August 2025
Issue 03

FOUNDRY

FUI's Creative Magazine



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Foundry is your portal to a world of boundless creativity. We are your platform, your voice, and your inspiration. Here, we cast a spotlight on the extraordinary talents within our FUI community. From thought-provoking articles to stunning visuals, Foundry is your gateway to a world of endless possibilities.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Art doesn't always clarify, stories don't always resolve, but that doesn't make the effort meaningless.

There's a moment, just before the first word is written, the first sketch begun, the first sentence spoken, when something falters. A pause, almost imperceptible, where the impulse to create collides with the weight of not knowing how. This issue of Foundry lives in that pause.

It gathers the work of students and faculty who kept going anyway; who wrote, painted, sketched, revised, rethought, and risked. It's not about perfection. It's not about polish. It's about the undeniable need to say something, even when language feels like it will fail, and still showing up to try.

Art doesn't always clarify, stories don't always resolve, some truths won't be shaped into paragraphs, but that doesn't make the effort meaningless. In fact, the most meaningful part may be the attempt, the reaching, the uncomfortable honesty of it.

You'll find all of that in these pages. Voices distinct from one another, sometimes in conversation, sometimes in conflict. Pieces that hold light and pieces that don't. Work that tells the truth outright, and work that circles it from a distance.

Thank you to everyone who shared something with us. Thank you to everyone who will sit with what they've made. We hope you find something in here that stays with you or maybe something that unsettles you. Either one would mean we're doing something right.

Rida Rehman

You can always edit a bad page.
You can't edit a blank page.

Jodi Picoult

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FICTION



THE LAZY WIZARD

Ummul Banin
BCA VI

Hidden deep within the glorious and majestic mountains of Baluchistan, was a secret valley. To the naked eye it was nothing more than a vast terrain of dry land and scarce bushes scattered as far as the valley stretched. This mysterious valley was covered on three sides by the enormous height of rocky mountains. Apparently, there was nothing special about this camouflaged piece of land. However, unbeknownst to human beings, its plainness and unassuming outward appearance was deliberate. You see, this peculiar valley of Baluchistan was home to creatures only heard of in myths and folklores. If you were to talk about the existence of such creatures, you'd be sure to receive odd glances. This was because these inexplicable beings had cleverly maintained their disguise and privacy for many centuries. No human had ever come across these beings, and most didn't even believe that they truly existed. They were rarely mentioned in stories, except by those who lived near the surrounding areas of the mountains that veiled the valley.

Around the same time and within the same mountains, there lived a tribe of wizards. The locals assumed these strange folks to be nomads from Persia. They didn't interact with the locals much and mostly kept to themselves in the intricate homes they had built within the mountains which they occupied. Hence, they blended in as an introverted group of foreigners and no one had suspected their true identities.

These wizards were indeed nomadic in nature. They were close to being immortal as they had lived across the lands of the East for millions of years. They had experienced and witnessed firsthand the changing cultures, people and geography of all the places they had occupied. Indeed, these wizards were ancient. They knew everything there was to know; of the physical as well as the metaphysical worlds. After living for so long, they had no charm for worldly goods. They didn't particularly care for wealth or lavish food or the finest clothes. They had become somewhat ascetic. Which is precisely why they stuck together in their small tribe. Eventually they moved to a new location – the lofty mountains of Baluchistan. This new home provided them with privacy and peace, as the population was meagre and the land was never-ending.

However, despite experiencing the changing cultures and traditions of half the globe, it was inevitable for nearly immortal beings to become victims of boredom. This was certainly the case with Bahraam.

Bahraam was an exceptionally tall albeit elderly and grey-haired wizard. His face and hands were covered in wrinkles and he had a long and flowy grey beard. His emerald eyes held wisdom as well as a spark of craftiness. His elegant fingers were elongated, pointy and slim and he was rather pale in complexion. His face was oval-shaped and was decorated with bushy yet sharp eyebrows. Bahraam had liked to adopt the clothing style and fashion of the place he lived in. Thus after moving to the mountains of Baluchistan, he began to wear clothes similar to the men of that region. Although, he enjoyed adding a personal touch to his attire. As such, he was known to wear a long dark green shirt that ended below his knees, matching trousers and brown shoes polished to perfection. He also wore a similar coloured head dress that consisted of a lengthy piece of cloth. It covered his head like a turban and enough fabric was left to fall off his right shoulder. Bahraam used to carry a wooden staff with a large emerald stone at the top, as well as a pipe in his mouth.

Bahraam was one of the oldest and laziest of his people. He had always opted for the easiest method of approaching a task or problem. He barely did any work and manipulated others into doing things for him. He prioritized his leisure time and liked to take things at his own pace – which was unsurprisingly, very slow. His fellow wizards had either seen Bahraam riding his silver stallion around the mountains, or sitting idly smoking his pipe and bragging about his many adventures. He was an odd one among his peers, as every other wizard was active and always immersed in the process of creation; whether that be in magic, writing, studying or art. At the end of every week, the wizards would get together and discuss their latest creations. Every

wizard would come up with something new and unique for each meeting, however, Bahraam would sit gloomily in a corner as he was too lazy and had not created anything in a very long time.

This state of affairs had gone on for quite some time.

Eventually, Bahraam became annoyed at not being the center of attention. He wanted to show off one of his creations too, but every object he owned was either unfinished or painstakingly basic. He didn't wish to partake in the draining process of creating something grand. Hence, he began to devise ways through which he could acquire an impressive work of creation. Bahraam wanted so badly to receive compliments and praise as all the other wizards did. He spent weeks upon weeks and hour upon hour trying to come up with a strategy or plan for his needs. Alas! Despite excelling in the art of short-cuts, he was unable to come up with anything solid.

Bahraam felt defeated.

In his mind, he would rather remain in eternal solitude, than be side-lined and ignored by his own people.

(Of course, you and I both know Bahraam was just too lazy, as well as too vain to acknowledge his short-comings.)

He refused to attend any more of the weekly meetings. Instead he spent his time wandering around the deserted terrain on his trusty silver steed. He wandered aimlessly above and around the dry mountains.

On one such occasion, as fate would have it, Bahraam strolled into the mysterious valley of strange creatures. He had known of the mystery surrounding that place, however, he was unfazed, too caught up in his woes. As he sat brooding on his horse, with his lower lip jutted out, a flash of light passed by him suddenly. He shook his head immediately and blinked his eyes. He looked around and saw a small white ball of light flying ahead of him into the valley. It was dusk and the sun had long begun to sink, the tall mountains provided more shadows to form over the valley. This made it easier to spot the ball of light.

Bahraam got off his horse and slowly began to walk towards the light. The light was flying forward at a slow pace, which made it easier for him to trail behind it. He squinted his eyes to get a better look and noticed that the light had a small human-like silhouette and iridescent wings. His eyes widened, almost to the point of popping out of their sockets.

He had found a pixie!

He was left awe-struck. He couldn't believe that he had found one of these creatures so easily. Of course, it was impossible for a human to find them, however, even amongst wizards not many had been successful in their discoveries, regardless of their magical abilities.

Without wasting a single second, Bahraam eagerly ranged closer to the unsuspecting pixie, in order to follow it into its hidden land. And just as suspected, as he turned the corner a large doorway of golden light stood before him, shielded by a huge stone. As the pixie flew into the illuminated doorway, so did the eager Bahraam. He had stepped into a portal that led him from the apparent world to the world of the unseen. Bahraam wasn't bothered as he had travelled via such portals for as long as he could remember. In a matter of few seconds, the pixie and Bahraam landed into a place with lush green trees and bushes, colourful and fragrant flowers of all sorts, a beautiful clear blue sky decorated with cotton clouds and what appeared to be a small colony of pixies going about their day. He stood and observed the scene before him. Small houses were built on and around trees, some built inside the trees or in large mushrooms. Unique vehicles and trinkets were scattered in some places. The pixies themselves were busy in doing their tasks, which ranged from harvesting their small farms, cleaning up around their homes, building unrecognizable objects or interacting with small animals such as chipmunks, rabbits or birds.

These pixies looked to be akin to humans, however, much smaller in size. Bahraam had assumed them to be not bigger than his hand. They had pointy elf-like ears and delicate features. They varied in complexion just like humans, some were fair while others were dark. They had an ethereal beauty and grace, with wings that seemed almost transparent. Each pixie had a distinguished coloured aura around them, which was the halo of light that surrounded them. Some were pink, blue or green while others were purple, golden or red.

Bahraam stood admiring the creatures when they finally noticed him, and they all instantly stilled in their places. They gawked at the elder wizard with wide eyes and wondered how he had succeeded in finding their homeland. The wizard, sensing the tension in the air, faked a cough before he stepped forward. The pixies eyed him suspiciously and the white coloured pixie whom Bahraam had followed into the portal shifted uncomfortably, thinking about the reaction of her fellow pixies once they discovered that she had been used as the bait. Bahraam had known right away that these tiny creatures would be of great use to him. And so, he put on his manipulative charm, adorned a wide smile and began to converse with the pixies.

In no time at all, the pixies had gathered around him. Bahraam spoke to them with calm and ease, he told them of the many wonders of the East as the pixies looked on at him in awe. His charm was undeniable, and he had fascinated the pixies in a matter of minutes. They began to trust this wise old wizard at once and poured their hearts out to him. It just so happened, that the poor pixies had almost run out of magic dust.

For those who aren't aware, magic dust is a vital part to the existence of pixies. It gives them strength and power which allows them to continue working. If they stop working, they will grow frail and eventually perish.

Around the same time and within the same mountains, there lived a tribe of wizards. The locals assumed these strange folks to be nomads from Persia. They didn't interact with the locals much and mostly kept to themselves in the intricate homes they had built within the mountains which they occupied. Hence, they blended in as an introverted group of foreigners and no one had suspected their true identities.

"Bahraam wanted glory without effort, praise without toil—so he turned to the pixies, and bound them with a deal they never truly understood."

As the pixies told Bahraam of their dire situation, with hands clasped together in front of their tiny chests and a sadness in their moist orbs – the screws in Bahraam's brain began to turn. He gave his small audience a condoling smile and a few words of comfort. This temporarily eased their worries as they hoped that this kind wizard would help them in some way.

Bahraam maintained his aura of generosity and offered to ensure a constant supply of magic dust to the pixies.

In return for a favour.

The pixies were delighted at hearing that Bahraam would provide them with everlasting magic dust to aid in their sustenance; they didn't give much thought to what he would ask for in return.

Bahraam explained his idea. He would come to them at the end of every week with a week's supply of magic dust, and in return the pixies would have to make a large painting for him weekly. He may at some point change his request for a painting to something else. He lit up his pipe and put it in his mouth, puffing out the smoke. He eyed the creatures as he waited for their response. The pixies looked at each other for a moment. They considered his idea thoroughly. They didn't see anything wrong with his plan; they would get magic dust every week and the only thing they had to do was make something for him. It didn't sound bad to them. Being the simple creatures that they were, they agreed to Bahraam's plan. Little did they know that this entire charade was in reality a contract of eternal slavery.

Bahraam capitalized on the poor pixies' need for his own benefit. And all because he was too lazy to create something new by himself. All he truly wanted was praise and glory without ever really lifting a finger.

...

On one of the wizard's weekly gatherings, Bahraam unexpectedly showed up to the surprise of his friends. They were in the midst of discussing their latest creations which ranged from a telescope that allowed one to clearly look at the planets, to a crystal which had the ability of showing the future. The group of wizards welcomed Bahraam. They playfully teased him by asking him if he had come to sit in the corner again. Bahraam smiled to himself as they lightly chuckled. He motioned for someone behind him to come

forward. He walked towards the center of the large room, his dark green robe strolled behind him and his wooden staff tapped on the floor. Behind him, two young wizards carried a large painting into the room, it was covered with a beige cloth.

As Bahraam was too lazy to carry his own painting, he had bribed the young wizards with a bag of delicious sweets each to do it for him.

The other wizards looked at Bahraam and then at the veiled painting which was now placed on a stand in the center of the room. Bahraam stood to its left and asked one of the boys to lift the cloth that obscured the masterpiece. As the young wizard lifted the cloth, the entire room erupted in gasps.

It was a magnificent work of art. The colours were ones they had never seen and brush strokes were so minute it appeared as if an ant might have painted it. The painted picture was of a heavenly landscape. The wizards had never seen such beauty and delicacy. They all came towards the painting and continued to admire it.

Everyone was aware of Bahraam's lazy tendencies, which is why one of the wizards asked Bahraam if he had really painted such irresistible artwork. Bahraam looked at his friend offensively and placed a hand on his chest as if to indicate that he was hurt by the comment.

"Of course, I made it myself. Why would you think otherwise? I've been working on this painting since the past weeks, that is why I haven't attended any of the meetings."

This clever response was enough for the unsuspecting wizards. They didn't question him after that and continued to give him words of praise. They applauded his innovative technique of painting and use of such unique colours. Bahraam assured them that he will continue to paint similar masterpieces for weeks to come, to which his friends nodded in approval. They all patted him on the back and promised to venerate his paintings by hanging them for everyone to admire.

As Bahraam enjoyed the never-ending praise which he had longed to achieve, the poor pixies worked tirelessly on another new painting for the crafty wizard.

In all fairness, the pixies had willingly consented to Bahraam's idea, only caring for their supply of magic dust. Besides, this deal gave them an opportunity to work continuously, hence, they wouldn't perish as long as they keep working. So, was it really unfortunate that the pixies would spend their time and magic dust on creating things for Bahraam? Is it preferable to opt for the easy way of getting things done if both parties involved received equal benefit? Perhaps such questions could be up for debate.

For now, our story ends exactly where it had begun – in a mysterious valley hidden behind the glorious mountains of Baluchistan.



A TURBAN FULL OF STORIES

Muhammad Shoaib
MSLE VI



"Once, he wore the turban like a king. Now, it lay limp, like a flag after a long battle."

My wife had been insisting for two days that I visit her sick relative. It wasn't that I didn't want to see someone unwell, but rather, I didn't want to hear his stories. Every time, he'd dive into tales from before I was even born, talk about dead relatives I never met, or recount things my grandfather did. Worst of all were the endless stories from his army days. The man had stories for everything.

Eventually, I had no choice. "I'm taking you with me right now," my wife said, fury in her voice.

He lay alone on his bed, a cluttered table of medicines beside him.

"How are you now?" I asked.

He smiled faintly. "Just counting my days."

The pain was etched on his face. Nearby sat his white turban, the one he always wore, proud and tall. Now, it rested untouched, like a fallen crown.

He coughed, again and again. Then, to my surprise, he asked for a cigarette. I reminded him it wasn't good for him, especially with that cough, but he insisted. As I fumbled to light one, his wife walked in and asked if he wanted something to eat. He shook his head.

"It's been a month," she told me, her voice soft. "Just a little juice now and then. Nothing else."

I tried to coax him, but he refused more sharply this time. There was something final in his voice. I had seen this before, when the body starts saying goodbye, one bite at a time. He never asked for the cigarette again. I put it away quietly.

He started talking, not about the army just yet, but about his sons. "My eldest is a milkman," he said. "I asked him the other day to take me to the doctor. He'd just gotten paid. You know what he said? 'I bought a bird for my son.'" He laughed bitterly.

That son was forty years old, his hair already white. There was something distant about him, like he cared more for his dogs than for his father. When I arrived, he had been standing outside, talking with other men, not about his ailing father, but about a sick dog.

The room smelled faintly of medicine. The table held a maze of small bottles, some open, others untouched. A cut apple sat beside him, a single bite taken and forgotten. The turban remained where it had been, the proud symbol of a man now fading. Once, he wore it like a king. Now, it lay limp, like a flag after a long battle.

He had once been a proper farmer, respected, proud. Now he was just... a burden. His two sons were unemployed, uninterested in finding work. I remembered how deeply he had loved them when they were young. All that love, it seemed, had returned nothing.

Everyone knew Hafiz Sab couldn't be beaten in an argument, not with logic, not with fire. He read the newspaper every morning and debated politics and war with friends every night. Though he bore the title of "Hafiz," there was never a beard on his face. His name was Abbas, but to everyone, he was Hafiz Sab.

I asked him to tell me one more story from the army, like he used to. He tried to sit up, but his back betrayed him. Still, he began:

"When I was in Karachi, Saad bachay, I was on night duty, around 1 a.m., when I saw a woman arguing with a man. The road was empty. He kept telling her to get on his bike; she was shouting, cursing. I was watching from the bridge when he grabbed her arm, trying to force her on. She screamed.

"I shouted at him, told him to back off, or I'd shoot. He ignored me. I warned him again, but he was desperate, and angry. The woman cried, 'Save me! He's drunk!' So I had no choice. I fired."

He paused.

"The bullet hit him in the chest, not the legs. He'd been moving." He looked away for a second. "Then the woman screamed louder, not out of fear, but grief. She cried, 'He's my husband!' Turned out, it was just a fight between a married couple. I thought I was stopping a kidnapping."

I sat in stunned silence. "What happened then?"

"I told the truth to my CO. My record was clean, so they didn't dismiss me. Held a small court trial. I was back on duty in two weeks."

"And the woman?"

"She got a government grant, money, a house, and free education for her kids."

That was the last story he ever told me.

A week later, I heard he had died. That day, something strange happened. His sons didn't even have enough money to buy their father a kafan. After we gave him a final bath, one of them quietly told his uncle that they didn't have a single rupee left.

I asked God how a man who lived with dignity, who loved deeply and served proudly, could end up like this, forgotten, helpless, and poor.



Mashaal Rahman Kazi
BSBM VII

THE INSEPARABLE ONE

My first memory of her was when I was about six years old. I didn't quite understand why I knew someone who looked so similar to me. I remember having an unbreakable bond with her.

She would be with me more often than not and would keep me company even when everyone else would abandon me. She would help me where I fell weak and would support me on the darkest of days. She was truly a light of ray in my life.

Everything was going well in life. We had passed high school and had planned on going to the same college and even studying the same major. She and I had bucket lists that took up multiple pages! It seemed as if I could not see a future without her, as she could not without me.

Or at least it seemed that way until one fateful fall morning when she was found dead.

So I started to wonder: what had happened? Why did she do it?
I may have finally found an answer.

Initially, I thought it may have been accidental, not intentional. However, my doubts were promptly cleared after the coroner's report ruled it a death by suicide.

Naturally, I decided to go digging through her things. I didn't find anything that might have pointed to an answer at first glance. Only upon a thorough investigation did I discover 'notes' that did not belong in a notebook for English notes.

Every couple of pages had a diary entry made into them. The entries were dated from up to a year ago to last week. They weren't very frequent; only one entry every couple of weeks or months.

My eyes tried to skim the writing to look for clues. The entries stated:

Saturday, 15th of October

It has begun again. The darkness is insanely vast, supposedly nothing, and yet everything that I feel. I cannot tell her, for she will be worried. I must try to let it pass.

Thursday, 23rd of November

Why won't the dust settle? Will it ever settle? It has been swirling like a storm in this mind of mine for longer than I wish to remember. I wish it would end.

Monday, 8th of January

The end has no sight. I try and will always try to never give up, but I fear I was not built for this world. The signs have always been there.

Why must I deny signs that are unwaveringly etched into my mind?

Wednesday, 31st of January

My soul is heavy, and I do not know if I can describe the happenings of recent days. He has taken over my life now.

Friday, 15th of March

The signs get louder and more opaque with every passing second. He is always there, always watching. I fear things may escalate soon.

Saturday, 13th of April

The emptiness echoes endlessly into my ears. The threads of my soul unspool and unravel everywhere. They unravel faster than I can spool them back in.

Thursday, 6th of June

He has started testing the waters to see how I will react. There is no winning and no losing. Only giving in.

Saturday, 20th of July

The ebony hours are most dangerous. There is no solace in them anymore. No hope of recovery or relief.

Monday, 5th of August

He gets bolder by the day. His meek stature may have everybody fooled, but only I truly know what hides behind his seemingly innocent act.

Tuesday, 15th of October

He has taken things beyond a tolerable limit. My mind can no longer endure it.

Thursday, 17th of October

Help did not come.
I am deeply sorry to everyone. I love you. I sat alone with my thoughts. I tried to register what my eyes could not comprehend. How could I not have seen any signs? How did I not notice any changes in her behaviour?

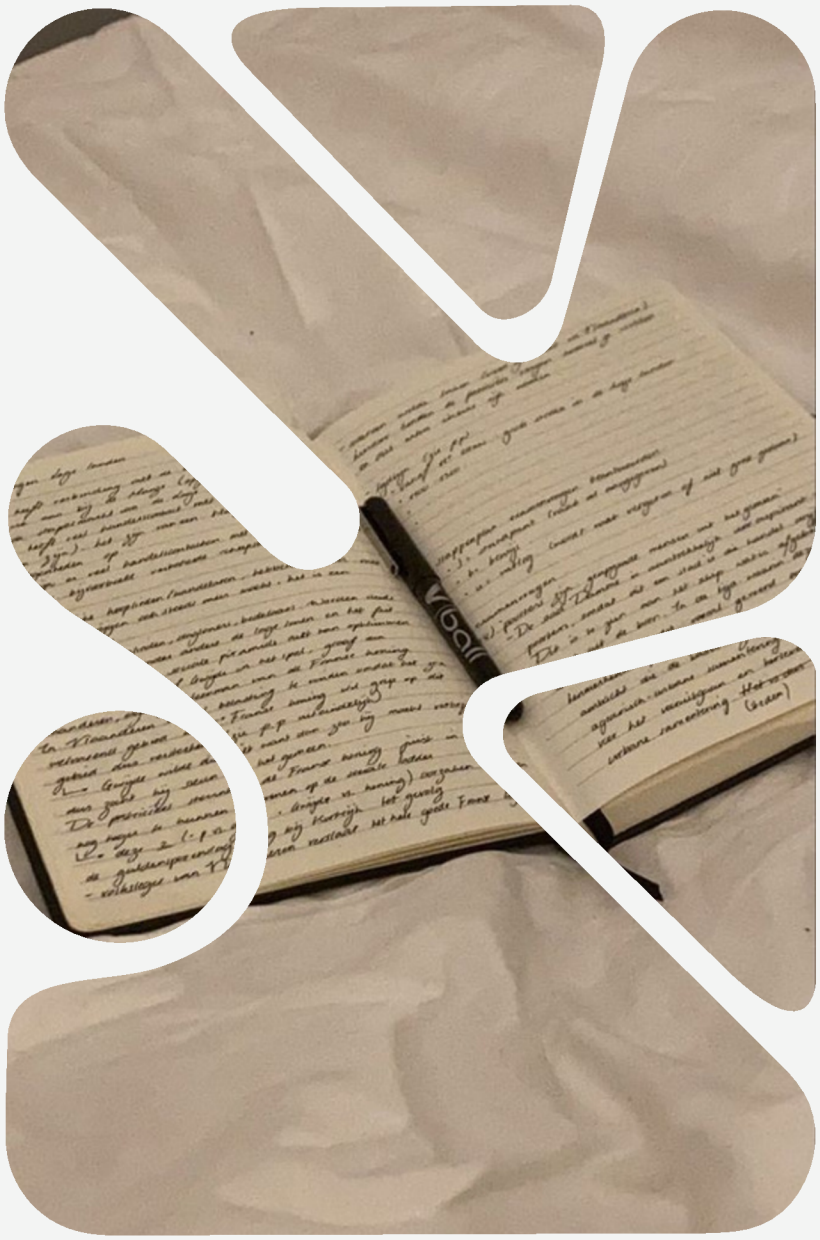
As if right on cue to break the silence and cut through my hurtling thoughts, the doorbell rang, and I hurried to open the door.

In walked nobody other than my neighbour and one of my oldest friends. He asked me how I was coping with the loss of my twin. I simply hugged him in response and motioned for him to sit in the living room while I went to pack up her things and get something to eat from the kitchen.

As I picked up the book to keep it back, my gaze fell onto a peculiar drawing she had sketched on one of the pages.

It showed a young, tall man with brown hair with the words ‘rapist’ written next to it.
The very same young, tall man with brown hair that was in my living room.

“As I picked up the book to keep it back, my gaze fell onto a peculiar drawing she had sketched on one of the pages. It showed a young, tall man with brown hair with the words ‘rapist’ written next to it. The very same young, tall man with brown hair that was in my living room.”



A SILENT FAREWELL

Only Zayn heard the scream. He jolted awake, his mother gasping for breath, a green rope around her neck.

Tehreem Imtiaz
MSLE III



Every corner of the room screamed luxury, and the suit Zayn wore added to the aura of grandeur. But his eyes were fixed on the one woman he loved most. Evelyn looked at him with deep affection, her eyes filled with the tears of joy, but he sensed an emptiness behind them. They lacked the spark they once held when Rayn was alive.

In her hand, Evelyn held a green silk pocket square, one she wanted to tuck into Zayn's chest pocket, but she didn't want to ruin his big day. Zayn stepped forward, embraced her in a warm hug, and placed a soft kiss on her forehead. As he turned to leave the room, a thought echoed in his mind: "Covid has been the harshest to me, hasn't it?"

The house buzzed with guests, laughter, and the mouthwatering aroma of food. Lavish lighting and extravagant décor marked a major celebration in the Bills family. Mr. Bills greeted everyone with a smile, but his eyes kept searching, restless, for someone with a green pocket square.

"How's Mrs. Bills?" one guest inquired. Mr. Bills sighed heavily, replying, "She's doing really well." He had repeated that line all evening. The whispers about her suicide attempt, despite a year passing, never truly left their lives. At times, he thought of leaving her, tired of the emotional outbursts, the grief-fueled arguments, but something always stopped him. He let go, every time.

A hush fell over the crowd as the groom descended the staircase. Applause echoed throughout the hall as everyone turned to Zayn with warm glances and heartfelt wishes. The bride, Raina, approached him, and the wedding rituals began.

But Evelyn's eyes remained on Zayn, even as her mind drifted back to the

summer of 2020. Though surrounded by people celebrating her son's wedding, she saw instead the memorials for Rayn. Overwhelmed, she tried to leave the hall.

"Don't cause a commotion today!" Mr. Bills snapped.

She turned to him, her eyes silently pleading, not to be held back, just to be allowed a moment before she shattered. She clenched the green pocket square tightly, trying to suppress the rising tide within her. Her tears came, she wiped them. They came again.

And then Zayn approached with Raina. He reached out and held Evelyn's hands, his eyes gently asking for her blessing. To his surprise, Evelyn embraced them both and gave her blessing. But her voice betrayed her.

"You exude nobility and look so princely... my dear, my Rayn."

Zayn, despite his love for his mother, recoiled slightly. That slip pierced him. He pulled his hands away with a sharp jerk, leaving Evelyn stunned and confused.

In her mind, a voice whispered:
"I know you miss Mommy, my son. You're alone, I know. Just give me some time. Don't be scared."

And the ceremony continued.

Later that night, Evelyn entered Rayn's room. It looked untouched, as if he still lived there. She inhaled deeply, trying to absorb every trace of her son's presence. She reached for the light switch, then let the darkness remain. She placed the green pocket square on the bed and walked to the window, throwing it wide open. The winter air swept in.

She stood still, like a statue, letting the memories rush in.

Her gaze drifted back to the pocket square. She remembered the day Rayn, then ten years old, had cried over it in a shop. She'd refused him at first, saying, "You're just a kid, Rayn, it's for gentlemen."

Through tears, he'd exclaimed, "But I want to be a gentleman, Mommy!"

He had sobbed until he gagged. She'd bought the square that day, hiding it away, planning to give it to him when he got married. She had hoped Zayn might accept it now, but his stiffness, his emotional walls, had made her too afraid to ask.

She picked up the pocket square, closed the window, and then quietly shut the door, leaving behind everything she had once held close.

The next morning, the house buzzed again, this time with chatter about the wedding. Evelyn sat at the breakfast table, silent, watching everyone bicker and laugh. A small smile crossed her lips.

Then she interrupted:
"I am planning a sojourn to Italy. I wish to escape the mundane. Zayn, could you kindly help arrange the trip?"

It was the first time in a long while that she seemed relaxed. Everyone was surprised, especially Zayn. He remembered how he had begged her to leave the house during her worst days after Rayn's death, and how she had always refused.He nodded. "I'll book the tickets."

"Take note," she added, her voice calm and deliberate. "Procure a solitary ticket. It is I, Rayn's mother, who is embarking on this journey, unaccompanied."
A chill spread through the room. Zayn knew his mother had changed, but the sudden confidence unsettled him. Still, he was relieved she was finally taking steps to heal. That day, Evelyn finished her breakfast, took her medication, and went to Rayn's room. She asked for help removing his belongings. Mr. Bills and Zayn were quietly relieved. It seemed like she was finally letting go. She placed the green silk pocket square on the fireplace mantel and locked the room behind her.

The day passed quietly. Evelyn busied herself with chores. Night fell, and a deep silence settled over the house. Only Zayn heard the scream. He jolted awake, he had seen her, his mother, gasping for breath, a green rope around her neck. In his dream, he had tried to save her but failed. Trying to shake the fear, he walked toward his parents' room. On the way, Rayn's door stood ajar. Inside, the green pocket square was burning in the fireplace. The window was wide open. Dread clutched his chest as he stepped closer. Outside, in the backyard, his mother lay lifeless, her body broken, blood oozing from her nose and head. Dangling from the window knob was another green pocket square, with Zayn's initials embroidered on it. Zayn collapsed in despair. But it was too late for his remorse.

Khadija Nadeem
BSEN V

THE BLEEDING WOUND

Ayesha clutched her dupatta tightly as she ran. Her feet, raw and bleeding, barely touched the ground before she leapt forward again. She was fleeing, not just from Nisar, but from her past, her present, and the future that terrified her.

When her lungs could no longer catch the air, she collapsed against a large rock, sheltered by the camouflage of a sprawling tree. The tree reminded her of Hikmat Khan, her beloved father, once her protector, now the one who had betrayed her. He had once shaded her from the world's cruelties, only to become one of them himself.

Ayesha was just fourteen when she was promised to a man eighteen years older than her. Nisar. He was tall, with rugged features and eyes the color of the sky, handsome in a way that seemed to command pride more than warmth. As Ayesha nurtured childish dreams of love, the wind whispered tales of violence in her ears. Tales of his first wife, a sixteen-year-old girl who died giving birth to his son. Nisar had buried them both with his own hands. He mourned for two months, then married a widow.

She was beautiful, always smiling, perhaps too much. One summer day, Nisar returned home early and saw her smiling at a cousin while serving him tea. "How shameless," he thought. "Smiling at her lover in my house?" He strangled her and buried her beside his first wife.

Ayesha had dismissed these stories. Her young mind couldn't comprehend such monstrosity. And like so many hopeful girls, she thought: He can change.

Now, tears streamed down her cheeks as she remembered the first time Nisar slapped her, for not balancing the salt in the daal. She had turned to her father, her eyes full of anguish and betrayal. But Hikmat Khan, the man she once thought unshakable, lowered his gaze. He said nothing. He did nothing.

For a time, Nisar showered her with affection. But it faded. Ayesha had failed to give him a son. Instead, she "punished" him with a daughter, a pale, frail child who died after two days. Nisar didn't shed a single tear. To him, it was nature correcting itself. But Ayesha mourned her child as if mourning herself.

In the midst of grief, she met Halima, the wife of an army officer Nisar once worked for. Halima taught her to read and write, to wear lipstick, to look people in the eye when speaking. Nisar resented this change, but for a while, he stayed his hand. Until he was promised a 13-year-old bride.

Ayesha knew. She knew this new girl would be the center of his twisted affection, and she knew what that meant for her. It was time to run. To disappear before he found a reason to kill her too.

So she ran. She ran from Nisar. From Hikmat Khan. From the place she once called home.

She ran until she saw the bridge. On the other side stood Halima, her only chance at survival. The checkpost was within reach when the bullet came, slicing through the wind.

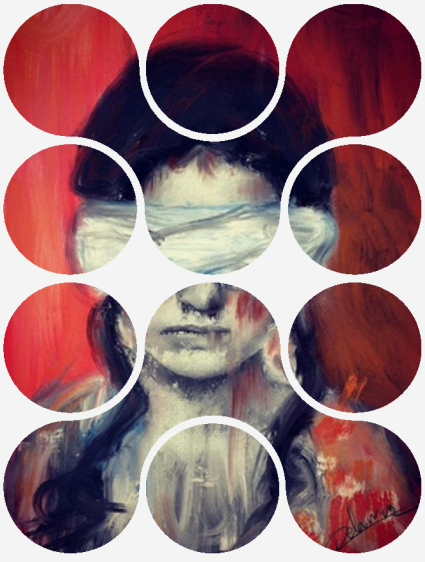
Time stopped.

So did Ayesha.

Pain exploded through her body, but her heart kept beating. The bullet hadn't pierced her heart. It had lodged in her lower back.

As her heavy-lidded eyes began to close, she saw flashes of uniforms rushing toward her. The ground trembled under their boots, a strange comfort against her trembling frame.

The last thing she saw was her father's face, before everything went dark.



THE CLOSED WINDOW

"So many thoughts, so many worlds. Too much noise, and too much silence."

Khadija Nadeem
BSEN V



Her mother asked about her day. She answered, “I didn’t kill anyone, nobody killed me, so it was a win-win day.”

But did she tell her that her wounds had twisted open again? Did she tell her that, while she screamed for help, calling her mother’s name a thousand times, people only heard words? Can her mother really not see that while she frets over the broken chair, her daughter is quietly nursing her wounds so they don’t bleed in front of them?

Did she tell her that she lived for someone who was dying, because someone else would live for someone else, and the chain would go on? But what about her? Who would live for her? She supposed her mother did. Sometimes, she wished she hadn’t.

Is all of this only in her mind? Or does she see things too clearly—so clearly that she tortures herself with the truth? Is it real? Is it delusion? Is she real? Or is she delusional? How long before she answers these questions for herself? Should she stop? Or not? So many thoughts, so many worlds. Too much noise, and too much silence.

She decided she liked the wind now. She wondered if her mother had liked the wind when she was young. And she felt guilty for liking it.

Her mother asked again, what had she done today? She said only: “I stayed inside and closed the window. The wind was strong today, after all.”

KINTSUGI SOUL

"She didn't need to hide her pain. The broken pieces of herself could be joined, just like pottery, to create something beautiful."



It was her fifth attempt at molding the clay on the potter's wheel. Ella had been struggling for the past three hours to give shape to this heavy, stubborn mass. Her hands, once steady, now trembled as she tried to throw the clay. Each time, the form collapsed, and each time, she had to start over.

The process exhausted her. Slowly, doubt crept in. She began to see herself as a failure.

Ella was an artist known for her dreamy, exquisite pottery. Her studio, The Potter's Dream, displayed marvelous ceramic creations that radiated joy and perfection, vibrant pieces that captured the colors of life itself. The studio held a special place in the hearts of art lovers, who would come from across the city to admire her work. Every piece sold for a handsome price, freeing Ella from the financial burdens that often discourage artists from following their dreams.

Her career flourished, and within a few short years, she had become one of the most celebrated artists in the city of Riva. She spent her days in the company of admirers or immersed in her studio. There were always smiles, laughter, and praise surrounding her, and she wore those things like armor.

Her achievements were her pride.

But despite the success, Ella felt hollow inside.

To the outside world, she was the picture of a young, thriving artist. But behind that facade, she was falling apart. People believed she had found her perfect niche, but inside her mind was a tangled web of thoughts she couldn't unwind. She felt like a boat adrift in a storm, her anchor lost.

And now, that chaos had begun to show in her art.

Where once her pottery was flawless, cracks now appeared, reflections of her inner turmoil. She began to withdraw from social events, avoided her friends, and eventually stopped creating altogether. She couldn't bear the sight of imperfection in her work. She didn't tell anyone. In her society, showing weakness wasn't an option.

So, Ella stopped working in her studio. Every morning, she left her apartment and wandered the city from sunrise until midnight, hoping to stumble upon inspiration, hoping to create something perfect enough to banish the pain.

She would spend hours at the bus station, watching passengers line up for arriving buses. Or she'd stand silently at the crowded subway stop, a ghost among the living. But no matter where she went, she felt lost in the crowd, swallowed up by the city's rhythm. She longed to feel normal again.

One day, during one of her aimless walks, she realized she had wandered far from the chaos of the city. She had arrived in a quiet suburban neighborhood. The weather had taken a sudden turn. When she'd left her apartment that morning, the sky had been clear with scattered clouds. Now, it was overcast and drizzling.

She thought the sky looked just like she felt, gray and heavy. She took shelter beneath the awning of a worn-down café. As she sat there, eyes vacant, she noticed a group of children playing in the rain. One of them caught her attention, a physically disabled child. Though he couldn't run with the others, he wasn't left out. He sat at the edge of the puddles, folding paper boats and handing them to his friends. His laughter rang through the rainy air, filled with joy and pride.

The scene struck something deep inside Ella. The child's quiet joy reminded her of a Japanese philosophy she once admired, kintsugi, the art of repairing broken pottery with gold. Instead of hiding the cracks, kintsugi embraces them, highlighting them as part of the object's history and beauty.

Suddenly, Ella understood. She didn't need to make a perfect piece of ceramics. She didn't need to hide her pain. The broken pieces of herself could be joined, just like pottery, to create something beautiful. She returned to her studio that very night, her heart lighter than it had been in months. She worked through the night, and in the days that followed, she created her best-ever collection, pottery that shimmered with golden lacquer in every crack. It was raw, imperfect, and radiant.

Each piece told a story.

Each crack was a memory.

Each line of gold was a healing.

Ella had finally found peace, in imperfection.

Wasif Qureshi
BSCP IV

ARYAN'S PROBLEM

In the end, it was hope that killed him.

Leading an uneventful and monotonous life for as long as he could remember, Aryn had encountered a problem: he had found something he wanted to do. Being unable to find a purpose in life had led Aryn to become unmotivated and dejected, resigning himself to a mundane, day-to-day routine. Now, after all these years, finding something to live for, something that could give meaning to his existence, left him both hopeful and anxious.

Naturally, you, the reader, will be wondering what singular, peculiar thing had roused Aryn from his robotic daily life. It was seeing a person who, to his eyes, seemed to be teeming with life and a love for living, so completely opposite to him. After struggling with himself for days, our protagonist finally gave up and accepted what had become a fact of his life: he could not get the image of that person out of his mind.

The more Aryn tried to ignore it, the more prominent the image became. It was eating him from the inside. Finally, when it threatened to take away the only thing Aryn held dear, he decided he needed to solve this issue. That thing was his mind. He relied on the capabilities of his mind to serve both as a means of living and as a shield to remain isolated from the rest of humanity.

You see, Aryn was a writer by trade and a painter by hobby. He was not a writer because he liked to write; rather, it was something he could make a living from with minimal effort and minimal social interaction. He wrote short and simple crime thrillers that people read to pass the time, books that required no real commitment but offered a sense of engagement. His books would not be memorable to any reader; they were just a pastime, like The Hardy Boys series. Aryn believed he didn't have the potential to write anything more substantial, so he never tried.

He spent his free time painting because it gave him a way to pass the days without engaging with society. Had Aryn not been so pessimistic and absorbed in self-pity, he might have recognized his own talent.

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He spent his free time painting because it gave him a way to pass the days without engaging with society. Had Aryn not been so pessimistic and absorbed in self-pity, he might have recognized his own talent. His skill had risen above the amateur level, and if he ever found the motivation to work on his craft, he could have truly excelled. Such was nature's gift to him. However, Aryn believed it was a mark of intelligence for a man to know his limits, and he had decided this was his.

But this wasn't intelligence. It was naivety. He had given up without even trying.

Hope, the hope of fulfilling some purpose, began to outweigh the skepticism he felt about his own abilities. The writer and part-time painter resolved to confront this newfound obsession the only way he knew how: by putting it into his writing.

The next story he wrote introduced a new character who seemed to be the focal point of the book. It almost felt as though the story existed solely to support that character, not the other way around. While this was obvious

to readers, Aryn, in his blind admiration, believed it to be his best work.

Faithful followers of his writing were positively surprised to see two more books quickly follow. But all of them shared the same obsessive focus on the new character, whom Aryn seemed to demand the reader worship just as much as he did.

It didn't take long for Aryn to realize he wasn't satisfied with portraying this image through words alone. He could use all the flowery language in the world to describe the character, but he could never make the reader see what he saw. His words failed him. They only made him more aware of the limitations of his craft.

So he turned to painting.
Knowing how much of a recluse Aryn was, I'm sure you, dear reader, will not struggle to guess what his next step was.
Aryn began painting the image he wished others could see. But memory alone was not enough. To refresh it, he decided to retrace his steps, the exact routine he had followed the day he first saw the girl he was now obsessed with. He found out she worked as a tour guide, which made it easier to observe her, since her route passed near a tea shop.

What Aryn absolutely did not want was to speak to her. He needed to maintain his distance. He believed that if he ever came in contact with her, his own lifeless and morose disposition would corrupt her vivaciousness, the spark that had become the very center of his existence.

No, what he wanted to do was preserve it. To showcase the effervescent and indomitably alive spirit he had glimpsed through the windows of her soul.
So he painted. And painted. And painted. It became an addiction, one he was only too happy to indulge in.

Every day, he took a walk to the tea shop at noon, where he could refresh the image only he could see.

Until one day... he couldn't.
Aryn realized he had run out of time. Life's cold hands had finally entwined themselves around her heart and extinguished the spark, as it had done to so many others. He could no longer see the shine in her eyes that had once captivated him.

Panicked, Aryn ran back to his apartment and frantically began painting. He had to preserve the image before his memory failed him too. He painted without stopping for hours, restarting more times than he could count.
The next time he saw her, she was giving a group of tourists a tour of the old Buddhist temple, just across from the tea shop where he had first seen her. But the fire in her eyes was gone. No embers remained, only ashes.

Aryn blamed her. He resented her for letting life win. For taking away his reason to live. For giving him hope, and then stealing it when he had, for the first time, started to feel at home in his life.

In the end, it was hope that killed him.

Filled with melancholy and self-loathing, with hatred for her and disgust for the world, he returned to the place he called a house, for he had no home. He was a creature who had never found a place to belong, nor a purpose to hold onto.

As he sat in the dim light, his eyes lingered on the plants hanging in his window, tied with a sturdy rope. He began to untie them.

Ironically, the rope that had once been bought to sustain life would now be used to take one.

Whether what Aryn saw ever truly existed, or whether it was simply a figment of his imagination, a desperate projection of his desire to find meaning in another, we will never know. But what we do know is this: the limitations of human communication, our inability to fully express ourselves to another, made it impossible for Aryn to solve his problem through words or painting.

Because in the end, it was impossible to make someone else see what only he could see.





C'EST LA VIE

Zainab Tariq
DPT VI

"Standing alone on that street, he understood something deeper: real motivation cannot come from the outside. It has to come from within."

A few years back, Wan Fateh used to stroll past the exotic vehicles in this lane, wondering whether, and when, he would be able to afford one. Not just the cars, but also the lifestyle of their owners. Each day, he took the longer route home from work, using those daily walks as a reminder of his goals. At night, he would spend hours sketching plans for his startup.

Nine months ago, he finally decided to execute those plans. But the road to riches wasn't as simple as he had imagined, and many like Wan have learned that the hard way.

Within the first two months, Wan learned lessons that often ake years to grasp. First came the reality of friendships. When money was tight, his social life began to dissolve. By the end of the first month, Wan found himself completely alone in the vast city of New York. After turning down too many hangout invitations, his friends had stopped calling.

Some might say he shouldn't have ignored them, but the truth was, every outing came with a cost, and Wan couldn't afford to spend on leisure when he was barely making ends meet.

Next came disappointment in partnership. His business partner pulled out just as the business launched, expecting quick profits. When that didn't happen immediately, he walked away. Wan was forced to cut down the scale of his venture and make peace with being alone.

The startup, already struggling, took a sharp downturn. After three months of draining time and money, Wan decided to reanalyze everything. He gave himself a week to meet with established entrepreneurs, identify the problems in his model, and find solutions.

He examined logistics, studied customer behavior, and analyzed why people left his website without buying. He realized his marketing strategy was deeply flawed and that much of his spending had gone toward unnecessary costs. It was a harsh wake-up call, but also the turning point he desperately needed. Refocusing his budget on the product and actual customer engagement became essential and in a matter of two months he relaunched with a redesigned website and a refined business model. The changes had a significant impact. His reach grew, and sales began to climb. Every month after that, Wan would review his strategy, looking for ways to improve. It became routine.

Nine months after his first launch, Wan returned to the same lane with the exotic cars. This time, he knew he could afford any of them. But he also realized that investing further in his business was the wiser choice, and more importantly, he recognized that he had never truly wanted those vehicles, other than to impress his former friends.

Standing alone on that street, he understood something deeper: real motivation cannot come from the outside. It has to come from within. People will come and go from your life. You will lose many, and you will have to move on from every one of them.

Because that's life.

C'est la vie.



WITHOUT TRADITIONS...

Ms. Sajda Jabeen
Lecturer English

Once again, the air is filled with the melodies of the past blending seamlessly with the present, "Chitta kukkarr banaray tay; kaasni duppatay waliye, mundaa sadqay teray tey". I smile when I look at the girls at the dholki, their bangles chiming away with its beat. Same symphonies, similar atmosphere as it was when I got married thirty odd years ago, oh but so different in terms of what happened, and what I would not let happen again!

I am so not looking forward to the ordeal ahead of me, but I square my shoulders and walk quickly towards the room where the elders; my mother-in-law, her daughters and sons—including my husband—have gathered to decide what to give as jahez (dowry) to my daughter who is set to get married. The short corridor seems like a bed of hot coals as I move towards the room which would soon become a court room for me as I face all the inquisitors who are against my decision to not give any dowry in the name of gifts, and in the name of traditions, to my only daughter and her prospective in-laws. The living room is alive with discussion one second before I enter, and seems like a tomb freshly erected—with silence echoing—the next second after I do.

Every eye on me, some with disdain, some disbelief, and some with worry etched into their foreheads. I walk towards the single sofa that I had placed this morning to face my audience with everyone sitting in a semi-circle on couches, settees and sofas—with some simply perching on the arms of the furniture available. I calmly sit down and look at all the people, from the left my husband on the sofa with my son on the arm rest, my mother-in-law with her daughter on the arm-rest, my father-in-law with the other son side by side on the two-seater, my mother and father on the sofa next and my daughter-in-law on the far right on a chair.

"Ok, then", I begin. "What are your reservations on my decision to not give a dowry aka gifts?" I complete my question fully aware that I have just asked my audience to load their verbal weapons and shoot me on sight. I wish I had been strong enough to stand against these so-called traditions on my marriage—traditions that put my father into a huge debt to satisfy the rhetorical question "log kya kahain gay?" (what would the people say?).

"What are you trying to achieve with this?" my father-in-law shot the first question at me and before I could answer, my mother-in-law piped in "We can understand you not asking your son's in-laws for any dowry because you knew you would not be cruel to his wife because of it. You even prepared his separate home with all the necessities to have an independent life. How can you guarantee that your daughter will also be shown equal courtesy?"

"What if they don't let her use their things because they were not brought by her?" my husband began with a catch in his voice, his love and fear for our daughter evident, "What if they change despite them being ok with no dowry rule for now?"

I take a deep breath to answer when my sister-law joins in with "You know what happened with me" her voice tinged with tears and eyes shining with them, "I was brave and decided not to take any dowry and see where that landed me. They were perfectly fine when I got married but later, I could not use their plates and pots because I did not bring them with me. My father had to get these things and send them to me to make my life easy." The tear finally broke the prison of her eye and slid down her cheek, which she wiped away quickly.

I took another deep breath, my voice louder than I wanted it to be, "I know what happened with you. And I do not want that for my daughter as well. But I draw a line at giving jahez just for fear of people. This is not a competition neither is it a proclamation of my financial status, and I do not want to make it one."

"But.." my father-in-law began and I stopped him with a raised hand, "No buts" I said with iron in my voice "I will not do what these traditions demand, they were

made for me and not the other way round".

I looked at every face and rested on my daughter-in-law, whose eyes have always sparkled with admiration for me, "I told my son's in-laws that I did not want dowry because providing for the wife is the son's responsibility. I need to set a precedent that goes a long way. I need to make strong every daughter and every father of a daughter to not be afraid of these so-called traditions and break away from these shackles"
"Your daughter will be ridiculed and criticized" my sister-in-law said again. I look straight into her eyes "She will not be criticized because I won't let her be bullied by anyone". I turn towards my husband with a question in my eyes.

He once told me that he was not strong enough to fight his family and people when he accepted jahez, and he prays that he makes the tough decision and not the easy one when it comes to his children, but it is so difficult to pull yourself out of the quagmire of what people have to say. Well, here is your chance!

I raise my eye brows, and he responds with a straightened back and a nod of resolution at me-Oh! The relief! He is finally with me on this.

The rest just gasp which is a testament to what they have perceived from the implied threat in my words. My mother was the first to say what every mother from eternity has been saying in this Pakistani culture, "You will destroy your daughter's marriage with your own hands. The daughter's dead body should leave the husband's house".

"I might not be able to create a storm, but I want to make a ripple—and let it do the job for me."

"Ammi (Mother) will you please stop with these dramatic dialogues passed down from generations to suppress women?" I soften my tone to underplay my harsh words.

"But beta, they have not asked for anything, but we cannot let our daughter go empty-handed, we have to give her something! And do not forget that women have to sacrifice to achieve happiness, and her parents have to support them", she continues, and I had had enough of this line of thinking from the moment I had married thirty years ago. I stand up, and look at everyone from the left to right "WHY?"- the cursed word again-always takes me back to the time I was submerged in the water when my brother tried to get out of the swimming pool by using my shoulders as a catapult—the need to breathe and fight back.

"Why do the women have to sacrifice? Is she the only entity who makes the home happy? What about the man's role? Why has he been made a man? To depend on the women to make the home a happy place? to make a man's life easy? Well, it stops now. He needs to grow up and take his responsibilities seriously. I raised my daughter from the day she was born to now and have not asked the guy's family for anything. Why do I need to give my daughter away, and also the things that she will need to make her life easy? Whether they ask for it or not is not the issue here, I am not going to give anything. Period!" Oh my God, I am on a tirade, and the need to flee before I explode and forget that they all my elders, makes my heart beat faster.

I take a deep breath to settle my inner turmoil and continue, with everyone in shock at my outburst "If every father decides to support their daughters when they face criticism for not bringing jahez, the in-laws would know their place and their responsibilities, and all the daughters who are facing this crisis will be saved. I might not be able to create a storm, but I want to make a ripple and let it do the job for me."

If nothing else happens, I would know I tried my best. I turn around, stop and look over my shoulder at everybody with my last remark "If they make one comment on my daughter's lack of gifts, I will bring her back and let them be". I walked out as loud, angry comments at my declaration filled the air I vacate.

I walk back through the corridor, leaving the din behind and stop at the window that shows me a glimpse of the moon in the otherwise silent, dark night. I look out at the moon.

I am trying to break away from this coffin-I cannot breathe freely because of the oppression of the

traditions, the weight of which is too much for me to carry- but not anymore. No one in my family will live with these shackles.

"Aunty!" I turn my head to see my to-be-son-in-law walking towards me. I turn around, watch as he comes towards me, tall and imposing but gentleness in his eyes-that is what attracted me the first time-that gentleness shining through.

"Jee beta" I raise my hand to pat him on his head. "How did you come?" I ask thinking he had not said anything about his visit. He looks me in the eye "Aunty, no one in my family will say anything about lack of jahez", as blunt as me-hmmm, maybe that is also one of the reasons I liked him for my daughter; no hidden agendas- I arch an eyebrow, "And if anyone does?"

"Then you have all the right to reprimand me because it is my duty to keep my wife happy and provide for her." he concluded with a solemn promise. "So, what to do with my family members who are against me on this decision?" I ask folding my arms in front of me and nod my head towards the living room.

"I will talk to them and they can take any promise they want", he says, nods his head and moves to the room I had recently walked out of.

I look at the moon again-it takes thirty years to bring about changes that matter most. Someone has to do it. Traditions! Out you go, and leave me without! I close my eyes and rest my head against the window sill.

Another presence beside me and I raise my head without looking back, I know it's my husband, "I am sorry", he whispers. I turn my head and look up at him. He is looking at the moon-like me. "For not knowing what it was to be a man and what it was to be responsible for the life that has joined me on my journey through life". He smiles and looks down at me. "But no more" he continues, "I was not strong enough but now no more! Now I will be your strength and my daughter's backbone", a promising resolve in his voice and face.

I put my hand on top of his resting on the window sill, "I am strong because of you, if you did not support me in my decisions, this culture would have eaten me alive with no bones left", I said. "Let us be strong together for our daughters as well so that people like my father are not left with tons of loan which takes them 25 years to pay back", I request—which he understands as what it is—a demand.

We hear footsteps behind and we turn around. My family and my son-in-law walk towards us. My dear father, wrinkles and stooped posture testament to his failing health and growing years, opens his arms for me which I do not take a second to wrap myself in- oh the arms of a father-a daughter's strength.

"We agree with your decision and we will support our granddaughter if this brat gives her any trouble", my father-in-law promises me and looks at my son-in-law with a twinkle in his eye. My son-in-law raises his hands to catch his ears with a smile. I look at my family and finally breathe a sigh of relief-at least it started; the wind of change which I might or might not see turn into a storm that blows away every tradition that hinders happiness.

We walk away towards the living room to finally start with the songs that were as old as traditions, but a welcome guest, with our close and dear ones—no outsiders allowed to mar the beauty of the event—especially traditions!





HONEY, FRIENDSHIP, AND FREEDOM

"In the heart of the forest, a girl and a baby bear taught the world that friendship, courage, and kindness could change even the darkest of fates."

Muqadas Batool
MSLE II

Once, in a quiet little cottage at the edge of a vast forest, lived a young girl with her mother. Her mother, a skilled seamstress, worked tirelessly to support them, sewing tiny baby clothes to sell in the nearby town.

One day, when her mother had to travel to the city, she warned her daughter not to wander outside. But the girl grew restless. Hoping to surprise her mother with flowers, she slipped into the forest. She wandered deeper and deeper until the silence wrapped around her, and she realized she was lost.

Tired, she stumbled upon a cave. Inside, she found a honeycomb dripping with golden honey. Hungry, she ate a little and soon fell asleep. But the cave wasn't empty for long, it belonged to a family of bears. When the girl awoke, she found herself face-to-face with a baby bear. For a moment, both were frightened. Then, like children who discover they are not so different after all, they laughed, played, and soon became the best of friends.

The days passed, and their bond grew stronger, an innocent friendship between human and animal. But one afternoon, dark clouds gathered, not from the sky, but from danger: hunters stormed the forest, capturing the baby bear and other young animals to sell to circuses. The girl's heart broke as her only friend was taken away.

Her mother noticed her sorrow and asked why she wept. Through tears, the girl told her everything. That very night, they crept to the hunters' camp. While the men slept, the girl and her mother quietly unlocked the cages, freeing not only the baby bear but all the captured creatures.

The reunion was joyful, the girl embraced her furry friend, and the animals scattered back to freedom. Her mother later appealed to the government, demanding stronger laws against illegal hunting. It became a small but powerful step toward protecting the voiceless of their land.

And so, in the heart of the forest, a girl and a baby bear once taught the world that friendship, courage, and kindness could change even the darkest of fates.

THE FORGOTTEN

I sat at the bus station, waiting. The sun blazed as if it were burning for the last time. There was no shade, nowhere for breath to rest. Life around me hurried forward, people moving with purpose, sweating but unbothered, while I sat idle, feeling like a fool left behind.

Then she appeared. An old woman in black rags patched a hundred times over, her frail frame wrapped in clothing as worn as her years. Her face was carved with deep lines that told more than words ever could, yet behind them lingered a trace of the teenage girl she once was. Two thin braids framed her head, and her small feet shuffled inside oversized men's shoes. Over her shoulder hung a sack, her livelihood, meant to be filled with what the world called waste.

She spotted a few empty bottles on the pavement and lit up as if she had found treasure. Kneeling, she gathered them and tucked them into her sack before dragging it into the bus stop's narrow shade. There she sat, pulled out a bottle, and drank. The water must have been boiling in the heat, but she swallowed it like nectar, her eyes closing in relief.

For a moment, she was still, watching the chaos of the city. Her hands were dark and scarred, as if they had mined coal for a lifetime, and her posture spoke of centuries of toil. She seemed less a woman than a monument to endurance.

A corn vendor passed, and she asked the price.

"Hundred rupees each. Buy two, I'll give you a discount," he said.

"Too much. I'd have to sell myself for that," she muttered.

"Then don't buy," he snapped, walking away.

She watched him leave, then pulled a long strip of cloth from her sack and tied it tight across her stomach. Hunger needed binding if she was to keep moving. With effort, she lifted the sack onto her shoulder, pressed one hand to the ground, and slowly rose, her knees trembling but unyielding.

It took all fours for her to stand, yet when she did, she looked unbreakable, as though no weight, no hunger, no cruel sun could stop her from fighting her way through the world.

"It took all fours for her to stand, yet when she did, she looked unbreakable, as though no weight, no hunger, no cruel sun could stop her."



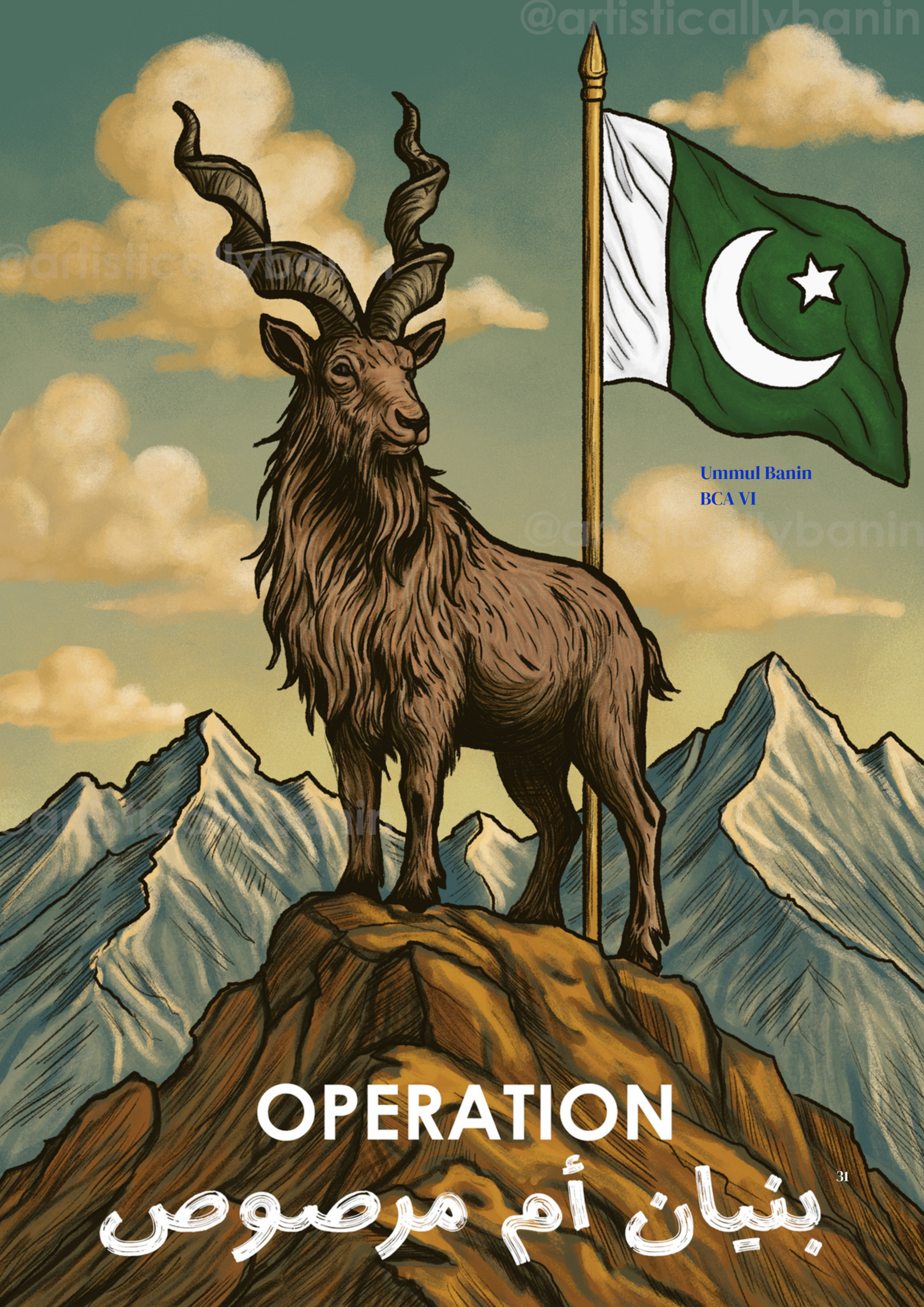
Amber Ayaz
MSLE III

ART

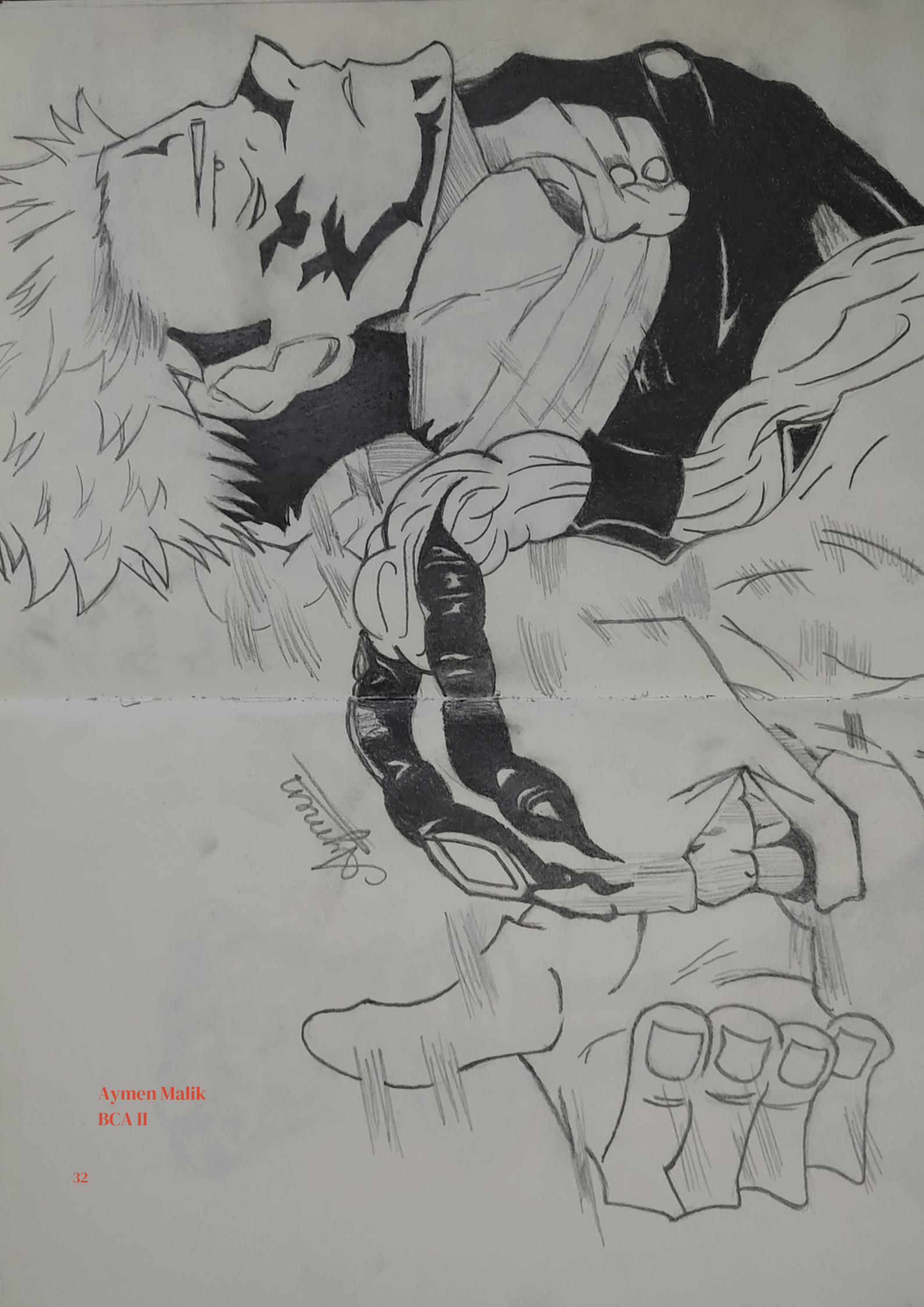


Emaan Masood
BSTH II





Ummul Banin
BCA VI



Aymen Malik
BCA II



Muhammad Zaween Tabassum
BCA II



Shumail Sarfaraz
BCA III

Shumail Sarfaraz
BCA III







Amnah Khan
BCA II

ARTICLES



TIME TRAVEL AND ITS PARADOXES



Travel, in its ordinary sense, is simple: you depart, you arrive, and the time between those two points is the duration of your journey. But if you are a time traveler, the very idea begins to unravel. How can the same two events, departure and arrival, be separated by two unequal amounts of time? In the strange landscape of time travel, the watch on your wrist tells one story while the universe itself tells another.

This is the paradoxical beauty of time travel. Long regarded as the stuff of science fiction, it continues to fascinate humanity, lingering somewhere between imagination and scientific possibility. With Einstein's theory of relativity providing a foundation, the once-impossible now feels like an open question. Could time travel be real? And if so, what paradoxes lurk within it?

Understanding Time Travel

Time travel, at its core, is a discrepancy between time as we experience it and time as it exists externally. It can be imagined in two ways:

"Time travel is not just about bending clocks; it is about bending our understanding of reality itself."

Yasha Umar
BSBM II

- Forward travel (time dilation): moving into the future at a faster rate than those around you.

- Backward travel: returning to the past, where paradoxes begin to emerge.

Forward Time Travel: Time Dilation

Travelling forward in time, or time dilation, is not just theoretical; it has been observed. According to Einstein's special relativity, as an object approaches the speed of light, time slows for it relative to a stationary observer. Experiments with atomic clocks on airplanes and satellites confirm this: moving clocks really do tick more slowly.

Einstein's general relativity adds another layer: gravity bends time. Near a black hole, for instance, time passes more slowly than it does far away. This is not just theory, astronauts aboard the International Space Station already experience time slightly differently from those on Earth. And in art, films like Interstellar have given us a haunting visual of time stretched and warped by cosmic forces.

Forward time travel, then, is not only possible, it is happening, subtly, around us.

Backward Time Travel: The Unsolved Puzzle

The dream of returning to the past, however, is far more elusive. Solutions such as closed time-like curves or wormholes appear in Einstein's equations, hinting that loops through spacetime could exist. But wormholes remain purely hypothetical, their stability dependent on exotic matter with negative energy density something never observed.

Backward time travel is where paradoxes multiply. The moment you step into the past, logic begins to fray.

Paradoxes of Time Travel

- The Grandfather Paradox: If you traveled back in time and prevented your grandfather from meeting your grandmother, would you erase your own existence? If so, who traveled back in the first place?

- The Bootstrap Paradox: What if a time traveler gives Shakespeare a copy of Hamlet, and Shakespeare publishes it as his own? Where did the play actually originate?

- The Causal Loop: A future event becomes the cause of a past event, which in turn becomes the cause of the future event — a circle with no clear beginning.

- The Fermi Paradox (of time travel): If time travel were possible, where are all the visitors from the future? Stephen Hawking once threw a party for time travelers, only advertising it after it had happened. No one came. Was it proof, or just silence?

These paradoxes highlight not just the strangeness of time travel, but its deeply philosophical implications: if cause and effect can be reversed, what does it mean to exist at all?

Science at the Edge

Despite the obstacles, modern science has taken small steps into this mystery.

- Muon decay experiments show that high-speed particles live longer than expected that is a direct evidence of time dilation.

- Atomic clock tests on airplanes and satellites prove that time runs differently at different speeds and altitudes.

- Quantum mechanics offers its own wild possibilities: entanglement, superposition, and experiments suggesting that particles might "loop" back in time on a microscopic scale.

And yet, enormous challenges remain: the energy required to travel near light speed is far beyond our reach; wormholes, if they exist, are unstable; and even if we solved these issues, cosmic radiation and unknown consequences loom.

Does time travel exist? The answer depends on how we define it. Forward time travel, supported by relativistic time dilation, has already been observed in particles, atomic clocks, even astronauts. Backward time travel, however, remains speculative, tangled in paradoxes, enormous energy demands, and limits of technology.

For now, time travel belongs partly to physics, partly to philosophy, and partly to our dreams.



STAY

"Not all threads are meant to stay, some arrive only to make you shine brighter before they fade away."

Mashaal Rahman Kazi
BSBM VII

Lives are like golden, delicate threads weaving their way through the universe. Some are more resilient, some fragile. Some intertwine for decades, others only for a fleeting moment. But one thing is certain: every thread already has its time on this planet marked out.

My sister and I, our threads, like our lives, were spun into existence frail and faint. If you paused to look, you'd see no more than a quick glimmer of gold. We fought through the first months of our lives, struggling to shine brighter, to become unbreakable, because in this universe, you can't survive if you're fragile.
Our threads have remained intertwined since the day we arose from our parents' fabric. We shifted from shimmering gold to deep black strands, the same as our hair. As we entered adulthood, our true colours began to show. No one knew what determined these shades; the universe seemed to decide by its own secret criteria. Most of the threads that brushed against mine stayed for at least a year, many of them still remain.

At the dawn of adulthood, I encountered a radiant, Venetian-red thread. It twined with my golden-bronze strand, making me stronger. In turn, I helped it glow brighter.

Then, one day, the universe chose to weave in change. Suddenly, red vanished. I went from seeing it almost every day to knowing I never would again. My bronze turned darker, shifting toward black, and I feared I'd lose myself entirely.

I'd heard of threads scarred by such soul-searing shifts: some snapped in half, others dulled into murky shades, still others shriveled into tangled knots, tiny, stubborn balls of fabric that could only be unraveled with enormous effort, if at all.

I fought hard not to knot, not to fade, not to surrender to darkness. For this darkness was not mere black. It was a colour in which you could see pure obsidian, swallowing even the brightest of light. A horrific colour to become. And the larger a thread grew, the harder it was to return to what it once was.

Now, nearly a year later, I understand that red was never meant to stay. I've accepted it. I am grateful for what it gave me, hopeful it hasn't turned obsidian, and glad it danced with me while it could. Today, in its absence, I have begun to blossom again and this time into a glowing orange-bronze.



THE RACE

"You are the lone runner in your race, the sole protagonist of your story."

Mashaal Rahman Kazi
BSBM VII

We often think we're running a marathon against everyone else in the world—as if crossing the finish line first would make us the most successful, the most worthy. But if you've "won" the race, then what? You're still buried in the same ground, lowered into the same casket, and left with the same question: what meaning did that race truly hold?

Life is too unpredictable to chase being the most productive, the most successful, or the richest of them all. You can strive for those things, but in the end, your fate was written long ago, sealed in an envelope hidden from human eyes.

You are ultimately alone: the sole protagonist of your story, the only passenger on your plane, the lone runner in your race, the single student writing your exam. So yes, make it worthwhile. But also remember, every story needs conflict, rising action, and a climax before it can move toward falling action and, finally, resolution.



"Now the rose no longer feels like love, it smells like a grave, a scar you planted deep within me."

WILTED

Wajhia Tasleem
MSLE II

You gave me a rose that day, and for a moment I felt special, like my world had lit up in your presence. That simple gesture pulled me closer to you, as though I were clinging to an invisible rope that bound my love to yours. But you never saw it. That rose meant more to me than anything ever had. And yet, you walked away, leaving me with nothing but a fading flower in my hand.

I should have known when you first stepped into my world that you would break it. God knows how much I love roses, but from you, it was never just a flower. It was a bundle of promises, stories, and memories I longed for but never received. My heart withered; like a weeping child, I broke. My love turned to ashes, its smoke denied by you. Now the rose no longer feels like love, it smells like a grave, a scar you planted deep within me.

WHERE I TRULY BELONG

Wajhia Tasleem
MSLE II

"No matter how far I go or how much I achieve, the village will always be where I truly belong."

Returning to my village after so many days, I finally feel alive again. Life in Lalazar has worn me down. Even as I write this, my tears blur my phone screen. Today, I came back from Mohri Furman Shah, my home in the serene hills of Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir. The days I spent there were unforgettable. The weather was freezing, yet nothing felt warmer than being with Ammi, Abu, and my brother.

Before moving to the city for my education, evenings in the village were my favorite time of day. Around 5 or 6 PM, I would wait eagerly for my father to return home. I always planned little activities so our evenings would feel special. We'd sit by the crackling wood fire, sharing food, telling stories, and enjoying the cold together.

I miss those days deeply, especially my father. I remember my early months in the city, when a scratch on my foot from wearing the wrong shoes left me in tears. It sounds minor, but back home I would've shared even a mosquito bite with someone. That day, I realized I had no one to share my pain with.

In that loneliness, I met Ma'am Selina at university. When I opened up to her, she listened with kindness. She encouraged me to make friends and reward myself for even small achievements. Her words became a ray of light in the darkness. Slowly, I began to heal. But today, after returning from the village, I feel that same emptiness again.

I long for mornings filled with the chirping of birds and the soothing call to prayer. The Fajr azan in the village carries a calmness that stays with you. My father would gently wake me, and together we'd light the fire in the kitchen before breakfast. fresh desi makhan and warm manni. I miss those simple evenings too, watching the sun melt behind the hills, making the whole sky feel alive.

Even the smallest parts of village life, washing clothes by the nala, gathering wood, or listening to the wind in the trees , meant something. They still do.

No matter how far I go or how much I achieve, the village will always be where I truly belong.



THE GENERATION OF QUIET REVOLUTIONS

Shumail Sarfaraz
BCA III

"Revolutions don't always begin with crowds. Sometimes, they begin with you."

We live in a world where silence speaks louder than words. Scroll through your feed and you'll see it: smiling faces hiding sleepless nights, motivational captions masking private battles, achievements posted online that never reveal the breakdowns behind them.

This is our generation, bold on the surface, but often broken within. Loud in the digital world, but quiet in reality. A generation dreaming of conquering the stars, while still wrestling with its own doubts.

And yet, if you look closely, there is something extraordinary about us.

We are not just surviving, we are redefining survival.

Every time a student whispers, "I need help," instead of pretending to be fine, a wall of stigma cracks.
Every time someone steps off the toxic treadmill of comparison and chooses peace instead, they reclaim their freedom.

Every time one of us extends a hand to someone drowning in silence, we ignite a revolution — not the kind with banners and slogans, but the kind that quietly changes lives.

Our revolutions are not written in history books. They live in small acts of courage.
In the girl who wears her scars like medals and still walks tall.
In the boy who rejects the pressure to be "masculine" and chooses kindness over cruelty.
In classrooms where students question outdated systems.
In hostels where laughter heals loneliness.
In friendships where honesty finally feels stronger than fear.

We are often told we are "too young to understand" or "too careless to lead." But look closer:
Who is raising their voice for mental health awareness?
Who is challenging gender stereotypes?
Who is creating art, music, and ideas that carry entire worlds within them?
It's us, the so-called careless, distracted generation.

Here's the truth:
We are not careless. We care too much.
We are not distracted. We are overwhelmed.
We are not weak. We are simply tired of pretending to be strong all the time.

And still, despite it all, we rise.
We rise when we choose to be real instead of perfect.
We rise when we support instead of compete.
We rise when we believe that even the smallest voices matter.

Our revolution does not need microphones or stages.
It needs hearts unafraid of feeling.
Minds unafraid of questioning.
Souls unafraid of dreaming differently.

So don't underestimate the power of your quiet choices.
Don't think your kindness is too small.
Don't believe your dreams are too big.
Because revolutions don't always begin with crowds.

Sometimes, they begin with one person.
And when enough of us begin, quietly, bravely, unapologetically, the silence will turn into a roar.

We are not just the future.
We are the present force.
We are the generation of quiet revolutions.



POETRY

ry



Shajeeha Khan
BSIET V

FLOATING WITH YOU

I told you I love floating lanterns
You told me they're nothing without fire in them

You told me I should try to be bit quite
I said I'm nothing without fire in me

Yet you extinguish fire in me
Ruined me just to show me I'm the floating lantern

And I hoped to burn you with my love
Ruin you just to show you're nothing without me.

RAINDROPS

I even feel that little fall of raindrop
You think I won't feel falling for you

It's nothing compared to falling of rain
Yet it's so beautiful

The beauty I can't even comprehend
Because it's nothing sort of easier

People fall for attractions and think it's love
People fall in love doesn't even know they're in it

But I knew the moment
I fell in those eyes of yours

I found those colors I was missing out
I found my focus I was losing
I found me!

CHAOS

I've always found rain calming
Calming the chaos around me.

Chaos is still there
But that's in me.

TRAGEDY OF LOVE

Muqadas Batool
MSLE II



Tragedy of love is worse
One loses identity in its core,
Love is the name of chaos
It gives memories that are sour,

The struggle is to get rid of it
Because it contains pain in it,
Why beloved rule over the mind?
Why it has the effect like wine?

With you, life is like a war,
Between us, people create a bar.
Your ego is like the stem of pine,
Without you, everything will be fine.

حالِ وجد

Sadia Mansib
MSLE IV



لبوں پہ ذکر ہے، دل میں صدا کی صورت ہے
یہ کیفِ عشق، میرے خونِ جگر کی صورت ہے

نہ ہوش باقی، نہ دنیا کی کوئی پہچان رہی
کہ جامِ وصل میں مستی بلا کی صورت ہے

صدائے دف ہے، سماعت میں بج رہا ہے جمال
ہر ایک لَے میں تجلّی، عطا کی صورت ہے

نظر کو جلوہ ملا، دل کو قرار آ نہ سکا
یہ بے خودی تو ازل سے دعا کی صورت ہے

میں خاک ہو کے بھی تاروں سے ہم کلام ہوا
کہ بندگی میں عجز، بقا کی صورت ہے



نُطقِ اَزل کی بازگشت

Sadia Mansib
MSLE IV

دل کے آئینے میں اِک نور جھلکتا ہے کہیں
میری ہستی کا سِرا تجھ سے جُڑتا ہے کہیں

تیری جلوہ گریاں ہیں ہر طرف پردوں میں
روشنی بن کے میرے دل میں اُترتا ہے کہیں

حرفِ خاموش میں اک راز چُھپا بیٹھا ہے
ذکر کرتے ہی تیرا، دل بھی سنبھلتا ہے کہیں

راستے دہر کے سب مٹ کے فنا ہو جاتے
تیرا سایہ مرے سر پر ہی ٹھہرتا ہے کہیں

میں نے جانا کہ حقیقت ہے فقط تیرا جمال
سلسلہ عشق کا مجھ کو یہ سکھاتا ہے کہیں

WHO AM I?

Humna Shahid
BSAM 2

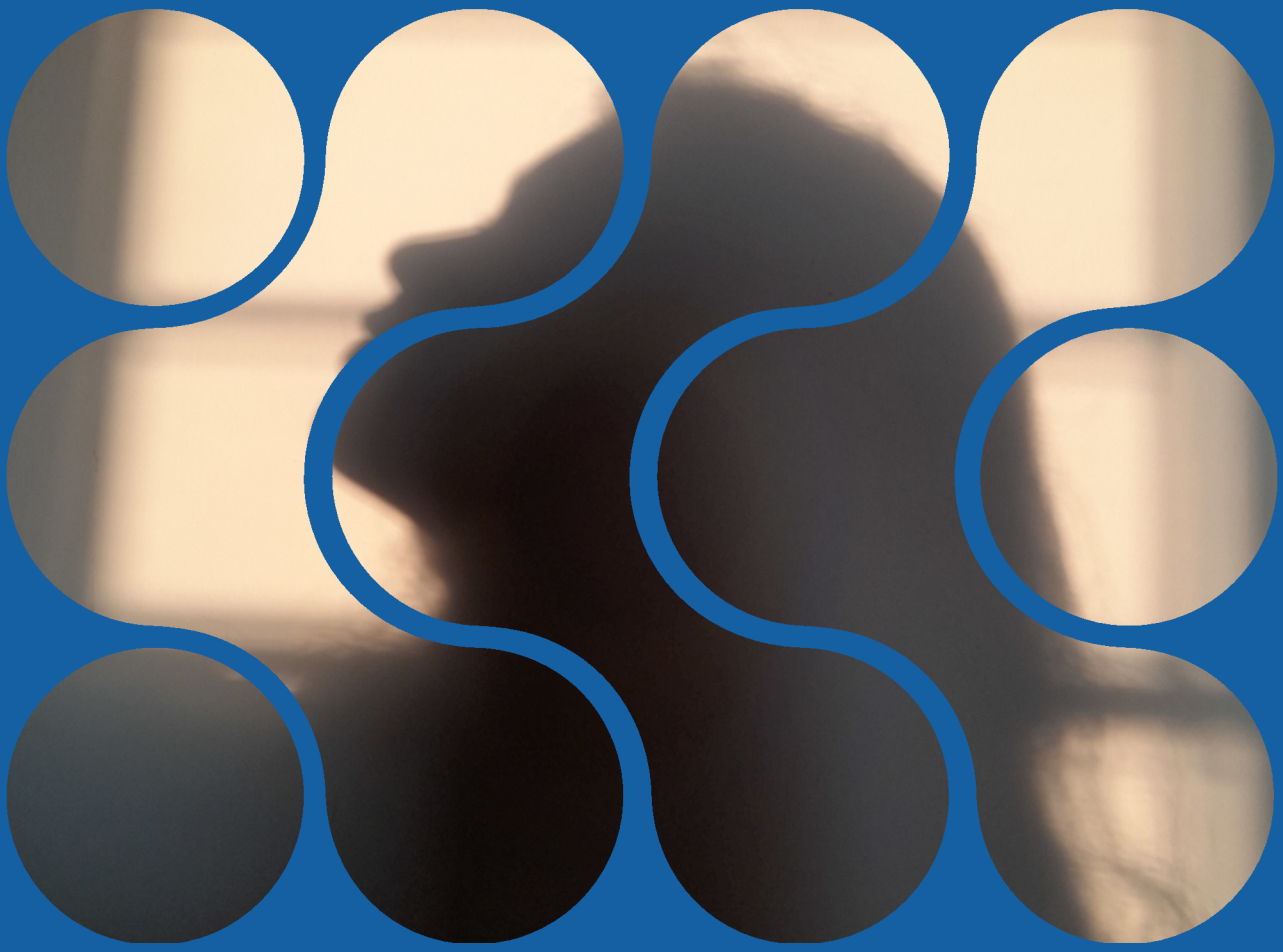
Who am I really?
When all the layers of others opinions
Expectations and Definitions
Are peeled away?

Who am I?
When all the strangers in my head
Are shoutout and silenced long enough
For me to hear my own thoughts?

Who am I?
Who am I beneath all the layers
Society, Friends and Family

Who am I?
When I look at myself in the mirror
And see me with clear eyes
Without filters of others?

That's what I'm trying to see
It's a journey without clear finish line





THE RAIN

MARIA HUMAYUN
BSCP

Rain drops fall, memories rise
Peaceful night, worries washed away
Soothing sound, a calming air
Transport me back to the memories we shared

Smell of wet earth, raindrops on the roof
Vivid memories, a tender reminder
In this peaceful moment, my heart finds peace
As love and laughter gently release

Moments we shared, under rains soft light
Whispers of love, forever bright
The world outside fades,
As I recall the memories we made

Raindrops continue, calming rhythm of rain
Echoes of memories, soft and plain
In this beautiful night, I am lost in thoughts
Cherishing the love our memories have brought



THE RESTLESS SOUL

Yasha Umar
BSBM II

you would see me as a tired person
then you would see the pain in my eyes
and how my soul speaks through them
how the words from my mouth stutter
and how the world around me seems
when i reach for the skies
i get drenched in my tired self
hoping for a rope, mountain or a shelf
cant seem to even hold onto myself
it gets better they say
but my eyes still bleed
my soul keeps shouting
in a language no one reads
and time heals all wounds they say
but when that wound becomes a scar
it becomes an aching, endless pain
reminding me of all I've lost

the wound doesnt bleed
it cuts right in the deep
no bandage fits, no salve can mend
these scars speaks like a lifelong friend
they only see the twisted smile i carry
i keep thinking people might see the
change
they might ask about the pain

they might see the cracks i try to hide
and the tiredness by my side
my shadow knows the truth I bear
the nights I cry without a sound
the dreams that died without a name
and hopes that never left the ground
but still I rise, though slow and torn
a flickering light fighting through the dark
for even shattered broken souls can shine
beneath the weight of every mark
and prove even fractured stars can shine

Did I cry?
Maybe;
For the people I knew not
Perhaps;
But what I knew for sure
Was of humanity;
The pain of losing a limb
Perhaps I have yet to experience
But what of that fellow human;
What of that child; who died in the blast
What of that mother,
Who had to bury her baby
What of those men,
who lost their limbs

Who breathe the same air
Born of a different mother
Possesses the same anatomy
Have hearts that hurt
Skin that burns
And eyes that speak volumes

Why are some subjected to such suffering
while the world sits still

In their air conditioned rooms,
Eating their fill, living aloof
With their wide smiles
Still complaining about the weather

I often wonder what it's like
To watch out, waiting for a bomb to hit
Wish there is enough food to stay alive
The dread of not finding treatment

Since hospitals were supposedly terrorist hubs
Sometimes, I wish them to suffer the same
But then I'm reminded,

Do I wish for children to starve?
Do I hope people die a miserable death?
Does it bring me joy to watch bloodied bodies and broken limbs?
Do I find it exhilarating to see bodies in the air in explosions?

For all the onlookers
Imagine being refused to look at your dead child
Why? You might ask
Because they could barely put the pieces together

Imagine your legs give in
being told they killed your son in a raid
And no one listens to you
Sat on cushioned chairs
No one bats an eye

What did they ask for?
Did they want their land back?
Wished to bury you alive?
Starve and kill your people?

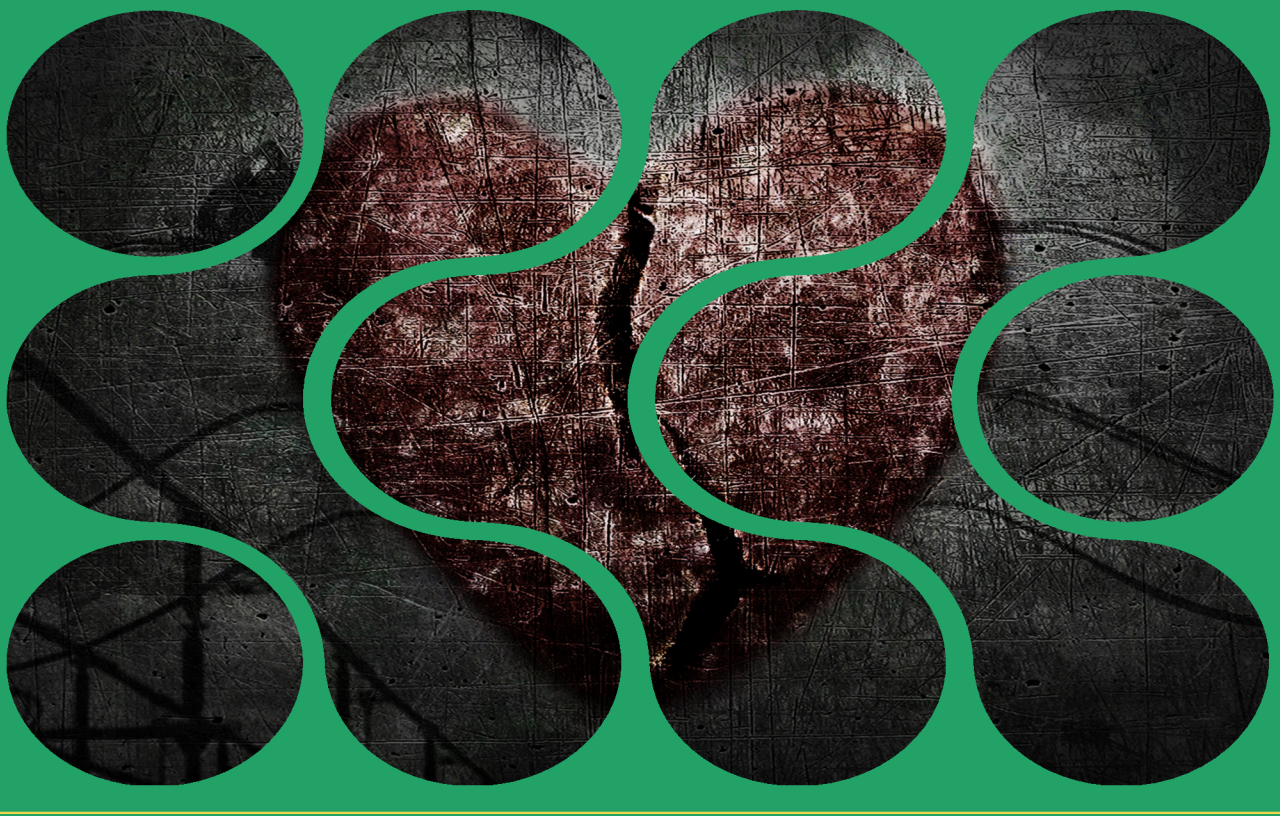
How dare you justify this atrociousness
How dare you make a mother cry
For her unborn child
Have you no fear,shame,humanity,morale?

I am ashamed
I am sorry
I am heartbroken
I am sorry.

A POEM OF EXPRESSION

Hooria Amer
BS English IV





THE UNAPOLOGETIC FREAKS

Muhammad Saad Bin Waqar
MSLE II

"Oh the residents of this universe and beyond
Listen to my heartfelt mellifluous song

A sonorous tone in honour of you my love
You, who were graceful like you came from above

Your love maddening and your worship my duty
To hell with this world so accept my fealty

Is what she was offered and she declined
I am full of sorrow, empty and left behind

Her betrayal unbearable and I bang my head
I am like a stone sinking in a flood

Oh of this world, hear my plea
Love like I did and you will be free"

"Oh you wretch worth no single penny
Have some shame if you have any

Oh you man worse than a dog
May you be blessed, your heart's clogged

One who's gotten his head smashed in
My you rot in hell for your mud slingin

You who never did what he preached
May your bones be smashed and your guts be cleaved

Oh the quiet one, who never spoke
When our children died with their families broke

The world that was ever so changing
When you were busy in your moaning and clinging

Oh you blind and dead freaks
When you suffer and will rot to shriek

You won't find anyone to have mercy
Then remember your stupidity and heresy

Oh you poets, you tyrants beyond tyranny
May you repent or burn for your felony"



MAN OF STRENGTH AND HONOUR

Muhammad Saad Bin Waqar
MSLE II

Oh my darling life full of ecstasy
Filled with gaiety like a fantasy

Surrounded by kin with every desire fulfilled
Their words soothing and every angst killed

Loved by all and surrounded with care
United we stand, who is to dare

My soul content and nothing to fret
I'd be happy even if I was dead

Thankful and honored am I oh Lord!
I never cried and it was never hard

My last breath about to escape
My face cloaked in bitterness like a cape

Rage boiling over and I curse my life
Denial helped but it was nothing but strife

I, a man with strength beyond belief
Let me curse you all, I need that relief

Damnation scares me so I'll withhold
I'll never forgive you all if I am to be so bold

Your piety will not save you that day
Scream all you want and suffer in that fray

Damned or blessed I possess relief
I care not for my self, just elated for your grief

I met my younger self for coffee today.
I spoke of money — he spoke of dreams.
I showed him my watch — he showed me his sketches.
I laughed at his innocence — he wept for my soul.
We sat in silence, two strangers sharing the same skin.

He asked, “When did we stop writing poems?”
I said, “When they stopped paying the bills.”
He whispered, “What happened to her?”
I clenched my jaw; some names are tombstones in my chest.
He said, “I wanted to change the world.”
I said, “The world changed me.”
He asked if I still speak to Mom.
I told him her absence answers me,
whenever the world feels too heavy.

I finished my coffee alone.
It tasted like regret.
Outside, the rain began to fall.
I thought of running into it barefoot, as we once did.
But my shoes were too expensive now.
And my heart—
too tired.



A CUP OF COFFEE

Muhammad Talha
BSCP VI

Got Something to Say?

Love it? Hate it? Somewhere in between? Let us know! Your thoughts shape the next issue.

Email: editor.foundry@fui.edu.pk

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BSEN III



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