,  
The sight of the glowing sun has left us all ravished,  
The gloomy flowers burst out blooming,  
Leaving the cold fuming,  
The frostbite has drastically decreased

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Sminika Aldi Grade: 6

Fresh breeze glides across our skin,  
Wings are seen, Oh!, and a fin,  
The sense of green,  
The roads are clean,  
Captured, is the state of the ice beast!  
Crowds and crowds,  
Sounds and sounds,  
As busy as can be,  
Get your cup of coffee,  
The season of spring is released!



# Young Creative Minds

## Gallery ride



Saatvik Grade: 4



Sahiti Grade: 5



Daksh Grade: 4



Demeera Grade: 4

These images are extracted from brochures and posters made by primary children in English class as a part of their learning!

New News

NASA'S PARKER  
SOLAR PROBE  
"TOUCHED" THE  
SUN



# *The Mournful Mockery*

Nishchala Papishetty



## *Book review: To kill a mockingbird*

Author: Harper Lee

Genre: Southern Gothic, Coming-of-age Story

Reviewed by: Zairah Madhurakuzhiyil 9th

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view. Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

To Kill a Mockingbird is a widely successful young adult novel and is a classic of modern American literature. It is a Pulitzer Prize winning read, which is told through the eyes of a child who could very well be an efficiently educated adult. The book was loosely based on the author, Harper Lee's life.

To Kill a Mockingbird traverses through themes of racial prejudice and injustice, as well as love and the coming-of-age of the main characters. The story takes place in the fictional small town of Maycomb where most of the residents are racists and it is narrated by Scout, a tomboy who lives with her lawyer father, and elder brother. Throughout the book, she talks about her childhood experiences, which mainly include herself, her brother, their friend Dill, and their reclusive neighbor Boo Radley. In the novel, her father Atticus, is asked to defend a wrongly accused black man and as the story progresses, we can see the trial develop through the childlike perspective of Scout. Gradually, both she and her brother learn many precious lessons from their father about tolerance, empathy and understanding.

According to me, this internationally cherished book is most definitely worth your time. I found this book captivating and inspiring. This is the type of book that has so many intricate layers of meaning and depth that each time you go back and read it, you'll have learnt something new. This is one, or maybe the best book I have ever read. Whether it's how the story portrays such grave topics in the perspective of a child, and absolutely perfects it, or its the lessons and brutal honesty that one can learn from it, this story exceeds all expectations.

I most definitely recommend this book to all, and request everyone to read it at least once in their life. I rate this book 10/10. I would suggest being at least 12-14 before reading this book as it deals with some weighty topics. Nevertheless, this is a book that will inspire and ignite the good in people and will never cease to do so.

I was lost in my thoughts while sitting in a train compartment. I was traveling to Shimla. Suddenly, an old woman got in. She was very sad and weak. She was not able to walk properly. I started reading a magazine when I suddenly saw her trip over a piece of metal sticking out of the floor.

Instinctively I reached out and caught her arm. I tried not to flinch as I clutched her bony, wrinkly arm, directing her to the seat with torn leather beside mine.

"Thank you," she muttered gloomily.

"Of course. Are you alright?" I asked.

But she didn't seem to hear me. She was gazing out the window of the old and noisy train like she was in a trance. Normally, I would have left her alone, but a few minutes after continuing to skim through my magazine, I saw that she hadn't moved. Hoping that she wasn't just a figment of my imagination, I asked her again. She jerked out of her stupor and stared at me for a few moments. I could almost hear the gears turning in her head as she pondered whether she should talk to me or turn away. In these slightly awkward moments, I realized she wasn't from India. Her skin and hair were pale, and she had light blue eyes and a large, crinkled nose. Her protrusive chin highlighted her hair, which was drawn up in a tight bun. She sniffed and curtly said,

"No."

I waited for her to say more, but when she didn't, hesitantly, I asked why. After another long pause, she replied, "My son is getting a divorce."

"Oh."

I was under my bed again. It had been almost an hour and they hadn't stopped screaming. It was getting louder and louder as the woman shrieked at the man, telling him how difficult he was to deal with, cursing him into oblivion. The man bellowed back, talking over her, defending himself. I heard small whimpers and then the door slammed shut. The man had left. Probably to get a drink. Or few.

SCREECH!

The train stopped at a small station, and people flooded out. Then it was only me, the old woman and a college student, by the looks of him, at the far end of the compartment. I thought that the woman would switch seats now that almost the whole compartment was empty, but she didn't move.

" 'He had an affair' she says." the old woman voiced abruptly.

"Who says?" I inquired, confused.

"My daughter-in-law. Or perhaps I should say 'ex' daughter-in-law now," she sighed deeply.

She seemed to have dropped her tough exterior, and I could tell that she was exhausted.

"You look tired," I said bluntly.

"Well, I haven't slept peacefully in days. They shouldn't be getting a divorce!" she exclaimed.

I frowned. "Why not?"

"Well even if he did have an affair, it's nothing to get a divorce over." And the next thing I knew, she was rambling about how back when she was young, an affair would not have been something to stress over or even talk about. They acted like everything was okay, even when it wasn't. But my mother didn't do that. She didn't act like everything was okay. She stood up for both of us.

A large figure loomed over me, and in a thundering voice told me how useless I was, how I would never be loved, how I would spend the rest of my life desperate and alone, just like my mother.

While all my friends, classmates, and cousins spent their ninth birthdays celebrating, opening presents, stuffing their faces with cake, that was how I spent mine. That's how I spent most birthdays, cornered in a room, with my father spitting malicious threats and slurred insults to my face, with a brutal expression etched on his face.

My mother clawed her way out of the cage her husband built around us. Clawed and scraped and cut her way out, and she took us away to Himachal Pradesh, where we built a life for ourselves. It wasn't easy, but it was better than what we had before.

"... so I don't understand why they are creating such a scene!"

'Thank goodness,' I thought, 'she finally settled down.' She inhaled deeply... and continued her rant. I sighed and made myself comfortable. It was going to be a long two hours.





**"Every Flower  
Blooms At A  
Different Pace"**

-Suzy Kassem

*What did summer  
say to spring?*

*Help, I'm gong to  
Fall!*

**Coffee  
Break**

Grab your coffee...  
or find one



**Time**



It's not  
procrastinating if  
you're drinking  
coffee



**It's  
procaffinating**





Why is the letter  
"A" like a flower?

\_\_\_\_\_

A bee (B) comes after it!

What kind of flower has  
the most ferocious roar?

A Dandelion

What Fruit Is Never  
Found Singly?

A Pear



March  
Blossom  
Season  
Grass  
Spring  
Grow  
Umbrella  
Green  
Tulip  
Breeze  
Butterfly  
Meadows  
Cherry  
Puddles  
Nest

"Where Flowers Bloom So Does Hope."

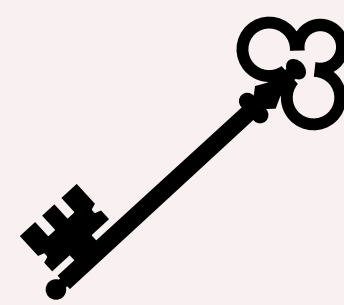
-Johnson





# The Locked Door

- Sampurna Chatterjee Grade 9th



I sat on my chair. The flowers in the bronze vase had withered again. The ceiling seemed to be closing down on me and I felt oddly numb. I laid my head on the table. There was a dull pain in my head that blocked my brain from thinking. Loud, cacophonous noises filled my head and wounded my ears until I was sure they were bleeding. There were no windows in this room. There never were. This place had always been oddly silent. So silent that the noise in my head relieved me. The vase. I needed the vase. I needed the pain to continue. I needed the pain to stop. Everything was a blur. My arm reached out for the vase and the noises in my head grew louder. My hand then tightened its grip on the vase and, without hesitation, started to bash the heavy piece of metal against my head. I needed the pain to stop. Therefore, I needed the pain to continue. The pathetic flowers fell on the ground and the, now empty vase, was chaotically decorated with dark red liquid. My hands wouldn't stop. They couldn't stop. I lay on the cold floor, breathless and blood-stained, just like another one of those withered, pathetic flowers I hate. "Jade. Jade. Do you feel any better?" I gradually processed the muffled words of a familiar voice.

As I opened my heavy eyelids, I felt the cold and hard bed sheet below me and realised I was lying down in my own bed.

Stephanie was sitting on the corner of the bed, looking at me with eyes full of pity. She was around thirty years older than me and yet looked abnormally pretty. Stephanie had wrinkled skin that she hid with her intricately vibrant make-up. She always wore long, silver dangling earrings that matched some of the strands in her hair. Stephanie was the calmest person I had ever seen- not that I had ever seen a lot of people in the first place. But no matter what, she was always there. She was there when I wanted to talk. When I felt breathless and bloodstained. When I, most importantly, was lonely. She was there, throughout, to remind me that I wasn't the only one in this world and that I was the safest when I was in my room. That that is where I truly belonged and I should be grateful for the peaceful, danger-free life I live. And I was. Atleast I always tried to be. The door haunted me. It opened possibilities and unlocked fears. I stayed away from it.

"Jade. I made you some warm milk. Get up!"

Stephanie's voice rang in my ears and I lifted my head to rest my weary back on my pillow. Then I sobbed. Stephanie hugged my pathetic soul and tried to patch up the torn pieces of me that were scattering all over the bed. I was shattering. I was withering like a flower plucked and separated from its plant. Stephanie's hug gave me warmth. It watered my parched soul. It gave me fragrance and beauty and coloured my pale, lifeless petals. It revived me and freshened my weary soul. But what for? Soft, trimmed and colourful, it again put me back in the vase where I belonged. Where I could never come out from, no matter how hard I tried. I was tired of coming back from the dead every single time. I longed for something new. Something ordinary. Jade, drink up the warm milk. It'll stop you from shivering. I'm leaving it on the table, I really have to go now. Don't touch the plaster bandage. It helps absorb the blood." Stephanie walked out of the room and locked the door.

I slowly got up from my bed and sat down on the chair. A tray was placed in front of me with a cup of milk and a bowl of white crystals next to it. Next to the tray stood the bronze vase, tall and clean with healthy, blue flowers inside.

The flowers calmed me down and I reached out for a piece of paper.

I started drawing the vase and then the intricate designs carved into it. Then I drew the flowers, upright and elegant. I reached out for the blue-paint bowl. "Crash!" before I knew it, my hand knocked off another paint bowl in the way and red paint splattered all over my unfinished drawing. Red flowers, a red vase- red flowed all over the paper and covered the whites, unevenly. Red. The colour was disturbing. It made me want to throw up. The paint was now flowing towards the tray of milk. I hated red. I loved red. Red was an inevitable part of me. It was my colour. On my forehead, blotches on my blanket, drops on the floor, inside the plaster bandages put away in the dustbin- red was unavoidable. I was sick of red. My head started to throb as I reached for the cup of milk. I was going back to the cycle, breathless and bloodstained. I would die and revive once again.

My hand tightened its grip on the cup of milk and pulled it away from the paint...

"Deja vu!" I thought.

I could hear an oddly familiar voice call my name. It was deep and husky and felt like home. It comforted me but it also intimidated me. "Jade! Please no! Have you gone absolutely insane? That's your mother right there! Put that piece of metal down right now." my father pleaded and ordered at the same time.

"That beast isn't my mother! She wants to kill all of us. Mother is dead because of her!" I remember my voice shouting.

I remembered myself standing in an odd place filled with food and things like cups, forks, spoons. It had a name I couldn't remember. Oh right, a 'kitchen'.

I looked brave, lively and younger.

"Jade please!" my father continued. "Your daughter

wants to kill me!" a lady stood next to my father, sobbing. She had wrinkles on her arms and her face was covered in intricately vibrant make-up. She was wearing silver, dangling earrings and clinging on to my father. She looked thirty years older than me and about my father's age. "This beast was trying to poison you, father! I swear I saw her!" I sounded less brave this time and more like my present self.

My stepmother was holding a tray with a familiar cup of coffee in it. There was a small bowl filled with white crystals that looked abnormally indifferent.

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My stepmother was holding a tray with a familiar cup of coffee in it. There was a small bowl filled with white crystals that looked abnormally indifferent.

"It's just sugar!" Stephanie wailed, "What in heaven's sake is wrong with this child?"

My eyes focused on a plastic packet lying on the floor which read: 'STRYCHNINE' My hands held on to a familiar bronze vase and without hesitation, I threw it on Stephanie. Everything was a blur. My father's voice was loud and muffled and then...THUD!





# The Locked Door



Continued...

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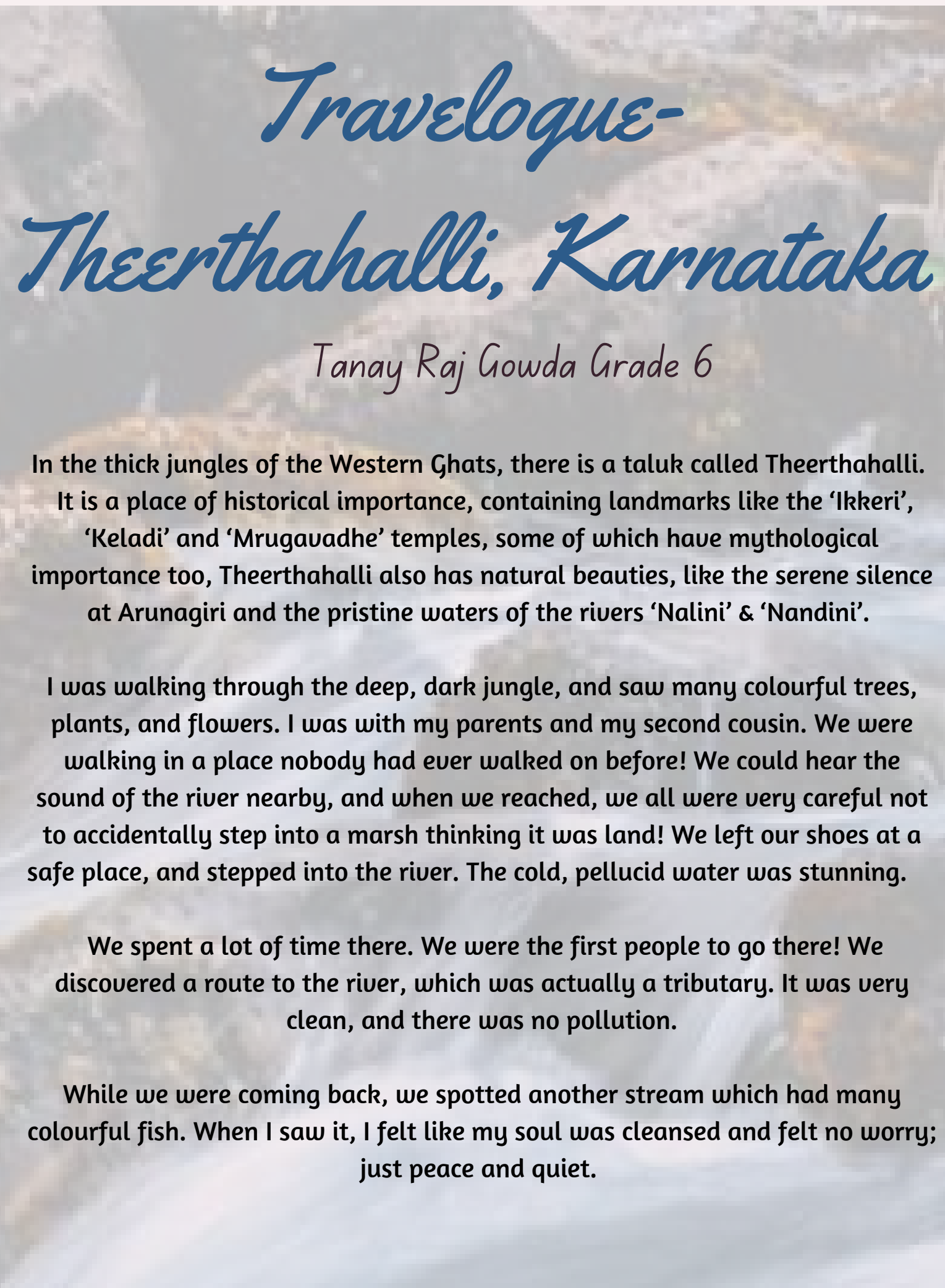
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My father lay on the kitchen floor, blood, red blood flowing out of a cut in his forehead.

What had I done! My father! I started bashing my head with the vase as Stephanie stared at me. Let me die! Let me forget! For I will never be able to forgive myself...

I came back to my senses and found myself sitting on my chair, covered in sweat. Tears streamed down my face. I had remembered my past, finally. After all these years. Finally, after all this time, I knew what to do. Forgiving yourself, it truly is a hard thing to do. But forgiving others can often be harder. I tried to ruin Stephanie. I ruined my father. And now, I ended up ruining myself. I ended up being fed by the very Stephanie who ruined my life. All this time, I loved her so for the fake niceties she provided me. I tortured myself without understanding why I wanted to. Did I deserve to live, after all I did? Did Stephanie deserve to live? I walked towards the door. It was always there but I had just failed to open it. Revenge can trap people into a dark, painful abyss and lock them there but forgiveness, I learnt, was the only key that could free them. If I would fight, I would not do so unreasonably and behind doors. I would be brave and show myself to the outside world. The world that hates me. The world that loves me. The world that has been waiting for me for years. I tightened my grip on the door handle and twisted it.



## Travelogue-

## Theerthahalli, Karnataka

Tanay Raj Gowda Grade 6

In the thick jungles of the Western Ghats, there is a taluk called Theerthahalli. It is a place of historical importance, containing landmarks like the ‘Ikkeri’, ‘Keladi’ and ‘Mrugavadhe’ temples, some of which have mythological importance too, Theerthahalli also has natural beauties, like the serene silence at Arunagiri and the pristine waters of the rivers ‘Nalini’ & ‘Nandini’.

I was walking through the deep, dark jungle, and saw many colourful trees, plants, and flowers. I was with my parents and my second cousin. We were walking in a place nobody had ever walked on before! We could hear the sound of the river nearby, and when we reached, we all were very careful not to accidentally step into a marsh thinking it was land! We left our shoes at a safe place, and stepped into the river. The cold, pellucid water was stunning.

We spent a lot of time there. We were the first people to go there! We discovered a route to the river, which was actually a tributary. It was very clean, and there was no pollution.

While we were coming back, we spotted another stream which had many colourful fish. When I saw it, I felt like my soul was cleansed and felt no worry; just peace and quiet.

## New News

## Perfectly Preserved Dinosaur Embryo Found Inside Fossilised Egg in Rare Discovery



# Spring

Zairah Madhurakuzhiyil 8

They say that for,  
A flower to blossom perfectly,  
Perfect conditions must be present.  
But how in this imperfect world,  
Can they expect,  
Perfect conditions to be provided everywhere?

Some flowers are suffocated,  
Some are liberated,  
Some are plucked quite early,  
And some are left to wither perpetually.

So, tell me how the world can expect,  
All flowers to blossom perfectly,  
When it doesn't provide,  
The environment that's oh so necessary.

I consider myself to be one of those flowers.  
A flower that has withered petals,  
A flower that isn't the perfect shade,  
A flower whose mind hasn't been made.

It isn't fair that only flowers who bloom perfectly,  
Are considered beautiful.  
How can you name beauty to be something so shallow?  
Beauty cannot be what something appears to be.  
Beauty should be known as what something has gone through,  
To get to where they are.

The flowers that survive,  
All the rough weather,  
And the seasons of darkness,  
Aren't these flowers the most beautiful?

The flowers that live through so much,  
And yet are still standing upright,  
Are the flowers that end up,  
Blossoming the most full and bright.

# Echo

Chaviv Jain Grade: 6

Echo is a historical fiction novel with an element of fantasy in it. It is written by Pam Muñoz Ryan, an American writer for children and young adults. The novel combines three gripping stories about children who fight against discrimination in society. It all starts and ends with fantasy, but as they say, the journey is better than the destination.

When a young Otto finds Eins, Zwei and Drei under a spell, he promises to help them using a harmonica. This harmonica is transferred to three children: Friedrich, Mike and Ivy. All the children face various forms of discrimination.

Throughout the book, there is one common theme: Hope will help you get through it all. This hidden message is revealed in the form of heartbreaking and laugh-out loud moments. If you delve deeper into the book, it's true meaning and intent makes itself shown.

Some parts make you tear up, while others make you laugh endlessly. This book shows the talent that children possess, and how discrimination can get in the way of it being displayed. It exhibits how mature and responsible children can be, mature enough to look after themselves and their family.

This book is apt for middle-schoolers looking for inspiration or anyone looking to read a heartwarming novel. The only minor stitch in the plot is the depiction of certain unlikely events. All in all, this book gets a 9/10.



# Victory over Covid

Tanishka Gupta Grade: 6

**This pandemic, don't know how long it'll last,  
With a snap of fingers, 2 years have passed.  
Covid has compelled us to stay indoor,  
That's enough! I can't be locked anymore!**

**People dying around is all you see,  
School has become an imagination for me.  
People here say, "Learn to cope...",  
It's all over, I've lost my hope.**

**So many people and so many kills,  
Listening to news now gives us chills.  
You can only sit at home to scream and shout,  
Why so much negativity? Isn't there a way out?**

**Wipe your tears and no need to cry,  
It won't harm giving it a try.  
Gather your courage and wear the mask,  
Nothing can compel you from accomplishing this task.**

**When you lose you also gain,  
No more sadness, loneliness and pain.  
Smile and don't hide the glee,  
Open the door because now you're free!**

**Nothing can snatch your freedom from you,  
You're finally outside and this is true.  
Follow the safety rules and forget the bitter past,  
It's now time for a fresh start!**







# Grey



- Sahana Narayanan Grade: 8

A blanket of grey, upon which clouds wander aimlessly, searching for something unknown to the clouds themselves. A grey sun, not beaming brightly upon the land, but rather spreading its own sorrows and gloom throughout the surface of the grey plain.

And a grey casket. Dreary, bleak as the rest, but Mrs. Streisand could not take her eyes off of it. For no reason but the one lying within the coffin. Her own daughter.

“Claire Streisand was a dearly loved child. Daughter of the late Hugh Streisand and his wife, Laura Streisand, she will be missed greatly. I would like to express my sincerest condolences to Laura Streisand, the mother of the newly deceased.”

Mrs. Streisand almost laughed. By almost, she meant that she could feel a little surge in emotion which, almost as soon as it came, was gone.

She was almost laughing at the insincerity of the funeral conductor. With his wooden voice and stiff posture, his ‘sincerest condolences’ didn’t seem nearly as sincere as they should have been.

But she couldn’t possibly be getting distracted at her daughter’s ceremony.

“-And Claire’s father, who unfortunately isn’t present here, would have mourned Claire’s loss as much as we are.”

No.

If her father had been present here, he wouldn’t have mourned. He would have smiled; a little, sweet smile, and the corner of his eyes would have crinkled, and he would have said, “Well, Claire darling, I can only thank you for being the most wonderful daughter I ever could have wished for.” He would have his head held high, back straight and chest filled with pride and dignity, even when he was crumbling inside.

But he was not here, and neither was Claire.  
Indeed, the sky was grey.

Still grey, though a decade had passed.

The wind whistled softly. It shook the leaves and blades of grass in front of the porch. The porch on which a woman sat quietly, rocking back and forth. The gentle breeze may have seemed pleasant to many, beautiful even; but Mrs. Streisand could only feel that the wind was crying. Crying out a feeble, timid cry for solace.

She sighed. Today had been an especially long day of aching loneliness. Not that it was uncommon for her. So perhaps it wasn’t an especially long day at all. It was simply as long as the others.

Mrs. Streisand closed her eyes. Tried to convince herself that her mind wasn’t buzzing so painfully, that she wasn’t stuck in the agonizing cycle of recollection.

But it didn’t work.

Because Mrs. Streisand could remember it all. The smile on her daughters’ face when she would wake up an hour after she should have. The way she acted so immature, but was sometimes so insightful that it almost scared her mother. With a sudden jolt, Mrs. Streisand rose from her chair. She needed to stop. But she couldn’t.

She couldn’t pretend that everything was alright when it was clear that it was not. Everything kept playing in her mind. A film that kept rolling.

Her daughter entering the world. Her daughter on her first day of school, waving, smiling brightly. Her daughter when she graduated, standing proud, filled with so much joy and happiness.

Her daughter at her own funeral. Still smiling, still beautiful.

But no longer alive.

Cold. Pale. Dead.

And her own plight. To walk home from the ceremony of her own child. She wished she couldn’t remember what it was like. But she could. She could remember it like it was yesterday.

Occasionally acknowledging the sympathies with a watery smile; Mrs. Streisand had made her way home, dragging her feet on the concrete.

Only once she had reached the front porch and saw her daughter’s shoes near the doormat, had she been met with the harsh realization.

Her daughter, the light and joy of her life.

Gone.

The vibrant beauty that her daughter was.

Gone.

Claire had taken with her any saturation left in life.

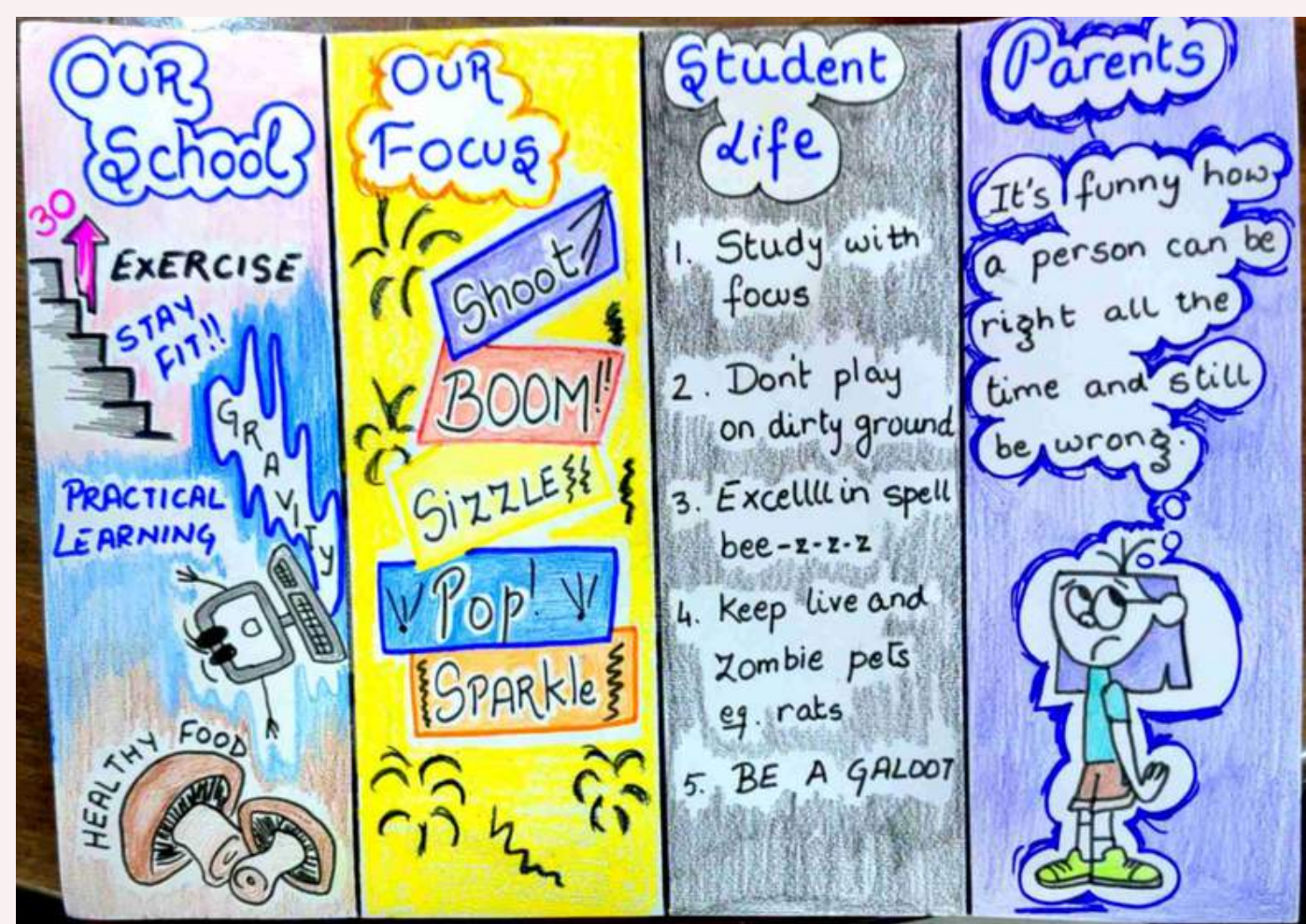
She needed to forget her. She could not afford to remember the happiness that she once had, or it may have torn her heart out.

She collected all of Claire’s belongings, heart aching almost unbearably. They were all shoved in Claire’s room, door locked and key hidden.

Mrs. Streisand swore never to open the door.

A key retrieved from under a vase, its blatantly obvious hiding spot. Old though it was, one could tell that it had been used extensively, and had hence been saved from rusting.

This key was the requisite to open one particular door in the house.



Demeera Grade 4





Mrs. Streisand clenched this key in her hands, it's ridges and grooves so familiar to her. She made her way to the door quickly, worried that if she hesitated longer, she would despise herself more than she already did.

After opening the door, Mrs. Streisand took a moment to absorb the familiar surroundings. A small ray of sunlight shone through a window in the room.

Dust lay thickly on top of the objects in the room, creating the false impression that the room was unseen, forgotten by the world around it.

But every object in this room held a cherished memory.

The books that Claire stubbornly refused to donate, even after having been read a thousand times. Claire's favorite candy, the kind that would get stuck in her teeth for ages afterwards, resting in a bowl on her desk. One curtain drawn, the other closed, so that the room wasn't too bright. Just the way Claire liked it.

Claire, Claire, Claire. The once idyllic name felt bittersweet on her tongue. Mrs. Streisand felt a dull ache throb in her chest. Her daughter had been taken from her too soon. She deserved a longer life. All were thoughts that had been discerned many times, but had never ceased to cause distress.

But now she no longer felt distress. She simply felt grey. Once upon a time, she had wanted to live forever, but that time was long gone. Now, every day was a relentless struggle.

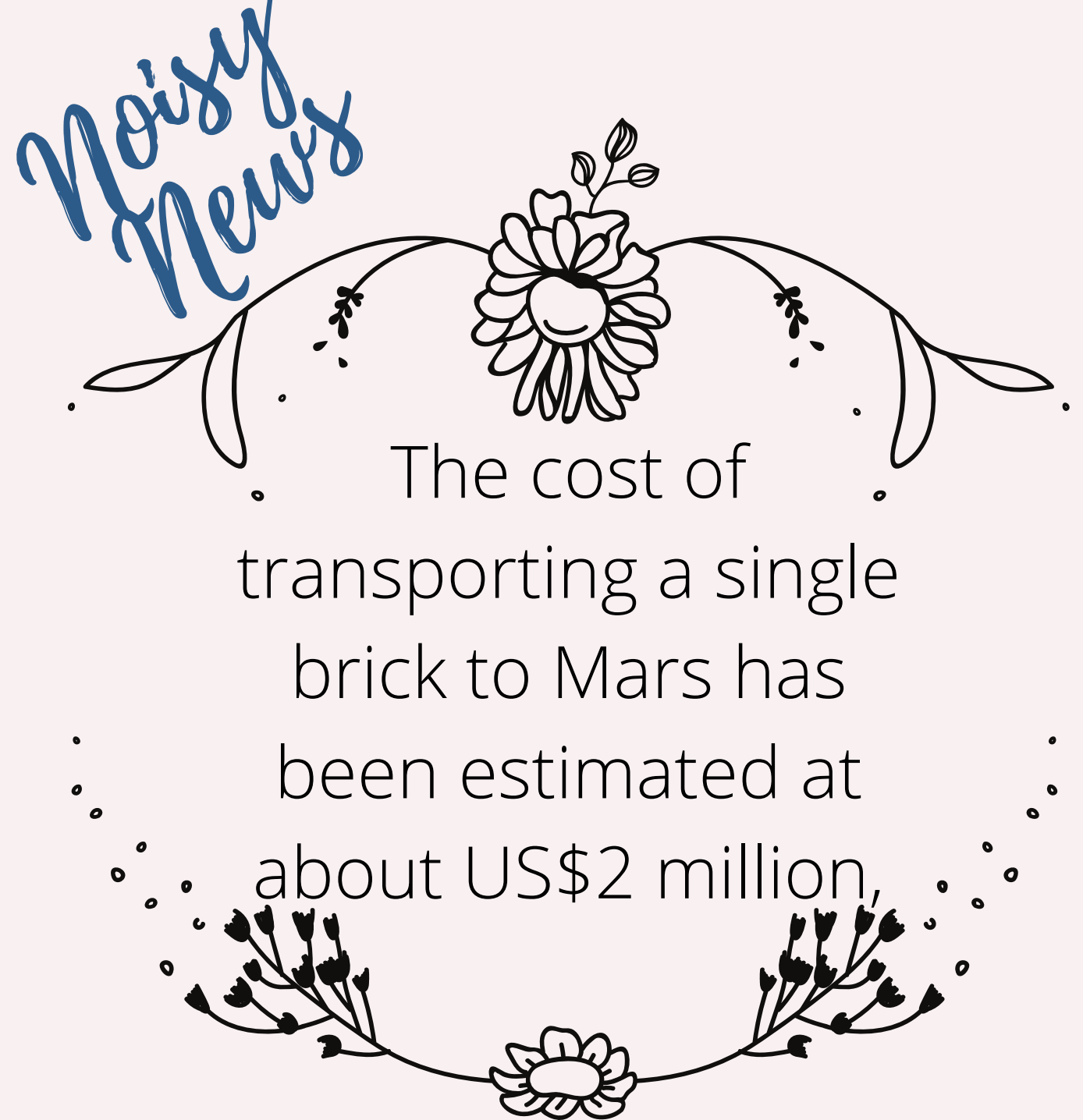
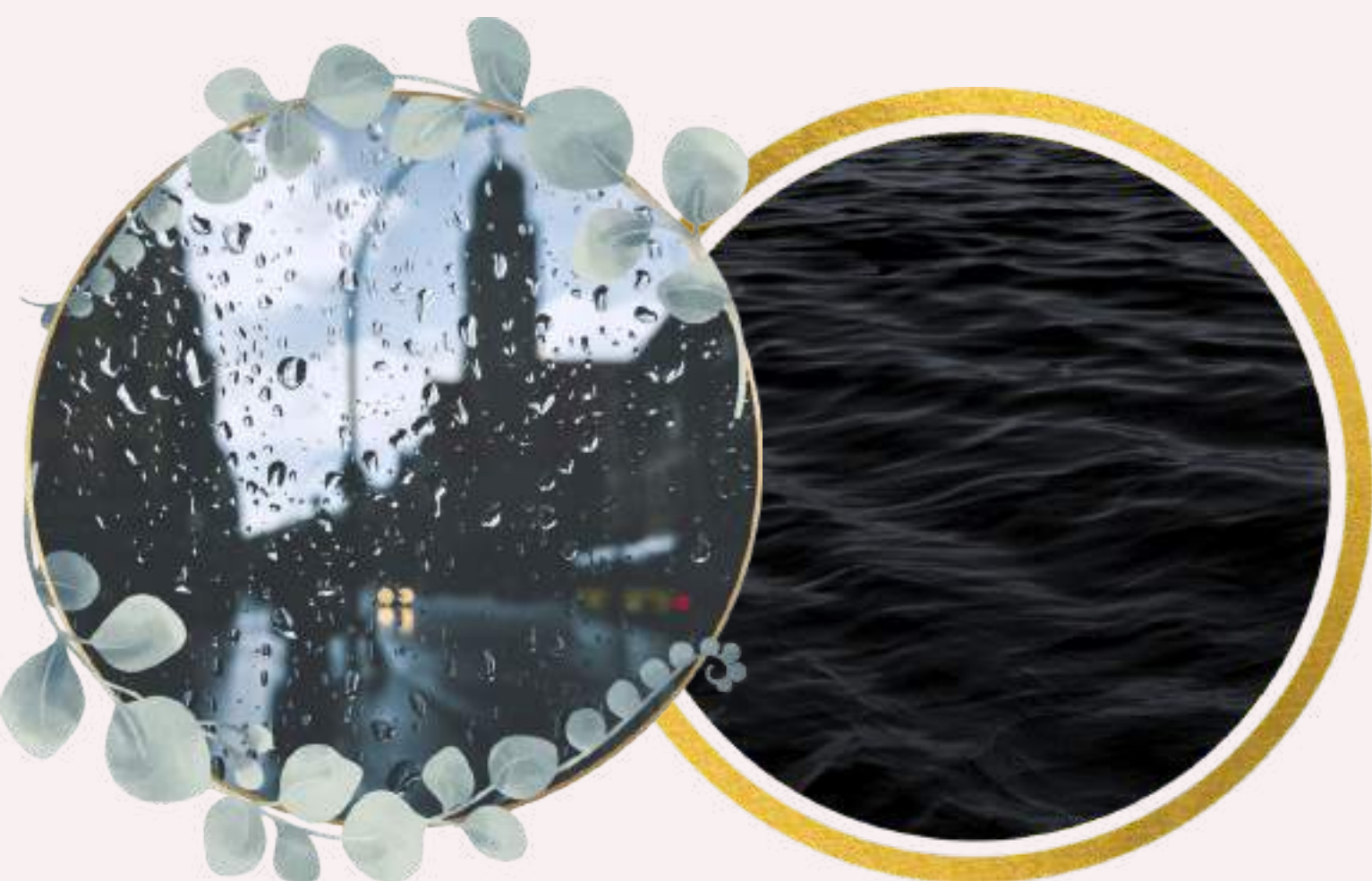
Hope that Claire would have wanted her mother to live. To live because she had made it this far, and that could not go to waste. To live for her. To live in spite of all the anguish that clenched at her heart day after day.

Was that hope fruitless?  
Maybe.

But it was enough. It was enough for Mrs. Streisand to want to live. So live she would.

Maybe, just maybe, if she kept enduring, she would finally be cut loose from the grey.

Was this what life was?  
Stuck in a cycle of constant self-pity and loathing?  
She stared at a photo of Claire.  
Her daughter. What would she have wanted?  
She no longer knew... but she could hope.



The cost of transporting a single brick to Mars has been estimated at about US\$2 million,

## A Knock from the Soul

-Yash Agrawal Grade: 8

"I can't... I can't do this. Why did I take on such a task?" I asked myself. It was a question that had been lurking in my mind ever since I started this project. I knew perfectly well how disappointed I would feel if I couldn't do it. I had experienced such failures before. My next generation Digital Assistant, the instantaneous Photopulse messaging, and now my most ambitious idea yet: an artificial friend.

By the evening, I was so hopeless that I started contemplating quitting. I went outside with my umbrella. The weather perfectly represented my feeling: hopelessness.

It had been an hour since I had left, the rain was calming down, and the Sun was slowly climbing up the horizon.

"Hullo."

I jumped. I had not noticed my friend Jim standing there, I was lost in my own thoughts.

"Oh. Hi..." I said.

Jim saw my worrisome look and asked me what was wrong. I told him everything, from the flashbacks to failures to the disappointing realization to the harrowing walk. His expression didn't change for a few moments. Then, he suddenly smiled and looked up at the horizon.

"Hey, Jake. Can I ask you something? What is that?"

He pointed to the Sun.

"Well, the Sun, of course."

"Wrong. That bright object is your soul."

A look of confusion came over my face. What was Jim trying to convey? "Yes. Your soul. That object is the brightest thing in this entire world. And guess what, your soul is the brightest soul that I have ever seen, that humanity has ever seen. That bright object in the sky is no different to it. That object has helped us for millions of years, and I do not have a shred of doubt that your soul will too."

I stood silent. It was as if a fire of hope had suddenly ignited in me. Just perhaps, Jimmy was right. I looked at the Sun. Perhaps my soul was similar to it, just sleeping like the Sun sleeps in the night. And then, I heard a knock from inside me. Then, my soul spoke: "Let's do this."

It was the one phrase that changed my life.





# The Hidden Door

-Srishti Sengupta Grade: 8

I stared at the worn out ribbon, as blue and weary as the eyes of its previous owner. I could still see her long brown hair neatly pleated with the ribbon dangling at the end. It had been years since I last saw Ruth, but everything about her was as clear as glass in my mind.

The dusty radio in the corner of the room bellowed with the excited voice of the reporter listing down how many Jews had been captured or how many bombs had been dropped. I thought this business was brutal, barbaric and cold-blooded, except I wasn't supposed to think so.

"You're still a child, Char, what do you know?" mother always said to me. The powerful Germans thought it was right, everyone in our quiet little town thought it was right and more importantly, father had thought so too. "If father gave his life for this, I have no reason to doubt it," I thought to myself as I reached for my hairbrush. It wasn't there. This wasn't the first thing to disappear; so this paired with the fact that I heard faint noises from the locked door made me believe there was a burglar hiding there. I quickly ran a hand through my messy blonde curls and crept out of the house as quietly as possible. The locked door, as everyone living in our flat called it, was an uninhabited house towards the end of the corridor. What's funny is that the door was never locked in the first place. Father and I learnt that years ago; it was our secret hideout. The door wasn't difficult to push open, even old Frau Becker could easily open it, but our neighbors were far too lazy and trusting. I pressed my ear against the cold white door, bracing myself to scream in case the people inside were lethal. The door swung open, and I expected to see tall burly men who possibly had guns. Small and less powerful than the ones soldiers like my father owned, of course. What I saw inside was the complete opposite.

The girl's flimsy red dress that sank down her shoulders looking all too familiar, had a star pinned to it.

"Oh, so you're stealing my things!" I said sharply, crossing my arms to look more intimidating. The girl flinched under my disdainful glare. "I-I d-didn't...she gave them to m-me." The dress undoubtedly belonged to me, no one else could have such broad shoulders.

"What's your name?" I demanded while admiring her smooth and thick hair. It wouldn't be long until it would be shaved away in a concentration camp, never to grow back again, for her life would be cut short by us Germans. I quickly blinked back the tears before my thunder cloud coloured eyes began to shower. I couldn't possibly sympathize with Jews, I was a German, a soldier's daughter who had lost his life because of Jews!

"They're the monsters, not us!" I screamed out loud. I gulped when I realized how mad that must have sounded, quickly covering up for it.

"Mother says children age their parents, you really did." "They're the monsters, not us!" I screamed out loud.

I gulped when I realized how mad that must have sounded, quickly covering up for it.

"Mother says children age their parents, you really did."  
For the first time, Ruth's troubled countenance broke into a faint smile.  
"That's my grandmother."

I nodded, the lady with the wrinkled kind face huddled in the corner looked like a typical grandmother; the ones who baked and told stories. My granny was nothing like that, she was cold, commanding and stern, just like my mother.

"My parents," Ruth began, "they were-"  
I couldn't bear to hear what she said next, their fate was too obvious, too terribly dreadful to accept.

I ran away from the door as fast as I could, as though Ruth was a ferocious tiger instead of a scared, broken girl.  
"Where were you, Charlotte?"

I was welcomed home by my mother's authoritative voice. I was twelve years old now, I could do as I pleased and it was none of her business. "At Frau Becker's place, you could ask her if you please." I answered, I was a great liar and my eyes were adapted to blocking away emotions. I gazed into the sky, it was the same colour as Ruth's eyes this evening. Heavens! Why was I thinking about her? No, it was time I accepted the truth. Father's death was his own choice, Ruth's parents' weren't, and being German didn't change the cold, hard facts. I had to help Ruth, it was the least I could do to make up for the horrible things our country had done to her. Mother wasn't to find out about Ruth.

I walked towards our roughly cut wooden table for dinner, but mother wasn't there. About twenty minutes later, she ran in looking breathless and more serious than usual. I noticed green stains on her skirt, which was surprising as we were having Pea soup tonight. Mother never cooked without an apron.

"Where were you, mother?" I asked, trying not to sound too curious. Mother ignored me and began eating.

"Charlotte, don't you dare follow me," she suddenly pushed her chair aside, making a loud screechy sound and stormed into her room.

The sun was shining much too bright the next morning and birds were chirping melodiously by the window. Suddenly, everything was still and the noise of a heavy jeep was the only sound to be heard. I knew that sound very well, for bad news was all that they brought. The grievous news they had brought to us two years ago was still fresh in my mind, like it had happened only yesterday.

"I'm sorry, Frau Schulz. He was a great man."  
Tears streaked mother's pale face; she looked as though she was in a different world.

"Charlotte, always be true to yourself." She said all of a sudden.  
"Charlotte, come down."

I was shaken back from the painful memories by my mother's instruction. "Now I know nobody would be foolish enough to hide Jews here, but we still have to check." The soldier was tall and stout with a rather cunning and menacing gaze. I found his deep and proud voice just as disturbing. "Oh, officer, I'm so glad you're here! I've been hearing noises lately, from the locked door," Mrs Becker lowered her voice, "I do believe there are ghosts there..."

Mother was right, Frau Becker really was annoying. The soldiers obviously didn't believe in her ridiculous ghost stories, but they would investigate the room now. My eyes filled with tears, they would take Ruth away, torture her, starve her, and probably kill her in a gas chamber. Now I realized what mother had meant that day. So what if these people were soldiers, I had the right to fight for what I believed in!







# The Hidden Door

(Continuation)

I took a deep breath, "That's my secret hideout. You probably heard me playing,"  
I answered.

"No, no! There was walking and talking...screams. A good many screams that  
gave a poor woman heart attacks!"

I stood speechless as the soldiers decided to investigate the room. I had betrayed  
Ruth's trust.

"Do you think my daughter is lying?" Mother asked sharply.  
The man, who seemed to respect mother because of father, looked embarrassed.

"I wouldn't dare to blame you, Frau Schulz."

"Then your work here is done."

I looked up at my mother, awe-stricken and confused. She fully supported the  
Germans and knew that I was lying, yet...

I quietly followed mother to our house, not daring to ask the question I couldn't  
stop pondering about.

"I'm very proud of you, Char."

I stared at the woman standing in front of me, surely she wasn't my mother.  
Mother seemed to have read my mind.

"Charlotte, Ruth couldn't have hid here on her own, could she?"

"B-but you always followed and supported them-the Germans." I stammered.

"Hitler's supporters aren't the only Germans, people who haven't lost their sanity  
to toxic nationalism are also Germans."

I felt ashamed for thinking ill of my mother when she had risked her life to save  
Ruth. It was obvious who else had access to my things.

"I was afraid you would end up like your father because you were too afraid to  
think for yourself. To listen to the voice within."

I hugged mother tightly, something I hadn't done for years. The future was  
uncertain, there would be several other hurdles in our way and victory was  
unlikely. Yet, even in the darkest of times there's always a flicker of hope if you  
stay true to yourself.

## Another World, Another Dream

If the world could speak,  
What would it like to be?

If the world had liberty,  
What would it be like?

The trees would be safe,  
There'd be plastic-free lakes,  
The sky, a clear blue,  
With little cirrus clouds.

The animals would talk,  
Across plains they'd roam and walk,  
Birds would fly free,  
And fish would leap in the sea.

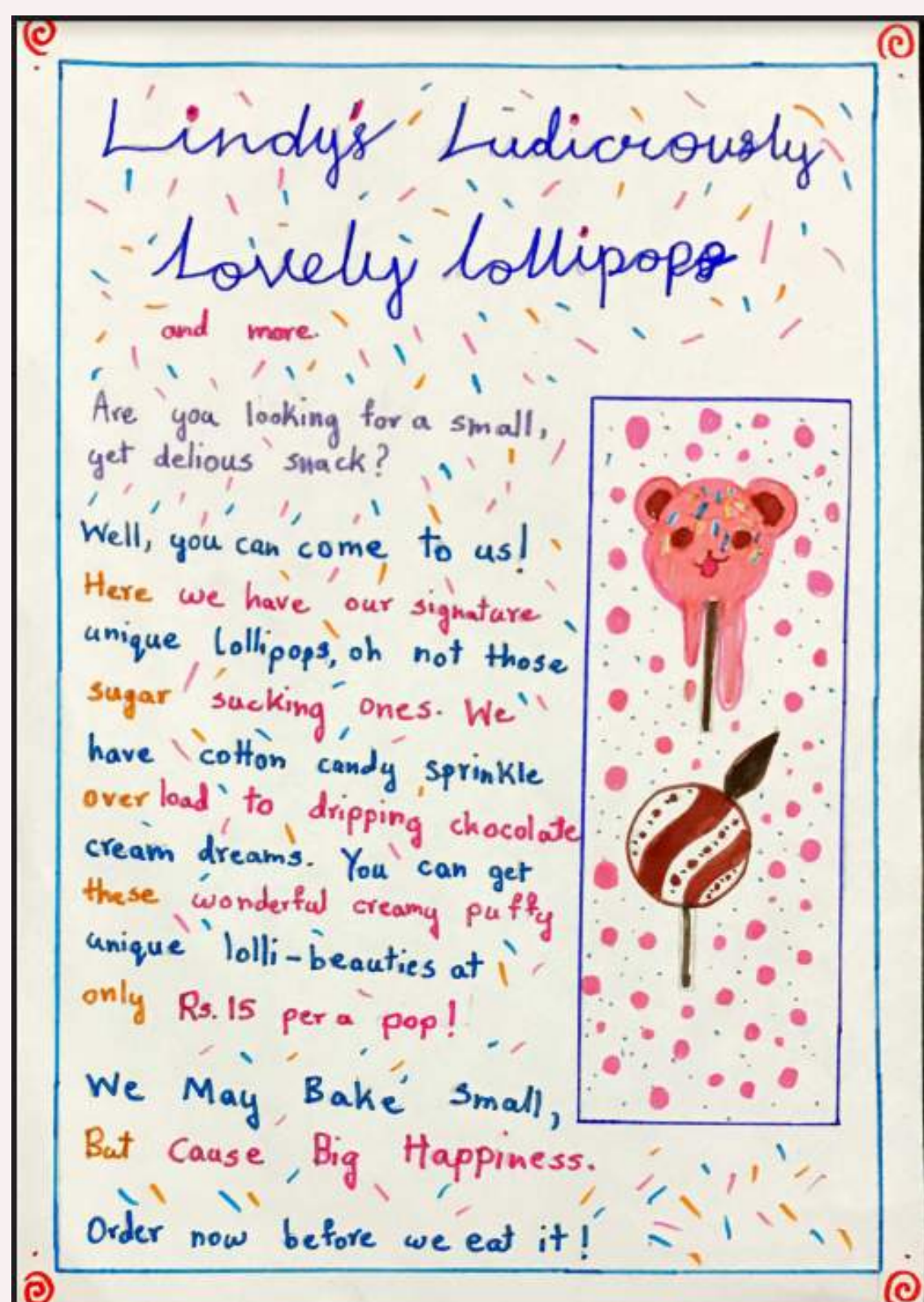
Fresh air in our lungs,  
The breeze on our face,  
The beautiful view,  
And a heart full of joy!

Deforestation is cured,  
Urbanization is less,  
Global warming doesn't exist,  
And green is all I see.

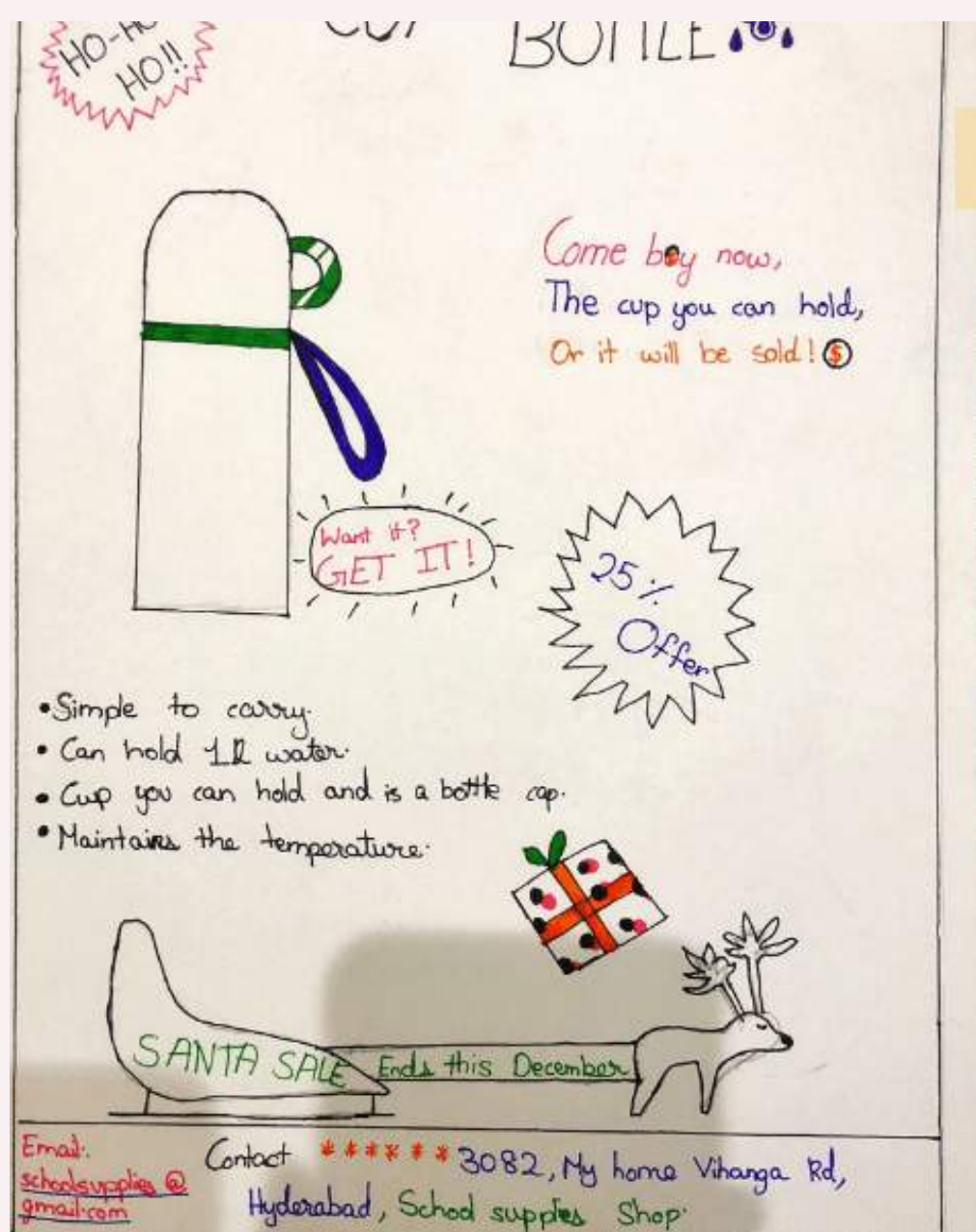
But wait!

It's just another dream.

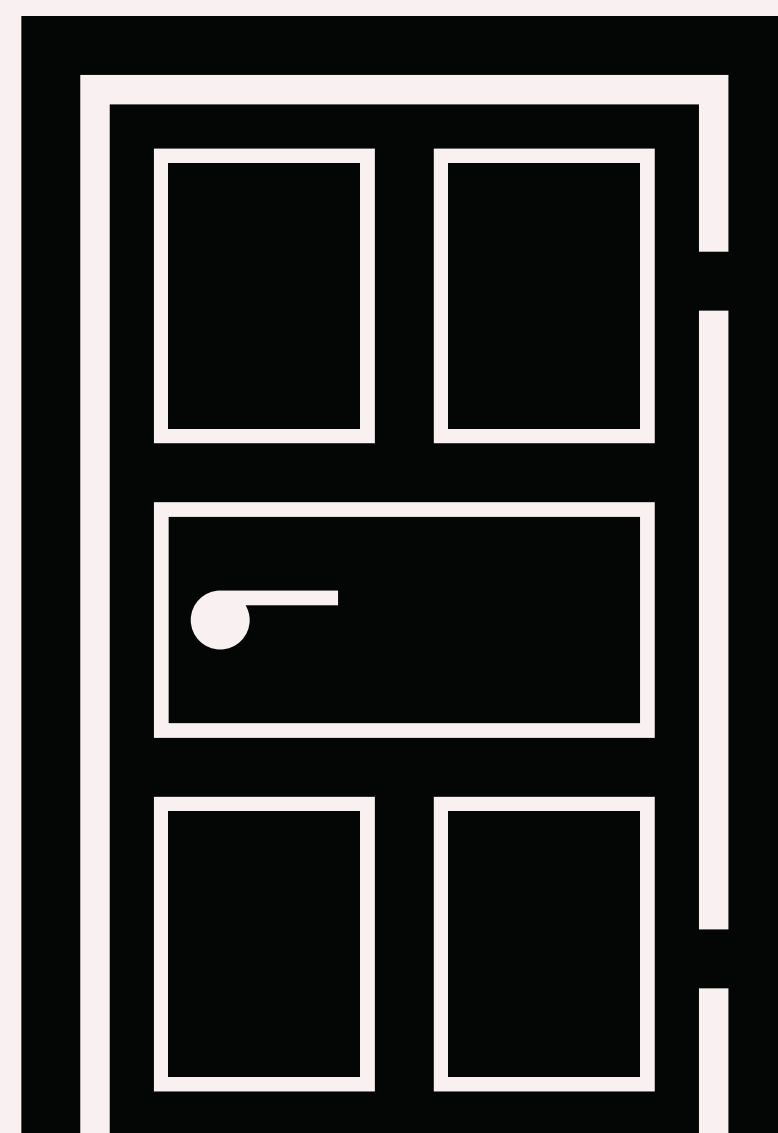
By Riya Ambekar Grade: 6



Sakruti 5C



Nivedya Pragith Nair





# Middle School Memories



Manohar Mudumbuy Grade: 6

The wisps of frost have vanished,  
The sight of the glowing sun has left us  
all ravished,  
The gloomy flowers burst out blooming,  
Leaving the cold fuming,  
The frostbite has drastically decreased

Fresh breeze glides across our skin,  
Wings are seen, Oh!, and a fin,  
The sense of green,  
The roads are clean,  
Captured, is the state of the ice  
beast!



Anchal Agrawal Grade: 8

Crowds and crowds,  
Sounds and sounds,  
As busy as can be,  
Get your cup of coffee,  
The season of spring is released!

Sminika Aldi Grade: 6





# Thank You

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