

LOTUS BUD





ENGLISH

BRUISED AND DISCRIMINATED

For all those who need a little more confidence, including me.

The world is a kaleidoscope, and I am the darkest hue meandering in it.

I am my own enemy. I hate myself. I despise every inch of me. Especially my burnt skin and sheer display of my race, promenading around with shameless identity. A day merges through a multitude of shades and intonations and I am the darkest hue, my blackness proliferating with each passing moment. Every time I catch sight of myself, an all powerful vortex of loathe and resentment overwhelms me. Yesterday in particular, I underwent such a sentiment when I encountered myself in the lightest hues that I could find but that put into even more prominence my grotesque dark skin.

I adorned my gauzy veil with as much vanity as I could muster, succeeding in hindering my face. I was light-footed as I sauntered casually down the street, my eyes focused and fixated on the pavement.

Even in one of the most secure places for people like me, I had to keep a low profile. The marketplace was pervading with white people. Their skin was so rich and pure, not a blemish demarcating it. I will go against everything that I root for by claiming this, but I longed to be them; to not be dark and bruised anymore, but a nightingale, free of shackled hands.

There are days when I feel infinitesimal, a black candy amid the coloured ones, desolated, solitary and

deserted. Sometimes I feel as though not only mortals, but God too has abandoned me, left me to thrive alone in the midst of a cruel, heartless world. Inconsequentiality pierces through me like a jagged dagger, killing all other emotions, till my heart is empty, vacant, devoid of any feeling.

The much coveted bangles had a long waiting time of about fifty people. I was to the front, standing behind another one of those beautiful people. A man in his early thirties I should say, probably shopping for his girlfriend in the front. Now, the law stated that I had to bow and step back to make way if such an event was to occur but not once have I had the obligation to. I wanted to look like them, but could not bring myself to respect them.

He jeered at me, his eyes dark pools of bleakness, peering into my soul. Just as he attempted to stand in front of me, I blatantly refused, my tone flat and binding. I instantly regretted it and rebuked myself for my thoughtlessness, my unscrupulous action. For a split second, everything was okay. He just stared at me unbelievably, but no words were uttered from the disgruntled droop of the corners of his mouth.

Optimistically, I thought that he was, perhaps, a kind soul, a kindred spirit and that I should not have judged him so harshly by his countenance. I could not have been more wrong.

When I observed the mortification in his face transform into vengeance, I could predict what was coming. I raised my arms to protect my face, but he was too quick. He struck me hard.

**“Am I just a withered flower, or a drenched flame?
Or am I a pompous display of discomfiture, the
epitome of self depravity or shame?
Am I a vulture, with ravenous, hungry hands?
I shall never know, unless I take a stand.”**

My brain advised me to relent, but my heart commanded otherwise. Every man has limits; I cannot just stand there and watch him demolish people like me. For once in my life, I fought back. I did not slap him back but oh, what I did was so much worse. I punched him, right in the gut. Not just a trifling punch, rather an avalanche of punches. And then I fled, trying not to think of the consequences that would inevitably follow.

The numbness was rubbing in inchmeal, caressing my inner passions till all that was left were thoughts of the day pervading my mind. By the time I reached my tucked away abode, polluted raindrops had commenced falling, disturbing the previous tranquility of the sky. Twelve hours ago, I would have found a deep sense of solidarity in those fleeting drops of rain, but now? I glanced at them admiringly, appreciative of how they bore their fate uncomplainingly, resiliently. A drop fell on the windowsill and I fondly caressed it, lovingly even. I had spent sixteen years of my life drunk in self loathe and misery, those evil feelings coursing through my veins like poison injected in my bloodstream. And I was done with it, done with bleeding self pity and resentment. The thought filled me with resilience, like a molten blade plunged seething into water.

I am black, and I am proud of it. I am proud of the beautiful, significant color that runs through my

blood because without it, life will be inexistent. I love myself and nobody in this world can deprive me of that powerful love or vehement reverence I feel towards myself, *nobody*.

I will not allow it. Not anymore.

Name: Swara Jhunjhunwala

Class: 9B

Colours

From 6,500 languages thank you!
For colours,
that fill up flowers,
and colour the towers,
and can be stared at for hours.
When the birds spread wings to fly
the colours can be seen by,
When the water mirrors
the blue sky with the blazing sun
it's a box of treasure,
floating freely with pleasure.
From black and white to pink and green,
is like wings of colours making a dream,
Houses are pink, the sun is yellow, and it goes on,
But there are people seeing black and grey ,
Which is not fair,
While we see it all neat and bright
We should say thank you for the colours tonight.

Name - Shalini Chatterjee

Class - 6C

The City

'Querencia - a place from which one's strength is drawn, where one feels at home; the place where you are your most authentic self'. That is what the settee beside my bedroom window is for me. Querencia. Its gaudy velvet coursing my hands fills me with homely warmth. I feel propelled to gaze through the window

across it when I am in the depths of despondency. It is so because of the city that unfolds outside. The city, my city, gives me an air of nonchalance and assuredness. It is always there for me.

“For those who are lost, there will always be cities that feel like home.”

~Simon van Booy

The city makes me feel like a taciturn onlooker, silently observing the happenings of the surroundings while lost in a world completely of his own. That, I suppose, is what I am. Looking out at the city is a distraction, a distraction that gets me through the day. I welcome it with open arms, and let my keen senses overwhelm me.

Nighttime is special, for it is the time when scintillating lights project dancing shadows of people traversing the streets. The time when the silver wraith hanging in the sky reflects the ethereal beauty of the city. Once in a while, I glance up to the sky, and find the moon grinning at me while the stars play with me with their notorious winks. It instills in me the feeling that I am unusual, distinct.

My teacher told me that everything is music, from the light tinkling of bells to the jangling, discordant notes of a protest. What differentiates each piece is the way we perceive it. The unhealthy sound emitted by a frying pan that radiates from the city during the day, or the melancholic soprano voice of the church songs reverberating at night, they are all music.

Rainy days paint the sky a solid gray. The kind of gray that is bestowed upon the city before the sun rises. The rain blurs my view, but that is okay. On those days, I find pleasure in the dampness of the

smell permeating the city, or the cool drops of rain against my fingertips when I extend them out. On those days, I derive exaltation from the thought that I feel trapped inside a painted canvas. No, not trapped, but free.

Once in particular, I stood gazing at the city and a realization dawned on me; it was the realization of why I found this view so irresistibly alluring. The city and I, we are the same, helpless of our fate but accepting of it.

Name - Swara Jhunjunwala

Class - 9B

Those leaves, and you leaving me

Autumn used to be my favourite season of the year. The crunching sounds of the orange and brown leaves under my dark brown boots was something that gave me comfort. I loved it, but not anymore.

We used to stomp on those leaves purposefully, just to hear the wonderful crunching sounds. A smile crept onto my face as I remembered you standing and watching me, laughing your warm comforting laugh that I'll never be able to hear anymore. How you used to smile at

my antics and laugh at your own jokes.
Recordings are never enough, I want to
hear you again,
see you laughing beside me, enjoying
the little things, giving me interesting
lectures on life and
telling me all your opinions. How could
I possibly meet you now, when you're
already high
above and unreachable to me. I
remembered how we used to stroll
through this park on
evenings like this, when the sun was
about to set but the sky wasn't dark.
You told me about
your childhood memories while I
listened. I stop today, in my tracks and
imagine you standing in

front of me, telling me that everything is fine and that this is just a nightmare, that won't happen now, but will it? The warmth that would come from hugging you, the comfort that I felt, I won't be able to feel that again. All that's left is your red scarf that you would always wear in autumn, saying it would bring good luck.

I just want to say goodbye to you, hug you tightly, tell you that I did it, that I finally got into my dream university. I want to hear you say that you are proud of me, but who will tell me that now? No matter how much I want to cry, how hard my head aches, I simply can't. I want to

scream, but my voice doesn't come out. The wind blew calmly, as if it was trying to console me, it helped a little but not as much. A leaf landed on my shoulder, it helped, it helped a lot. You adored leaves, you would always say that if you ever died you would become a special leaf and help me, and stay by my side. I always frowned and told you to stop talking about death.

It was inevitable wasn't it? You dying, leaving me behind all lonely and sad. Whenever I felt lost you would always guide me, but where are you now when I need you the most. I

chuckled softly as I picked the leaf up from my shoulder and held it out in front of me. You became a very special leaf, father, you really did.

Name - Portia Bala

Class - 7D

Where the Violets Bloom

It was one of the coldest November mornings in Helmand. The stars of the night sky started to disappear in almost no time as the orange light radiated from the horizon. On this chilly, cold winter morning, the town of Grishk seemed to be tucked inside a large blanket of snow. This time the onset of snow started a little early. Even the winding river, which would normally be free of snow, now had a thin layer of fleeting ice. Surely Helmand was all set to have one of the harshest winters this time.

The rays of the sun struck the snow making it shine like diamonds. Few of the streaks seeped through the cedar grove, piercing the curtains of the shabby wooden window, waking up Naghma from her slumber. She reluctantly opened her eyes to check the grandfather clock on the wall in front of the bed only to find it was yet not time to get ready for school, she still had half an hour before she had to start getting ready. She lazily turned to her left to throw her tiny arm gently on her father's chest and hugged him. This short span of time she got before starting her day was her 'me' time. She would spend this time thinking about far-off lands, of the magical horses that could fly, of the

porcelain goat that could speak like humans. Her mind would also be clouded with worldly thoughts like how she would spend her day at school or what games she could play with her friends during the recess. She thought about the snowfall that she waited for all year long. It suddenly occurred to her how the snow that she adored could cause her school to close. Last year, her school was closed for weeks because of the snow. Her hometown lacked advanced infrastructure, which was why heavy snowfall affected the everyday activities of people. Naghma's school was still functioning since the snowfall was minimal till now. Suddenly, the flow of her thoughts was interrupted by the sound of

the clock. She shot up, trying to wake up her father. "Baba, wake up! Please get me ready for school

or else we will be late for school." She hated missing even a single day at school.


Jamil gradually opened his eyes, slowly sitting up on the bed. He could barely open his eyes. He

vigorously rubbed his eyes to clear his vision. "Naghma, go back to sleep. You have been growing

slimmer recently, you should take a day's rest" said Jamil sleepily, trying to convince his daughter to stay back home that day.

"Don't worry Baba, I am absolutely fine. Shabana must've come to school today and I'm sure she will

be waiting for me." This was one name Jamil was quite familiar with and often heard in conversations



with his daughter. Jamil knew for sure how worried she was since Shabana had been absent from school for the past two days.

“But it’s snowing heavily dear, we cannot go to school today”


“No Baba, you know, today our English teacher is going to tell us a story of Rostam and Sohrab”,

argued Naghma. Out of all the other lessons in school, Naghma used to wholeheartedly enjoy the

English class. Every English class, their teacher would tell them stories about distant lands she longed

to visit. Towards the end of her day in school, her mind would drift away from classes, thinking about

what she would tell her father about her day when she got back home. Her favourite time of the day



was when after reaching home, she would sit down to have her lunch while telling her father the story she was told that day in the English class.

Jamil started getting restless. He knew how much Naghma enjoyed attending school. The walk to her school with Jamil is what she enjoyed the most. She had to cross the river to reach her school. Every day before getting on to the bridge, she would collect a few pebbles and stuff them into her uniform's pocket. While she walked down the bridge, she would toss the pebbles into the river, each time trying to throw it farther than the last. She would jump around, clapping her hands, every time

she succeeded in doing so. Seeing his daughter happy would never fail to warm the cockles of Jamil's

heart. Jamil now felt helpless. His jaw stiffened. He snapped at Naghma, "I do not want to hear another word!"

Naghma's eyes swelled up with tears as if all the waters of Helmand would soon be flowing down her cheeks.

Jamil, at a loss for words, looked blankly at his daughter for some time. The sight of Naghma's

weeping face filled his heart with remorse.

Only he knew how much he wanted to take back his

words. In the whole world, he only had his daughter whom he could call his own just like Naghma

had no one else but him. Fathers around the world protect their daughters from all evil, wish the best for them, make arrangements so that they live a happy life. Otherwise, what are fathers for after all? But, today Jamil felt devoid of all strength. The Taliban Fatwa of disallowing girls to go to school was so overbearing. It had occurred to Jamil several times to leave Helmand. But, where would they go? They did not have the means. And, wherever they went, the Taliban would soon follow. He pulled Nagma closer to him, hiding her face in his chest. He somehow managed to prevent letting out his bottled up feelings. His gaze shifted to the street outside the window. The first few

Taliban soldiers with their guns were starting to appear at the crossing. Jamil let out a deep breath.

The world around him was crumbling at breakneck speed. Would he ever see Naghma going to school again? Would he live to see his dream, of seeing Naghma as a doctor, fulfilled? Several thoughts occupied his mind. He lowered his sight that now fell on the pot on the window sill. A single Violet flower had bloomed. He had not noticed this till that very moment. But then, life is full of surprises and so many of them are pleasant ones. Jamil's heart filled with hope as he clasped his daughter tightly.

Name -Mrigakshi Mazumdar

Class - 7A

WHISPERS OF THE SEA

In a quaint coastal village where the briny scent of the ocean kissed every breeze and seagulls painted the sky with their wings, lived a young girl named Marina. Her heart beat in rhythm with the waves, her every step echoing the call of the sea. From the tender age of five, Marina's soul had been enraptured by the azure expanse that stretched beyond the horizon.

Marina's room was adorned with treasures washed ashore—seashells of all shapes and sizes, glistening pebbles that carried tales of distant shores, and bottles containing secret messages penned by unknown hands. Her walls were a canvas of ocean sunsets, captured in vibrant hues that seemed to breathe life into the room. But it was her insatiable curiosity that set her apart from the crowd.

Marina would rush to the shore every morning as the first light painted the waves gold, her bare feet imprinting a story of unquenchable yearning on the sand. She collected seashells, each one telling a story about ancient sailors and faraway lands. Her gaze was always drawn to the horizon, as if she expected the sea to reveal its secrets at any moment.

The lighthouse keeper, an elderly man named Captain Grey, was the one who noticed the fire

that was raging within Marina. He'd sail through storms and calms, his heart beating in time with the ocean's rhythms. He took Marina under his wing, sharing tales of his travels and instructing her in the ways of the sea because he recognised the same passion in Marina's eyes.

Marina's fascination with the ocean changed under Captain Grey's guidance and she gained a profound knowledge of its workings, including the ebb and flow of tides, the meaning of the wind, and the constellations that helped sailors find their way home. She could recognise the distinct cries of various seagulls, as if they were narrating tales of adventures off in the distance. Her guitar's strings were danced over by her fingers as she played, producing melodies reminiscent of the lullaby of the sea.

Marina's connection to the sea grew stronger over time. Her affection for the sea went beyond the physical—it was a spiritual bond, an echo of shared histories and dreams. She longed to sail beyond the horizon, to inhale the salty air that whispered secrets to those who listened. The village revered her dream, recognising the truth—Marina was born of the sea, and the sea had claimed her heart.

Marina's dream came true one summer as the sun painted the sky in coral and gold hues. With Captain Grey's approval and a crew of fellow dreamers, she set sail on the ship.

The ship sliced through the waves like a dancer's embrace, transporting Marina right into the heart of her passion. Marina's ship danced with the wind, guided by the same constellations that adorned her walls. Every sunrise brought with it the promise of new horizons, and every sunset reminded me of the sea's timeless beauty. Marina felt alive in the embrace of the open water, her spirit soaring on the wings of her dreams. Marina stood at the ship's bow one moonlit night, her heart overflowing with gratitude, as the sea shimmered with a thousand stars. She looked out over the vast expanse that had become her sanctuary and thanked the waves.

And the sea seemed to respond in that moment—a gentle breeze, a playful splash, as if the ocean itself acknowledged her devotion.

"Whispers of the Sea" whisked Marina away to shores she'd only dreamed of—tropical paradises, forgotten islands, and bustling ports where cultures intertwined like threads in a tapestry. She became a storyteller with each journey, her words painting pictures of the ocean's majesty, power, and timeless allure.

Marina's journey was more than just a quest; it was a meeting with the very essence of life.

Her fascination with the sea was more than just a passing fancy; it was a love affair with nature's most enchanting dance. It was a journey into the depths of her own heart, one that left an indelible imprint on her soul.

Name - Anahita Dhar
Class - 9D

The Serenade by Twilight

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm, amber glow across the tranquil lakeside, the world seemed to hush in reverence. The gentle ripples of the water mirrored the tranquil evening, and a soft breeze rustled the leaves of the willow trees, like the whispered secrets of nature herself.

Amidst this serene symphony of twilight, a solitary figure stood by the water's edge, bathed in the soft, golden light. It was a young woman with a violin clasped lovingly in her hands. Her eyes, pools of

deep contemplation, gazed out toward the horizon.

Without preamble, she raised her bow and delicately touched it to the strings. The violin responded with a sigh, its notes like the sweetest signs of a summer evening. The melody that flowed forth was not just music; it was a serenade to the universe.

The notes soared, carrying with them the heart's deepest emotions—joy, longing, and a touch of melancholy. Her fingers danced upon the strings, each touch an intimate conversation between her soul and the instrument.

The lakeside became an enchanted realm, where the very air seemed to hold its breath, and the stars began to twinkle in time to the music. The moon, a silvery

crescent, rose higher in the sky, as if drawn by the ethereal strains of the violin.

Listeners, invisible to the musician, gathered around, drawn by the enchantment of her playing.

Their hearts swelled and broke with each note, for this was more than a serenade; it was a gift from the heavens—a beautiful serenade that transcended the boundaries of time and space.

As the final note faded into the night, a collective sigh of awe and gratitude echoed through the lakeside. The young woman lowered her violin, her eyes still gazing at the horizon, as if seeking an answer in the starry expanse. And in that moment, the universe seemed to whisper back, its response carried on the wings of a thousand fireflies that danced in the night.

Name - Natasha Kayal

Class - 9D

The Family Man

So much blood on his hands,

But not one drop stains his Rolex,

He hides behind balls and festivals oh so grand ,

But don't be fooled - he'll slay whoever dares to even dream about conquering his land,

His favourite part about the kill however,

Is not beheading his prey ,

It's seeing their loved ones torturing themselves, all in vain.

I haven't heard of anything quite so ironic,
Because after destroying dreams and
crushing hopes , he dares to call himself a
"family man".

-Shanaya Danish
8D