

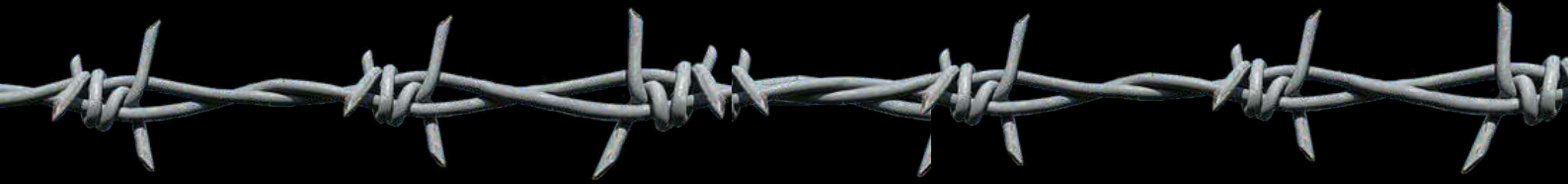


CAMEO

The English Department
E-Newsletter, Kalindi College

Volume X
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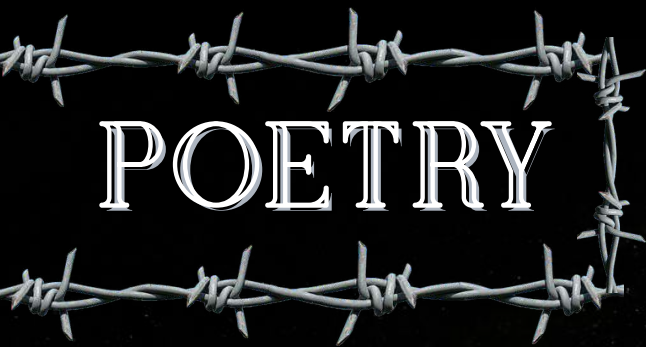
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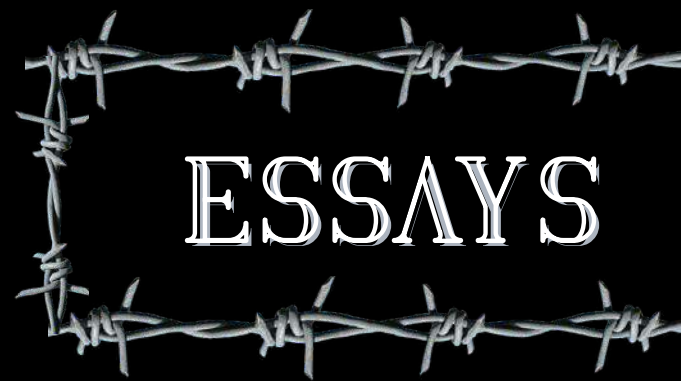
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PRINCIPAL'S NOTE



It is truly delightful that the English Department, Kalindi College, continues to publish its half-yearly online newsletter, Cameo, which allows the students of the department, a platform to express their creative talents through short pieces of literary compositions and artworks. I give my best wishes to the students and faculty of the English Department for inspiring diverse and boundless expression of literature and art.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We usually recognise war by its most visible signs: soldiers, weapons, ruined buildings and borders under dispute. Yet conflict often begins much earlier. It begins when societies divide people into those who belong and those who do not. Language, surname, religion and gender can become reasons for suspicion. Disagreement is met with intimidation and silence is mistaken for peace. Our theme, *Fractured Worlds: War, Peace & Power*, emerges from the harsh realities of our times, where conflict is present not only on recognised battlefields but also in conversations, institutions, and individual lives.

But what do we actually mean by war? Andrew Clapham defines it as organised armed conflict between states or groups. Such clarity is essential because if every disagreement is called a war, the word 'war' itself risks losing the weight of destruction and bloodshed it causes. At the same time, confining war to battlefields can overlook other forms of organised harm. Communal hatred, sexism, racism, censorship, surveillance, displacement and other forms of daily policing may not necessarily involve tangible weapons but they can still produce fear, trauma and division.

Thus, wars may be understood through military, political, social and psychological lenses.

Additionally, peace is equally difficult to define. It may mean the end of violence, bloodshed and the possibility of beginning again. These are not small achievements; yet a faux peace can also be declared by silencing those who suffer. Therefore, peace cannot be only measured by the absence of gunfire. It can also be examined in terms of presence or absence of equality, dignity and freedom. At the same time, must imperfect peace be rejected? A ceasefire may not render justice but it may save lives. The task remains to recognise peace as necessary without allowing it to become an excuse for forgetting.

Literature has always questioned these contradictions. Early Greek epics often portrayed war as courage, honour and masculine identity. Works such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* presented the glorious side of war alongside grief. Behind the heroic names were broken families and bodies that must be mourned. As warfare became more industrial and destructive, writers increasingly turned away from the broad narratives of victory and towards the experience of the ordinary individual.

The destruction of the early twentieth century made older romantic ideas of battle harder to sustain. Wilfred Owen famously made “War, and the pity of War” his subject, writing not about majestic conquest but about exhausted soldiers, damaged bodies and young lives consumed by patriotic promises.

Moreover, George Orwell indicates the sinister uses of language itself. He repeatedly warns that political language can be used as a vehicle to make lies appear truthful and unquestionable. His point remains valid because the war of words is further carried out through weapons. Yet, language can expose power as well as protect it. History may remember dates, treaties and victories but literature preserves the social reality of the era. It questions: who writes the truth of history? Is it the victor, the survivor, the state or the witness? Official histories may erase inconvenient lives but personal memory can be selective as well. Literature unsettles this certainty and draws our attention to what the accepted versions have left outside their frame.

The way we witness suffering has changed immensely. Nowadays, news of injustice and destruction reaches us repeatedly and instantly through our smartphones. This access creates awareness, preserves evidence and carries unheard voices across the globe. However, it also produces manufactured outrage, desensitisation and compassion fatigue. The constant exposure to grief may lead to indifference but looking away also leaves the power unchallenged. Hence, a question arises: Are we becoming better witnesses or merely consumers of tragedy? The answer, perhaps, is not to stop engaging with the media but to change how we engage with it more critically and responsibly.

This issue encompasses multiple meanings of war. It begins with the belief that power can protect rights as well as suppress them. It cannot be understood through a simple division between heroes and villains. Thus, the questions that matter more are: who makes the decisions, who is protected, who bears the cost and whose suffering is acceptable? As you turn these pages, we hope you will be encouraged to look at our fractured world more carefully, question it more honestly, and refuse to look away.

Best wishes,
The Editorial Team



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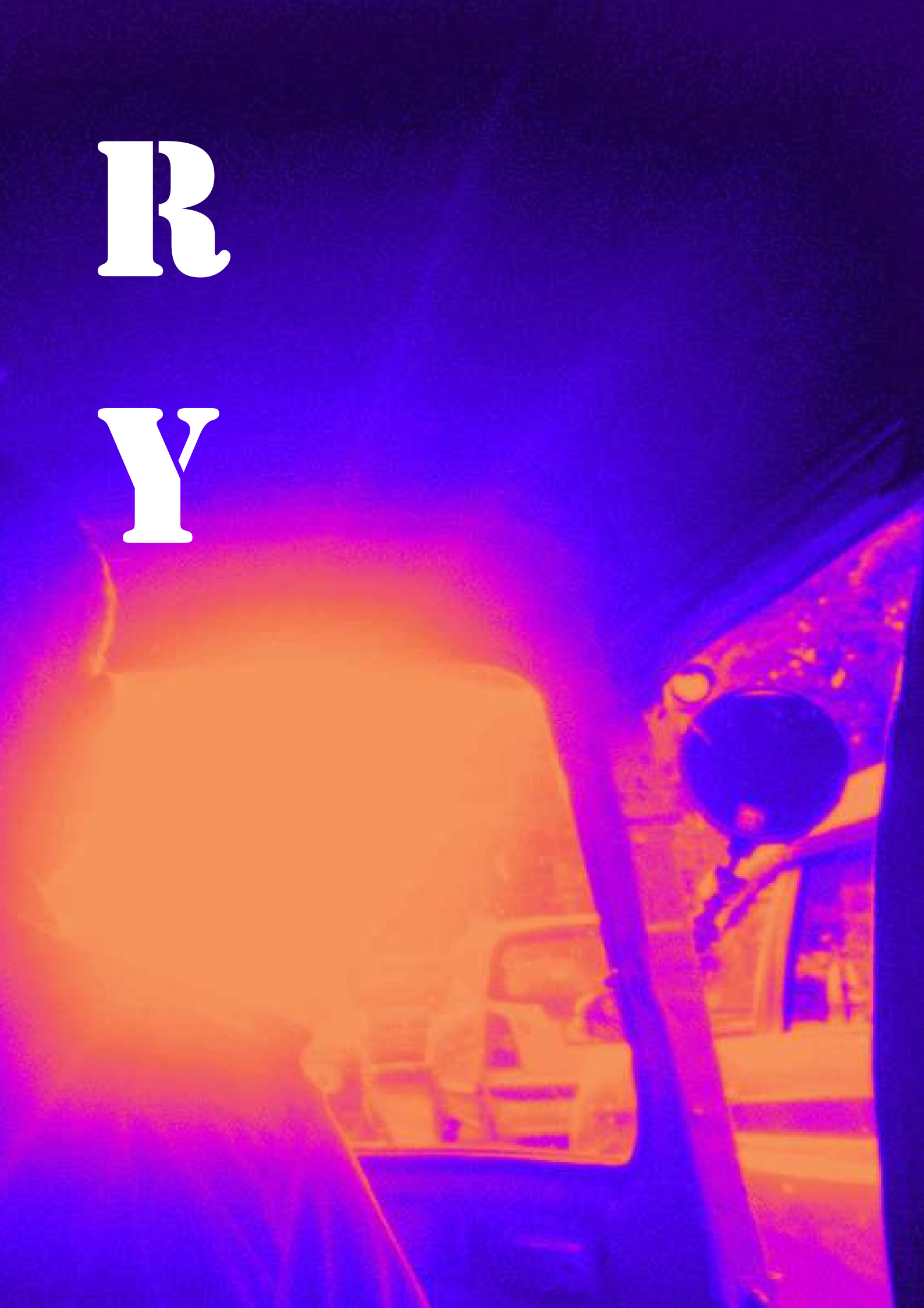
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SONGS OF THE UNMARKED

War, they say is a necessary evil, a recurring theme
Where someone's favourite song is a sound of someone's scream
Where the masses watch their lives unfurl like dreams
The agony being matched on movie screens
A nightmare of suffering and death in a living hell
No emotions to sell
With polluted air being left with a tale of absolute greed to tell
For the human sacrifice is an acceptable cost
For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops
With a wanting of peace, a cause long lost
History written on pages glossed
An unerring toll
Hearts of coal
Families bereaved of missing roles
And men who once weathered the brave
The sparks their fire gave
Lie with weeds flourishing on unmarked graves
As it's so fitting to die for one's country
It's also finer to live for it alternatively
But the choice of a notion to rethink
lies with someone whose power doesn't and will never shrink.

Avni Chaudhary

3rd Year

Avni Chaudhary is a third-year undergraduate student deeply involved in literary and creative pursuits. She has served as Creative Coordinator of Mitrakshar, Creative and Social Media Head of Of Muses and Bards, and Creative Head of the Film Club. She has a keen interest in writing, creativity, digital media, and communication, and enjoys exploring new forms of creative expression.





THE LAST FLIGHT

I kissed those tears goodbye,
Just like how you missed the flight twice.
You missed the chance to fly,
To uncover those secrets hidden inside me.

As time clicked like fading heartbeat,
I still saved the last flight with me
Hoping we head somewhere
only we know.

Maybe we still have time to surrender ourselves to hope,
To keep ourselves alive for a new day.
A day will come with a better us,
Perhaps time will answer our patience.

Hoping to be close to your heart,
But alas, became distant from the world
Now searching for a new me.

Misthy Mann

1st year

Mishty Mann is a first-year student who finds herself drawn to the quiet power of words and the stories they carry. She enjoys poetry and literature that lingers long after the last page. A quiz enthusiast, she finds inspiration in curiosity, conversations, and the little moments that often become stories.



THE TRUTH BETWEEN ERAS

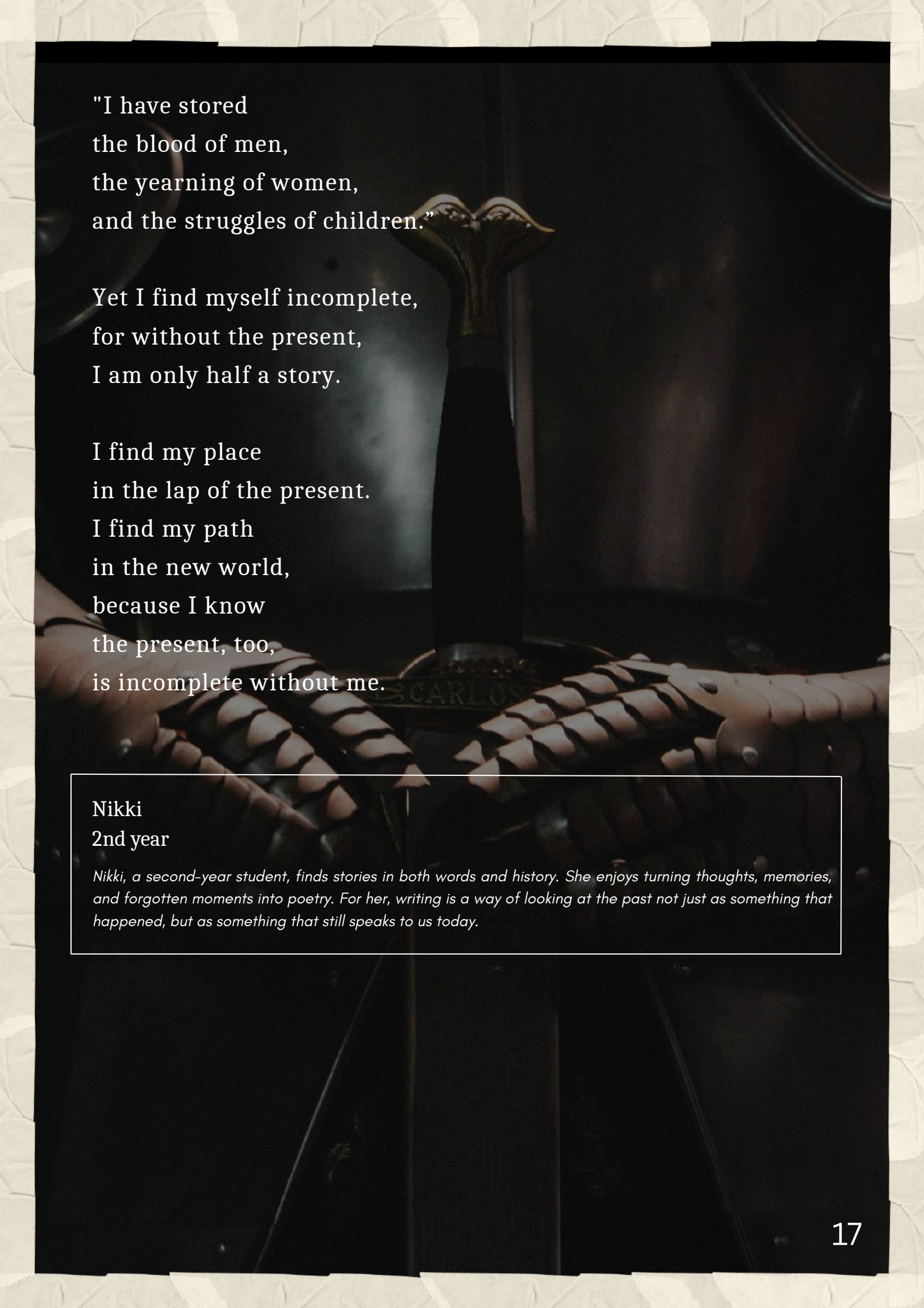
History tells the truth,
while the present tells lies —
lies that can never become truth.

History gives meaning to the present,
a reason to keep living
with the shadows of the past.

The present questions history,
while history answers the present.
Still, one question remains:

Who stands behind history?
Who decides what becomes truth,
and what is left unheard?

History says,
"I am the answer to every question.
I am the one who ties the present
to the past."



"I have stored
the blood of men,
the yearning of women,
and the struggles of children."

Yet I find myself incomplete,
for without the present,
I am only half a story.

I find my place
in the lap of the present.
I find my path
in the new world,
because I know
the present, too,
is incomplete without me.

Nikki
2nd year

Nikki, a second-year student, finds stories in both words and history. She enjoys turning thoughts, memories, and forgotten moments into poetry. For her, writing is a way of looking at the past not just as something that happened, but as something that still speaks to us today.



IN THE NAME OF GOD BEHIND THE HAZE OF BOMB

As I restate what has been taught to me,
The guns once picked can never bring peace.
The bloody red would bring no mercy.
In the name of their god,
They hold their hands upright and
Wrong us.

So I,
Child of my god
Who favours peace and happiness,
Am I obliged to cry my tears out when witnessing their broken
homes ?
to be in his glory is to be a bigger person and forgive.
But the echoes of their cries haunt me
The hands which reached out to strangle my people's throat sit
quietly,
Waiting for me to forgive and witness another sin
I am not divine.
Nor as Glorious as god
I startle at their cries and erupt with anger as their hands reach
out.

So I join the impious war,
And bleed for people who burned so I could light.
Cut off those hands who dared to reach out
And happily stay in the burning furnace if that is what god
wants.

Janhvi

2nd year

Janhvi, a second-year literature major, is drawn towards writing raw explicit poems, even though they leave her miserable. Current concern:- someone might find out that she has written a poem about them quite intentionally. Writes hindi poems and translates them too. The twisted, playful, yet profound art of poetry writing gives her a space to exist in, and she loves it right back.



QUIET NOT PEACEFUL

In my quiet room, I lay wide awake
Aware of each sound, passing around me
The World around me has settled, yet my heart quakes
Afraid of the dangers that surround.
The iron rain has stopped long before,
Yet my heart quivers with each tick of the clock.
The silence of night is hauntingly chilling,
Promising of a danger that subsided long before.
When will the fear end? When would I sleep like before?
Where are my carefree days? Devoid of this pressing weight
The answers are lost in the debris of rain
The World believes the empty sky is the end,
Yet in my quiet room my mind refuses to settle.
I lay wide awake,
Aware of each sound, passing by me.

Tiya Singh
3rd year

Tiya Singh is a third-year undergraduate and a curious person who likes to engage with new ideas and face challenges with determination and a positive attitude. She is a person who is keen and persevering who loves to lose herself in fictional worlds and escape from the problems of the world through reading literature. She enjoys solitude while immersing herself in fictional worlds and its limitless possibilities.



DEAD LEAVES

The world stands in its myriad stages,
Each moment turning endless pages.
The leaves lie scattered on the floor,
Hinting at the end of the world, nothing more.
The families' lips curled in silent dread,
Grief, a weight that bends the heart's thread.
Helpless, the world watches as it's led.

Other families held mixed worlds beneath them,
Half-withered leaves, half in bloom again.
As some breathed through machines and wires,
Others danced in the glow of their quiet desires.

In the shadows, the trees stood green,
A symbol of wealth, where struggle went unseen.
While others fought for breath and time,
The rich lived untouched, in a world sublime.

In the streets, the economy crumbled,
Lives were lost, dreams humbled.
Depression spread, a silent plague,
While headlines flashed in a glittering haze.
The trials of stars, the media's cry,
As the poor ones' pain was ignored, left to die.

The streets were emptied, hopes were lost,
As the poor walked miles, paying the cost.
Migrant workers, with nowhere to go,
Chased survival, with nothing to show.
While the wealthy sat behind their doors,
The country bled, but no one roared.

Rashi Vyas
3rd year

Rashi Vyas is a third-year undergraduate student pursuing English Literature. Her writing explores themes of society, inequality, and human experiences, often drawing from contemporary events. She enjoys literature, music, and creative expression.



BORDERS ON SKIN

They drew the first line when I was born.
Not on a map, but on my name.
It told people where I belonged before I even learned to walk.
Later, they added more.
A line across my language—
“Speak this, not that.”
Another across my faith—
“Pray like this, not like them.”

Each line was invisible, yet everyone could see them.
Everyone except me.
So one day, I decided to see them for myself.
I stood before the mirror, marker in hand.
On my forehead, I wrote my religion.
On my arm, my nationality.
Across my chest, my language.
I kept drawing,
Lines intersecting, dividing, labeling—
until my skin looked like a broken map.
They provided me with clarity — guidance — direction

And because of that I could see my place in the world.
But then the lines started to burn.
And I do not mean it metaphorically,
These lines actually burned.
They seeped into my skin, turning from ink to cuts.

I wanted to wash it off.
They wouldn't wash off.
They were never just ink.
They were beliefs.
Beliefs that were passed on to me.
Beliefs that were marked on me.
Beliefs that were repeated to me so many times they became
true.

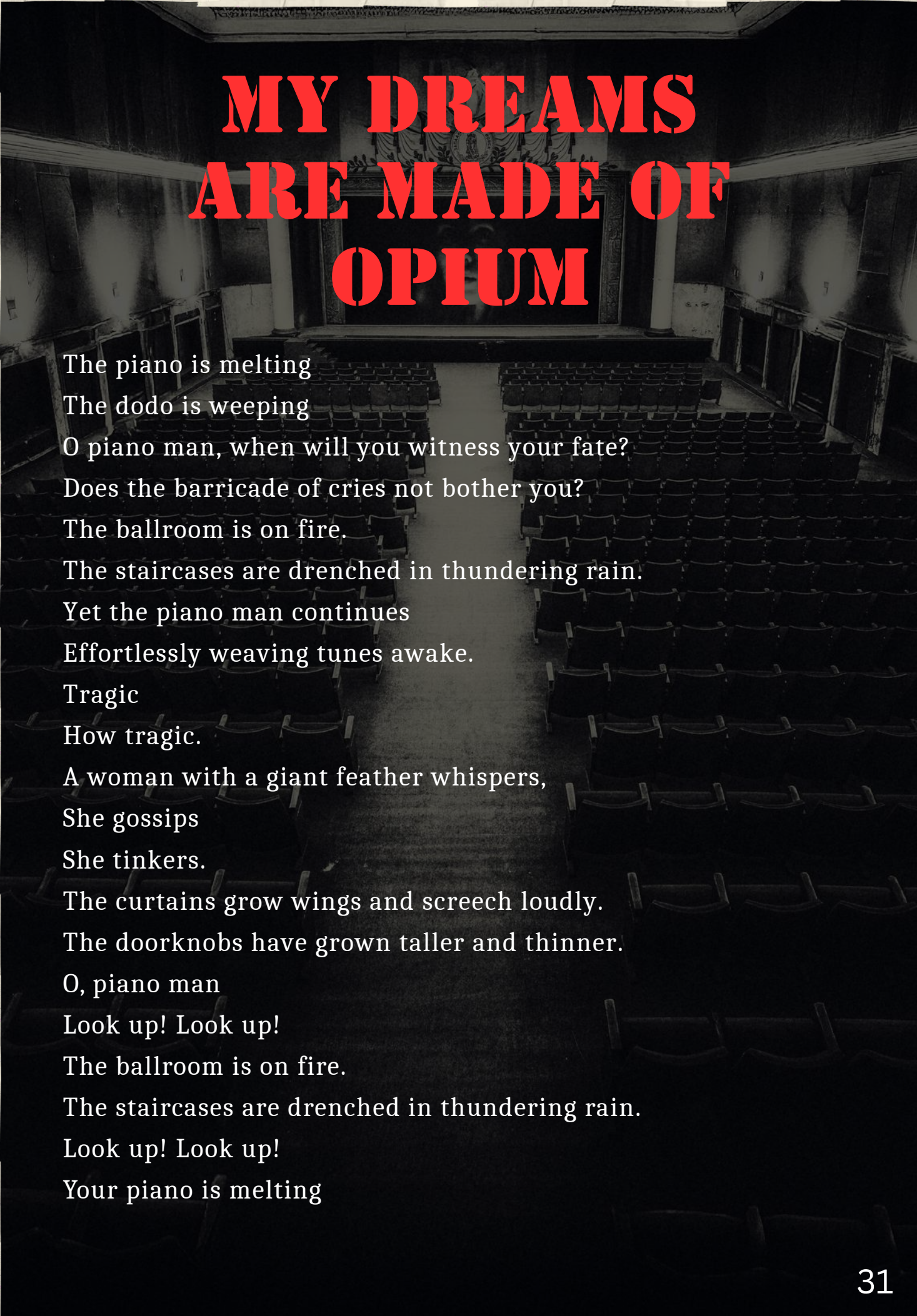
I looked in the mirror.
I was bleeding,
Torn apart.
It was then that I began to question if these imaginary borders
were hurting me,
weren't they made to protect me?
I dropped the marker.
I began to think — maybe the whole problem, this entire time,
isn't that I don't know where I belong.
Maybe the problem is that I was taught I could only belong to
one place.

Anushika Pandey

2nd year

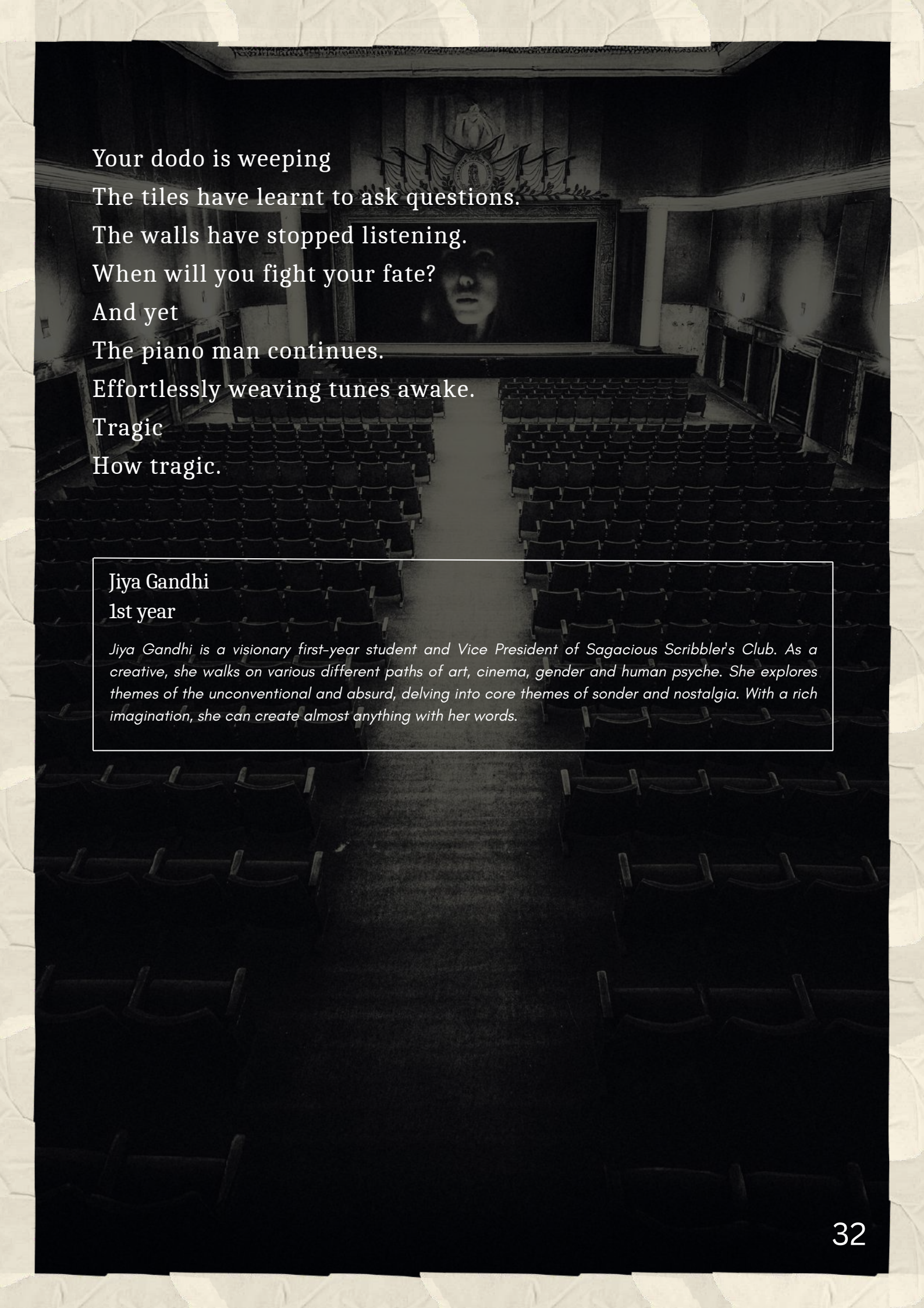
Anushika Pandey is a student of B.A. (Hons.) English with a keen interest in literature, creative writing, and the many ways stories shape our understanding of people and the world around us. A Creative Coordinator of the English Literary Society, she has also contributed as an editor to Pravah, annual college magazine. She enjoys writing, designing, and exploring ideas that lie at the intersection of literature and everyday life. When she isn't reading or working on a creative project, she can usually be found collecting far too many ideas and trying to turn at least some of them into something worthwhile.





MY DREAMS ARE MADE OF OPIUM

The piano is melting
The dodo is weeping
O piano man, when will you witness your fate?
Does the barricade of cries not bother you?
The ballroom is on fire.
The staircases are drenched in thundering rain.
Yet the piano man continues
Effortlessly weaving tunes awake.
Tragic
How tragic.
A woman with a giant feather whispers,
She gossips
She tinkers.
The curtains grow wings and screech loudly.
The doorknobs have grown taller and thinner.
O, piano man
Look up! Look up!
The ballroom is on fire.
The staircases are drenched in thundering rain.
Look up! Look up!
Your piano is melting



Your dodo is weeping
The tiles have learnt to ask questions.
The walls have stopped listening.
When will you fight your fate?
And yet
The piano man continues.
Effortlessly weaving tunes awake.
Tragic
How tragic.

Jiya Gandhi
1st year

Jiya Gandhi is a visionary first-year student and Vice President of Sagacious Scribbler's Club. As a creative, she walks on various different paths of art, cinema, gender and human psyche. She explores themes of the unconventional and absurd, delving into core themes of sonder and nostalgia. With a rich imagination, she can create almost anything with her words.



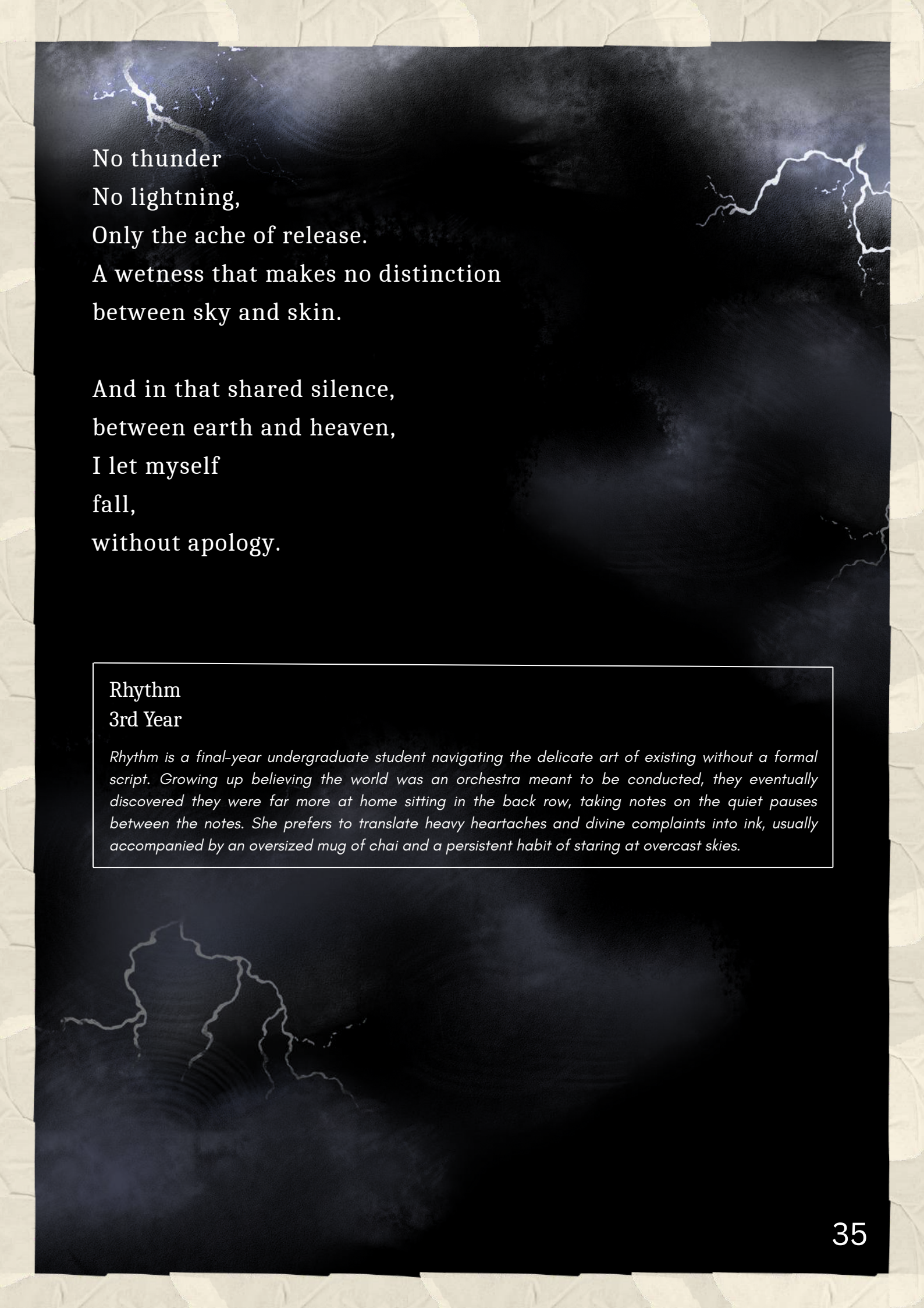
RAIN FALLS LIKE ME

The sky does not ask permission,
before it breaks
a slow unraveling of grey,
spilling across the hours.

It starts quiet,
just as I do,
a blink too long
or the tremble in the throat
that no one sees.

Rain
not a storm,
Soft,
then sudden,
then everything.

I sit at the window,
watching the drops race down
the glass,
mirroring my own descent,
not dramatic,
just persistence.



No thunder
No lightning,
Only the ache of release.
A wetness that makes no distinction
between sky and skin.

And in that shared silence,
between earth and heaven,
I let myself
fall,
without apology.

Rhythm
3rd Year

Rhythm is a final-year undergraduate student navigating the delicate art of existing without a formal script. Growing up believing the world was an orchestra meant to be conducted, they eventually discovered they were far more at home sitting in the back row, taking notes on the quiet pauses between the notes. She prefers to translate heavy heartaches and divine complaints into ink, usually accompanied by an oversized mug of chai and a persistent habit of staring at overcast skies.



THIS WAS NEVER MY DESIGN

I see My children lying face down in the dust,
a street turned into a graveyard,
stones heavier than the silence above them.
Did I craft ribs and lungs only
for them to collapse beneath rubble,
while you cheer and call it justice?

I see a van,
rusted, trembling under the weight of exile,
a child clinging to his mother's eyes,
asking questions no child should ask:
"Where is home? Why is the sky on fire?"
I never made homes to be carried
like luggage on broken wheels.

You who chant My name,
You who draw lines on maps,
You who bless the killing of strangers!
Do you dare think I asked for this?
My temples, My churches, My mosques
were not built to echo with hypocrisy.



You kneel before Me in prayer
but rise only to raise guns,
as if the sound of explosions
were a hymn I enjoy.

Look at the street again.
Look at the bodies.
Is this your offering to Me?
Do you believe the blood of children
writes scripture more clearly?
I did not make human hearts
to beat only for revenge.

You destroy in My name,
yet I created you for mercy.
You divide yourselves into nations and faiths,
yet I made you with one breath.
Every body lying in the rubble,
every family fleeing through smoke,
they are all yours.
And you are all Mine.

Tell Me, then,
when did killing your brother
become a form of worship?
If I am watching, I am weeping.
If I am silent, it is because your violence
has drowned even prayer

Rhythm
3rd year

Rhythm is a final-year undergraduate student navigating the delicate art of existing without a formal script. Growing up believing the world was an orchestra meant to be conducted, they eventually discovered they were far more at home sitting in the back row, taking notes on the quiet pauses between the notes. She prefers to translate heavy heartaches and divine complaints into ink, usually accompanied by an oversized mug of chai and a persistent habit of staring at overcast skies.





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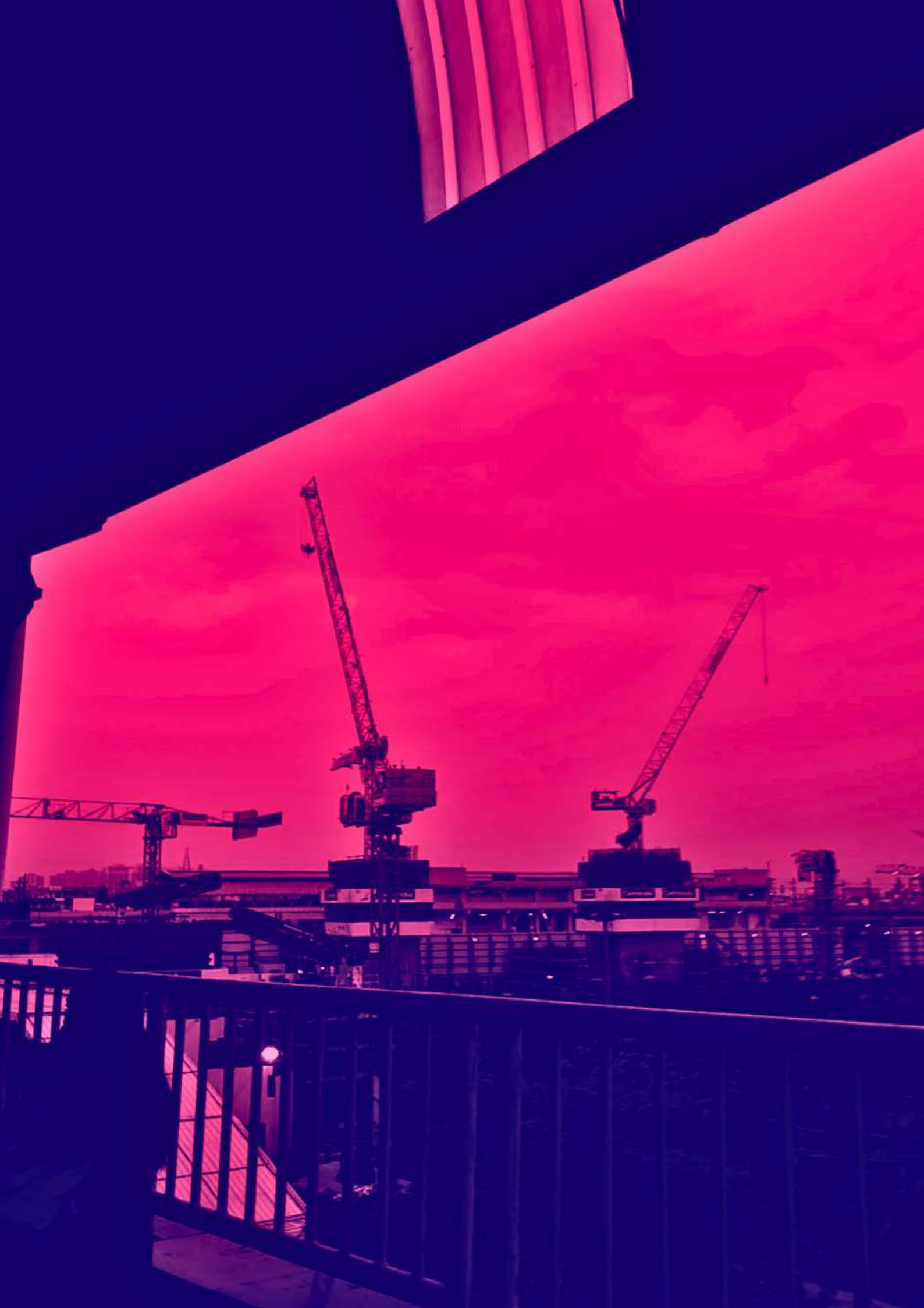
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FRACTURED WORLD:

WAR, PEACE, AND POWER

“The world doesn’t break all at once with a bang, nor do we. The rift appears slowly, between the voids and borders we form. Peace is the ultimate destination, but is it even attainable, or is it just an armour for the wars being fought?”

My vision for this fractured world is both externalised and internalised.

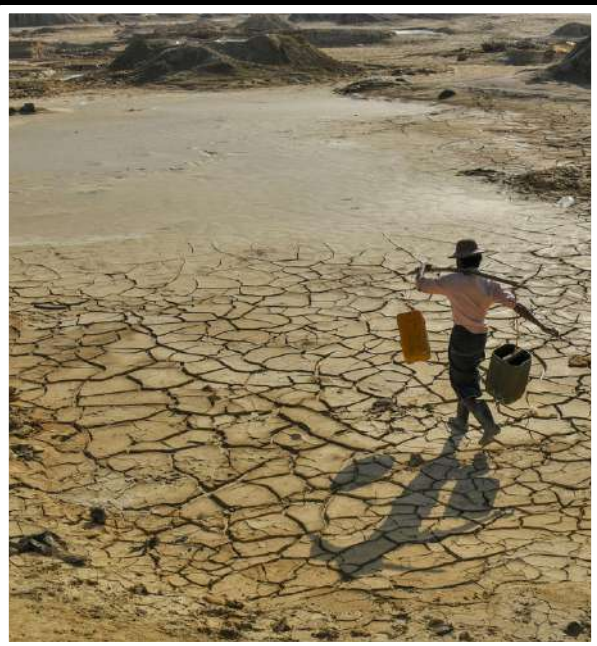
War Beyond the Battlefield

Beyond the battlefield, war is everywhere. Despite this, the world keeps moving every day. For instance, while changing

metros recently, two men got into the women’s coach. When called out, they began arguing instead of just apologising and paying the fine. Instead of letting things go and admitting our faults, we all tend to escalate everything. There are a number of conflicts; different views and opinions lead to arguments all the time. A simple conversation on secularism can swiftly escalate into a heated debate.

If we look at the smaller picture, into our own households, just like any other, we see how things get escalated over a mere dinner menu. It is a

prime example of how arguments are the repercussions of even the most minute things. Cold wars are everywhere: interstate, international, and interpersonal. Everybody is at war. An underprivileged man is at war against hunger, poverty, and a lack of resources. A middle-class man is at war against EMIs, loans, employment, and inflation.



We Are All Soldiers

We are all soldiers, never off duty, because we are always at war internally. This is a war with no visible battlefield, boundaries, or definitive ending. There are no external opponents that we fight against; it is our very own mind that we are at war with. A war with a known enemy is better than the war beyond the battlefield, but how do we fight a battle with ourselves? Using what weapon?

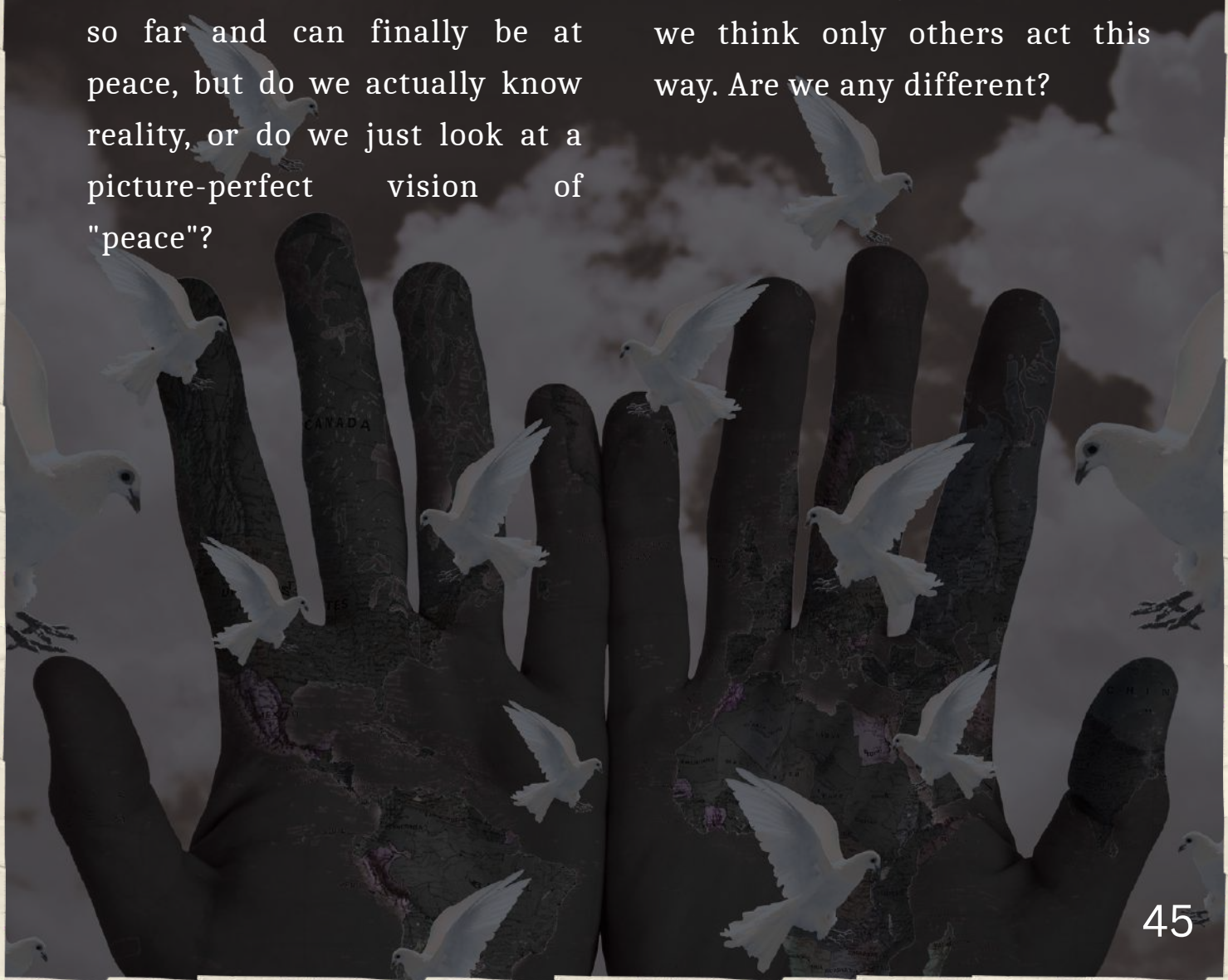
Every physical war leads to destruction, bloodshed, and death; although terrible, that external loss can eventually be compensated and sustained. But when war comes from within, it is inevitable. Beyond the battlefield, what can be given to compensate or sustain us? This internal war brings destruction to oneself and to every other being in our surroundings, rather than causing destruction to just a particular geographic

place. Visible wounds can be healed, but how can a shredded soul be healed?

The Illusion of the Final Destination

The final destination is peace for everybody, is it not? Yet, peace is deceptive. Alongside ongoing inequality, suppression, and unheard voices, I feel peace can't really be attained. Nowadays, we feel we have come so far and can finally be at peace, but do we actually know reality, or do we just look at a picture-perfect vision of "peace"?

The other day while travelling, two socially deprived kids were just enjoying themselves, looking out of the window with the natural wonder and exploration of childhood. The people sitting beside them began confronting their mother, telling her to hold them back. These are kids I'm talking about. We don't even realise the suppression and inequality we perpetuate among adults who are less privileged than us, yet we think only others act this way. Are we any different?



We feel we are developing, becoming progressive and modern, so we assume we are finally at peace. But are we? There is still inequality and discrimination. We suppress the people we can, and thousands of pleas go unheard. It is not a grand, sweeping example, but a reality check: if somebody underprivileged asks you for the most basic of things, we often judge whether they are "needy enough." Have we set a bar for "being needy enough" too? How can we attain peace when, if not outright wars, there are these constant loopholes blocking it?



The Midnight Armour

Internally, because we cannot hold weapons against what cannot be seen or against ourselves, what do we do? We armour ourselves with the mask of peace. I know too little to give a precise definition of what peace is, it is instinctive, right? But one thing should be conjectured: does what we think peace is, and what we do to attain it, actually simplify the concept? Does it provide us real peace, or is it just an illusion?

Consider the series and movies you binge-watch, the midnight snacking, or listening to songs. The real war, You vs. You, begins at midnight when the rest of the world sleeps. It is then that you wear your armour of what you consider peace, getting ready to save the day (or, more precisely, the night). To some people, peace is meditating, travelling, cooking, or dancing; for some, like me, it might just be sleeping. Again, it is intuitive. I am not saying peace is not attained through these things, but the only thing that keeps me peering deeper is this: we all do something once a day that according to us gives us peace, but if we are asked if the day went well, or if everything is okay, or how life is lately, do we not lament the fractures in our daily existence the moment a stone is cast into our quietude? One bad event is all it takes to trespass on the moment we think we have attained peace for the day.



Subjugation, Not Suppression

We hold up peace as our way to combat war, but instead of using peace as an armour, we end up creating borders. We shouldn't do that. We should embrace whatever we consider peace neither as a diversion nor as an escape; rather, we should use it as a silent subjugation. These internal wars are necessary. You should be at loggerheads with yourself and feel everything. To remind yourself who the "real combatant" is, oppression is im-

erative, so you must subjugate, not suppress.

Wars always take place for asserting power, dominance, and tyrannising. However, the sovereignty lies in our hands whether to be submissive or to hold fast to ourselves and "our peace", taking the bull by the horns and domineering over whatever we are at war against. It resides with us to choose whom we want to give power to, keeping in mind that history only remembers the powerful. Many stories are told, rewritten, and erased, but what remains central is the assertion of power. Power decides which stories are to be told and which are to be forgotten. History's truth is shaped by power.

We humans have created divisions in our minds and then put them on paper in the form of maps, naming those divisions "borders." Borders do far more than just divide land; they defi-

ne identity and belonging. But do we all not belong altogether? Don't we all share the same identity, being human beings?

The Plaster of Peace

A fractured world, defined by War, Peace, and Power, is not just a mirror to worldwide setbacks and chagrin, but also a mirror to our internal lives. Our world is not perfect, apt, or ideal. It is wounded with so many loopholes and liabilities like inequality, discrimination, suppression, ignorance, and various other societal despondencies.



But the POP, Plaster of Peace, prevents it from scattering. It helps us uphold power in combating every war, both from within and outside. All we need is a strong, yet non-violent oppression against these loopholes. Peace isn't promised, nevertheless, it's not fair to think that if you aren't attaining peace, then nobody is. A non-violent oppression that makes a change for even a few people won't harm.

Radhika
1st Year

An observant first-year student, Radhika Singh is a singer-writer at heart. Fascinated by how words shape minds, record history in times of chaos, and connect human spirits, she pours her soul into her craft-writing with a singer's passion and singing with the rich depth of a storyteller.



WARS: INSIDE & OUTSIDE BATTLEFIELDS

From nighttime stories in bed to history lessons in classrooms, there has always been one common story: a king conquering it all by defeating his enemies. The earliest memory from our childhood that we might be collectively sharing, irrespective of who we are or where we hail from, is probably of our grandparents narrating the tale of that one brave prince/king who, after



overcoming all the struggles in his way – through the power of faith and friendship – defeats his enemy and gets a happy ever after. Hence, naturally we grew up believing in the entire concept of ‘the victory of good over evil’.



Then came the realistic history lessons in the classroom, and alas! The perfect image of our fairytale happy endings and the

endings and the entire utopian concept we had gotten used to believing in came crashing down. We learnt that throughout history, the world has been a harsh place to live in. The good king does not always defeat the evil king and protect his kingdom; he is sometimes himself defeated and betrayed by his own people. More often than not, the more powerful one wins the war; moral values hold little to no importance on the battlefield.

Unfortunately, unlike the Battle of Kurukshetra in the great epic, the Mahabharata, where war was fought to establish righteousness, real-world wars are fought to establish dominance over the weak. War is not about liberating; it is about capturing. However, in a country like India, where folktales are so intricately intertwined with our history, the lines between reality and the mythological world often blur.





The more we study, the more we realise that war has been a constant throughout civilisations. Sometimes it occurs amongst people of the same civilisation, and at other times across different civilisations. It is almost as if wars are an integral part of our history. This raises an important question: are wars necessary for evolution? While the natural humanity of a person would roar up to say 'no', the truth is some people do indeed believe that war is a footprint of evolution. Or else why would this barbaric act of killing, butchering and capturing innocent people even seem appealing?

It also does not help that, from age-old times, tales of wars won or lost have conventionally been told from the perspective of the victor, who often glosses over his actions with the excuse of 'rescuing' the oppressed from the misery inflicted upon them

by their previous ruler. This whole 'saviour complex' stems from a superiority complex, where one thinks they are more deserving of ruling than the other because they are entitled to more power and privilege.

In the current times, when violence has reached its peak with leaders of strong nations warring against each other and committing mass genocides without any remorse, both humanity and awareness of the global citizens come into question. How aware are they of these ongoing wars? How often do they question and protest against the government(s) that are directly or indirectly a part of this inhumane brutality? Do they take a fierce stance against these institutions and fight for the human rights of these poor people affected by war?

Or are they more interested in being a part of the insufferable bunch of 'keyboard warriors' who take a neutral stance regarding anything and everything happening on this planet since they are privileged enough to be under the comfort of their roof, be ignorant and be ungrateful for their geographical luck while ignoring the voices of these dying people?

Also, with the rise of social media as a medium for circulating news about such sensitive issues, there has been a rise in the phenomenon of 'desensitisation'.

Desensitisation is a process that diminishes emotional responsiveness to a negative or aversive stimulus after repetitive exposure. Therefore, as a result of this excessive exposure to such gut-wrenching information, our brain automatically seeks a coping mechanism to numb itself; this

is dangerous because we become detached from the reality around us and therefore unresponsive to the severity of the current war situation.



Then again, there is also a section of population least concerned about the horrors happening around, and those happen to be the rich. They live in a bubble-wrapped world that is totally out of touch with reality; they refuse to use their voice and influence in order to advocate for the oppressed and protect their rights. However, these privileged people also do not hesitate to exploit the labour of the poor.

The gap between the rich and the poor only widens until it becomes clear that the system is perhaps on a journey to eliminate the poor entirely. This division amongst people in the face of such brutal genocides happening around the world is a real example of how wars are even fought outside the battlefields. They fight amongst themselves on a daily basis until we all forget that we all bleed the same red.

“Justice will prevail, you say? But of course it will! Whoever wins the war becomes justice.”

-(A quote from ‘One Piece’)

Soumili Debnath

1st year

Soumili, is a first year student who happens to consider herself an active member of the human society- where poetry dances in the rhythm of breaths and stories are hidden in the sparkle of eyes. Growing up with the tales of her beloved Feluda and Holmes made her believe she was one among them too, but turns out she is more fit to be a reader with glasses than an investigator with a cigarette.



WHAT IS A SOLDIER WITHOUT WAR?

War, Power and Historical Memory in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022)

All Quiet on the Western Front (2022) is a sombre film adaptation of Eric Maria Remarque's seminal work. It is based on a 1929 semi-autobiographical anti-war novel of a German veteran, during which period Germany and Great Britain saw an exceptional bloom in war books, plays and films (Eksteins 345). Edward Berger's 2022 adaptation upheld Remarque's legacy by presenting the real, raw accounts of wartime friendships, loneliness, death and devastation. The film earned four Academy Awards, including Best International Feature Film, Original Score,



Cinematography and Product Design, by presenting the Great War as an overwhelming human catastrophe. The original title of the novel, *Im Westen Nichts Neues*, is fraught with tragic irony. It translates to "In the West Nothing New" which was a standard phrase used routinely in German army dispatches when no major territorial gains occurred. It was finally in 1929 that Australian translator Arth-

ur Wheen rendered this into English as *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

The irony lies in the fact that high commissioners and senior officials viewed the front line as quiet whilst thousands of young patriots were dying daily to capture a few yards of mud at their behest (Bradshaw). The Western Front was never quiet for the living but only ever quiet for the dead.

The film's opening sequences expose the frigid atmosphere of industrial warfare. It is represented through the mechanical-like life cycle of a military uniform. A sequence shot captured Heinrich, a young soldier who is killed offscreen. The blood-soaked wool jacket is stripped away from his corpse, cleaned and mended by the factory workers. It is then shipped to Northern Germany and reissued to the naive recruit named Paul Bäumer (Felix -

Kammerer). When the protagonist notices another soldier's name tag sewn inside the collar, the clerk simply tears it out and calls it a clerical error. This shows that uniforms survive while human beings perish. This additionally signifies the economic shortages faced by Germany in 1917 when military logistics relied on recycling uniforms from dead soldiers.



Educational Indoctrination

Paul and his classmates, the young recruits, did not enlist out of reason or malice but rather due to the indoctrination by schoolmasters about duty and honour. This toxic classroom climate reflected the European social climate of 1914. In that period, the educational and civic institutions institutionalised imperial patriotism and romantic visions of military glory.

Moreover, historian George Kennan described the First World War as the “greatest seminal catastrophe” of the twentieth century (Dosenrode 5). He defined it as such because the war shattered Europe’s long-standing faith in societal progress and national destiny. This naive romantic illusion is eroded the moment Paul reaches the front lines. The patriotic slogans are pulverised

by bombardments, artillery barrages, a worse atmosphere and slaughter.



The peak emotional scene deals with Paul’s actions in the middle of a mud-filled crater. He stabs a French soldier named Gérard Duval during hand-to-hand combat. He was trapped alongside the dying man as artillery rained down above. Therefore, he was forced to watch the enemy soldier choke

on his blood. However, a flicker of humanity rose inside Paul's heart, and he desperately attempted to save the man he had just wounded. He was overcome with remorse, finding the photographs of Duval's wife and child inside his jacket pocket. The scene left the audience with a deep feeling of catharsis. Paul is left with the psychological stench of taking somebody's life.

The 1928-1930 War Boom and Nazi Suppression

Nearly ten years after the 1918 armistice, a sudden cultural "war boom" swept across Europe and America. A war veteran named Charles Carrington published a memoir wherein he referred to this public obsession as 'a hysterical phase as well worth the attention of social scientists as the hysterical phase of 1914' (Eksteins 346).

Yet, this anti-war narrative provoked violent outrage from Germany's rising nationalist Right.

On December 5, 1930, during the Berlin premiere of Lewis Milestone's Hollywood film adaptation at Mozart Hall, Joseph Goebbels organised a riot. Nazi brownshirts released stink bombs and white mice into the theatre while shouting "Judenfilm" (Simmons 41). Right-wing agitators circulated conspiracy theories that Remarque was secretly Jewish, claiming that his real name was "Kramer" spelt backward and accused his work of promoting the "stab-in-the-back" myth, which falsely claimed that leftist politicians and minorities had betrayed an undefeated imperial army (Smyth 52).

Political Vanity

Berger further parallels the original story with a political storyline centered on Matthias Erzberger (played by Daniel Brühl) to accelerate the momentum of the film. In reality, Erzberger was a German politician who led the armistice delegation to the Compiègne forest. He pleaded with the French officers on the grounds that only false pride separated the nations from slaughter. However, in stark contrast is the fictional character of General Friedrich. He refused to accept defeat and frantically asked,

“What is a soldier without war?”

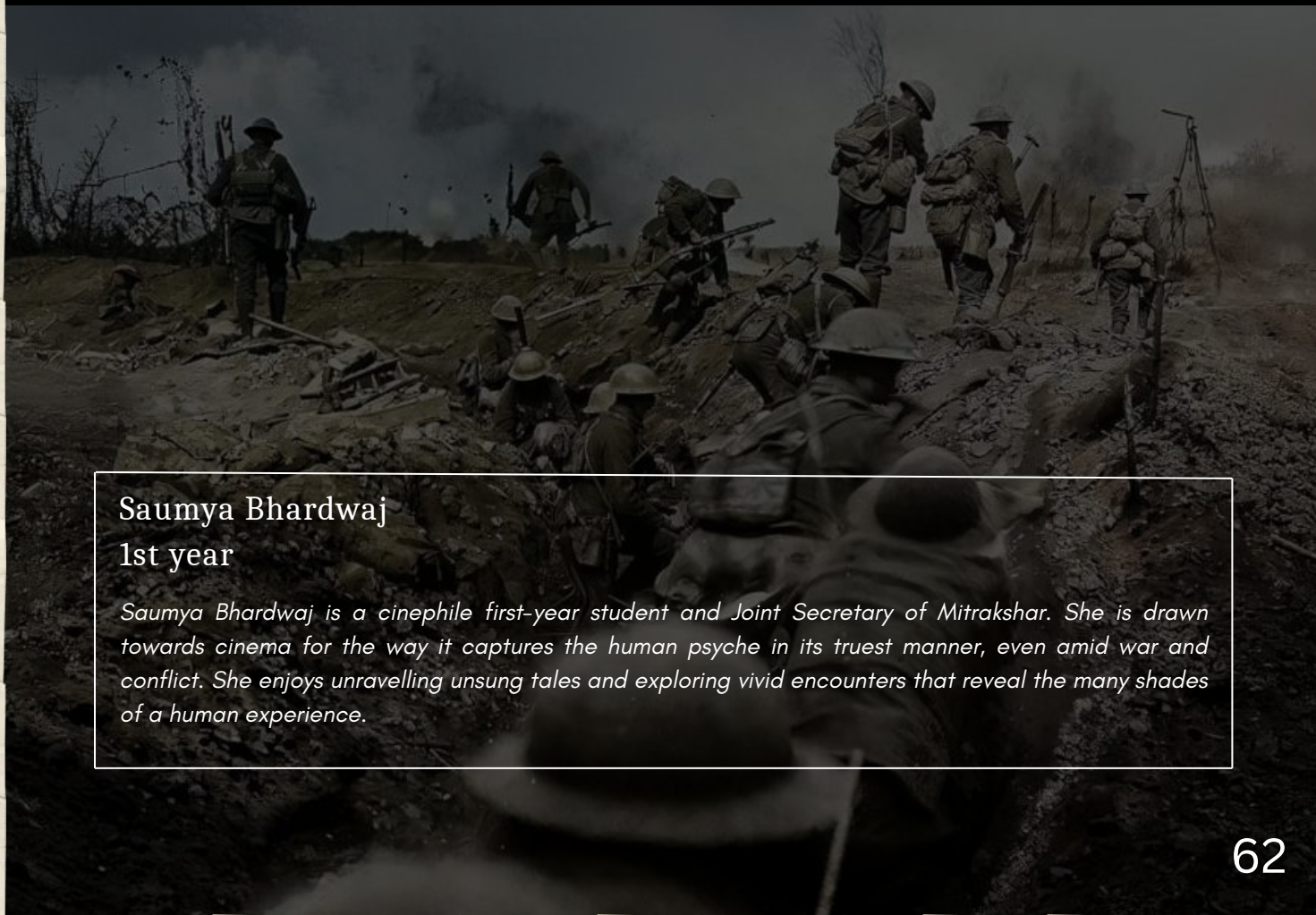
Just fifteen minutes before the armistice takes effect at 11:00 AM on November 11, 1918, Friedrich orders his exhausted troops into a final, pointless charge

This addition highlights the tragic gap between political/military leadership and human cost, reflecting the real historical tragedy of November 11, 1918, when thousands of soldiers died on the war's final day to satisfy the pride of their commanders





Edward Berger's 2022 adaptation ensures that no impressionable youth is fooled by the false concept of romantic heroism. He connected the suppression of 1930s with modern storytelling to spread the vitality of anti-war narratives. The story of Paul Bäumer serves as a lens to see the hidden egoistic propaganda in geopolitical conflicts and disputes; the consequence of which is an irreplaceable human life.



Saumya Bhardwaj
1st year

Saumya Bhardwaj is a cinephile first-year student and Joint Secretary of Mitrakshar. She is drawn towards cinema for the way it captures the human psyche in its truest manner, even amid war and conflict. She enjoys unravelling unsung tales and exploring vivid encounters that reveal the many shades of a human experience.

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ABOUT CAMEO



The English Department is one of the oldest in Kalindi College; known for its excellence in classroom teaching and interaction, the department offers multiple papers to its students across several disciplines that promise an enriching learning experience to the students regardless of the discipline they select. Over the years, it has organized intellectually stimulating programmes for the students through the departmental society, 'Mitrakshar' (the English Literary Society). Inter departmental programmes and fests hosted by the society have brought together students from various colleges for us to engage with, deepening our understanding of the world, strengthening our overall skills, and transforming our lives through literature. Although the college has a number of publications, the English Department has its own online publication of which this is the tenth volume, second issue. This publication is an attempt to go beyond merely academic engagement of the students. The department enthusiastically carries on its online publication in the spirit of nurturing the innate talents of its students.

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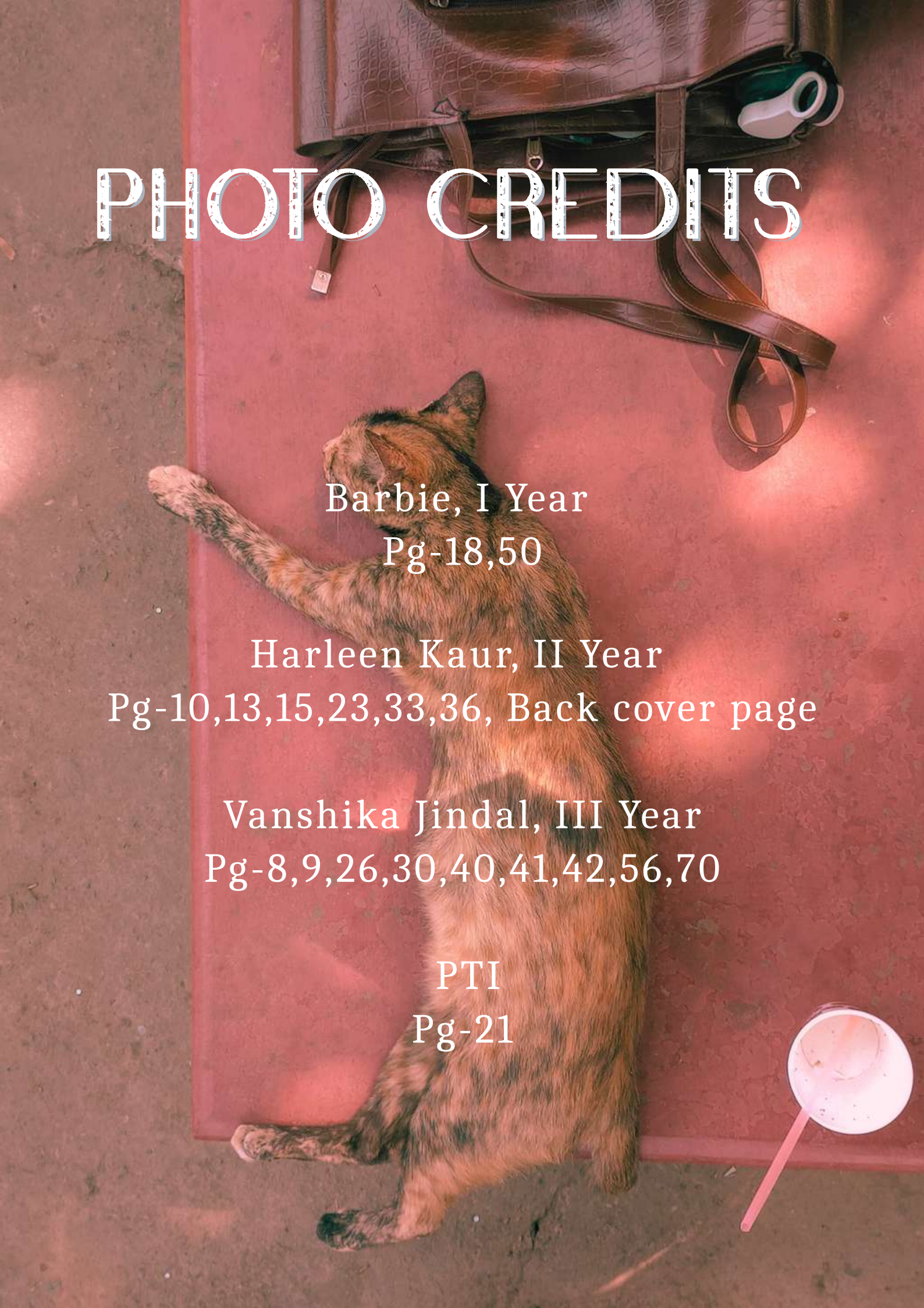


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