

A Literary Venture by KiiT Group of Institutes

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Klound 9

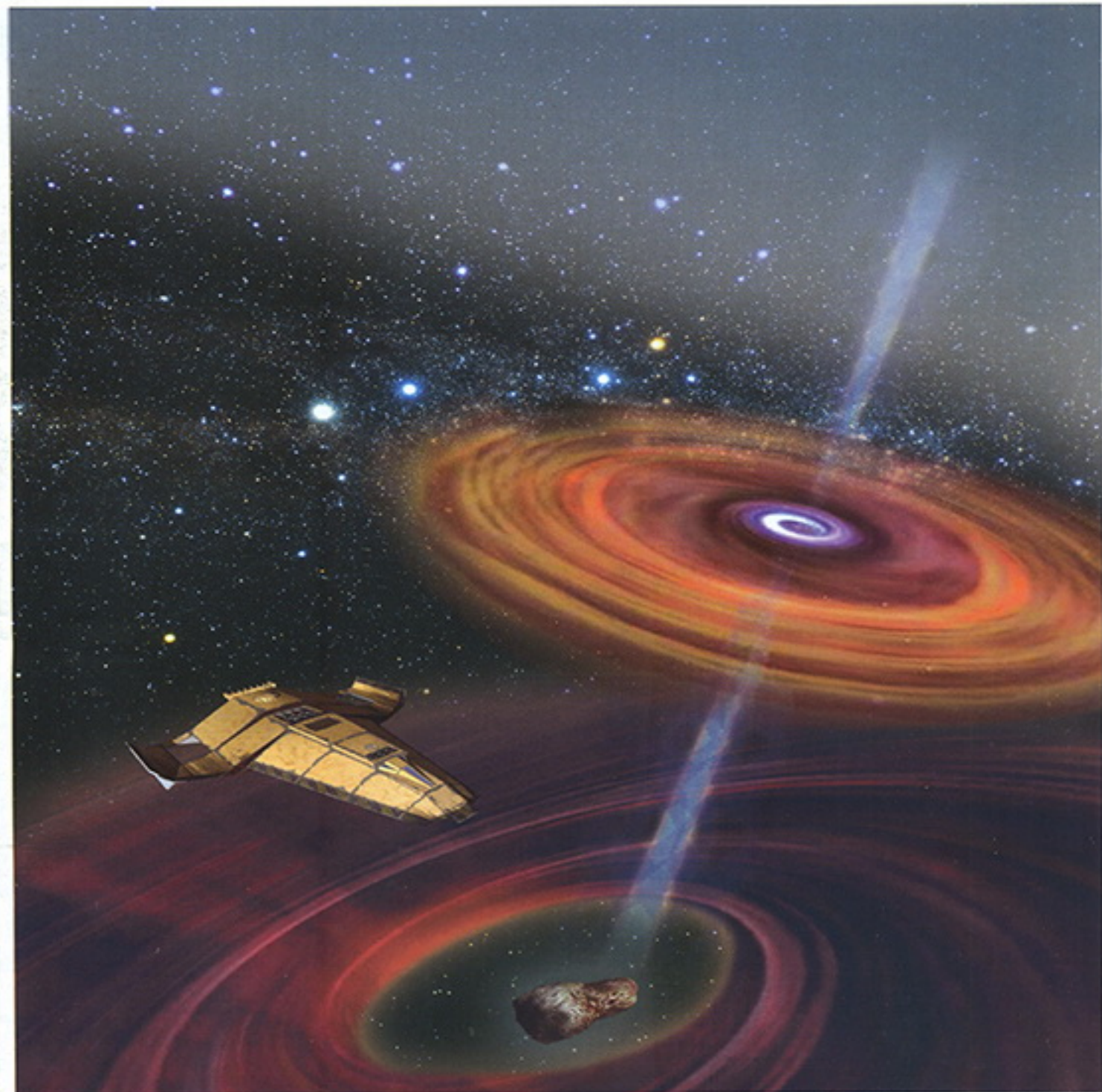
National Magazine for School Children

Thanks for
the Jellyfish

The Notebook

The Chase

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From the Editor's Desk



We could call this issue a "Spooky Special". It has quite a few ghost stories – *The Devil in Adam* by Prannoy Mehta, *The Secret of the Raychester Beverstone Castle* by Ananya Acharya, and finally one by me, *The Chakrata Cat*. I have been told that my ghost stories are not scary enough. I hope this selection will satisfy our readers' desire for the creepy.

And that's not all from beyond our world. We have a futuristic story from outer space by Vartika Chadha titled *So Long and Thanks for the Jellyfish*, which is our cover story. I congratulate all those who have sent in their short stories for publication in *Kloud 9*. But once again we are being bombarded by poems. I urge all aspiring authors to try your hand at prose. I am sure your teachers will help you refine your creative skills.

It gives us immense pleasure to provide this unique platform to an ever widening circle of young aspiring writers, many of whom have that latent creative spark, lying deep in them, waiting to find expression in a big way sooner or later. We at the editorial board of *Kloud 9* have often sensed your creative vibes, and every time we sense them, we feel elated in being instrumental in bringing them out. All glory comes from daring to begin.

You will notice this issue covers an international chess tournament that was held in KIIT International School. I am sure there are similar events being held in and around many schools. We would like students to give coverage to such events and interview celebrities and interesting personalities who visit your school. Please send us such articles /interviews with photographs. We will be happy to publish your reports.

Finally, I have a pleasant announcement to make. We have a short story writing contest coming up on the occasion of Children's Day. Watch out for the details which will be posted to schools and on our facebook page.

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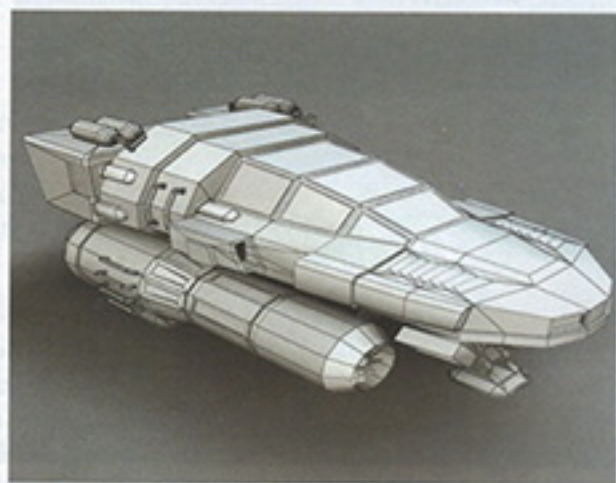
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ALL ARE BRAVE



BY ANUBHAV MISHRA

Once upon a time there lived a girl named Shilpa. She was a very brave girl, but was poor. She wanted to join the army of her kingdom, but unfortunately there was no place for girls in the king's army.

She practised shooting arrows and darts by herself and became very proficient at archery. She used to watch soldiers going up and down on horseback and was always inspired by them. She continued practising archery using boards for targets. She also learnt horseback riding and how to shoot poison darts, from her father's friend who had been a soldier in the king's Army. Being a girl, she saw no chance of joining the army. Yet she used to move about in the jungles practising archery and shooting poison darts. Whenever soldiers passed by she used to follow them to see how they rode horses or practiced shooting arrows. She learnt much by secretly watching the soldiers and repeating their feats secretly at night.

One night she saw a group of soldiers going somewhere on horseback. She followed them, as usual, with her bow, arrows and darts. She found something strange. The soldiers didn't seem to be on their regular patrol. They were hurrying on some purpose. She couldn't find them after a while as the soldiers trotted off deep into the jungle.

This happened for a few nights and Shilpa wondered where the soldiers were going each night. She always saw some soldiers heading for the forests at night. She followed them a few times but each time she lost them as they were on horseback. She knew the jungle very well. One night she went ahead and hid on

the branches of a big tree near the river and waited for the soldiers. 'They must come near the river to water their horses,' she said to herself.

Sure enough, she heard the sound of hooves and soon a group of soldiers came trotting to the river. They drank water as did their horses and after a while they started to ride on into the forest. Shilpa noticed that the last soldier took some time to water his horse. Just when he was about to mount his horse, she dropped a stone that attracted his attention. He sensed that there was someone around and came near the tree to check. At that instant Shilpa shot a poison arrow into his neck and the soldier died instantaneously.

Shilpa wore the soldier's uniform and rode his horse to join up with the group of soldiers. All of them rode on until they reached a large fort hidden in the forest. She entered the fort with the other soldiers and saw that it was an enemy camp. There were many soldiers of the enemy kingdom inside the fort. Shilpa understood that the enemy was planning an attack on her kingdom, and those soldiers were spying on her people.

She tried to hide her face and moved about awkwardly. The commander of the enemy camp suspected her and called her to him. He removed her helmet and found that she was a girl and was surprised that there was a girl among his soldiers. He immediately knew that she was not one among them and imprisoned her in a cell with no openings except a single small window.

She languished in the prison until one day she saw through the window the king of her

kingdom passing at a great distance from the fort. The fort was so well hidden that the king's men could not see it. That's because no one would imagine that there was a fort hidden away inside the forest.

Shilpa took a leaf and wrote a note on it and with her poison dart shot the note right across to the king. The dart hit a tree trunk just in front of the king. He noticed the leaf with a note and came to know of the enemy's treacherous plan to overthrowing him.

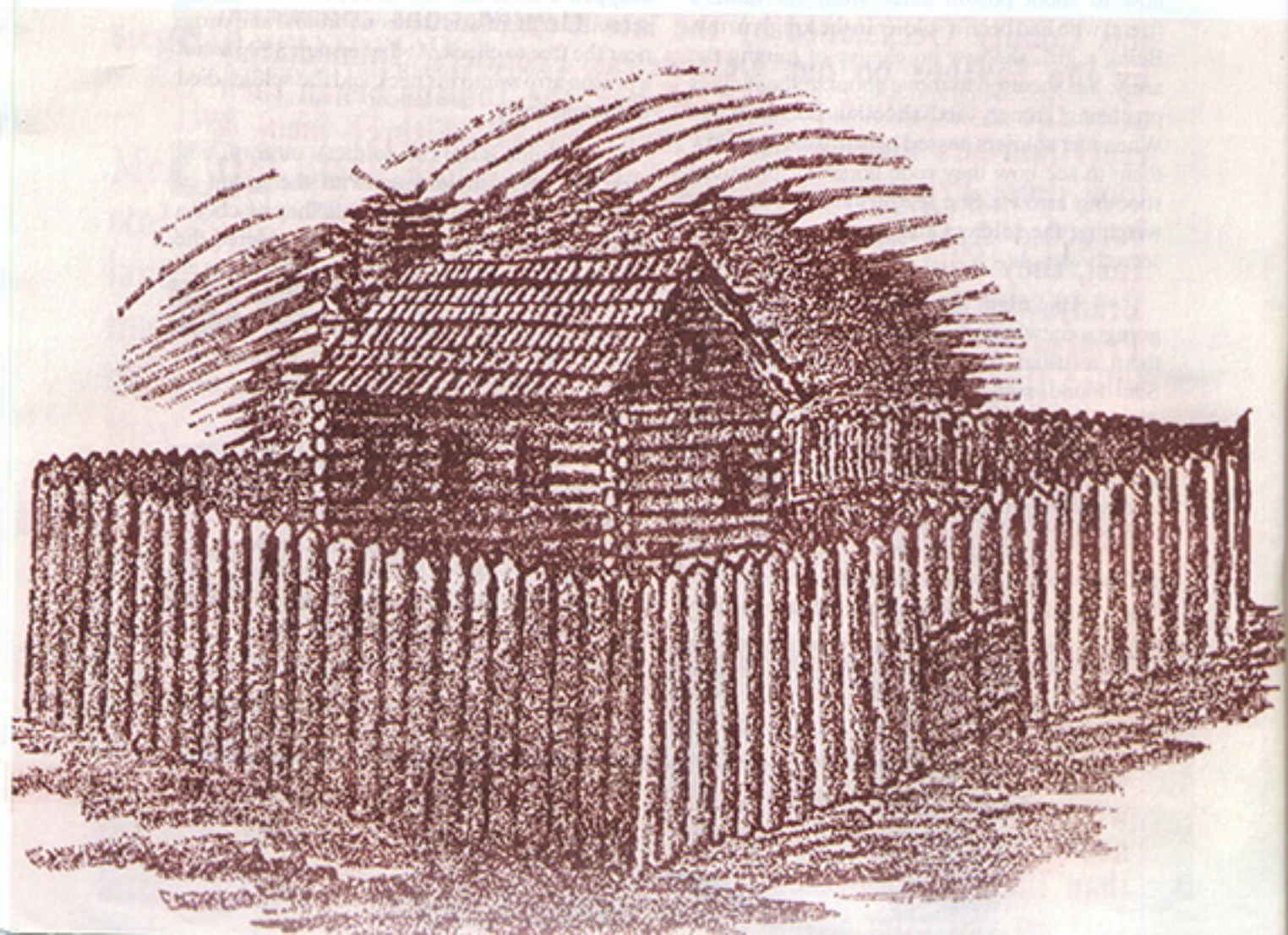
He got furious. In no time he returned with his army and overran the fort and defeated the enemy commander. He imprisoned all the enemy soldiers as well as the spies. It was then that he found that there was a girl imprisoned inside a cell. On questioning the girl the king

realized that she was the one who shot the note towards him on a dart and had saved him and the kingdom. The king was very pleased with Shilpa and was very impressed with her bravery.

He said : "ALL CAN BE BRAVE, NO MATTER A BOY OR A GIRL". He asked Shilpa what reward she wanted for her courageous act. Shilpa said, 'I would like to join your army and serve the kingdom.' And the king made an exception for her and granted her wish. He also rewarded her and her family handsomely.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 7 student in KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar



A FAERIE TALE

BY PRIYA DUTT

“Never ever make a faerie interested in you.” That is the golden rule to ever live long outside a faerie encounter. Apparently, I couldn't hold onto the one single rule. And they say survival is instinctual. Now, the queen of the Winter Court wants me to be the Summer Queen since summer blood apparently runs in my bloodline.

I gathered my jacket closer to me as I walked down the street. The winter had nearly but gone, yet I still can't shake off the chill that crept up my arms. That was exactly how the aftereffects of meeting the Winter Queen felt like, and that was about an hour ago. So, I wondered why I subjected myself to this torture. Well, that had to do with my involuntary transition - she was turning me into a bloody monster and I couldn't do anything about it, except take away her magically enhanced potions so that they did not spontaneously burst into flames every time I felt like strangling my classmate or going Godzilla on my brothers. I was on the edge most of the time.

Which brings the next question into the spotlight - Why should I put up with it? It's my life and if I didn't want to be a Faerie, then why should I be? I think I didn't highlight the word 'forced' well enough. And no, dying was not an option since I was halfway into being a complete Faerie, which meant even if anyone suddenly decided to blow me up, they could only

keep dreaming about it - not even iron could harm me right now.

Iron actually weakened the Faerie, like silver did the werewolves and holy water, the vampires. This makes my boring-built-with-iron town literally my saviour. I knew being chased by the queen of the Winter Court was not as much scary as it was crazy. But sadly, Faeries are greatly mistaken to be good. In the words of my eccentric half-mortal, half-fey librarian Maya, “Faeries are those monsters that put all those things 'that go bump in the night' to shame. They are dark and mysterious creatures that revel in chaos and bloodshed.” Aneira, the Winter Queen, had introduced me to Maya to give me a better understanding of the fey world.

Now, what is that? I thought as I stopped



in my tracks. Bonus question – Why is there a freaky Faerie standing in front of me, smiling with a row of red daggers for teeth? I believed the answer escaped me as well. But I didn't think that thing was going to wave a white flag anytime soon.

Suddenly I felt dark claws dig into my arm. I couldn't quite make sense of what was happening until I found myself on the edge of the town's water tower, my belly part painfully pressing against the rusting metal railing. Gods help me, if that is iron, and the fey behind me isn't affected by it. This makes the fey behind me one of high stature and great power. I forgot to mention that the 'I-can't-be-killed' rule doesn't exactly apply to the powerful fey.

The monster/fey had my arm twisted behind me as it bent me forward. "You're the Summer Queen?" It asked mockingly in a guttural tone which grated my ears.

"Not yet." I squeaked as I half-hung off the edge of the tallest structure in town.

"No," It sounded truly sorrowful. "So



sad! It seems Aneira might be using you, little mortal."

I was confused. "What?"

"See, if you were to be the Summer Queen, you would be the Summer Queen right now. But you aren't."

"Chaos," I heard another voice - a male voice - speak. Unlike that of the creature behind me. This voice sounded wise and was as smooth as silk. "You are out of your cage again. Remind me, what was it built for?" He asked.

Chaos loosened its hold on me as it stepped back. I immediately brought my arm into my view and noticed the five gashes in my arm from Chaos' claws.

"I'm not a creature to be caged. I'm older than you!" Chaos said haughtily. I turned to look at the third person, which was a Dark fey. Of all the three court feys – Winter, Summer and Dark – that lived in the human realm, Dark feys were the most dangerous. They literally thrived on the fiercer of human emotions such as anger, grief and envy.

"And, I'm stronger, Chaos. As your king, I command you to return to our commune." He ordered. Bound by fey laws, Chaos simply disappeared into thin air. Maya had said that the stronger of Dark feys could travel through shadows.

"Aisha," The Dark King said. I was stiffened at the acknowledgement. "Go home. Aneira would find you."

I nodded sharply. Trehan, the Dark King, was probably the most dangerous Faerie to ever exist with centuries worth of life experience to boast of. I made a quick beeline for the ladder.

"Aisha," I heard Aneira say as she joined me. Like always, her frozen hair fell in dreadlocks around her waist. "Trehan told me about Chaos."

I had been sitting in the only Fae café



that had been enchanted to be not seen by humans. "Why am I still human?" I asked.

Aneira looked questioningly at me. "I believe Chaos got to you. She loves to create chaos. I didn't turn you because completing your transformation while winter dominated would have weakened you. You were to be a summer fey, and on the cusp of the summer I would've turned you. But this doesn't matter anymore, Aisha, because I'm turning you tomorrow. Winter would retreat its last chill tonight. Chaos has escaped. Trehan found that she had broken the amphora that held her powers and had escaped. She is in her prime and she's gonna attack soon. Your court is very vulnerable at the moment and your people need you. Meet me at the lake."

She turned and started for the door. At the door, she stopped. "I'm glad you aren't resisting your destiny anymore." She spoke over her shoulder and then she was gone, leaving melting snow in her wake.

"Why are you here?" Aneira asked Trehan, who shrugged in response. "What, I can't watch?"

The only reason I had Aneira and

Trehan as allies then was because they needed Summer Court to stay strong. The foundation of Fae world was in balance. Without the Summer Court, all the other courts would be destroyed. The moment I am in my place, both of them would be back to thinking of their own courts only. The lengths of which could not be argued since it was the former Winter Queen who had killed the last Summer King.

"I won't even answer that." Aneira said as she stared at the lake, which slowly froze into ice.

I wrung my hands. "Let's finish this thing."

Aneira raised a hand towards me, which I reluctantly took, my hand already freezing in her grasp. She led me to the center of the lake. "This lake is enchanted," She said as she took my other hand in hers. "Kings and queens are bestowed their power upon it. Now," She said staring into my eyes. "Don't break contact with my eyes." Then she started chanting words in an incomprehensible language.

"It's the ancient language of Faeries." I heard Trehan speak while I continued staring into her eyes. "You know, before we went for mortal dialects and all."

I screamed as I suddenly felt my body on fire; the heat was unbearable. It felt like my insides were slowly turning into lava, flowing into my veins. It hurt, a lot.

"It's gonna be over soon." I heard Trehan over Aneira's chanting and my own strangled sobs. Slowly, the pain started to subside, leaving me stronger than ever with each

second. The heat became a part of me. I was no longer mortal, but a creature of summer.

Aneira stopped chanting and asked, "How do you feel?"

"Different." My tone felt a little different, a little brighter.

"You look different, too." She said and pointed at my arms. My skin glowed as if a lamp was lit within me.

"Well, well, it seems I'm a little bit late to the party." I recognized the guttural voice as that of Chaos'. Aneira and I whipped our heads towards the bank of the lake, to see her standing with all of her claws on one hand disappearing into Trehan's chest.

Aneira cursed as Chaos pulled her claws and Trehan slumped on the ground. "But better late than never." Chaos said.

"Is he..." I whispered, unable to finish my question.

"No, he is alive. Just hurt." Aneira said as she gripped my hands tighter. To torture him later, I realized. Chaos grinned at us, her sharp, red teeth gleaming under the sunlight. "Which one of you wants to be the first?" She asked excitedly.

"Aisha," Aneira said to me in a low voice. "We create a balance. Summer and winter. Warmth and cold. Balance defeats chaos. Channel your power into me, take my cold into you."

"How?" I asked desperately as I watched Chaos put her clawed feet on the ice.

"Be summer, be you!" She replied. But how? Aneira looked at my hopeless expression and said, "Close your eyes, feel the energy."

I gave Chaos a last glance, who took her time to saunter towards us. So confident!

"Close your eyes, Aisha!" Aneira yelled. My eyes flew shut. I could hear my heart pounding, Aneira's panting breaths and Chaos' claws clicking against the ice. I tried to concentrate on my beating heart and the heat

that spread into my body with each pump. I focused on that heat, imagining it getting warmer with every breath. I imagined the heat flowing into Aneira's body where our hands touched, and warm her. At the same time, a blow of chilled wind flew into me. But instead of cooling me, it mixed with my heat - Winter intertwined with Summer! I felt stronger and braver. I felt invincible.

I grinned and my eyes were wide open. Chaos was a few feet away from us. Another look at us and her grin fell. She saw the storm that raged within us through our eyes. The eyes are the windows to our soul, mortals said. They said it right. Her eyes narrowed and black wings sprang from her back. With a screech, she flew at us. A huge gust of wind blew, throwing her against a tree, uprooting it. Chaos immediately stood up. Blood seeped through the wounds in her shoulder and thigh where she had impaled herself on the branches. She spat blood before she opened her mouth and screamed. I screamed back, my eardrums bleeding. A snow storm interlaced with the fire escaped from the mouths of Aneira and me. Chaos tried to fly off but suddenly a hand wrapped around her leg. Trehan. Rage contorted his features as he threw Chaos in the path of the storm, leaving only blood and black feathers behind.

Aneira freed her hand from mine. Our connection broke - winter was leaving me. I stood gasping for breath. "She's gone?" I asked between breaths.

"Yes," she said in relief. Trehan ran the back of his hand over his mouth. The wound in his chest seemed to have completely healed. "I should've done that long time ago," he said. Looking at me, he continued, "I've done my job. I hope your court's interests never conflict with mine, Summer Queen." With a nod at Aneira's direction, he disappeared.

"So..." I looked at Aneira. She only smirked at me, "Good luck, Aisha." The ice cracked right beneath me and I sank into the freezing water. Spewing water and curses as I broke over the surface, I knew the game was on. And so was my Faerie tale.



The writer is a grade 12 student in Lancer's Convent, Delhi

THE CHASE

BY MANAV VARMA



“You broke the lamp!” shouted Dad
And to me, he sounded really mad!
Swiftly I run down the lane
Dad right behind me with a cane!

Across the road, into the park
I graze my knee, it leaves a mark.
I quickly climb up the slide
And slip down to the other side.

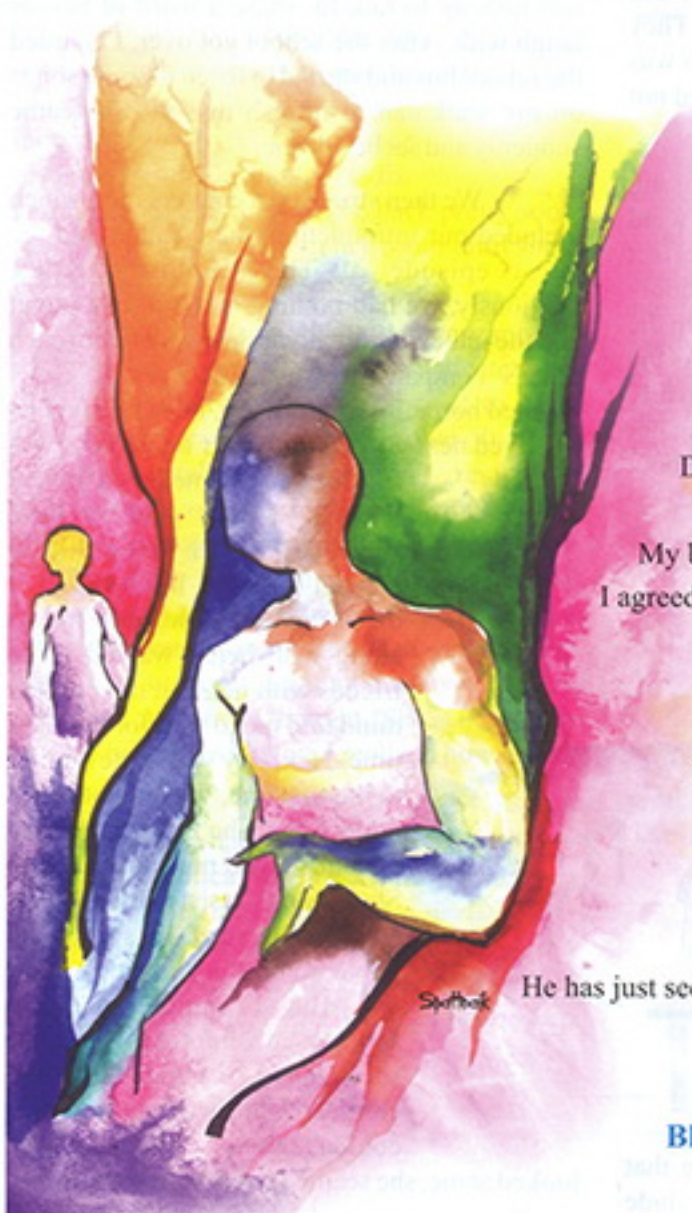
I can clearly hear Dad's loud panting
Nevertheless, he still keeps ranting.
It's raining now, the grass is damp
Dad's still shouting, “You broke the lamp!”

My brother had said he would buy a new lamp
I agreed to break this one, though Dad would rant
Brother told me not to worry
“Just get Dad out in a hurry!”

Now we are back on the way to our house
I'm scurrying as quickly as a mouse,
We get inside, and he's really mad
But we all shout, “Happy birthday, Dad!”
Now he can't stay mad anymore
He has just seen the new lamp on the table, by the door!

 Kloud

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Bhavans Rajaji Vidyashram, Chennai



THE NOTEBOOK

BY VIDISHA KAUSHIK

It is a simple story. Probably just another story. But still it is very special to me....

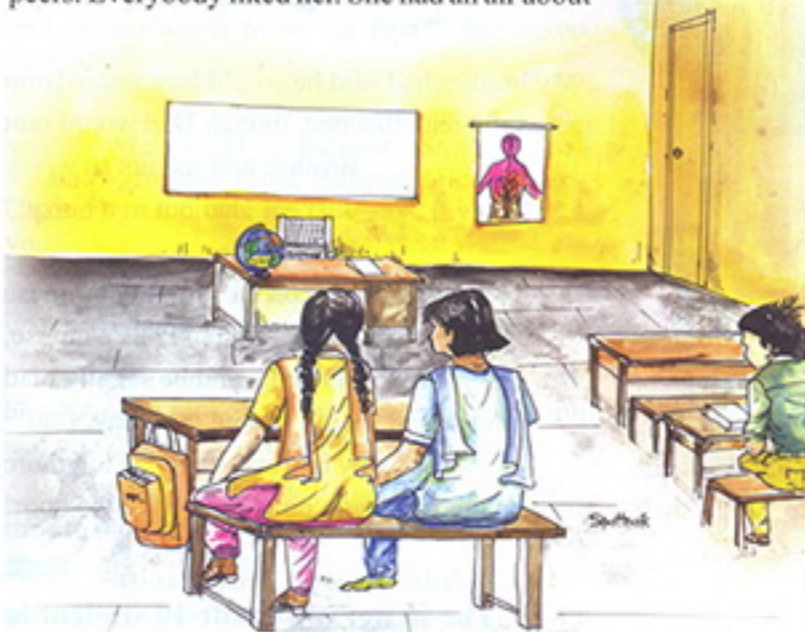
....I was new to the school and the image I had built in others' eyes was quite negative. They thought of me as a stupid book-worm who was way too much into studies! Maybe they did not know me well, nor did they try to.

As I clearly remember, it was a pleasant, breezy summer day. Birds were singing, wind was blowing and it was undeniably a perfect climate to start off the first day of my high-school - a day I had been anticipating for so long! On the first day, I sat next to a very beautiful girl. As the day progressed, I discovered that she was really intelligent but still was very popular among her peers. Everybody liked her. She had an air about

towards me. We did not talk to each other. I sat quietly while she gossiped nonchalantly with her friends. I felt seriously lonely and unhappy. I had nobody to talk to, share a word or two or laugh with. After the school got over, I boarded the school bus and started to listen to some songs on my walkman to refresh myself. She came suddenly and sat beside me.

We then struck up a conversation which included our introduction, the weather and the latest episode of *The Vampire Diaries*. Obviously, we had nothing much to talk about and the unbearable awkwardness we felt in each other's company truly justified that. Then I reached home. To my surprise, I discovered that she lived next door. She was *my* neighbor. I was a little overwhelmed. I got mixed feelings. I was glad to have someone like her living next to me but I was a little scared. I didn't really know how to get along with her. I wanted to be friends with her. But my prudent mind told me to wait for the right time. Next day was quite similar to the first one. We did not talk. I noticed that she liked to be with me but she did not show it at all. She couldn't resist staring at me. Now whether that was something good or not, I just couldn't make out. But I could sense her suppressed emotions because she seemed so unrevealing and confined. She was an enigma I couldn't solve. Whenever she

looked at me, she seemed so earnest, so truthful!



her as cool as a cucumber. But one thing that perplexed me was her unfriendly attitude

The following afternoon, after coming back home, I couldn't stop thinking about her. So I finally decided to visit her. When I knocked at her door, her mother opened it. She was extremely shocked when she saw me. After recovering from the setback, she said, 'You must be V... Vi... Vincent! Ahh...It is a real pleasure meeting you! Isabella keeps talking about you all the time!'

I wasn't expecting to witness such a reaction and to hear something like that. I was indeed taken aback. Her mother resumed, 'Isabella has gone for her music lessons and will be back pretty soon! Would you like to wait in her room until she is back?'

'With pleasure, thank you very much!' I went to her room. It was sophisticated and likeable. While waiting, I happened to come across her diary, a notebook rather. It was a personal notebook. I couldn't resist the temptation to open it and check it out. It was alluring enough for me to forget moral etiquettes! So I opened it. What I read was astonishingly touching! I was in tears. I began to sob...I had rarely, in my fourteen years of life, cried. And suddenly, I got all the answers to my questions. And then I thought, 'She is the one for me, my best friend!!' Now I realized how lucky I was.

Isabella had a sister who looked like me, she was my replica. When I saw her photograph, I could not make out the difference. Unfortunately, she had died the year before from tuberculosis and after that Isabella's life had turned over a new leaf. She became heartbroken.

POWER OFFICE



Even after having so many friends at school, the void was still present; the pain was still excruciating. But then, I came. When she saw me for the first time, she was reminded of her beloved sister. She saw her in me. This is what I came to know after going through her notebook. She had written how much she wanted me and how much she loved me!

Suddenly, I heard a voice. It was Isabella. She came in and saw me with the notebook. She rushed to me and held me as tightly as one possibly could. Then she said, 'You are the best thing to have happened to me after my sister's untimely departure.'

All I could utter was, 'Thank you Isabella, I could not be happier!' and yes, I wouldn't be. After all, I had found a great friend! The healing process had begun...

Cloud 8

The writer is a grade 10 student in Army Public School, Kolkata

POWER OF LOVE

BY PRATIK RAVIKUMAR SANGHAVI

This is the Power of Love,
As white and innocent as a dove;
Nobody can say it is rough
Because profound is love.

High up in the skies it moves,
All around the earth it grows;
Nobody can say it is rough
Because profound is love.

From here to there it keeps swaying,
And captivates one without saying;
Nobody can say that it is rough
Because this is the Power of Love!

It is wonderful! It is beautiful!
It is admirable! And truthful;
It comes from within and it is there
It attracts everyone and spares no one.

This is the 'Power of Love'
It will happen one day;
It has to happen,
What ever you say....

Kloud 9

The writer is a student in
Activity High School, Mumbai



SILLY CHILLI

BY RUQIYA SHARIFF

A small, old house stood in the green grass lands of an adorable tiny village in the province of Baluchistan (Pakistan). The house was surrounded by coconut trees and had a stream flowing on one side. It was a pretty well maintained home as it had only two occupants in it. One was a popular young boy named Sheikh Chilli. He was only popular for his foolishness and his humour. He was innocent, devoid of envy or bitterness, guileless and helpful by nature. He was seldom cunning enough to be called a shirker, and yes, the boy was a big daydreamer! And always remained an inveterate daydreamer building castles in the air. Sheikh Chilli was a proper comic character and was regarded by most people as an object of ridicule, but was an obedient and a lovable son of his widowed mother. Sheikh was his mother's only child, her only close relative after the death of her husband and she loved him dearly. His mother did small jobs like working for wealthy families and earned a living just enough to feed them both.

On a fine windy day when Sheikh Chilli was enjoying his favorite hobby of flying kites, his mother called him to go on an errand for her. He quickly withdrew his kite and obeyed his dear mother. His mother asked him to buy mustard oil for eight *annas* from the shopkeeper Lalaji and warned him not to daydream on the way for he would make things worse for her.

'Yes Ammi', assured Sheikh. 'Don't look so worried. You look less beautiful when you worry'.

'Less beautiful', his mother said. 'Where do I have the money or the time to look beautiful? Go on you flatterer. Rush to the market and get me the oil'. She said giving him a tumbler.

Sheikh Chilli reached the store in a jiffy and asked the shopkeeper Lalaji, for the oil. After measuring oil worth eight *annas*, he started to pour it into the tumbler. (the tumbler could contain only 7 *annas* worth of oil). Now Sheikh Chilli didn't know what to do.



Then he had a brainwave! He happily turned the tumbler upside down and told Lalaji to pour the rest of the oil in the hollow space beneath the tumbler without even realizing that all the oil that had been filed in it fell on to the ground in a huge blob.

Shaking in disbelief at this craziness the shopkeeper did as he was told. Sheikh Chilli took the tumbler carefully and headed home!

His mother who was washing clothes noticed Sheikh entering the gate holding the

tumbler upside down. Astonished she asked, 'Beta, where is the rest of the oil'.

Joyfully Sheikh Chilli turned the right side up (losing the rest of the oil as well) and showed her the empty tumbler.

'Here', he said. 'It was here Ammijan. I promise I saw Lalaji pour it right in here', Sheikh remarked, after seeing the empty tumbler.

'Into the ground you fool', his mother scolded with rage. 'Is there no limit to your foolishness?'

Sheikh was sad and offended.

'But I did as you told me to do! I got oil for eight annas but you didn't tell me what to do when the tumbler was overfull. And now you're getting angry Ammi. You look less beautiful when you—'

'I'll thrash you now if you don't get out of my sight!' replied his angry mother.

Sheikh ran up to the roof with his favorite kite, and his mother wearily went back to work. Later she had to get the oil herself. So much of money and oil wasted.

Later someone thumped at the front door. It was Lalaji's smaller son.

'Buaji, I am here with your oil which



bhayya had turned upside down. Luckily there was a tin below in which this oil got collected! Here, take it'.

On hearing this Sheikh Chilli's mother was happy and thanked him.....

On another lovely morning, Sheikh Chilli's mother asked him,

'Beta Sheikh, did you get one of those nightmares again? You were uneasy and restless the whole night'. Sheikh Chilli nodded in agreement, putting his arms around his dear mother.

'I will take you to the wise hakimji today. Hopefully he can put an end to your nightmares,' said Sheikh's Ammi.

At the old hakimji's place, Sheikh Chilli explained his problem. He had a recurring nightmare in which he was a mouse and all the village cats were after him!

'Why is my child suffering like this?' asked Sheikh's mother to hakim. 'Hakimji, when my son was a small baby, a wildcat had scratched him badly before I could save him. Could it be the reason for his bad dream?'

'There is a possibility, but don't you worry, your son will be alright after a few days', said the hakim turning to Sheikh Chilli. 'Beta, come along to my place every evening for the medicine and remember you are not a mouse but a handsome young boy'.

Relieved and happy Sheikh Chilli went to the hakim every evening to get the medicine. They both spent almost an hour talking and sharing stories between themselves. Soon, the hakim and Sheikh Chilli became good friends. The friendly hakim would also teach Sheikh a few simple facts about health and hygiene.

He once asked, 'Beta Sheikh, if one of my ears fell off, what would happen to



me?"

'It's simple, you would become half-deaf', replied Sheikh Chilli. Agreeing to this, the hakim asked again,

'And what would happen if both my ears fall off?'

'Then *hakimji*, you would become blind!' answered Sheikh Chilli. The confused and startled hakim asks, 'Blind? How would that be?'

'You see *hakimji*', explained Sheikh, 'If you lost both your ears then wouldn't your spectacles fall off?' The hakim burst out laughing.

'You are right Beta! I didn't give a thought to it'. After a few joyful days had passed, Sheikh Chilli's nightmares ceased and he stopped dreaming that he was a mouse.

One evening, an old friend of the hakim visited him when Sheikh was present at the place. He was asked to buy some hot *jalebies* from the bazaar for the visitor. When he was about to step out, he was startled by the sight of a big fat cat.

'Save me *hakimji*' he squeaked.

'Don't worry Beta. Don't you know that you are not a mouse?' reminded *hakimji*.

'Yes, I know', said Sheikh Chilli.

'But has anyone told that to the cat?' he foolishly asked. Hiding a smile, the hakim shooed away the cat, reassuring Sheikh and sent him to buy the *jalebies*.

'I knew this boy's father well', declared the hakim's visitor.

'I would like to convey my respects to his mother'.

'Don't worry, Sheikh will accompany you', said the *hakim*. Soon after tasting the delicious, hot *jalebies* and drinking some *kehwa*, Sheikh Chilli and the visitor left for Sheikh's home.

One the way, the visitor asked him,

'So, this way goes straight to your home, doesn't it?'

'It doesn't', replied Sheikh. The visitor was surprised.

'I thought it did'

'It doesn't', Said Sheikh again.

'Then where does it go?' the visitor asked.

'It doesn't go anywhere', told Sheikh calmly.

'Beta, what do you mean?' asked the astonished visitor. Sheikh Chilli explained patiently.

'How can the road go anywhere? It doesn't have legs nor does it live. It just lies where it is! But we can go on this road to my house. Ammi and I will be honoured to have you as our guest'.

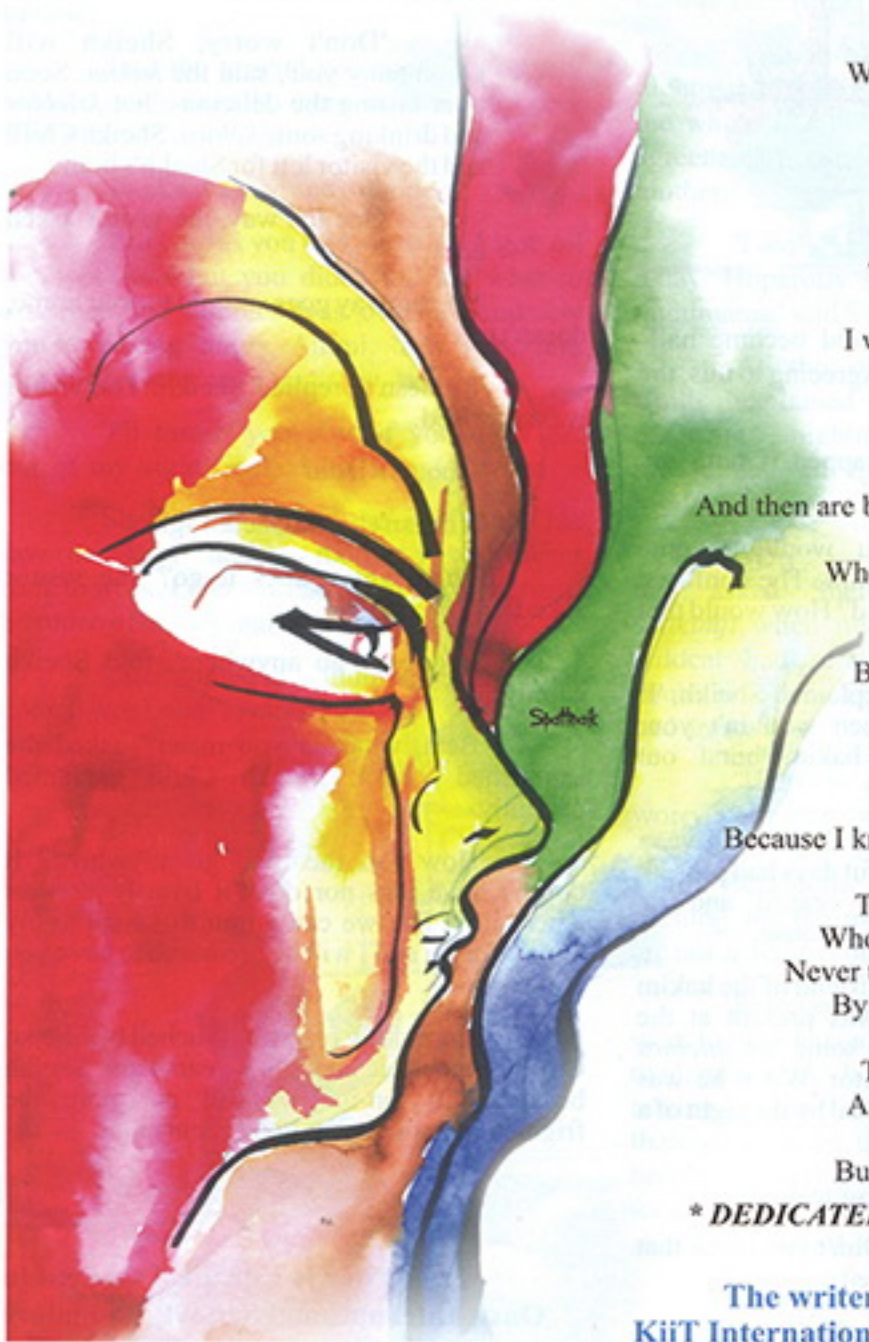
The elderly man was touched by Sheikh Chilli's innocence and a few years later, Sheikh became his son-in-law! But no more the frightened 'mouse', but a confident man!

Cloud 9

The writer is a grade 8 student in Oasis International School, Bangalore

THE MOMENTS I BLINK

BY SABYASACHI PRUSTY



I call them great days
When we were happy and gay
When I think of them today
I have nothing to say
So wonderful were they!!

The wonderful moments
That I spent with my friends
Just replays in my mind
I wish the time could rewind!!

When I lie awake and think
And the moments I blink
They flash in my mind
And then are blown away with the wind!!

When tears roll down my cheek
I sit with sorrow and think
It makes me feel so bad
Because it makes me so sad!!

The days we spent at school
And when I broke the rules
I was not much too scared
Because I knew my friends were there!!

To save me from the teachers
Whom I thought were preachers
Never thought I would be let down
By the darkness of the clouds!!

The things that we all shared
And the friends whom I cared
Are no longer in touch
But Oh! I miss them so much!

*** DEDICATED TO ALL MY FRIENDS ***

iCloud

The writer is a grade 10 student in
KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar

17TH RED LETTER DAY

BY KUNJAN MEHTA

Some red letter days are hard to forget. Some of them may haunt and scare us. Sometimes we do not forget some moments and people. Thoughts of them keep popping up in our mind, flashing memories of those days when luck did not favour us: These days are hard to forget and one should not forget them either, but should learn lessons from them so that other people do not make the mistakes we did.

Seventeenth August – the day when I cried for the first time; the day when I was born into this vast world. This is a tale from two years back. I was a very quiet and contemplative person. Nothing but books delighted me the most but my friends were quite the opposite. They loved fun and frolic, days out and picnics. As my birthday was round the corner, my friends decided that we all would go for a picnic. I refused, but no one paid heed to my likings. They were busy planning for a picnic to my friend's farmhouse located near the forest where they wanted to celebrate my birthday with great pomp and show. In the end, I had to agree, which was possibly the biggest mistake of my life.

To my great surprise, my mom agreed with this outing. So ultimately all my plans for my birthday were spoiled and I had to go for the picnic. I packed my necessities in a satchel and we all went to the farmhouse by car. It was more boring than I had imagined. It seemed as if I was being taken a prisoner because I was neither allowed to listen to music nor was I allowed to read books. Soon we reached the farmhouse; it was indeed a massive and beautifully designed farmhouse fitted with the necessary amenities. It

was surrounded by lush greenery, which was indeed very soothing. We all unpacked and relaxed ourselves. My friends were indeed chatterboxes. Every second, they had to talk about something. Sometimes I felt left out, because I was temperamentally different from them. However, I had the company of my best friend Sejal who too was like me, contemplative, and so I always preferred her company to that of others.

The next day I was getting bored with the chatter boxes, so Sejal and I decided to venture in the surroundings unaware of the dangers that we might find ourselves in. We took a water bottle and we were out in the open. We walked some distance talking about various things such as our aims and aspirations in life, and after wandering in the woods for a while decided to return to the farmhouse. Suddenly, we heard a roar. Thinking it was the play of winds in the trees, we ignored it. Soon we heard a much louder roar. A chill ran down my spine when I heard the panting of an animal coming from right behind us. I was about to turn back but Sejal held my hand and asked me to run. Before I could say anything, Sejal bolted clasp my wrist tightly. I felt we were running in the wrong direction, but sensing the presence of a ferocious animal behind us, I sprinted with Sejal, terrified at the prospects of being mauled and eaten up by it. I did not want to die nor did Sejal but it looked as if luck did not favour us. We ran without looking back, but suddenly, the tiger was ahead of us. It had overtaken us, probably through a shorter path in the undergrowth, and was there, right in front us, with a hungry, malicious glint in his eyes. We

abruptly stopped and panted heavily. For the first time in my life, I saw a tiger in his natural habitat. It was majestic and menacing. Suddenly, in the blink of an eye, he pounced on Sejal. The next moment I was desperately trying to pull Sejal from the clutches of the tiger. But he was indeed very strong. He had held Sejal by her leg. She was writhing in pain and pleaded with me to leave her and flee. But I held both her hands and screamed at the top of my voice. My fear had transformed into fury and was fighting an animal hundred times more powerful than me to rescue my dear friend. Then I heard the sounds of people and the rustle of their movements from among the thicket. In no time we were surrounded by people holding axes in their hands. The tiger instantly let loose Sejal and ran into the thicket. The villagers chased it. In the next moment our friends joined us and we were all horrified at the sight of Sejal whose right leg below the knee had been bitten away by the tiger. We rushed her to the hospital.

She had lost a lot of blood and her condition remained critical for a few days. We all prayed together and fortunately God listened

to our prayers. Sejal was soon out of danger, though she had lost her leg. I felt intensely guilty, because to go for a stroll into the woods was my cursed idea. Sejal's biggest dream was to become a great athlete and now she could never be one, and I was responsible for shattering her dreams. I would never ever forgive myself. I cursed myself for all this.

Today, after two years of the tragedy, Sejal has a prosthetic leg and is limping through life. She is cheerful and seems to have completely forgotten the tragic incident that crippled her. It seems everyone has forgotten the accident except me. Seeing the constant expression of guilt on my face, Sejal always tells me that life and accidents don't come announced. Whatever happened that day was not our mistake. It was the work of God. She assured me that her dream would be fulfilled and I didn't have to worry about it. But till this day, I have never been able to erase that majestic but frightening image of the tiger from my mind, and, strangely, I am dying to meet it again; to kill or to be killed – I do not know.

Kloud 9



MY CRAVING FOR LOVE

BY RIA THIMMAIAHGARI



I stared at the cold, silver fog
That blew across my face
Without anybody to give me love
It seemed that life was a waste.

The tiny, little memories
Swept away so fast
This day will be one too
But one that will always last.

The craving in my heart
Made my throat feel sore.
The tragic tears hid inside,
Came out no more.

I sighed and stared at the remains
Of what was left behind,
But tiny, little memories was all
That I could find.

I was craving for love, indeed, love,
A craving for my family.
For mama and papa and brother too
All smiling around me.

My craving for love will never end
Even if people see,
The sign that's hung around my neck
That says "Adopt me".

For memories will always last
Of my family who were once alive
Of mama and papa and brother too,
Of when happiness was mine.

Cloud 9

The writer is a grade 8 student in
Oakridge International School, Hyderabad

A FRIEND IN NEED

BY KHUSHI MAHESHWARI

It was a bright Monday morning. Children were getting ready for school or were standing in queues at bus stops, husbands getting ready to go to work and women, as usual, off to the market place to buy the provisions for the week ahead.

Rita and Mina, who usually did their week's shopping on Monday mornings, were also a part of this crowd. They started walking down the lane, to the market place chattering about the weekend, latest cosmetic, designer saris and all sorts of other things.



They first went to the grocery store, then to the vegetable and fruit vendor and they ended their shopping by giving a finishing touch at 'Makhanlal's Sweet Home.' They finished their shopping early and decided to take a walk round the corner, near the cloth market.

Tired from window shopping the ladies were about to retire, when their eyes fell on a glittering and gorgeous looking dress elegantly

kept in the display window of a shop. This was exactly the kind of dress Rita needed for her brother's wedding the following month! Hurriedly, the two ladies entered the shop and asked for the cost. The dress was expensive, but as they were regular customers at the shop and also the first customers of the day the shopkeeper offered them a discount of ten percent. Rita happily agreed to it and bought the dress.

In the evening when Rita's husband came back from work, she started describing to him all about the dress, how much she liked it and how happy she was when she had found it! When she rushed into the room to show her husband the dress, alas! The dress wasn't there. She checked every corner of the house, enquired with her friend and also with her shop-keeper. The dress was missing. Rita was dismayed and shattered. She thought only about that dress, all day long. Her husband promised to buy her a similar dress, but all this could not console her. She was simply heart-broken.

After a few days, when Rita had at last got back to her senses she received a letter from her brother saying that she was needed there after two weeks to help him with the wedding arrangements. Rita sent him a reply telling him that she would surely be there.

Rita had a twelve year old daughter and a five year old son who often went to their neighbour's house to play with their children, who were also of the same age as they were. The neighbour was not very rich but was comfortably off.

Once, when Rita's daughter had gone there to play, she spotted an open cupboard and saw a dazzling piece of cloth hanging in it. She was about close the cupboard, when the dress fell off its hanger. And to her surprise, it was the same dress that her mother had bought for uncle's wedding! She immediately rushed to her house to tell her mother this news. Her mother came storming into the neighbour's house and immediately demanded for the dress to be given back to her.

The neighbour was very scared and told Rita to sit down and that she would explain the matter to her in detail. Rita, much against her will, sat down and listened carefully to what she had to say. The neighbor admitted that she stole the dress from Rita. She too wanted a pretty dress for a function they were going to attend.



She stole it from her when she met her at the market place and engaged her in a conversation as they were going back home. She was about to place the dress quietly in Rita's cupboard after attending the function, when she noticed that the dress was torn at one end. She was about to give it to the tailor to get it darned when her daughter found it.

She was weeping by the time she finished her story. Rita was extremely sorry that she had been so rude to her. The neighbor apologized for her behavior and promised to mend the dress and give it back to her. Rita accepted her apology and they both became friends again.

Cloud 9



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Ek Kadam Aagey

TODAY

BY NEHARIKA DEVARAKONDA



I opened my eyes
And found a few mice
I knew we were in a motel
Which was named 'Gratel'.
In front of me was a woman who was old
And she was found to be bold.
The woman suddenly shook
And threw a book.
I found it wrong and the woman fell down
On the mat of Mr. Brown.
A few others and I hurried
To the hospital, and I hoped she won't be buried.
I waited outside the ICU
And murmured "I don't want to miss you".
Later I heard that the doctor refused to try
And make her revive, "why?"
"No money!" said the doctor.
Money had made the doctor a monster
What a miserable condition, I felt
Which made my heart melt.

Klound 8

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Delhi Public School, Vijayawada

SO LONG, & THANKS FOR ALL THE JELLYFISH

BY VARTIKA CHADDA



DAY 1

There I was, cruising along in my classy white spaceship of the size of a football field, accompanied by my ever faithful sidekick, Agent J, or popularly known as Jellyfish. The dark expanse of the universe stretched in front of me like a never ending ocean. I had been sent on a rather crucial mission by the inhabitants of my planet. It was top secret, of course, extremely important and obviously involving a staggering amount of money. It would be shocking to know the amount of money the government had spent to get me and Jellyfish out of the blue planet. My companion had been a harmless little fellow before he accidentally consumed a granola bar and discovered he was allergic to peanuts. He ended up sprouting tentacles and his IQ was now some thirty points below that of not a very agile minded medusa.

I had sworn to myself that if this mission was a failure I would go back to being an elevator operator. My mission "details" were easy enough to follow: "Get out of the planet at half the speed of light, go and look for a black hole (and get sucked into it) and don't forget to take the Jellyfish with you. When you are done, try to figure out what a quasar is." Hmm... Easy enough.

One can't "look" for a black hole as they happen to be bodies of infinite density formed after the death of a big ole star, after a supernova explosion. The star eventually collapses to the

point of zero volume, creating what is known as a "singularity." As for falling into it, you won't catch me dead doing anything like that. It is not possible to go into an unforgiving black hole and come out again - not even light can escape its super powerful gravitational pull. To be "sucked" into a black hole, one has to cross the Schwarzschild radius (pretty much of a tongue twister, ain't it?). At this radius, the escape speed is equal to the speed of light. The point where light can just escape is called the event horizon, and after you pass this point you are inside the black hole and can't get out. Ironically, it is possible, however, to enter a black hole and not die; but be prepared to be compressed or stretched to the size of a noodle! Jellyfish was working on the deck below. And as for quasars, I didn't care what they were.

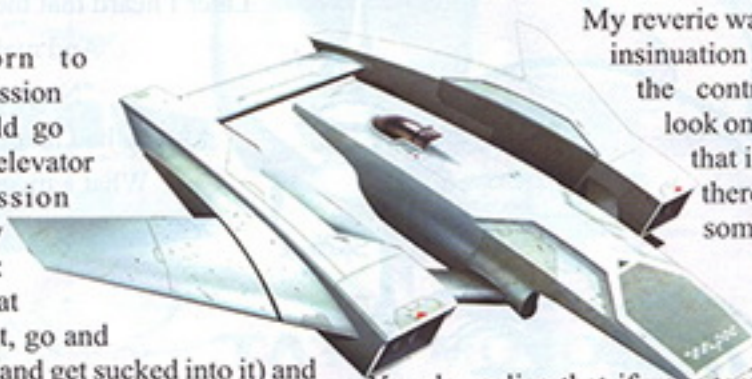
My reverie was broken by the insinuation of Agent J into the control room. The look on his face told me that if he had a brain, there was certainly something in it.

"Jelly, go back to the deck please."

You do realize that if your tentacles press any button on the control deck, we could soon end up dancing between the Great Bear and Jupiter."

"Agent V, my tentacles seem to have detected radio waves, you might want to have a look."

I went to the main deck to see what



Jellyfish had been up to. I peered down the periscope like device and there I saw it. I hate to admit it, but Jellyfish was right. Moving towards us was a humongous spaceship, the size of a blue whale perhaps. This spelled D.A.N.G.E.R. I rushed back to the control panel and jabbed a few buttons to turn our ship around and there, after a crushing sound, it started turning. I squeezed my eyes shut and calculated the value of pi up to twenty third decimal place and tried to remember Lady Gaga's last name, while cursing myself for forgetting to pack my Cloak of Invisibility and for not knowing how to disappear the Harry Potter way (apparate) . I opened my eyes and the alien spaceship wasn't in sight. It seemed like I had successfully averted an attack by a gory green alien race. Agent V saves the day!

DAY -2

I can't say the next day dawned bright and clear since we weren't on *Terra firma* anymore but, yes, this day seemed more cheerful than the previous one. I had just begun my work for the day when Jellyfish catapulted into the room and explained to me in his rather

high pitched voice that the aliens had left a message. The message clearly stated that they meant no harm, rather they wanted to tell us something. Fishy. I told Agent Jellyfish to keep his prized purple head out of the matter and to go and clean his room.

Jellyfish and I cleaned the deck with a vacuum cleaner and there ensued an argument. I tried explaining to him that black holes weren't cosmic vacuum cleaners rather they radiated energy due to quantum mechanical processes. This radiation is called Hawking radiation. And then I saw the light, the radiations we had received could have been from a black hole. I charged back to the control room and made a close study of the signals we had received. The aliens did try to contact us but not via radio signals. The signals we had received earlier yesterday were something totally different. Agent J and I contacted the alien spaceship again. A particularly ugly looking green alien explained to us the secret of the radiations and after an extremely difficult three hour battle with astrophysics, realisation dawned. "Eureka!" I cried and flailed my arms in the air.

The radiations were something of a conundrum to all the brainy scientists of the Earth, earlier thought to be radio emissions sent out by aliens in an attempt to contact us. Contrary to this popular belief they were actually beams of light sent off from the center of a black hole, perpendicular to their rings. They were known as Quasistellar object or quasars. They belonged to a class of active galaxy often observed from 2000 to 10,000 million light years away from the earth. The quasars were extremely powerful and had 100





million times more mass than that of the sun. Black holes - something that sounded as if they were straight from a science-fiction movie - were actually prevalent in our galaxy. They happen to be one of the most violent and

energetic objects in the universe and shoot off jets of light even as they suck in surrounding gas. These jets are quasars.

Having solved the mystery that had puzzled many great minds I profusely thanked Agent J and our new alien friends. Then I pushed back the reverse gear and Jellyfish and I headed home ward. Agent J stood on the deck, wildly waving to the aliens, a white handkerchief in hand, and yelling with all his

might, "So long and thanks for all the jellyfish."

Kloud

The writer is a grade II student in Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram



ON THE WAY

BY ASHOK KUSHWAHA

The road was long
And I alone.
Walking...walking...
And walking alone.

I felt hungry,
I felt thirsty.
But there was none
To take interest.
Sun shined up
Bright in the noon.
The road was long
And I alone.
Walking...walking...
And walking alone.

I had stepped out
To reach my goal.
But on the way
I forgot the whole.
Divisions of mind
Lead me to roam.
The road was long
And I alone.
Walking...walking...
And walking alone.

I was lost
And wandering unknown
This time searching the way
And not the goal.
I remembered my teacher,
My friends, my home

And remembered
The path they had shown,
And then thought-
'At the beginning,
Neither the road was long,
Nor was I alone.'

All said together-
"Get up,
And step forward
With a new hope,
New energy,
And in a new direction.
You will find the right way
And finally the goal.
Then, the road
Will be no longer
And you won't be alone."

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 11 student in
J.N.V. Rahikwara Satna, M.P.

Spattnak

THE SECRET OF THE RAYCHESTER BEVERSTONE CASTLE



BY ANANYA ACHARYA

It was a nice sunny afternoon in the Eastbourne Oakheart Town. Stephanie and Jefferson Fredrick headed home from school. 'Hey,' Jefferson said, 'Today our teacher told us about an old castle that has been revealed by scientists. I heard that it is near our town.' 'It is! Imagine an old castle which has a big mystery and lurks around with clues. I wish we could visit it once.' Stephanie was excited. 'Yes, you are right!' exclaimed Jefferson. 'I know you love mystery, but how can we get there? All alone in a forest, searching for an old castle in the dark. I don't think anyone will allow us to go.' Stephanie answered in a stern voice as they walked together. Jefferson was Stephanie's brother; both of them were of the same age.

They had certain differences between them, but one thing was absolutely sure – both of them simply loved mysteries. Half of their bookshelves were filled with detective novels and adventure stories. They always wondered how it would be to solve a real mystery.

One fine Saturday, Jefferson decided to play something and do some physical exercise. 'Steff! Steff! Please come and play volleyball with me! Will help you to lose some weight, you know,' shouted Jefferson from the garden. Stephanie knitted her eyebrows and replied from the window, 'Jeff, Please stop talking about my weight and let me wear my trainers, at least.'

When they started playing, a soft wail came from the woods behind them. 'HOOOWWWWLLLLL'.

'What was that? Jeff,' asked Stephanie strangely 'How would I know? Looks like a wolf from the woods,' replied Jefferson. The howl came again, but this time it was loud and distinguishable. It came again. Stephanie and Jefferson had cold feet as they looked around and searched for clues. 'It looks like. . . . Somebody's calling us' Jefferson said,

looking anxiously at Stephanie.

'Are you thinking what I am? Do you think just one look would be fine?' Stephanie asked and waited for a response. 'Let's do it! We'll tell mum we're going to the store, okay?' Jefferson answered confidently.

They ran inside and rushed into Jefferson's bedroom. Stephanie drew an old curtain covering a closet 'Are you sure we can use it?' Jeff was almost trembling with excitement. 'Of course! It's a great opportunity.' Stephanie sounded more confident than her brother.

They opened the closet and took out a big, orange backpack. They zipped it open and pulled out a notebook, a pencil, a flashlight, a mini metal detector and a knife and put on their hiking shoes. 'Jeff! Steff! Why is it so quiet up there? What's going on?' their mum asked them from the stairs. She was coming upstairs to Jeff's room!

'Quick, hide the things and sit on the bed! Here's a book.' Jefferson said, shifting the bag beside the closet. 'Jeff, What are you doing Where's your homework? And yours too, Steff?' Mum asked lowering her eyes at them

'Done!' they replied together anxiously. 'That's great! Who wants some cookies and milk?' Mum asked picking up a pencil that was lying on the floor. 'Mom could we just go down . . . um . . . to the store and get a few things? I really need them for tomorrow's test' Stephanie pleaded, making up a reason. 'If it's for a test, then you may. Take Jeff with you and come back in 30 minutes!' She commanded as she headed out to the kitchen. 'Yes! Good work, Steff. Come on now!' Jeff rushed out of the house. 'Silly, Can't even wait for me.'

'Stop! Jefferson Fredrick. Stop being Usain Bolt and slow down!' Stephanie shouted as they raced into the woods. 'Not until we reach the. . um. .

err. . . WAIT!' Jefferson jumped around and stopped to ask where they were heading for.

names, please?'



'Stephanie and Jefferson Fredrick .But, are you really serious?' Stephanie asked the woman. 'Indeed, I am. Is he your brother?' she asked looking at Jefferson. 'Indeed, I am.'

'Well, the news headlines said that this castle was discovered two weeks ago. There was a treasure hidden here.' Jefferson told the woman everything about what the news said. Stephanie informed her about the scientists who visited the castle.

'Why don't you listen to this famous story yourself? The woman continued pensively, 'Thousands of years ago, a mighty King named Johnston Conway ruled this country. In those times it was

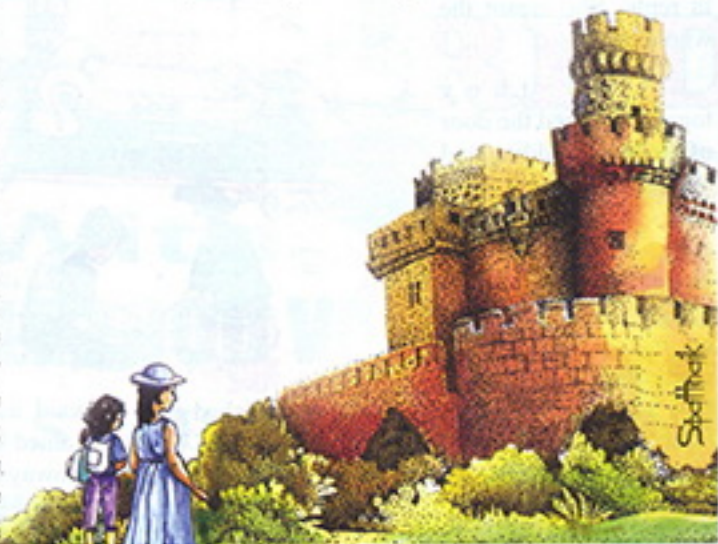
Stephanie was running so fast down a slope that she was not able to control her speed and fell over Jefferson! They suddenly started rolling down. Rolling down, into a deep gorge!

'Aaaaaaa...' they screamed together as they rolled down. When they touched the ground and got up, Stephanie dusted the bag and said nodding her head 'Let's go ahead...'

'We are in a tunnel? Where does it lead to? We are actually going inside there? Hey, you need to wait a second. Let's make a plan, Please,' Jeff said puzzled as they walked into the old tunnel. 'See, I think we should, you know, explore this tunnel. It may lead us to...Ray Chester Beverstone Castle, I suppose.' said a silvery voice behind them. 'What?' Jeff asked Stephanie, looking around. 'I didn't say that!' Stephanie answered turning around too. 'Aaaaaaaahaaaa! Who are you?' They screamed, when they saw some one behind them.

'Hello, I am Adriana Earthshine and this tunnel leads to the Raychester Beverstone Castle. I am the caretaker of the palace. May I know your

an empire. People were happy and prosperous. The king was very kind and generous to all. But, One day



an evil spirit descended on this kingdom.' Adriana explained.

They finally entered a big field of grass. 'Here we are. Would you like to enter the castle and look at it?' She asked them when they came nearer the big castle. The castle was enormous. It was almost

the size of an amusement park. There was a large wooden gate that protected it.

Jefferson looked at Stephanie and winked at her. 'I think we should solve a mystery here.' Jefferson said.

'What mystery, Jeff?' Stephanie sounded a bit puzzled. 'Let us try to find something after Adriana completes the story.'

'Oh, yes! Just to inform you. There are evil ghosts and spirits of murderers within the walls of this castle. If you children have the desire to solve a mystery, then you should find . . .' as Adriana was talking she turned back and headed back to the tunnel, 'the hidden treasure! Here's a clue. . . In the deep, in a keep find the treasure that you can read.' Good luck.' Adriana said looking back at them in delight as she walked ahead. 'Thanks Addy!' Exclaimed the two children as they waved goodbye to the friend who accompanied them and helped them reach their destination. 'Let's move on to the treasure.' Stephanie suggested, opening the bag and checking if the mini metal detector was working. 'Give it to me, you hold the bag. Where do we start from?' asked Jefferson. Stephanie winked at him in reply. She meant the whole castle!

As they together pushed the door of the huge building and walked in, they were completely baffled at the sight they saw. Even though the castle was ancient and not known by many, Adriana had really kept it clean and tidy. The old-fashioned furniture was polished and clean. The rooms had beds and storerooms. The kitchen had not been used for a long time, and the counters were clean and in good shape. They started looking at every nook and cranny for clues. They discovered that the castle had an upper floor where all the bedrooms of the royal family were, including their portraits and paintings.

One hour later, they came to a halt in front of the main entrance. They did not find any clue and neither the metal detector beeped. 'Let's go home now Stephanie, I really want some cookies and milk

now.' Jefferson said shoving the metal detector inside his bag. 'I thought you loved mysteries? One last place is still left for us to check.' Stephanie said looking around as they walked forward. 'Steff, don't you remember, Adriana gave us a lyrical hint out there and we haven't thought about the riddle yet. So I guess we should start checking that out if it leads us anywhere.' Jefferson said, looking puzzled. 'Thud!!' came a loud noise from the floor. 'Wait, Jeff!' Stephanie exclaimed. 'Thud!!' the noise repeated as they stepped a little ahead. Stephanie kneeled down and pulled out the metal detector from their bag. 'It's made of wood . . . It's totally wooden!!' Jefferson cried as he stomped at the part of the floor where the noises came from.

'BEEP.BEEEEPPP.BEEEPP.BEEEP!!' beeped the detector which sensed some metallic object below it. 'We have to dig the floor, to find out what's inside. Give me the knife.' Stephanie said. Jefferson took out the knife and started edging out a square from the wooden part. After much digging and pulling out wooden blocks, Jefferson and Stephanie



found a rectangle shaped box. They gasped and beamed at each other in delight. The box had the Conway Clan stamp on it!

Stephanie carefully took the box out from the hole and dusted it with her handkerchief. 'Oh brother, it's locked! How do we open it now?' Jefferson said, frantically searching inside the hole for a key to the lock. 'No! Relax . . . I'll try with my hairpin.' said Stephanie pulling out her hairpin. 'Got it! Finally, we can see it. Take it!' Jefferson said, excitedly handing a golden key with some orient design to Stephanie. Stephanie put the key inside the

lock carefully so that it fitted perfectly inside the lock. She turned the key as Jefferson packed the bag. 'TICKKITY-TICK!' the lock opened!

Jefferson placed the box on his knees and pulled the cover open. They both gasped in excitement when they saw what was inside. 'A diary? titled 'The True Treasure Of My Life' by King Johnston Conway. Huh?' Jefferson said, puzzled. Stephanie thought for a moment and then exclaimed. 'It's correct! Remember Adriana's clue?' she said with a grin. 'In the deep, in a keep. Find the treasure that you can read.' They chanted together. Let's read it, sister!' Jefferson said opening the golden embroidered book. Suddenly, A paper fell out of it.

'Huh, What's this?' Jefferson said, his eyes looking straight at Stephanie. 'Let me read it aloud' she said taking the paper.

Dear Reader,

I, King Johnston Conway, hereby enlighten you that I do not care about money or gold that is plenty in my possession. I want something made by my family and me, to bequeath to the people of my kingdom to be my real treasure. I declare that the city which has been built on my behalf will be

called Eastbourne Oakheart from now on.

Regards,

KING JOHNSTON CONWAY I

1800 A.D

'We solved it at last! Give me a high five!' Jefferson and Stephanie exclaimed together as happiness filled their hearts. Now, they knew how it felt to solve a real mystery as they headed home.....

The next day, they were ready to face their mother about their delay. 'Mom, we are really sorry if you are disappointed with us.' Jefferson said lowering his head. 'Mom, We have to tell you something important.' Stephanie said as their mother turned around and beamed with happiness. 'I am so proud of both of you! It's not bad if you went out to solve a mystery, It was your heart's desire! Good work on the article though.' Mother said as she hugged them both.

Their story was published in the newspaper and their wish to be detectives was fulfilled.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 6 student in Shalom Hills International School, Gurgaon

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BOOK REVIEW

'TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD'

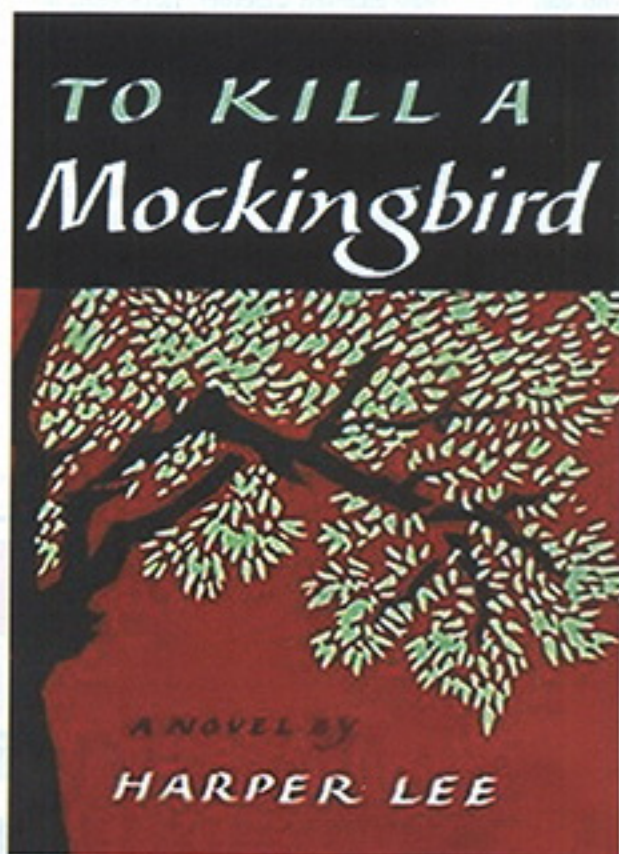
by Harper Lee

REVIEWED BY
MRINALINI CHANDRASHEKHAR

To kill a Mockingbird written by Harper Lee is one of the most powerful books I've ever read. It deals with the issues such as racism, oppression & injustice that have existed among men since prehistoric times. There is nothing novel about the theme, but the genuinity and the passion with which the theme is handled makes the book a great piece of work.

The characters have been portrayed realistically and the concept and the message the author is trying to deliver is effectively communicated. It taught me how our colour, looks and background matter a lot in today's world. Everyone is judgmental and therefore you have to be careful about how you portray yourself in public. For instance, in this novel Boo is an ugly, scared and dirty boy who, towards the end of the book, turns into a hero. Tom Robinson, on the other hand, is accused of raping Bob Ewell's daughter. While I was reading the book, I was at first angry with the man, but when his innocence is proven, I learned how the evil forces of the world can corrupt and destroy the innocent. It is unfair to blame an innocent man for a crime he hasn't committed.

The book opens our eyes to some harsh realities of our society, makes us reflect on them and inspires us to react against the injustices. The aesthetic as well as the didactic merits of the



Kloud 9

The wirtter is a grade 12 student in
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"Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." - Chapter 10 of To Kill a Mockingbird

CHRONICLE OF A BOY WHO MOCKED DEATH

BY URJA BHUYAN



*“One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die!” – John Donne*

The story of Akash Dube's short life is, indeed, stranger than fiction.

Imagine a nine year old school kid volunteering to participate regularly in Terry Fox run for cancer awareness and continues to run, and run around to raise funds for the cause until he himself was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of sixteen – the kid who fought the disease like a great warrior trying hard to pacify his family and friends while silently bearing the consequences of chemotherapy!

The story of Akash's short life is as extraordinary as it is heart-rending. He was born on 3rd June 1992 to Sujatha, a chemical engineer and Ravi, a food technologist, and lived in Sharjah until a cruel stroke of fate took him away for good. He was just sixteen. He had his schooling at the Ibn Seena English High School, a reputable institution co-headed by his granny, Mrs. Dube. At a very tender age of nine, Akash was obviously far more aware of the sufferings of his fellow humans than most of his peers. His schoolmates, teachers and other non-teaching staff of the school adored the kid, and his natural warmth and affection for others made him a darling to everyone who knew him.

Tragedy struck him most unexpectedly,

in a most unexpected way. One day while playing tennis he fainted and was rushed to a hospital in Sharjah. After some preliminary tests the doctors suspected leukemia and advised his family to take him elsewhere for better treatment. He was taken to Apollo Hospital in Chennai, where he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia.

At Apollo Specialty Hospital the news of leukemia was broken to him by Dr. Revathy. Every one, including his doctors, was dumbfounded at his stoic response when asked if he was angry about his fate. “Why should I be angry? And with whom? I'm just a statistic in the number of people who get leukemia. In fact, I'm



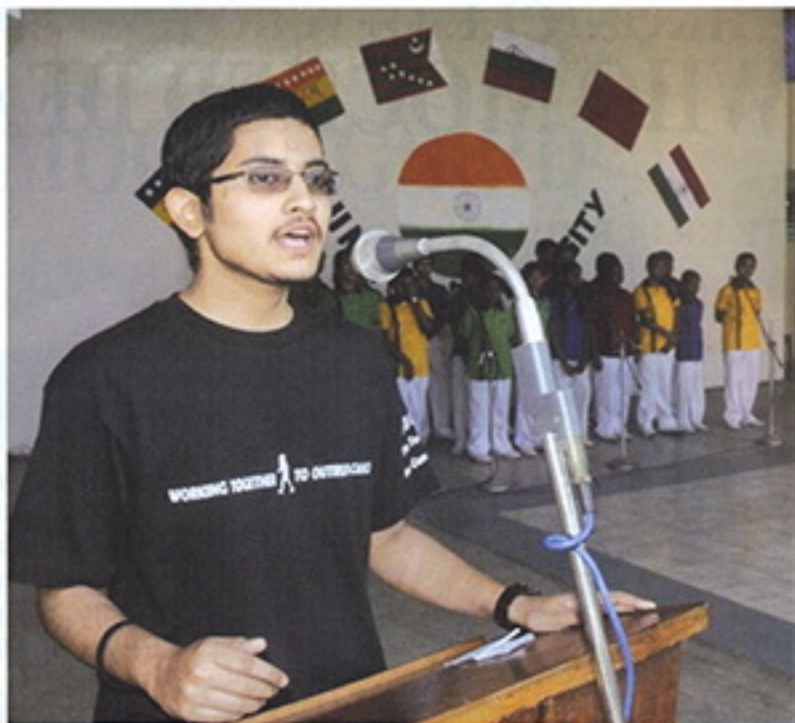
luckier than most because my father can afford my treatment whereas so many are not as lucky.” Akash was changing here into a very, very strong human being.

A new phase had set in in his life – a phase of a long drawn battle with a formidable

enemy, but a phase that moulded the teenager into a great warrior and an inspiration to many. And it was during this period that he changed many things. When he was in remission, he organized the Terry Fox run in Chennai - right from the sick bed, under the banner "Today's Research is Tomorrow's Cure". Though he was frail, and sensitive even to the mildest infection, he went from school to school in Chennai wearing a mask to talk about the Terry Fox run and everyone accepted his idea wholeheartedly. In the fourth year of the run there were fifteen thousand participants, but there was no Akash....

The ever enthusiastic and self-driven Akash was always ready to be helpful to others. Even as a fourteen year old child he sold his old CD's and books to start libraries in a village school in Madhya Pradesh. Such was his desire to help others that he even gave up his pocket money for two years to pay the school fees for a boy in Rishi Valley village school. It is rightly said that beauty comes from the heart and soul and, therefore, Akash was beautiful - ethereally.

His grandmother wrote in a letter " Out of the blue, leukemia, full blown had struck and he lay in bed. We thought he didn't know of his ailment, but much later we learned that he knew exactly what he had and had told his friend Zaid about it and asked him not to tell anyone else because he didn't want to be pitied. We were asked to shift Akash out of Sharjah in 24 hours and tried to keep up the façade with him that he had dengue. The truth was he was playing a part to comfort us! This concern for his family and friends would continue throughout the four years of his treatment. And that evening en route to Chennai, a hero was born." I can imagine how hard it must have been for his family to assimilate and accept the diagnosis because I've seen my cousin brother die of blood cancer.



After spending a year in Chennai he was back in Sharjah. But he had changed; changed into a determined and a fearless boy. Despite the endless agony caused by the doses of oral chemo, chemo by port every 3 weeks and the steroid injections administered weekly, he never showed it, partied hard and laughed as much as he could because he wanted his friends to remember him as a cheerful and happy person.

Akash's case persuaded the IIT Chennai to take him for a research project, where his colleagues were all PhD students, leading him to research on micro RNA that causes cancer and the ones that prevents cancer. Very convinced that one day oncogens will be switched off before their onset at the genetic level eliminating the harsh chemotherapy, the paper that he wrote resulted in research grant and mentorship of a Nobel laureate along with admission to the graduate course in Colombia University. He also secured admission at Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, Kellogs, Yale, Berkeley, Wharton, Stanford and many more. He did university level courses at Harvard where he topped the Maths class. And, from there he chose Stanford because Stanford had excellent cancer research facility. Ten weeks after joining Stanford, the cancer

returned with a vengeance and he struggled for another two years. He never doubted the efficacy of the people whom he knew. His trust and faith in people was immense and strong. But in the end nothing worked: neither the harshest chemo nor the trial drug that he had volunteered for.

His urge to help others was so strong that till his last moment he put up efforts to help, to be useful in some way. He wanted to live. Not just for himself but for the millions of underprivileged patients. Akash single-handedly did what our lawmakers couldn't do in many years. This extraordinary young boy was, indeed, worth twenty old politicians. In the Terry Fox Runs he had organized in Chennai, he raised about Rs. 50 lakh which he donated to Tata Memorial Cancer Centre. True, that his pain never did subside. It was as excruciating as it could be. Yet he smiled, remained cheerful and comforted his family. I salute him for the person he was. Despite the fact that I never met him I

feel that I knew him intimately. He represents the indomitable nature of the human spirit. How I wish we all could make our lives worth living the way he did. We cry at the slightest of pain, but he smiled at the most excruciating one. He taught us the value of life and showed us the strength that he required to live his life. I can hardly imagine any other 16 year old kid who could've taken all that pain the way Akash did and yet remain full of life. After all, not everyone can see the positive side of everything, of every breakdown, of every pain....

For me and for everyone who knew Akash he will always remain an inspiration. The courage, the patience and the unconditional love he had for everyone will inspire people for a very long time. . And this is how he will live in our hearts - loved and Respected.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Loyola School, Bhubaneswar



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MY DREAM SCHOOL



BY OMKAR RATH

I have always been a natural learner. Whether I excel and am admired by my teachers or I am blatantly disregarded by them, I am ever-enthusiastic to learn. If I am not interested in listening to some one's monotonous speech or can't retain the unpronounceable terms given in books, I can't help. Is it my mistake if I want to understand the world according to my perception? Is it my fault if I interpret the concepts as per my understanding? In either way I am learning, aren't I? And that, I believe, is what you call education!

Then why do you label me a duffer, dumb and stupid if I fail to come to terms with an outdated system that is imposed on me? Why do you want me to join in the academic rat race where I lose my identity?

I want to learn, not sitting in a cell where my visions cannot go beyond the four walls. I want to see the nature, feel the sun, observe its journey from one end to the other. I want to explore where the birds go chirping and come back home safely. I want to play in the earth, making my hands and

clothes soiled, put a tiny seed in it and wait till it sprouts with two leaflets and watch it grow. I want to lie on the meadow and read the books of the firmament; draw the pictures and color it with the palette of rainbow in my hand and run along with the floating clouds. I want to rejoice by getting drenched in the rain; feeling the gush of wind over my face; drinking the fresh cool air and picking the pebbles and shells on the seashore. I want to race with the tides and bid goodbye to the ebbs; build my castle in the sand and watch it taken away by the waves.

I want to help my fellow-beings who are less fortunate than me, who are enslaved, who beg on the streets or are exploited by fellow humans. I want to reach them and show how beautiful the world is and how wonderful the life is. But alas! How little we know about it?

How I wish I could learn in MY DREAM SCHOOL which doesn't work anywhere, but does exist everywhere



The writer is a grade 8 student in Delhi Public School, Vijayawada

MOMMY, I'VE LEARNT TO SPELL D-E-A-T-H

BY HIMANI TRIPATHI

Susan lay on her bed staring at the ceiling. She had never noticed it before. She had never noticed the way the grey looked against the white, creating perfect squares. She was here again, not a very special place, but it was special for her even though she was not here by choice.

She couldn't understand what had earned her the time-out. She had asked herself a simple question: was Rachel like Cinderella's stepmother? She banished the thought as



quickly as it came. Her stepmother wasn't evil. She took her out to trick-'r-treating, gave her chocolates and allowed her to do fun stuff that other kids never did. Rachel Grey was a good mother. And it was for this very reason why she had concealed the fact of her brain tumour from the six-year-old.

"Mommy, what is death? I heard you talking about it to 'Mr. Apple Eyes' that day."

The memory still mocked at her. Was this what life had come to? The girl called the doctor 'Mr. Apple Eyes'. Rachel adored the girl who had an angelic face on which smile spread as easily as jelly spread on a toast. She had big charming caramel eyes, a cute little button-nose and lips as red as cherry. She had chubby cheeks, always a bit red despite her not so fair skin. She would be a beautiful lady someday. If the surgery went well; 'If- that word was always there haunting Rachel as if it were a ghost.

The phone rang suddenly snapping her out of her own thoughts. "Yes, Dr. Wesley. What is it?" Rachel said, her voice breaking through the silence, panic evident in it.

"Ms. Grey, I need you to come to the hospital right away," worry racing the doctor's tone, making the words come out faster than he intended. "Of course, right away."

The tall white building looked intimidating to her. The peace of the place was a complete opposite of what she was feeling at that time. "Mommy, I want to be that tall some day."

"Some day, darling." She knocked on the door of the cabin that had the name plate 'DR. WESLEY'. As soon as Rachel entered the cabin, Susan was sent out to play to the play area designated for kids in the hospital.

"Please take a seat, Ms. Grey." He said

in a calm voice. The calm before the storm, Rachel thought. She shook the thought out of her head. She watched him like a student watches a teacher, her attentiveness almost scaring him. "I'm afraid the tumour has spread, Ms. Grey. We can't operate. She has five months at the most." He had never been that good with words to



soothe and charm and calm people down.

"Five months. Is that all, Dr. Wesley?" said Ms. Grey half to herself, her voice not betraying her emotion. Perhaps it was the shock that kept her from breaking down.

As the doctor looked at her face for a second, shock flickered across his face before he disciplined it into a mask of indifference. Polite, but indifferent. "Yes, Ms. Grey. That is all. I'm very sorry."

As Rachel Grey walked out of the cabin, she forced herself to stay calm for the sake of her daughter, who right now was running towards her with the angelic smile on her face that reminded Rachel so much of her father. The little girl stopped at her mother's feet, her eyes shining with excitement.

"Mommy, I've learnt to spell D-E-A-T-H, death," her laughter evident in her voice. Rachel just kept looking at the angel-like face, a tear drop finally streaking down her own face. A drop that reflected intense pain, and love.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Sunbeam English School, Varanasi

“Death is no more than passing from one room into another. But there's a difference for me, you know. Because in that other room I shall be able to see.

- Helen Keller

In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on.

- Robert Frost

Best Wishes

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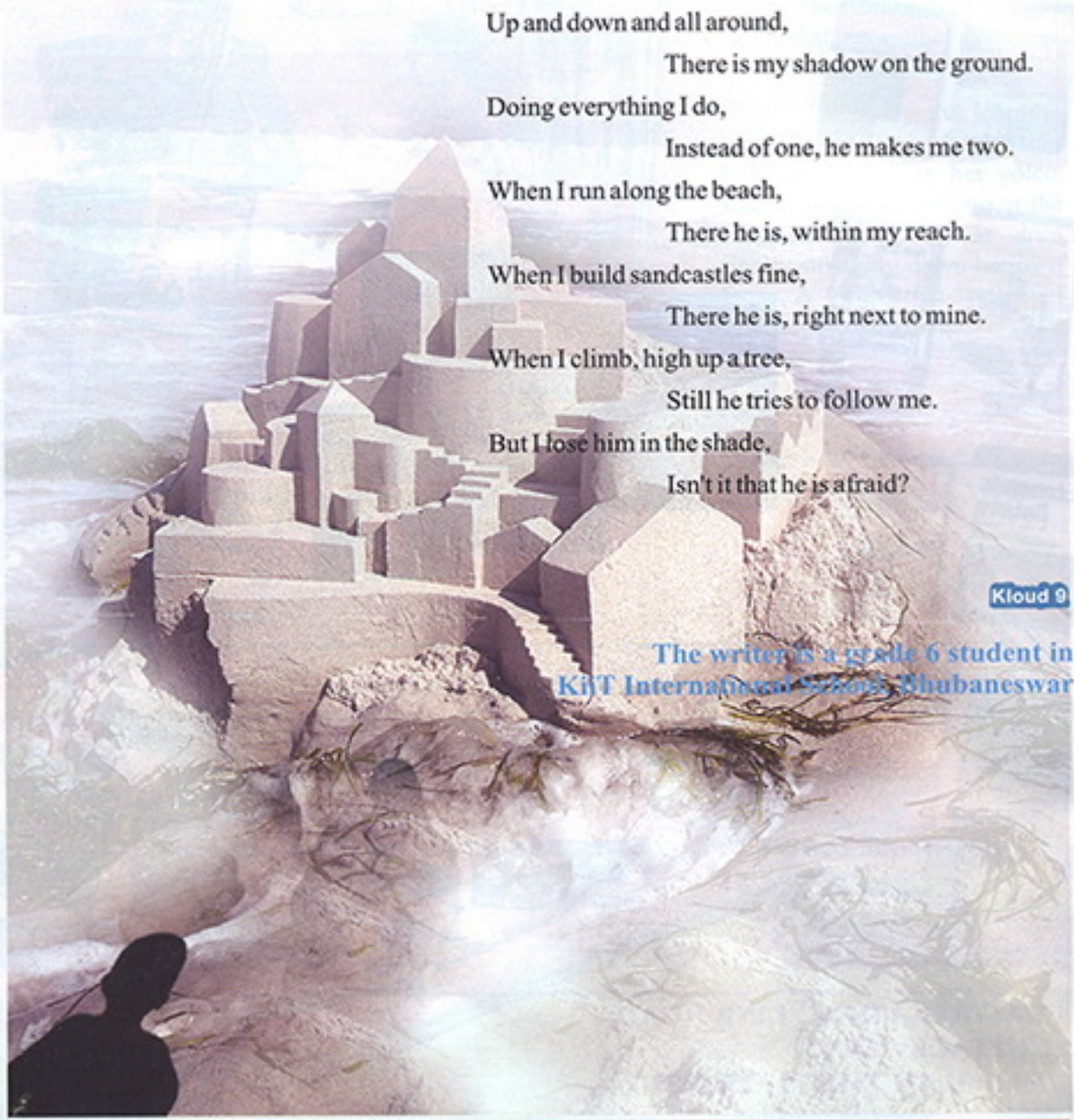
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SPECIAL FRIEND

BY TRISHITA CHAUDHURI



Up and down and all around,
There is my shadow on the ground.
Doing everything I do,
Instead of one, he makes me two.
When I run along the beach,
There he is, within my reach.
When I build sandcastles fine,
There he is, right next to mine.
When I climb, high up a tree,
Still he tries to follow me.
But I lose him in the shade,
Isn't it that he is afraid?

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 6 student in
KjT International School, Bhubaneswar

WHY READ FICTION?

BY MANISHA SINGH



Why do we read fiction? What do we expect to achieve by reading things that people of imagination write about? What draws us to stories like moths to a flame? Is it to quench the eternal fire of curiosity that rages constantly in the human heart? Or is it just for the sheer pleasure that it gives us?

There is a plethora of reasons why we read fiction. Sometimes we read fiction to satisfy our simple cravings for pleasure that arise in us. But sometimes we read it to break the monotonous cycle of routine that makes life seem drab and gray. Reading fiction is a great way to momentarily forget our quotidian worries, stress, and fears which sometimes overwhelm us to such an extent that they leave us jittery and sleepless. Reading is one of those activities which can completely absorb our mind. By reading fiction our mind is rejuvenated with vibrant colors in the form of imagination.

Have you ever wondered why we who are forever on the lookout of peace tend to find amusement in stories which are riddled with conflicts? In reality our outlook towards conflict is ambiguous. When we are totally content with life a haze of boredom sets in; this only clears when there are some problems in our life, or in the life of the people of the book we are reading. Hence stories are not merely a reflection of life rather it is life in motion. They, therefore, broaden our understanding of ourselves and also help us appreciate our surroundings.

What magnetizes us to fiction is that it stimulates emotions that we find pleasurable – humor, horror, adventure, wonder, romance,

intrigue, etc. Each here is a code word for a specific genre of books. We catalog books by their intuitive emotional draws.

When we read stories to 'escape', we hunt for a getaway not from life but to life more appealing than our sometimes lusterless existence. Fiction transports us to a life which we, from time to time, have fancied. Enjoying fiction is a higher form of daydreaming. By reading it we can vicariously experiment with experiences which we do not dare to have in our own life, but which we profoundly yearn for. As a result, fiction gives us the ability to explore without having to worry about the consequences.

Sometimes reading fiction is deemed to be less entertaining and thrilling than watching television and movies; but readers realize that words can do things which images and sound cannot. These mere words carry us deep into a character's mind offering us insight into people's motivations and behavior. At times just a few written words can produce a much deeper and richer experience than an hour long episode of your favorite show can. Also many people prefer reading fiction to watching serials and films because it does not break off every fifteen minutes for a commercial break which sometimes last longer than the show itself. Fictions allow us to interpret things as we want to; they do not force a certain decorum on us but gives us freedom to deduce from events and situations and be critical of them as we wish to.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 12 student in Navy Children School, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

DOODHWALA

BY NIKITA GUDURU



Every day morning at about 7 o'clock, I would lie awake waiting for a voice. The waiting seemed endless, but at last I would hear the distinct sound of his bicycle bell and the next thing I knew my ears detected the smooth voice calling out "GUDIA". I would run across the house as if being chased by a dog to the door and open it with a wide grin pasted over my face.

And in front of me was our ever smiling doodhwala or milkman. He wore an amiable



smile on his face which I waited to see every morning. As a 7 year old kid, it amused me to see a turban wearing, tall man with a long mustache to be so friendly. I lived at a place called Utarlai in central Rajasthan. We were a colony of Air Force employees and families, and had to depend on milkmen for bringing us milk as the nearest village was about 20 kms away. My doodhwala was, in my opinion, the best of all. But as such he was. He would come to our home last and would sit down to have a friendly chat with me calling me 'Gudia', literally meaning doll. This continued for almost two years, and being an only child of my family, I immediately connected to him and he seemed to be my

second grandfather.

Every summer my family visited my grandparents in my village in Andhra. That year also we did. I regretted leaving my doodhwala but getting to spend two months of total freedom, savoring delicious mangoes was really luring and so we set off. After about three days I reached my grandpa's place bubbling with joy and excitement. The wildness in me just came out when I saw children playing on the streets. In those days I was found more on the streets and less at home. I came home only to eat and sleep.

On one such sprightly and pleasant night as I got back home I heard my mother whimper on the phone saying "Oh! God is so cruel sometimes". I waited for her to hang up and then walked up to her with a shining face and asked her the reason behind her sudden change in mood. She pulled me closer and said softly "Our doodhwala is no more, he died in an accident". Before I could even understand and assimilate the truth a tear involuntarily dropped from my eye. I couldn't believe my doodhwala was no more. I cried and cried till all the living souls in the house were with me consoling me.

I don't know why but at that moment I felt like I had lost a part of myself and cried bitterly half hoping I would hear him calling out 'Gudia' from the doorstep. But that just didn't happen. My doodhwala had served his part and had now left leaving me shattered and I felt as if a family member had died. But the reality was irreversible. That night sleep was a stranger and I stared at the stars hoping to see my doodhwala and hear him calling me, 'Gudia....'

Cloud

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Delhi Public School, Vijayawada

MY FATHER

BY AMAL PRASHAND

The kind face that looked upon me
The secure arms that held me
The smiling eyes that looked into mine
Father, how nice you are!

The day I was born you held me,
Took every pain to ensure the best for me,
That it always reached me, stayed with me;
And that I shunned away, all the rest;

Walking along the beach, hand in hand;
In the sunset twilight, on the golden sand;
Father, your kind eyes staring into mine,
Father, you opened all the doors of life!

Dropped me at school in the morning,
Picked me up at noon,
Taught me in the evening,
Read to me at night.

Through thick and thin, you guided me;
Through the worst of storms, you protected me;
Through the right path, you lead me;
Father, you are selfless as can be!

Into the skies you threw me,
Watching me laugh as I flew, you never once broke my faith;
For you always watched me; never once broke my faith;
And you always caught me before I fell.

When today, I walk this lonely road,
Your ideas are with me, father;
Those enlightening moments with you,
Sweep me with nostalgic memories.

How proud am I today, Dear Father!
For you have molded me into a fine young man,
For your faith, your belief has borne fruit
We will meet again on the Great Judgement Day, Father!

The writer is a grade 9 student in Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi, UAE

BOOK REVIEW

THE SON OF NEPTUNE

BY RICK RIORDAN

BY NITHILA ASHOK

Rick Riordan's *The Son of Neptune* was published by Penguin Books in 2011. The author, Mr. Rick Riordan was introduced to Greek mythology at a very young age. This influenced him to write the Percy Jackson series. *The Son of Neptune* is the second installment of the series called 'Heroes of Olympus' consisting of three books so far.

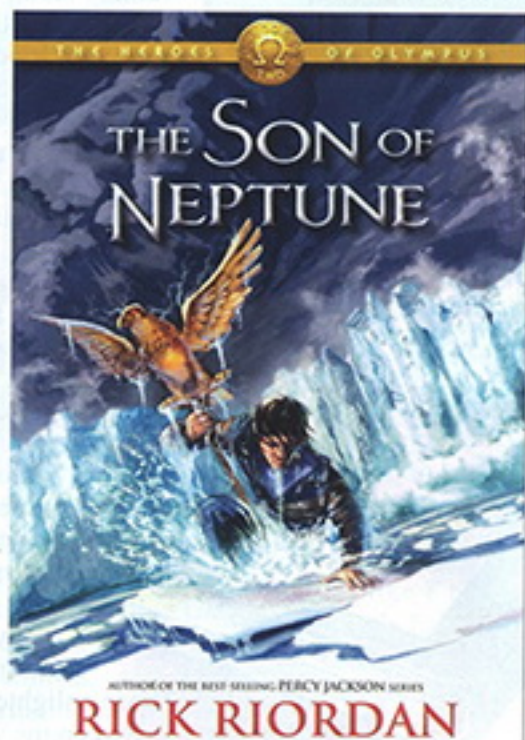
This book takes our imagination to greater heights as we see the Roman and the Greek gods and their demigod children. It introduces all the major gods of Greek and Roman origin. This book revolves around Percy Jackson, a son of Poseidon, the god of water who is called Neptune in Latin. He finally wakes after a very long sleep and finds himself being chased by two snake haired women (Gorgons). He makes his way to the Roman camp where he rescues two demigods Frank and Hazel. The camp leader, Reyna sizes him up and asks about his past. He finds he is unable to remember anything except one name: Annabeth. Hazel then takes him to Octavian, the camp's astrologer who can prophecy by ripping teddy bears and reading the stuffing and offering

it to Lord Jupiter, who is Zeus in Greek.

Octavian is convinced Percy is a spy but lets him join the fifth cohort whose symbol is an eagle. During the war games, Percy learns that a boy called Jason had gone missing four months ago. Soon, Lord Mars appears and claims Frank as his son. He orders for a quest to Alaska, which he wants Frank to lead and also wants Percy and Hazel to join him. They set off the next day where they encounter Queen Hylla, sister of Reyna and the queen of the Amazons. They also learn that Gaea, the goddess of nature has kidnapped Thanatos the lord of death and sealed Tartarus, the doors of death, meaning anyone who dies will come back immediately fully healed.

They battle Laistrygonians, Cyclopes, wheat monsters, giants and rescue a harpy from a blind man. Finally, they battle Alycenous, a son of Gaea. They defeat him with the help of Arion, the fastest horse in the world. They also find that Hazel was

from the past and unknowingly helped Gaea resurrect. Frank washes away her curse and also learns of his family gift which allows him to turn into anything. They battle it out at Camp Jupiter and Percy gets elected Praetor. He is finally reunited with Tyson, his half brother and Mrs.



O'Leary, a hell-hound the size of a truck. Tyson tells him that Annabeth and her friends were on the way to rescue him. The story ends with the arrival of the Greek warship and Percy learning that it was Hera, the goddess of marriage who took his memory in order to unite the forces of the Greeks and Romans.

The son of Neptune, being a general historical survey, lacks a thesis or a central argument. In the whole book, Percy is being molded by what other people say. He has a low opinion of himself and lacks confidence. He is fiercely loyal to his friends. The author has represented both sides equally and presents a

brief history of both at the introduction. Most of the author's sources are from Bernard Evslin's 'The Greek Gods'. In this interesting combination of thrill, adventure and touches of comedy, one can take their imagination to greater heights reading about the conflict between the gods and their children. I would recommend this book to anyone who has a thirst for adventure and mystery.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi

A NEW GIRL IN THE SCHOOL

BY G.NIKHITA

When I was asked to write an article for the school magazine many ideas came into my mind. As I was thinking and sorting out my ideas, I remembered my first day at school. That delightful day was 3rd April when I entered a class of unknown faces. I was nervous and felt a tinge of fear. 'Will I be able to adjust? Will they accept me? Will the teachers like me?' were amongst many questions that ran in my head and troubled me at that moment. But an amiable smile from my Math teacher cleared all the questions and made me feel welcome. I introduced myself trembling with fear and feeling awkward. After I was welcomed I slowly walked to the first empty bench I saw and took my seat. My bench mate flashed a smile across which merged with the end of the period bell. All the girls gathered around me with a wide grin pasted on their faces and rattled out many questions one by one. I felt as if I had been with them all my life. The day quietly slipped by. Since then DPS has given me memories abundant. My teachers are some of the best who made me feel at home. And then come the people without whom I would never have made it this far in DPS - my dear friends. They accepted me and gave me some of the sweetest memories. Now I share a strong bond with my school, my teachers and my friends. One year has sailed by and now I feel like the luckiest person to have found this magical place on that 3rd of April. Thank you DPS.....

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Delhi Public School Vijayawada.

YOU ARE THE ONE

BY IKRAA HAMIDANI

How can I forget those wonderful days,
When life could be enjoyed in various ways.
We rose like the stars and the shone like stars,
What we chose was success and excellence to chase.

Amidst the crowd of millions of stars.
Beyond the age of toys and bars.
When everyone had the craze of cars,
I saw an angel treading, as if from Mars.

She appeared different but interesting to me.
Dressed like a butterfly all set to flee,
When I went close and got the chance to see,
I realized that she was my fortune's key.

She gave me a smile so kind and gentle,
Enlightened my life doing the work of a candle.
Occupying the special place in my heart which was till now rental.
A day without her would drive me mental.

One fine day came a sandy dune,
Snatched everything from me, including my moon,
I could no longer hear the melodious tune
Of my angel whose name was Yansoun.

I cringed and cried for her to come back,
I felt like an employee who had been sacked.
I could no more take the pain and went to the rack
To take my ticket and have my clothes packed.

All of a sudden I heard a ring,
I went to the door all sad and tears running.
I wondered who it was at that time to bring
To me a little comfort or a wonderful thing.

It was my life at the door,
The person I was impatiently waiting for,
I could not be happy any further more,
Because I had experienced joy from the core.

My angel was back with the same curve,
With her hand forward under the friendship's glove.
I accepted it with keen love,
We were united like the friendship dove.

Cloud

The writer is a grade 10 student in Activity High School, Mumbai,

UN'ESPERIENZA ITALIANA

(An Italian Experience)

MITSY JACOB

It wasn't just another day.

24th of May 2013 was a day I should have rejoiced over. But it turned out to be one of the most miserable days I had ever had. I was on vacation in Europe with my daughter and after spending some wonderful time in Switzerland, I was robbed at the metro station in Milan on that day. Numerous warnings from friends and family did not deter me from travelling to Italy.

Under the bright lights of the metro station, in spite of the precautions I had taken, I was dexterously robbed by some smart young girls with oodles of experience in their craft, and apparently with the support of a well coordinated clandestine gang. Having lost every cent - my credit card, debit cards, traveler's checks, money: everything - I was miserable and exhausted, when I ran into a young man who looked very Asian. Instincts told me to speak to him in my rudimentary Bengali, which I did, and had a miraculous effect. The umbrella vendor who was selling his merchandise on the platform at the metro station, immediately closed shop, took us to the nearest police station

where we lodged a formal complaint. This Samaritan was an immigrant from Bangladesh.

To my surprise, at the police station I saw at least half a dozen tourists who had come up with complaints of having been pick-pocketed or mugged. And the Italiano police did not seem in a great mood to be of genuine help to anyone. I collected a copy of the FIR and took a cab to the hotel, literally penniless, shattered

and fatigued. (My travel agent had contacted the hotel where my room had been booked and had requested them to pay off the taxi).

The depressingly rainy and cold weather aggravated my misery while my daughter and I confined ourselves within the four walls of the hotel room. Luckily our passports were intact and I still had my cell phone. A few phone calls and help started pouring in. That was a moment I felt truly blessed being a teacher. My dear old students from Dubai, my friends from the UAE and the US, and

even the principal of the school in Sharjah I used to work with, all of them instantly came to my aid. From Milan we headed for Venice by train while I kept watching everyone around warily as if all of them were waiting to rob me. I had developed kleptophobia. We were so much



shaken by the Milan experience that we dropped Florence from our itinerary and boarded a plane from Venice to Rome.

After years of yearning to visit the Vatican City, I was eventually in Rome to look at Michelangelo's paintings and to walk in the Colosseum. That beautiful bright evening with the woolly white clouds floating in the lovely blue sky had a balmy effect on me and helped me recover from the effects of the Milan nightmare. Most people I tried to speak to knew little or no English and I was wondering if I could hire the services of a guide when, again, I saw another South Asian, apparently another Bangladeshi, hanging around at a bus stop. Forgetting the good old dictum 'Never talk to strangers', I approached the guy and asked him politely if he was Italian, and he promptly replied 'Si, si' (yes, yes). I mustered up all my courage and spoke to him in the Bengali language and his eyes lit up.

Sagar, (That's what he said his name was.) a well built youngster of medium height, reluctantly agreed to accompany us to Vatican city. He confessed to me that he did not have any legal documents to stay in Italy and so he was careful about his movements. He told me that he had paid a substantial amount of money to an Italian official and was eagerly awaiting the proper documents that would grant him legal citizenship. Sagar showed us around Vatican

city, but shied away from the camera and kept his distance from the patrolling cops. I narrated to Sagar the terrible experience we had at Milan and he quietly listened to my story. As the evening wore on, I thought he began to feel comfortable in our company. But then, out of the blue, he told me something that jolted me. "Sister", he said, "do not trust me, I am a thief too - a pickpocket." When I looked at him with troubled eyes, he quickly tried to comfort me saying that he was joking. Deep down, I knew he was telling the truth. But that day he accompanied me like a brother and he did exactly what a brother should be doing - ensuring the safety of his sister.

He dropped us at the hotel and when I tried to pay him for his services, he refused to accept any remuneration. When I asked him if he would meet us the following day, he gently replied that he would find somebody trustworthy to take us around. True to his word, he sent us a good guide the next day. Sadly, Sagar didn't give us his contact number and when I asked our new guide, Mr. Tahidul, about Sagar's whereabouts as we wanted to bid him goodbye, he replied that Sagar had gone to attend a fair. Oh! I thought, was Sagar busy pick pocketing? Maybe he was, or how else would he pay for his citizenship? I chuckled while I thought. There was honor among thieves.



WEALTH OF A NATION



BY LAKSHMIPRIYA VENKATESAN

From snow-capped mountains guarding
The north of the realm,
To the chattering rivers winding
Through the mists' shimmering sheen,
The oceans embracing the sides
Of this mighty, ancient nation.

The plains feed the land,
The desert lies abandoned,
The plateaus pay the man,
The forests seem enchanted.
Islands float a little way off
Surrounded by the deep blue sea.

Such is the wealth
Of Mother India.

Plough's teeth cut the soil
Black, red, yellow, brown
Healed by the peasants toil,
Heartened at the sun's frown.
The earth's happiness
Bolsters the growing crops.

The breeze dances along,
Caressing the sweating flowers,
Towing clouds in monsoon,
Reuniting the earth with its fluid lover,
Blowing old memories away
Blossoming joy and hope.

Such is the wealth
Of Mother India .

Glittering temples adorned with gold
Share their spiritual glory
With majestic Mosques of old
And sacred Churches' story.
Gurudwaras sparkle brightly
Through Punjab's swaying crops.



Spicy, bitter, sour and sweet
Idli, Dosa, Sambhar, Vada
Are tasty South Indian treats,
Chapathi, Puri, Papad, Dhokla
Tickle North Indian palates
The cuisine is of delectable variety.

Such is the wealth
Of Mother India.
The mighty Mughals lorded
Over the bounteous northern lands.
Pandyas of Madurai guarded
their ancient, antique sands .
Cholas, Cheras, Guptas, Mauryas
Enriched cultures, traditions, heritage.

Carnatic, Hindustani melodies
Leave music lovers speechless,
With graceful dance celebrities
Of Kathak, Bharatnatya, and other flawless
Classical, regional dances
Holding the audience spellbound.

Such is the wealth
of Mother India.

Rakesh Sharma, Bachendri pal
Kiran Bedi, A.R. Rahman
J.Nehru, Lal-Bal-Pal
Dr. Abdul Kalam, C.V.Raman
Of many who wrought miracles
Immortalized in the history of time.

North or South, East or West
Unique in culture, style and thought,
But an extended family, blest
With fortune, luck, Gods' grace.
May her glory never shrink.
May she shine for eternity.

Such is the wealth
Of Mother India.

**The writer is a grade II student in
Future International Academy, Mussafah, UAE**

Kloud 9



THE DEVIL IN ADAM

BY PRANNOY MEHTA

There was something about blood that always fascinated Adam irresistibly, morbidly. The way the bright fluid flowed through his own veins, and the very sight and smell of it intoxicated him and rendered him something wolf-like, a trait in the young man which no one, except his dad, noticed.

Like many male members of his bloodline, who were serial killers, he also developed an instinct to kill, but unlike them he developed it at a very young age. He began to derive a morbid pleasure of killing creatures while he was hardly ten. His victims were stray animals at the early stage, but his likings slowly changed as he entered his teens: he began to crave for human blood. He knew that his actions would have their consequences but was overpowered by his thirst for gory acts. The more he hunted and killed, the thirstier he grew for more blood.

He had a step-sister, Rebecca, who loved him more than anything which could be said in words. He always wanted to tell his sister about his dark side, but he never did because he believed that telling her such a thing would break her heart, which he never could imagine. So he hid it from her and tried his best not to let her know his sinister secret.

Once after killing a neighbor, while Adam was chopping the victim's body with his 17 inch knife into pieces and was carefully wrapping them into plastic bags, with an erotic pleasure, his dad opened the door and stepped in.

"Adam! What have you done?" Adam's dad was very horrified by the sight.

"Dad!" Adam was quite shocked and

speechless as he had not expected his dad to interfere at that time.

The father who knew about his son's brutal instinct was quite depressed but not surprised as he also knew where the boy had inherited it from. Since there was no genetical reason why the killer instinct that had been inherent in the male members of the family for generations would not be passed on to his son, the old man knew that his son's desire to kill could not be stopped. So he tried to change Adam's choice of victims: he made a new rule for him that he would only kill those people who had killed others. He convinced Adam of the unjust nature of the legal system that let big criminals slip by but easily and mercilessly trapped small-time criminals and often innocents. Thus he decided to be a 'Clean monster' and with the help of his dad he learned the minute techniques of leaving no trace behind after committing a murder. The art of killing became his passion and he perfected it through experience. In a few years he also mastered in forensic science and learned precisely what an intelligent investigator would be looking for to trap a killer. He would cut the body into pieces, destroy the face, wrap it in a black garbage bag with garbage and dump it into the sea, leaving absolutely no clue behind.

Following his dad's suggestion, he specialized in killing only killers. In a few years he almost cleansed the town of all the murderers. And left the cops with a nagging question: "Where have the murderers disappeared?"

After years of hard work he joined the police department and became a professional

investigator himself. Soon he was promoted to a very senior position in the crime branch. One day while he was in his office, he received a call from a hospital informing him that his dad was admitted there and that his condition was critical. He rushed to the hospital. He was alright this morning. What has happened to my dad? With all the questions running through his mind he entered his dad's room just in time to receive a shocking bit of information from him before he breathed his last.

"Adam, I found out who killed your mother", said Adam's dad struggling to take his last few breaths.

Adam was quite shocked as he had always thought she had died in a car accident. "Who? Who killed my mother?"

"Tri...i...nity." Adam's dad managed to whisper almost inaudibly and passed away, leaving Adam in tears and his face red with anger.

Trinity was an underworld boss and was the most wanted. He was a suspect in many sensational murder cases and had been at large for a few years. The government had declared a reward of half a million dollars to anyone who would help his capture, alive or dead. He tracked down Trinity's people and killed them one by one, and eventually laid his hands on the boss himself. Adam had him moved to his car, stuck a syringe into his neck and the anesthetic took effect in a few seconds. When he woke up he found himself wrapped up in plastic, at a mysterious location. Trying to break free, Trinity cried for help as loud as he could.

Adam stepped closer to him and imitated his cries for help showing that the room was sound proof. "Why are you doing this to me? Do you know who I am?" Trinity seemed unsure whether to plead for mercy or to threaten.

Adam replied in rage taking out a knife out of his bag. "I know you well, Trinity. You killed my mother and now I am going to kill you." Adam stabbed him through his heart.

For the first time Adam felt a sense of contentment, of fulfillment and he decided to confess everything to his sister. There was a tremendous transformation in him. He slowly divulged his dark secrets to her, and she stood listening to him with wide eyes and dropped jaws. Now she was the only one person who knew about the devil in Adam. He told her everything and when he stopped she was dazed and stretched her arms for support. Adam helped her slump into a chair. After a while she regained her senses and spoke.

"Oh God! Adam, I still love you and will always love you, for you are my brother and no power in the world can change that. But the things you have done are not right. They may look right to you, but they are not. You are nothing less than Trinity. You've killed someone's sister, brother, uncle, aunt, father, mother, son or daughter. You never even thought about it once."

Adam didn't know what to say to console her as he ran out of thoughts.

"Well, I don't know how to save you now - nobody would know. Well, I know a way out but you are not going to like it. Listen, they'll find you sooner or later. I think it's better for you to surrender yourself to the law. That's the only way out." She prescribed the best possible option to kill the monster in her brother and redeem his soul.

Adam sat contemplating her words and he understood them. He did not argue with her and did not say a word. He slowly stood up, held her close to his chest and kissed her on her forehead. There was an unusual glow on his face and he was determined to surrender. His face looked thoroughly human and pure peace radiated from it. Then he grabbed his car key and quietly walked out.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 9 student in Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi

THE CHAKRATA CAT

BY RUSKIN BOND

Chakrata is a small hill station roughly midway between Shimla and Mussoorie. During my youth, before the road became motorable, I would trek from one hill station to the other, sometimes alone, sometimes in company. It would take me about five days to cover the distance. I was a leisurely walker. You couldn't enjoy a hike if you felt you had to catch a train at the end of it.

At Chakrata there was an old forest rest-house where I would sometimes spend the night. Don't go looking for it now. It has fallen into disuse and been replaced by a new building closer to the town.

Towards sunset, late that summer, I trudged up to the rest house and called out for the *chowkidar*. I forget his name. He was a grizzled old man, uncommunicative. If you told him you had just been chased by a bear, he would simply nod and say, "You'd better rest then. You must be tired." Nothing about the bear!

Anyway, he opened up one of the bedrooms for me, prepared a modest meal (which I enjoyed, having eaten little all day), and offered to make a fire in the old fireplace. Chakrata can be cold, even in September, and I offered to pay for the firewood if he would fetch some. He switched on the bedroom and verandah lights and then walked to the rear of the building to fetch some wood.

That was when I saw the cat.

It was a large black cat, and it was sitting before the fireplace, almost as though expecting a fire to be lit. I hadn't

noticed it entering the room, and it did not pay much attention to me, just kept staring into the fireplace. Then, when it heard the *chowkidar* returning, it got up and left the room.

"You have a cat?" I asked trying to make conversation while he lit the fire.

He shook his head. "Cats come for rats," he said, which left me no wiser. And he took off, promising to bring me a cup of tea early next morning. There was a small bookshelf in a corner of the room, and I found an old favourite, *A Warning to the Curious* by M. R. James. His haunting stories of ghosts in old colleges kept me awake for a couple of hours; then I put out the light and got into bed.

I had quite forgotten about the cat.

Now I heard a soft purring as the cat jumped on to the bed and curled up near my feet. I am not particularly fond of cats, and my first impulse was to kick it off the bed. Then I thought: "Well, it's probably used to sleeping in



this room, especially with the fire lit. I'll let it be, as long as it doesn't start chasing rats in the middle of the night!' And all it did was come a little closer to me, advancing from my feet to my knees, and purring loudly, as though quite satisfied with its situation.

I fell asleep and slept soundly. In fact, I must have slept for a couple of hours before I woke to a feeling of wetness under my armpit. My vest was wet, and something was sucking away at my flesh.

It was with a feeling of horror that I realized that the cat had crawled into bed with me, that it was now stretched out beside me, and that it was licking away at my armpit with a certain amount of relish. For the purring was louder than ever.

I sat up in bed, flung the cat from me, and made a dash for the light switch. As the light came on, I saw the cat standing at the foot of the bed, tail erect and hair on end. It was very angry. And then, for the space of five seconds at the most, its appearance changed and its head was that of a human – a woman, teeth-bared with flaring nostrils and large crooked ears, her lips full and drenched with blood – my blood!

The moment passed, and it was a cat's head once again. She let out a howl, left the bed, and disappeared through the bathroom door.

My shirt and vest were soaked with blood. For over an hour the cat had been licking and sucking at my fragile skin, wearing it away until the blood oozed out. Cat or vampire or witch's revenant? Or a combination of all three...

I ran to the bathroom. The cat had taken off through an open window. I closed the window, bathed my wound and examined myself in the mirror.

I had not been bitten. There were no teeth marks, no scratches. The tongue, and constant licking, had done the damage.

I found some cotton-wool in my

haversack, and used it to stanch the trickle of blood. Then I changed my vest and shirt, and sat down on an easy chair to wait for the dawn. It was three in the morning. I felt weak and fell asleep in my chair, to be wakened by the *chowkidar* knocking on my door with a cup of tea.

Chakrata is a lovely place, prettier than most hill-stations, but I had no desire to linger there. There was a bus to Dehradun at eight o'clock. I decided to cut short my trek and take the bus.

"Where's that cat of yours?" I asked the *chowkidar* before I left. He knew nothing about a cat. Did not care for cats. They were unlucky, the companions of evil spirits, creatures of the world of the dead.

I did not stop to argue, but thanked him for his hospitality and took my leave.

The wound, if you can call it that, took some time to heal. The skin beneath my arm-pit was all crinkly for a few weeks. But the body heals itself, if given a chance to do so.



But what does remain on my skin is a bright red mark, the size and shape of a cat's tongue. It's been there all these years and won't go away. I'll show it to you, the next time you come to see me.

5TH KIIT INTERNATIONAL CHESS FESTIVAL

BY SURENDRA MOHANTY



Chess is a game of concentration, a game of the mind and wits, of strategic planning in silence, a game in black and white, and yet a game that allures people from all over the world. In the scorching heat of May in Odisha, but within the air-conditioned campus of KiiT International School, the Fifth International Chess Festival was held from 20th to 27th of May 2013.

Dignitaries, observers and judges from World Chess Federation – Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE), All India Chess Federation (AICF) and Odisha Chess Association (OCA) converged on the campus for those eight days. KiiT International School hosted the prestigious tournament. There were 687 participants in the tournament, that included players from almost every state of the country as well as from 12 foreign countries – Armenia, USA, Georgia, Russia, Albania, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Belarus, and Uzbekistan – all fighting silently for a total prize money of Rs. 16,00,000/-

India is held in high esteem in chess because of Viswanathan Anand, who is the current world champion and has held this position since 2007. Though Anand wasn't present at KiiT, all great players who were full of admiration for his talent. Those who had the good fortune of playing with him considered it the most memorable game of their career while others had the singular desire of getting an opportunity to play with him. Indian Grandmasters who participated were Abhijit Kunte, Neelotpal Das, R.R.Laxman and Vaibhav Suri, while the tournament saw the participation by two Women Grandmasters – Padmini Rout and Kiran Manisha Mohanty – both from Odisha. In all, there were 22 Grandmasters, 20 International masters, 2 Women Grandmasters, 2 Women International Masters and a large number of FIDE Masters and Candidate Masters.

Other than matches in the elite category (players holding titles), there were matches in several categories such as Under 7, Under 9, Under 13, Women's category, Veteran's category Special Category and many others. School students including students from KiiT International School and tribal students from KISS played in their respective age groups.

Kloud 9 caught up with a few prominent players, between their games and talked to them. Here are some excerpts.

□□



Mikheil Mchedlishvili (Grandmaster)

books and likes his 'Sicilian defence with white'.

Asked if he has ever played a match in the USA, he replies that he hasn't and adds that their prize money is very high. What does he have to say about Man versus Computer in the game of chess? There is no point in playing such a game. The computer will always be the winner. But, he adds that it makes your game strong, though there is no contest against a computer.

And what is his opinion about players from India, particularly Odisha? Has he interacted with any young Indian chess player here? Of course he has. He has made friends with a young player from Odisha named Debashish Dash and is all praise of him. Debashish is very promising and will make a strong player in future, he says. The opening by Indian players is very strong, but they should remain strong throughout the game.

Thanks Mikheil for the advice. We are sure many players will heed it.



Mikheil is from Georgia. This is his third visit to India and his second to KiT, all in connection with his passion for chess. This time he is very happy as his performance has improved and he has done better than the last time. He is also happy about all the hospitality and warmth he has received here. He says people are friendly here and very down to earth. While describing his friendly encounters with other chess players he fumbles for words and admits that he is not very fluent in English. Never mind Mikheil, you've come here to impress us with your skills in chess and not in English.

He has been in the game since his childhood and has been a Grandmaster for 10 years. That's like a lifetime in chess. Has he ever associated with the legendary Boris Spassky? Not much, he says, as Boris Spassky has moved out of Russia. But he is one of the greatest living chess legends. Mikheil has studied his

Merab is another grandmaster from Georgia. He is young and ever smiling and talks to you with warmth and openness. How long has he been in the game? Well, he has been a grandmaster since 2007, but has played in tournaments since he was six. And how did he begin that early? Chess is very popular in his country and he has always had an interest in it. He used to play with his sister as a child. Then there was a local tournament that he entered at the age of six and won it. That fired a serious interest in him and he started concentrating on it.

What is his opinion about Indian Players in the international chess scenario? Firstly, the current world champion is from India. And there are many Indian players emerging on the international scene. They are popularizing the game in the country. 'I know about 100 players from India who are very talented. But no one like Viswanathan Anand. He is a great player and I am his supporter.' There is a kindle in his eye when he talks of Anand. Has he ever played with him? Yes, he has played against the Indian legend only once and lost. But he is very enthusiastic about having played with Anand. 'He is very fast in thinking,' he adds reminiscently.

Why is it that computer which has no brain can beat man in the game of chess. Merab is prompt in his response. Earlier Gary Kasparov used to play against computer and win some times. But now technology is much improved – much better programming, very large data storage very good analyses. Computer can calculate and analyse data at the rate of 20 moves per second. The human brain cannot match that speed and cannot analyse so much data that fast to come up with so many possible moves. It is true that the computer has no brain, but it wins because of its technology.

We hope the computer does not overtake man in other crucial areas.



Merab Gagunashvili (Grandmaster)

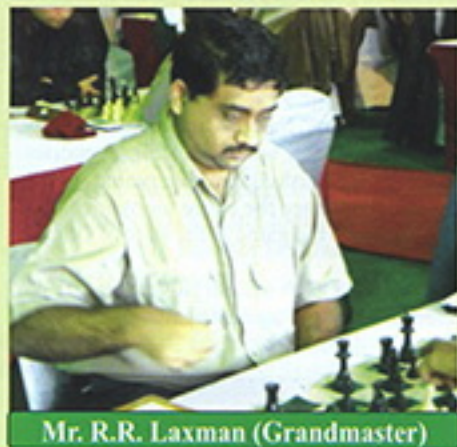


Amonatov Farrukh (Grandmaster)

against Kramnik, the man who had wrested the World Champion title from Gary Kasparov! (Kramnik later lost his title to Viswanathan Anand in 2007.) Wow! It has to be Amonatov's most memorable.

Has he played against Viswanathan Anand anytime? Not yet, but he is waiting for an opportunity to play against the World Champion from India.

How does he visualize the future of the game in Odisha? Odisha has many good players, like Rakesh Kumar Jena who is very hardworking. He seems to have a bright future. There are many other talented players and the future is bright for the chess scene in Odisha. He has taken the time to train the local players in the state, and all those players have proven themselves promising. Way to go, Grandmaster from Tajikistan. And congratulations once again for winning the tournament! □□



Mr. R.R. Laxman (Grandmaster)

Klud 9 thanks the Grandmaster for his time and wishes him good luck in future tournaments. □□

Daughter of the soil, Padmini is the first Woman Grandmaster from Odisha. She may be credited as the girl who ignited the passion for chess in the state. This young girl, still studying for her bachelor's degree, just out of her teens, has won many accolades and is undoubtedly the most well known chess player in the state. She didn't do very well in this tournament though, and moans that she couldn't exploit the many opportunities she got. Well, nothing is lost for the youngster and there are many more opportunities ahead.

First let us listen to her future plans. 'The World Junior Championship is coming up. I am preparing for it and I want to give it my best. I want to improve my rating.'

Her most memorable event in chess? 'I won the World under 14 tournament in 2004. That was truly memorable for me.' We are sure there will be many more such memorable events coming your way. What is her impression about young chess players of Odisha? They are doing very well at the national level. They should play in more challenging tournaments to improve their game and rating.

And what would she advise the students who wish to pursue chess as a hobby or a career? They need to work hard. Their parents need to support them in their passion for chess. Coming to the support by parents - wouldn't they worry about the game hampering the studies of their children? Padmini was forthright on this, 'My parents supported me in pursuing the game. And it helped me improve my studies. I used to study in the last couple of months before my exams, yet I got good grades. Chess helps in concentration, thinking power, memory, analyzing data. All these help in studies too.' □□



Padmini Rout (Woman Grandmaster)

Amonatov represents Tajikistan, but he is a Russian by birth. And he is the winner of the KiiT International Chess Tournament 2013. Congratulations. The Russian is beaming with happiness. He says, 'It's a great feeling. I was able to play well with other equally talented Grandmasters. It is great to be the winner of this eight day long Chess Festival.'

He has more reasons to be happy. This is his second participation in KiiT International Chess Festival and he is carrying home many good memories of this place. He visited Puri and had a memorable time on the beaches. In his words, 'I liked the beaches there. The people are very hospitable and friendly.'

Which has been his most memorable game. His game with Vladimir Kramnik is certainly the game that he cherishes the most. He drew that game against the former World Chess Champion. A draw against Kramnik, the man who had wrested the World Champion title from Gary Kasparov! (Kramnik later lost his title to Viswanathan Anand in 2007.) Wow! It has to be Amonatov's most memorable.

Laxman says he comes here to participate in this festival every year. He enjoys playing with the grandmasters from different countries who turn up for the festival every year. It's a wonderful experience, and KiiT has been a wonderful host. The organization and the conduct are simply fantastic.

How has his performance been in the tournament this year? He doesn't appear satisfied with his performance this time. He could not play to the best of his ability this time. Would that affect his ranking? No, he says, but he rues his failure to rise up to his normal standards.

He says he has been playing chess for the last 15 years. It is heartening to see many young people keen to pursue chess professionally, especially young men and women from Odisha. And here is his message for young people, especially students who wish to take up chess as a career - practise more, work hard and success will come. Tournaments such as KiiT International Chess Festival provide the ideal opportunity for the growth of talent in young people.

Another daughter of the soil. She is also a product of KiiT University, so she is standing at the core of her home turf. Naturally the tournament has gone very well for her and she is pleased with her performance. And what is she doing after graduating from KiiT? She has got a job with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Do her sports engagements hinder her job? No. She has got the job through sports quota and her employers permit her to go and play in prestigious tournaments. L.I.C. has been very supportive in her sports activities.

In Manisha's case her passion for the game has been a hindrance to her studies, to some extent. She took up chess when she was in class 10. While she was studying in KiiT, she had difficulty with her exams and the completion of her course due to her frequent participation and involvement in tournaments.

Some of her memorable moments in this sport: In 2006, she played in the Common Wealth Chess Tournament. She played against Grandmaster Nigel Short. Though she lost, she is thrilled to have played against a formidable player like Nigel Short who was a challenger of Kasparov. 'It was amazing playing against him,' she reminisces. She played in the Asian Junior Championship the same year and came second and also achieved her Women's International Masters title. She became the first WIM from Odisha.'

What are her future plans? She wants to be a top player of India, and she is practising for it. And how does she practise? Not by playing against a computer. She practices through books and by playing online.

Good luck in all your endeavours, Manisha.



Kiran Manisha Mohanty (Woman Grandmaster)

The Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony was held in the auditorium on 27 May 2013. Shri Arun Kumar Sahu, Minister for Energy, Information and Public Relations was the Chief Guest. He gave away the prizes to the winners in all categories. Grandmaster Amonatov Farrukh was the champion in the tournament while Merab Gagunashvili was the runner up. Dr. Achyuta Samanta, the founder of KIIT and KISS was the Chief Patron under whose guidance the entire tournament was conducted. All dignitaries were full of praise for Dr. Samanta for providing such a fillip to the game in the state of Odisha, due to which the game has risen to prominence in the state in the last five years.

What next? The World Chess Championship will be held under the auspices of FIDE from 6th to 26th November 2013 in Chennai. The current World Chess Champion, Viswanathan Anand will be defending his title against challenger Magnus Carlsen of Norway. An event to watch out for!



THE BOAT THAT WENT BOTH ON LAND AND ON WATER

A FRENCH FOLKTALE

RETOLD BY SURENDRA MOHANTY

There was once a princess very beautiful, charming, intelligent and equally haughty. Her father, the king was very possessive about his beautiful daughter and he too was a proud king. He had no son, and he didn't wish to marry his daughter off, instead he wanted to have her with him always. He considered his daughter so beautiful and talented that he thought no prince was a real match for.

But people in the kingdom started talking about why the king was not getting the princess married. First the queen, then the ministers and then the commoners started wondering and asking the king when their princess would be getting married. They reminded the king to find a suitable prince or, at least, a capable man for her daughter, who would one day rule the kingdom.

So the king thought of an idea and set an impossible task for any suitor for his daughter. He announced, 'I'll give my daughter to any young man who can build a boat that goes both on land and on water. He must take wood from my forest and build such a boat in which he should come sailing to the palace to ask for the hand of my daughter in marriage.' He was dead certain that no one would ever build an amphibian boat.

In the same kingdom there lived two brothers. The elder one was very clever and an adept craftsman. He prided himself that he could build almost anything. But such self-confidence also gave him an air of arrogance. He said to his younger brother, 'Who else but I could build that boat and win the hand of the king's daughter? And if I can't then no one else can.'

The next morning he set off to the king's forest with his tool box. On his way at Three Beech Tree Hill he met an old woman who was picking kindling and firewood. She greeted him saying, 'Good day, Mr. Carpenter. How are you doing this morning?'

But the young man held his head so high in the air that he barely noticed her. He was preoccupied with the thought of riding to the King's palace and winning the princess as his bride. He simply grunted and walked on.

'Where are you going with your tool box, Mr. Carpenter?' the old woman insisted.

'That's not your business, but I'm going to make some skittles,' said the young man sarcastically.

'Skittles it should be, Mr. Carpenter, and skittles it shall be,' said the woman and went her way.

At the king's forest the elder brother got to work with all his mettle, but somehow he could make only skittles. Whatever he chopped, sawed and carved turned into skittles. In the end he got exasperated and returned home in a foul temper. 'The king only wanted to make a fool of every young man. Such a boat can never be built even if all craftsmen in the world toiled until the princess got four score years old,' he grumbled at his younger brother. 'And then there was this old woman who cast an evil eye even before I got to work!'

'You shouldn't growl this way, brother,' the younger man tried to comfort him. 'Perhaps you should have persevered some more.'

'You go and persevere tomorrow. A miracle might come your way.'

The younger one didn't say a word but found his brother's words challenging. The next morning he set off to the king's forest with the tool box. At Three Beech Trees Hill he met the old woman who was picking kindling. The woman greeted him and he greeted her courteously.

'And where may you be going, Mr. Carpenter, with your tool box?' she asked.

'To the king's forest. To build a boat that can sail both on water and land, just like the king wants.'

'And how do you think you will do that?'

'I really don't know how. But I think if I persevere long enough and keep at it and not lose heart nor my temper, it may well happen,' replied the young man cheerfully.

'That's how it should, Mr. Carpenter, and that's how it shall be,' said the woman. 'Take careful note of what I say. When you've built the boat, go to the king and show it. On the way you'll meet six extraordinary men. Take them onboard for you'll need them.'

The younger brother thanked the old woman, tipped his hat to her and went into the forest humming a merry tune.

He reached the king's forest and got down to work. As he felled trees, chopped off its branches and cut the timber, miraculously pieces of wood fell into



place by themselves. They joined to form the keel, the rudder with a helm, the wheels, the gunwale, the bow with a prow, the stern, and the sides, the thwarts, the deck with a mast, the stanchions, rails and cleats. The young man had no idea of how it was happening, but he knew it was by the magic spell of the old woman, who he guessed could be none other than a fairy.

By noon the boat was shipshape. It was perfectly finished, intricately designed complete with beadings and carvings. The young man wanted to try the boat. No sooner had he boarded it and started to wonder how to launch it into the pond than it rolled down to the pond. Then the boy wondered if it would sail on land as well; the boat came on to land by itself and sailed well, as willed by the young man. So he steered the carriage-boat over rivers, ponds, fields and moors and headed towards the king's palace.

On the way he met a man with a belly like a huge water-skin, lying by the river's edge and drinking water from it.

'Below there,' called out the young man. 'What are you doing?'

'Drinking. I'm River-Drinker. When someone wants to cross the river, I drink up the river dry.'

'Come aboard, we shall go to the king's palace.'

A little farther down, he saw another man was with jaws gaping like pitchforks. He was gnawing at a mountain with all his might.

'Hey there,' the young man cried. 'What are you doing?'

'Chewing up the mountain. I am Mountain-Cruncher.'

'Come aboard, we shall go to the king's palace.'

A little way down he came across a man who blowing air so forcefully that he could turn nine windmills on nine hills faraway.

'And what are you doing, my friend?' he asked.

'I am Mill-Puffer. I live by blowing wind.'

'Come aboard, we shall go to the king's palace.'

The next man he met had large ears like those of an elephant. He said that he was Sharp-Ears and he could hear dandelions grow on the other side of the world by putting his ear to the ground. The young man got him onboard and sailed ahead towards the king's palace.

And who was the fifth man he met? He was Stone-Slinger, who had arms like staves and could sling stones and knock down larks flying in a hundred leagues around. The young man invited him as well onboard and sailed on.

The last man, called Long-Legs, was able to put on legs like poles and outrun the fastest of creatures like horses, deer and cheetahs.

'Come aboard, come aboard,' called the happy young man. 'We shall go to the king's palace.'

And thus all seven of them reached the king's palace sailing in the carriage-boat in full view of all the courtiers, nobles, and commoners. The king too came out of his palace and saw the boat with his eyes popping out and his crown askew. He had to admit that the boat was like the one he had in mind, and he would give away his daughter in marriage to the young man as he had promised. 'But,' he added, 'there is a small hitch that needs be sorted out before the wedding can take place. The guests cannot be offered the sour wine that is lying in my cellar. We have to get good and tasty wine.

'You or one of your men must drink up all the wine in all my casks and barrels, so that tomorrow I can refill them with good wine, fit for the wedding of a king's daughter.'

The young man asked River-Drinker to drink up all the wine in the king's cellar and he did that in no time. He could have drunk many times more wine than the king's cellar could hold.

The king frowned. He had to set another 'minor' task so that the man could be refused his prize. 'Just one more tiny little hitch. There is a stock of bread in my kitchen that is stale. So you or one of your men must eat up all the bread so that we can

bake and stock up fresh and tasty bread for the wedding.'

That was not a problem for the Mountain-Cruncher. He was only waiting for signal from the young man, and as soon as he received it he fell upon all the buns and loaves and devoured them as if he hadn't eaten in months. He could have eaten many times more bread than the king's kitchen could hold.

The king wasn't pleased though he was amazed. 'There is one more thing to be sorted out before the wedding. My palace seems set somewhat towards the shade. You or one of your men must blow on it to turn my palace to face the rising sun.'

That man turned towards Mill-Puffer and winked at him. Mill-Puffer got down to his work and blew so much wind that the palace turned around a

couple of times before settled facing the direction of sunrise.

The king frowned but was helpless. He set another task that he thought could never be completed by any man.

'I'm going to the highest room in the highest tower of the palace,' he announced, 'and I'll whisper in my daughter's year what she must fetch for her wedding. You or one of your men must hear what I say and repeat it to me exactly as I said it.'

It was the turn of Sharp-Ears who pricked up his ears and listened to the king whispering to his daughter, 'Fetch the wedding jewels from the treasure tower, deep in the mountains.' He relayed the exact words to the king when he came down.

The king was frustrated but not entirely, for he still had a few tricks up his sleeve with which he thought he could thwart the wedding. In the meantime the princess rode off in her finest and fastest horse towards the treasure tower, deep in the mountains. The king let some time pass while everyone waited for the princess to return and the wedding to take place. Now the young man had not seen the princess, nor had she the village lad who had astounded everyone by completing all seemingly impossible tasks set by her father. She wasn't clear herself if she would like to marry the village lad. The young man remained unassuming and showed no air about all his achievements thus far.



it

All of them waited.

'Goodness gracious,' cried the cunning king all of a sudden. 'I forgot to give my daughter the key



to the tower. The wedding cannot go on without the jewels, unless of-course, you or one of your men can run and catch up with her and hand her these keys. And yes, he will also have to get back here exactly at the same time as she does.'

The young man gave the go signal to Long-Legs who dashed off like the wind, caught up with the princess and handed over the keys to her. She got out the wedding jewels and galloped back at the best speed her steed could do. But that was no speed for Long-Legs who had to restrain his speed to avoid going far ahead of her.

When the princess saw that there was no way her horse could outrun the runner on foot, she decided to trick him. She feigned that she was tired and needed to rest. She stopped her horse under a tree and pretended to take a nap. Long-Legs dozed off too.

The princess then quietly tiptoed with her horse a little distance from the sleeping man and then galloped away homeward.

The young man wanted the princess though he hadn't seen her yet. He watched in the direction of their return and started to worry as it was getting late and there was no sign of the two. 'Sharp-ears,' he said. 'Listen carefully and tell me how far they are.'

'The damsel is returning on her charger at full gallop,' replied the listener. 'She will be here soon enough while your Long-Legs is snoring under a tree.'

'Stone-Slinger,' cried the young man. 'Take good aim and throw with a pebble at the tip of his nose.' Stone-Slinger did exactly that and Long-Legs woke up with a start and realised that the princess had tricked him and had gone. But that was not a matter with him. He put on his top speed wondering if he wasn't a wee bit too late.

Almost the whole kingdom, or at least all those who were interested in the princess' wedding

were waiting eagerly at the palace. They could see the princess charging down when her horse came into view at the last bend. The charger was charging like the whirlwind and his hooves were throwing dust and sparks along his track. And soon Long-Legs too dashed into view like lightning, came abreast the galloping horse and slowed down to keep in exact time with it.

They came darting up to the king and halted exactly on the same line at the same time.

The king had no option but to give his daughter in marriage to the young village lad, who had surmounted every obstacle posed by him. Even then he did not boast of his achievements, but with honesty said that a fairy that had appeared to him at Three Beech Trees Hill had helped him. When the bride saw the young man who was so simple and straight, she took to him and both were happy to be wedded and swore to love each other.

The day after the wedding the bride told the young man that they should take Sharp-Ears for their honeymoon. Her father had decided to keep the boat for himself so that he could go over land and sea. She knew something was brewing as her father was not keen that any man, least of all a village boy, should marry his daughter and take her away. She asked Sharp-Ears to listen to what was happening in the court when they were away.

Sharp-Ears listened and told her, 'Madam,



your father has ordered 3000 soldiers to pursue you and attack your husband, kill him and take you back to the palace.'

'Oh! What do we do now?' cried the princess.

'We'll prepare for war against your father's soldiers,' said her husband.

River-Drinker, Long-Legs, Sharp-Ears, Mill-Puffer, Mountain-Cruncher and Stone-Slinger were quite a force to reckon with for the king's army. While Sharp-Ears kept them informed about what was happening in the army camp, Long-Legs dashed



everywhere carrying orders. Stone-Slinger struck them with barrages of stones and pebbles and the army didn't know where such volleys of stones came from.

Mountain-Cruncher crunched up a mountain so that young couple could go away unhindered. River-Drinker drank up a river so that they could cross over to the other side. And when the king's army came chasing them, River-Drinker belched out the entire river and the soldiers were stopped on their track by the flood.

Finally Mill-Puffer blew such a storm at the soldiers they were literally blown off the battlefield. Chariots, horses, canons, and troops were blown off in the gale and in a short while the battlefield was cleared.

The king had lost on every count and he realized that it was because the young man had the fairy and good magic on his side. At last his anger subsided and he decided to make amends with his son in law. The two made up. In time the younger brother succeeded the throne and made a capable ruler. And he and his queen went all over their kingdom in their famous boat that went over land as well as water.

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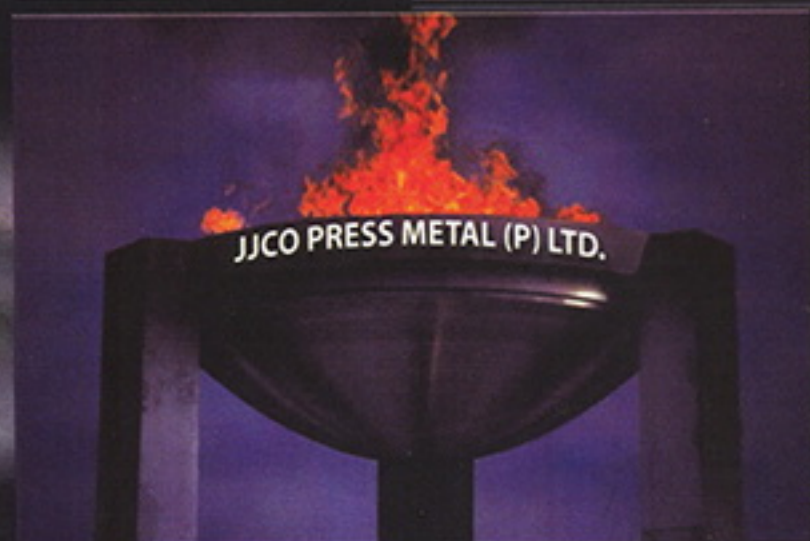
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2. We accept short stories, poems, personal experiences, opinions, travelogues, anecdotes, jokes, puzzles and interesting facts. But originality is the prime factor for selection.
3. All submissions must be in English, and **MUST** be the original work of the student.
4. Short stories and non-fictions should be below 2000 words (about 1500 words is ideal). Poems should not exceed 20 lines (may or may not be broken down to stanzas).
5. Suitable pictures and photographs may be scanned and emailed in JPG format for travelogues, other articles and stories. But do not download from the Net and send it. Scan resolution should be 300dpi
6. Email your work to kloud9@kiitis.ac.in or post a neatly handwritten or typed manuscript to The Editor, Kloud 9, KiiT International School, KiiT Campus 9, Bhubaneswar – 751024, Odisha.
7. Handwritten, typed or emailed articles must mention clearly the writer's full name, class/ grade/ standard, school name, and email address. It will be helpful to contact you in case your article is selected. Submissions without these data will not be considered.
8. Email attachment should be in word (doc. or docx.) format. Do not use fancy colours and fonts. Times New Roman 12 size font with auto font colour (black) is ideal. All matter should be typed/ written in double space.
9. In case your writing is short-listed, we will contact you by email for your passport size photograph and for a certificate to be signed by your school authorities. Only selected writers will be contacted.
10. Decision of the editorial board for selection of submissions is final.
11. Scan and keep ready a recent passport size photograph of the writer (resolution 300 dpi), for sending after selection/ shortlist.



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