

CAMEO

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

FROM PRINCIPAL'S DESK



It is a matter of pleasure for me that English Department continues to publish Cameo, its online publication which caters to the needs of creative expression of its students. It is my desire that the students should continue to strive on the path of academics and creative expression.

Dr. Anula Maurya,
Principal

My Reminiscences



With a nervous heart and wobbly confidence, I had set out for my first day in college. I had gotten into DU, finally. I had made it to Kalindi College which is NOT in/near Kalindi Kunj for a fact!!

Skip to first class of the first day in college. I was sitting with my book on the table next to my classmates whom I had just gotten acquainted with. Neither was I able to pronounce Sophocles nor was I sure about the pronunciation of Oedipus. Doubting my decision of opting for a course in literature, I sat nervously in class. The teacher came and introduced herself. She went on to introduce the author of the text, the historical background of the text, and finally the story. I had read all sorts of stories back in school. But, this one had just blown my mind away. Scandalous as the narrative was, we were all left in awe by it. But then, it was taught in such a way that it changed my perspective of looking at the human-race forever. Soon, my reaction at such provocative texts changed from 'Haw' to 'Oh' and I went through an internal metamorphosis.

With each passing semester, I fell more in love with the world I was introduced to. Yes, there were struggles. No, I am not referring to the long serpentine lines for taking the admit cards or the red shiny plastic pasta from the canteen. I meant understanding writers like Foucault, Derrida, and Nietzsche. Cursing the syllabus all the way, I was blessed with some friends for life. From bunking the classes to organizing events, from making notes to getting photocopies, we did it all. We have loved it, we have hated it and now, we miss it. Each time a memory pops up in the head, a smile spreads across the lips. We left Kalindi with much more than our graduation degrees, experiences that cannot be summed up in words and memories which would be cherished for life.

- Sweta Chatterjee, Class of 2018,
B.A. English Hons.

A Small Inconvenience

"It is easier when one is married." The last time this thought had occurred to Neesha over and over again was during a party where every colleague approached her with some petty talk. "They all try," she would tell herself. It didn't bother Neesha a lot but bothered she felt. She had learnt to deal with such situations. A broad smile, a witty remark, and some female employee around her. The women are encouraging. They were all single when they started. They have all had such awkward situations. However, it was not 2018 when they were starting off. There was no internet dating. They had no virtual identity that men could stalk. Neesha's work in advertising is challenging. She needs a virtual media profile.

"You are very fortunate. You are aware. People are encouraged to employ you. When I started off, I was a nonentity. People wouldn't approach me with accounts and stats because I was a young Dollie playing grown up." Neesha's mother would often say. This did little to comfort her. Sandeep, a young colleague, experienced but two years her senior, had brought her a cake when she got her first salary. It was sweet and overwhelming, but a little too much. His guidance, jokes, and gestures worried her at times. It was all done with humble, good intent but it was there and the thought occurred to her again.

"Nidhi Ma'am, are you still working with the channel?"

"Yes, I am. You want to contribute. It would be great if you could. We are visiting the CEO and founder of Digital Shiksha. He is inspirational."

"Mr. Khatri, wow! I would love to come... it's just the timings."

"I understand. I will pitch for you. Any question you've got?"

"No, not really. How are you managing with all this?"

"My schedule is flexible since the digital marketing channel will be launched soon."

"That's incredible."

"I know. My husband's so excited for me. He went to Gwalior with me last week taking an off since neither of us had any idea about the place and the interview was important."

"That is so encouraging. All the best." , "Thank you and try to make it for the next interview, maybe."

"Of course!"

Nidhi was five years senior to Neesha. She was currently developing an interactive digital marketing platform and was acknowledged for her work. No Sandeep or Mohit ever crossed her mind. She had a husband who would take an off for her work-related travel. It was so convenient. Convenience was all that was lacking in Neesha's professional life.

"Perhaps I am not meant for this. The public interactions... late hours... enthusiasts. All so exhausting!

Maybe I could have looked for a government job."

Her salary was wonderful. It was thrice the amount her mother earned as an accountant. The money encouraged her despite everything. She was financially literate and independent. She had potential and that's what she reminded herself about the most. On days when pithy matters didn't trouble her, she worked a lot. She worked till late, smiling to herself. It was great until the thought occurred to her again.

"Had I been married I wouldn't have to go alone." The meeting was to take place in a suburban locality. It could go on for hours. Her home in the city was twenty miles away. Twenty miles wasn't a lot if she had to travel during the day.

"Sandeep Sir, I was wondering if you could accompany me after the meeting today. Traveling alone could be daunting," she said.

"Of course. I understand. We'll leave together." "Thank you."

"You don't have to thank. I appreciate that you asked me."

Mhina
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Neesha smiled and returned to her desk. She hated to ask for favors. Had she been married and asking for favors it would have been a different case. "I hope I am not leading him on... C'mon he's not a creep. This is fine, relax." Asking Nidhi ma'am or some other woman would have been easier. But Neesha knew better than others that she couldn't ask them because they would be going home with their husbands. "It's a sham," she thought again.

Moving to the new city was not disturbing. As a daughter of a military officer, she was accustomed to switching places. Moving was not a problem at all. It was moving alone that made her feel insecure. It was the first time she was alone, an adult working in a new city. A scandalous city, but a new city. Her rented apartment was close to her office. The neighborhood was safe. She had grown familiar to the uncle who lived alone with his Pomeranian on the first-floor.

"Maybe I could get a dog. Dogs are protective." She would often talk to the kids next door. They were seven and five year old boys. Their mother lived alone on most days with her sons. Mr. Anand traveled a lot for his work. "She seems fine. Her boys will be teens soon and then it wouldn't matter if she lived alone. Besides she has her in-laws in the city."

For Neesha, growing up meant switching cities every three years along with her father. The army-camp where they lived was a safe space. They had a bodyguard and a driver for commuting at any hour. She never did any household chores. There were servants for that. She liked the safety that being with her father offered. Neesha didn't live with her mother except when she was in college. Her management college was in Pune where her mother worked as a full-time accountant. Momma lived with her parents. Old people, but wonderful companions.

Neesha used to visit her in summer vacations with her father. They would spend a great deal of time shopping, sightseeing, and cycling. Cycling was a pleasure; her way of acquainting herself to a new place. Here, she was afraid to cycle given her job timings and the reputation of the city. "One of these days... If only I had a few girlfriends. It would have been easier."

The only time Neesha was alone in a city without her Dad or Momma was when she went on an excursion with school friends to the exotic South. It was gorgeous except for that one evening on the ship.

"Neesha let's go now," one of her girlfriends said.

"Yes, but no! Come on, this is beautiful. I want to wait here longer," she said.

She was standing at the parapet of the ship staring at the sea. It was twilight and the air was a warm embrace of freshness. Nobody wanted to sit inside. They were all just hungry.

"Come soon."

"Yeah," Neesha said. An hour or so passed. It was late and Neesha started to go back to the mess in the basement when she got lost on her way. A man passing by noticed she was clueless.

"Can I help?"

"Uh yes... You know the way to the mess?"

"Yes. Come along."

She followed him and they reached near the mess. "There you go," he said.

"Thanks a lot", she said.

He hugged her lightly and slapped her butt. Before she could react the fellow rushed off. Neesha could not comprehend what happened until she was back inside the mess with her girlfriends. It was awkward and disturbing. She was impassive but affected. She would shrink around strangers. Feel terribly disturbed when asking for help.

"Maybe I could get a boyfriend." She would think and refute the thought with plain annoyance.

"I need a car. I could travel alone late at night. It wouldn't be an issue."

Neesha wondered how her mother lived and worked alone. "She lived with her parents and she was married."

Neesha was never lonely. She was just alone. The workplace alone didn't disturb her. At times, she felt the studious gaze of men on her as she walked past the lane to her building, when she was jogging in the park or when she was grocery shopping. It was careless musing but it was there.

"It will be okay," she would say.

She would often call her parents and tell them about the amazing opportunities she had before her. The nice neighbors with whom she familiarised herself. The children she often met on the stairs or the elevator.

Sitting in the car now with Sandeep talking about the inconveniences of the meeting, Neesha forced a smile and joked about some sandwiches.

"Relax. It will be okay." she thought.

MEDUSA'S LOCKS



Ava hated it. Restrained ideas and constrained structures- this is how she would like to define a “column writer” as. Higher paid you are, more ‘razor-tongues’ to cater to. Throwing away the millionth piece, she raked her hands through her hair.

Staring despairingly at the mirror, she heaved a sigh. Nobody, at first, knew what their colour was. Settling on black made them appear brown, and vice versa. They even cast a hint of burgundy; a colour that came out under the warmth and brightness of the sun. Certain angles even brought out some white; whitened maybe because of responsibilities. So, Ava settled on brown, a classic comfort colour, to answer the “hairy-confusions”.

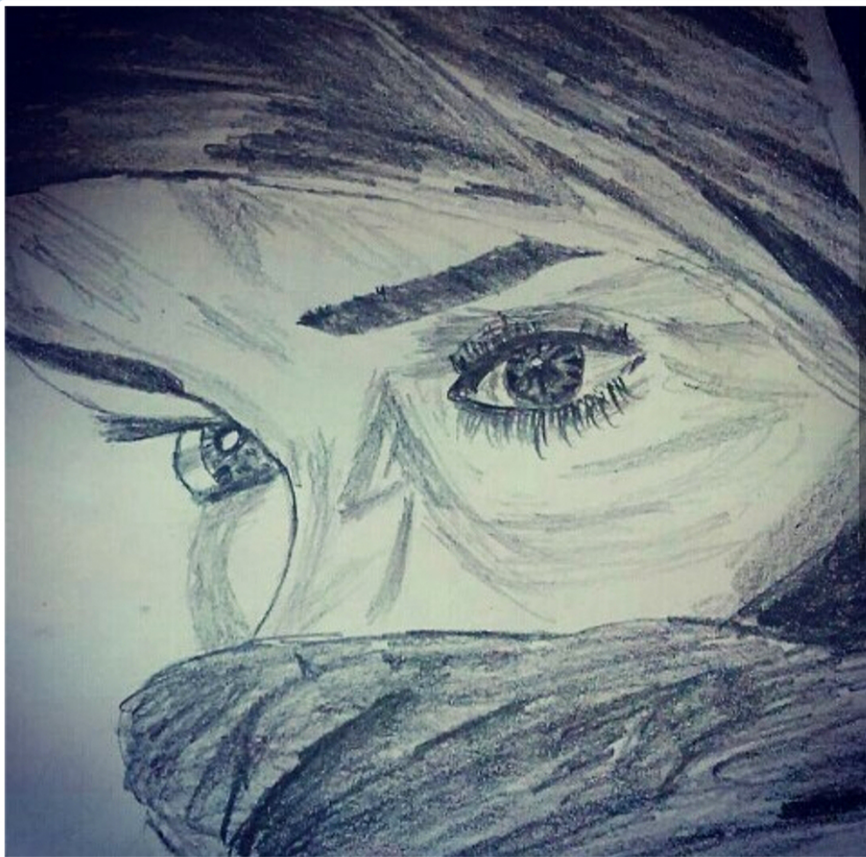
These curly mass of brown strands, they refused the constraining hair-ties. The forceful grasp of sharp-edged clips didn’t do any good; half of them escaped anyway. Ava tried combing them. However, the locks were gracefully wild, almost breaking the comb speeding through them.

Carefully, Ava smoothed her hair through her fingers, giving them an unhinged look, before she resumed combing. This time, comb only served to make her hair better; uniformly swept together.

Running her hand through her hair, she noticed few escaped strands. “These strands, give them some time,” she mused, “and once again, they will get out of hand.” Pausing briefly, she said, “not out of hand, but out of head”, and gave a short, hearty laugh.

With no writer’s block, Ava picked up her pen again, Hair behind her ear, she wrote, “fierce woman are everywhere- you mother, friend, sister or even your colleague. Unique as different colours in a rainbow, they all stand together, kept in line by their dreams, hopes and aspirations. Anything else, to keep them in line, is poor enough of a job. Because some beauty will always step out of line, break the rules. You know why? Amazing women do not listen to anyone, except their own voice. Good luck dealing with a strong woman who knows what she wants.”

An Honourable Man



A Ph.D. holder,
Polite in nature,
Well dressed and organized, Full of
refined etiquettes and civilized.
Owns a mansion "He is an honour-
able man".

Living in his winter days,
He struggles to walk,
Takes numerous medicines
To be able to breathe and talk
Still takes Care of a girl
He is an honourable man.

She comes in the morning,
For her daily routine,
Hiding herself in a saree-covering,
Eager to finish the work and leave,
Always looking anxiously at the
sixty year old in the corner,
"Is he an honourable man?"

There is a fact- Eagles always find a
way
To look at their prey,
And hover over them and swoop
down
So is the mansion in the night,
When the eagle feasts upon his
prey, and
The world sleeps till the next day. In
dark he is an eagle,
But in the light he is an
Honourable man.
The shouts and screams of the prey
are always unheard.
You know? She holds no degree,
But a sense of shame,
'Shame' that we impose upon her,
So she cages herself in silence.
Is she an "other"?
Oh no! She is
Not.
But He is an Honourable Man.



The English Department is one of the oldest in Kalindi College. Till recently it has had the distinction of teaching each student who has studied in this college, be it whichever course she may have taken. The English Department is known for its excellence in classroom teaching and interaction. Through its departmental society Mitrakshar (English Literary Society) has over the years organized intellectually stimulating programmes for its students. We have hosted inter-departmental programmes and fests and brought together students from various colleges to engage with and deepen our understanding of the word, its place in the world and how we may transform ourselves through literature. Although the college has a number of publications, including the newsletter as well as a student magazine, the English Department also has an online publication of which this is the Third volume. This online publication is an attempt to go beyond merely academic engagement of students in their discipline via projects/project presentations. The Department enthusiastically carries on its online publication in the spirit of nurturing the innate talent of its students.

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