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എഡിറ്റോറിയൽ

ജൂലിയ ജോസ്

അതിജീവനം - ഈ വാക്കിന്റെ അർത്ഥവും വ്യാപ്തിയും ആഴവും നമ്മൾ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞത് ഈ കഴിഞ്ഞ ഒരു വർഷക്കാലമായിരിക്കും. ലോകം മുഴുവൻ കോടിക്കണക്കിനാളുകളെ ബാധിച്ച ഈ മഹാമാരി നമ്മളെയും പ്രത്യക്ഷമായോ പരോക്ഷമായോ സ്വാധീനിച്ചു. ഈ മഹാമാരികാലം നമ്മുടെ ശീലങ്ങളിലും ചിന്താരീതികളിലും മാറ്റങ്ങൾ വരുത്തി. നമ്മുടെ സർഗ്ഗാത്മകതയും ഭാവനയ്ക്കും പുതിയ മാനങ്ങൾ കൈവന്നു.

കരോലിന മലയാളീ സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ സാഹിത്യഅഭിരുചികളെയും കലാവാസനകളെയും പ്രദർശിപ്പിക്കാനായുള്ള തട്ടകമായ സുവനീർ കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷങ്ങളിലേതു പോലെ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചപ്പോൾ ഞങ്ങൾ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ആശയമാണ് 'പ്രയാണം'. നിലവിലെ സാഹചര്യത്തിൽ ഞങ്ങൾക്ക് ഏറ്റവും അനുയോജ്യമായി തോന്നിയത് ഈ പേരായിരുന്നു. ഈ കാലഘട്ടത്തിന്റെ പരിമിതികളിൽ നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് ഉള്ളടക്കത്തിലും രൂപകല്പനയിലും ഈ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം മനോഹരമാക്കാൻ ഞങ്ങൾ പരമാവധി ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. നമ്മുടെ പ്രതിഭകളുടെ മനോഹരമായ കലാസൃഷ്ടികളെ ഞങ്ങൾ അഭിമാനത്തോടെ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിക്കുന്നു .

ഈ കൊല്ലവും ഇതിലേക്ക് ലേഖനങ്ങളും കഥകളും കവിതകളും ചിത്രങ്ങളും സംഭാവന ചെയ്ത എല്ലാവരോടും നന്ദി അറിയിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു. സുവനീറിന്റെ മുഖചിത്രം മനോഹരമായി രൂപകല്പന ചെയ്ത അർച്ചനക്കും, പേജ് സെറ്റ് ചെയ്ത് പ്രിന്റ് ചെയ്ത **Mango** ഡിസൈനും, **Vazhemadom** പ്രിന്റേഴ്സിനും, അതുപോലെ പരസ്യങ്ങൾ നൽകിയ എല്ലാവരോടും അകമഴിഞ്ഞ നന്ദി അറിയിച്ചുകൊള്ളുന്നു.

നമ്മുടെയെല്ലാം ജീവിതത്തെ ഒരുപോലെ സ്വാധീനിച്ച ഒരു കാലഘട്ടത്തിലൂടെ പുതിയ പ്രതീക്ഷകളും സ്വപ്നങ്ങളും പ്രാർത്ഥനകളുമായി നമ്മുടെ ജീവിത പ്രയാണം തുടരും...

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President's Message

2021 വർഷം മാനവരാശിക്ക് പ്രതിസന്ധികളുടേതും ആശങ്കകളുടേതുമായിരുന്ന കോവിഡ്-19 നമ്മുടെ സാമൂഹികജീവിതത്തിന് ഏറ്റ കനത്ത പ്രഹരമായിരുന്നു. ഒറ്റപ്പെടലുകളും വേർപാടുകളും നമ്മെ വേദനിപ്പിച്ചു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു. പക്ഷേ അതിജീവനത്തിന്റെ പുതിയപാതകൾ നാം കണ്ടെത്തിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു. ഈ കാലഘട്ടവും ഒറ്റപ്പെട്ടുനിൽക്കേണ്ട ഒന്നല്ല പക്ഷേ ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ തന്നെ തുടർച്ചയെന്നാണ് പ്രപഞ്ചം നമ്മെ ഓർമ്മപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത്.

ഈ പ്രവർത്തന വർഷത്തിന്റെ തുടക്കം GCKA - യെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം അനിശ്ചിതത്വത്തിന്റെയും അപ്രവൃത്തതകളുടേതുമായിരുന്നു. പക്ഷേ ശുഭാപ്തിവിശ്വാസത്തോടെ വിവിധ കമ്മിറ്റികൾക്ക് രൂപം കൊടുത്ത് പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ ഏകോപിപ്പിക്കാനായിരിന്നു കൂട്ടായ തീരുമാനം. പരിമിതികൾക്കുള്ളിൽ നിന്നുകൊണ്ട് പ്രാവർത്തികമാക്കാൻ കഴിയുന്ന ആശയങ്ങൾ ഉരുത്തിരിഞ്ഞുകൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു. ഈ വർഷത്തെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളിൽ സ്പോൺസർമാരുടെ നല്ലരീതിയിലുള്ള സഹായസഹകരണമുണ്ടായി എന്ന് കൃതജ്ഞതയോടെ അനുസ്മരിക്കുന്നു.

പ്രതികൂലസാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ വ്യത്യസ്തമായി ചിന്തിച്ച് ഈ പ്രവർത്തനവർഷത്തെ പരിപാടികൾ ഏകോപിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ സഹകരിച്ച സേവനസന്നദ്ധരായ എല്ലാ GCKA അംഗങ്ങളുടെയും പ്രത്യേകം അനുസ്മരിക്കുന്നു.

ക്രിസ്മസ് ട്രീ, കേക്ക് ബേക്കിംഗ് മത്സരങ്ങൾ സംഘടിപ്പിച്ചതിനുശേഷം "ക്രിസ്മസ് ലബ്ബ്" ഭംഗിയായി തന്നെ വിതരണം ചെയ്യാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞുവെന്നത് അഭിമാനകരമാണ്. കർച്ചിൽ കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ നേതൃത്വത്തിൽ ക്രിസ്മസ് പുതുവത്സര ആഘോഷങ്ങൾ തത്സമയം സംഘ്രേക്ഷണം നടത്തുവാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞതും നേട്ടങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ ചേർക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. ഒട്ടേറെ അല്പദയകാംക്ഷികൾ സേവനസന്നദ്ധതയോടെ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾക്ക് ചുക്കാൻ പിടിച്ചുവെന്നത് നന്ദിയോടെ സ്മരിക്കുന്നു. ആരോഗ്യപ്രവർത്തകരായ GCKA അംഗങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു Tribute വീഡിയോ ചെയ്യുവാൻ GCKA യുത്ത് കമ്മിറ്റി അകമഴിഞ്ഞ് സഹായിച്ചത് പ്രത്യേക പ്രശംസ അർഹിക്കുന്നു.

കുട്ടികൾക്കും മുതിർന്നവർക്കുമായി ഫോട്ടോഗ്രാഫി, പെയിന്റിംഗ്, ഡ്രോയിങ്, സാഹിത്യമത്സരങ്ങളും സംഘടിപ്പിച്ചത് വ്യത്യസ്തതയായിരുന്നു. പരിമിതമായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിൽ നല്ല നിലയിൽ തന്നെ മലയാളം കളരിയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം മുമ്പോട്ട് കൊണ്ടുപോകാൻ ആത്മാർത്ഥമായി സഹകരിച്ച അദ്ധ്യാപകർ GCKA സമൂഹത്തിന് അഭിമാനമാണ്. മലയാളംകളരിദിനാഘോഷം സംഘടിപ്പിച്ചത് മലയാളം അഭ്യസിപ്പിക്കുന്ന കുട്ടികൾക്ക് ആത്മവിശ്വാസം പകരുന്നതായിരുന്നു.

കോവിഡ് സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ മാറിവന്നതനുസരിച്ച് പരിമിതികളോടെയാണെങ്കിലും വിവിധങ്ങളായ സ്പോർട്സ് മത്സരങ്ങൾ സംഘടിപ്പിക്കുവാൻ സാധിച്ചതും നേട്ടങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടികയിൽ ചേർക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. പ്രതികൂലസാഹചര്യങ്ങളുണ്ടെങ്കിലും ചില പരിമിതികളോടെ ഓണാഘോഷങ്ങളും നടത്തുവാൻ തീരുമാനമെടുത്തുകഴിഞ്ഞു. ആഘോഷങ്ങൾ നന്നായി നടത്തുവാൻ സാധിക്കുമെന്ന ശുഭപ്രതീക്ഷയിലാണ് GCKA BOD - ഉം സേവനസന്നദ്ധരായ അല്പദയകാംക്ഷികളും.

കോവിഡ് മഹാമാരിയിൽ നമുക്ക് നഷ്ടമായ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ടവരെ പ്രത്യേകം അനുസ്മരിക്കുന്നു. കൊറോണ വൈറസിന്റെ പിടിയിൽ നിന്നും ആധുനിക ശാസ്ത്രം നമ്മെ പുതിയൊരു ലോകത്തേക്കാണ് വരവേല്ക്കുന്നത്.

ശാശ്വതമായ മാറ്റം, അതുണ്ടാക്കുന്ന പുതിയ സന്തുലിതാവസ്ഥ, സംജാതമാകുന്ന പുതിയ പ്രപഞ്ചം, അതിലൂടെ നമുക്ക് ഒത്തൊരുമയോടെ തുടരാം, "പ്രയാണം"!



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2018 ഫെബ്രുവരി മാസത്തിലെ രണ്ടാം ശനിയാഴ്ച. രാവിലെ നടക്കാനിറങ്ങിയതാണ്. ശൈത്യകാലം കവർന്നെടുത്ത യൗവനം തിരിച്ചുകിട്ടാറായ പ്രതീക്ഷയിൽ റോഡിനു ഇരുവശത്തും വളർത്തുന്ന ചെറി മരങ്ങളിൽ ചെറിയ തുടിപ്പുകളായി പൂമൊട്ടുകൾ വന്നു തുടങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നു. രണ്ടോ മൂന്നോ ആഴ്ചകൾക്കുള്ളിൽ ഈ മരങ്ങൾ മുഴുവനും പീക് നിറത്തിലുള്ള ചെറി പൂക്കൾ കൊണ്ട് നിറയും. ഏതാനും കാരുകൾ വല്ലപ്പോഴും കടന്നു പോകുന്നതൊഴിച്ചാൽ, ഈ നഗരം എന്റേതുമാത്രമെന്നു തോന്നി. മനസ്സ് ഒരു വെള്ള കടലാസ്സു പോലെ ശാന്തം. പുതുതായി കിട്ടിയ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യത്തിന്റെയും സമാധാനത്തിന്റെയും രുചിയറിഞ്ഞു, ഒഴുകിനന്നുസരിച്ചു നീന്താൻ പഠിച്ചു തുടങ്ങിയിട്ട് നാളുകളധികമായിട്ടില്ലല്ലോ.

സാലിസ്ബറി സ്കൂളിന്റെയും മാർട്ടിൻ സ്കൂളിന്റെയും മൂലയിൽ ഒരു ചെറിയ കോഫി ഷോപ്പ് കണ്ടു. അമേരിക്കയിലെ തെക്കൻ സംസ്ഥാനമായ നോർത്ത് കരോളിനയുടെ തലസ്ഥാനമായ റാലിയിൽ താമസമാക്കിയിട്ടു രണ്ടു വർഷം കഴിയുന്നുവെങ്കിലും ഇത് വഴി വരുന്നത് ഇത് ആദ്യം. കടയുടെ മുന്നിൽ റോഡിന്റെ അരികു പറ്റി ഏതാനും അലുമിനിയം കസേരകൾ ആരെയോ പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ചു തണുത്തുറഞ്ഞു കിടക്കുന്നു. കടയുടെ പുറത്തു ചുവന്ന നിയോൺ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ 'ഓപ്പൺ' എന്നൊരു സൈൻ ഒഴിച്ചാൽ ആ കട തുറന്നിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നു തോന്നുകയേ ഇല്ല.

വീട്ടിൽ നിന്ന് കോഫി കുടിച്ചിട്ടാണ് ഇറങ്ങിയതെങ്കിലും എന്തോ ഒരു കാന്തികാകർഷണം പോലെ ആ ഡബിൾ ഡോർ തുറന്നു ഞാൻ അകത്തേയ്ക്കു ചെന്നു.

“ഗുഡ് മോർണിംഗ് മാം! വാട്ട് ക്യാൻ ഐ ഗെറ്റ് ഫോർ യു?” കൗണ്ടറിൽ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്ന ഇരുപതിനോടടുത്തു പ്രായം തോന്നിക്കുന്ന സുന്ദരിയായ മദാമ്മ കുട്ടി ഒരു ചെറു ചിരിയോടെ എണീറ്റ് സംബോധന ചെയ്തു. അടുത്ത് ഒരു കോളേജ് ക്യാമ്പസ് ഉണ്ട്. അവിടെ പഠിക്കുന്ന കുട്ടി ആയിരുന്നിരിക്കണം. അവധി ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ നഗരത്തിലെ മിക്കവാറും കടകളിൽ കോളേജ് കുട്ടികളാവും പണിയെടുക്കുക.

“ഗിവ് മി എ മിനിറ്റ് പ്ലീസ്”. ഞാൻ ചുവരിൽ കിടന്നിരുന്ന ചോക്ക് കൊണ്ടെഴുതിയ കറുത്ത ബോർഡിൽ നോക്കി ചിന്തിച്ചു നിന്നു. എനിക്കെന്താണ് വേണ്ടത്? ഞാൻ എന്തിനാണ് ഇങ്ങോട്ടു കയറിയത്?

എന്റെ കൺഫ്യൂഷൻ കണ്ടിട്ടാവണം ആ പെൺകുട്ടി ഒരു മെനു കാർഡ് എടുത്തു എന്റെ നേരെ നീട്ടി. “മാം, യു ക്യാൻ സീ ഔർ ഒപ്ഷൻസ് ഇൻ ഹിയർ” കയ്യിൽ അത് വാങ്ങാതെ ഒന്ന് എത്തി നോക്കിയിട്ടു ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു. ‘ഇറ്റ് ഇസ് ഓക്കേ. ഐ വിൽ ജസ്റ്റ് ഹാവ് എ മീഡിയം കപ്പുച്ചിനോ.

‘ഫോർ ഹിയർ ഓർ റ്റു ഗോ?’ ഇവിടെയിരുന്ന് കുടിക്കണോ അതോ ഡിസ്പോസിബിൾ കപ്പിൽ കൊണ്ട് പോകുന്നോ എന്നാണ് അവൾ ചോദിച്ചത്. അമേരിക്കയിൽ എത്തിയ ആദ്യ ദിവസം തന്നെ വളരെ കഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട് മനസ്സിലാക്കിയ ഭാഷാ പ്രയോഗം ആണിത്. ഇരുപതു വർഷങ്ങൾ കഴിഞ്ഞെങ്കിലും ഇപ്പോഴും അത് കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ ചിരി വരും.





ഏതാനും നിമിഷങ്ങൾക്കകം തലച്ചോറിലെ ഓരോ കോശത്തെയും ഉണർത്തുന്ന മാദക മണമുള്ള ഒരു ഡബിൾ ഷോട്ട് കാപ്പിയിൽ ചൂട് പാൽ ഫ്രോസ്റ്റ് ചെയ്തു, ഒരു പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് സ്റ്റേർ കോണ്ട് കുട്ടി എന്തൊക്കെയോ കുത്തിവെച്ചു. നൂറുത്തു പതഞ്ഞ കോഫിയുടെ മുകളിൽ ഒലിവു ശിവരത്തെയും ഇലകളെയും ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കും വിധം ഒരു മനോഹര ചിത്രം തെളിഞ്ഞു വന്നു. ആ വെളുത്ത കപ്പും സോസറും ഒരു പ്ലാസ്റ്റിക് ട്രെയിൽ വച്ച് എന്റെ നേരെ നീട്ടി.

‘ഇസ ഇറ്റ് ഓക്കേ ഇഫ് ഐ സിറ്റ് ഔട്ട് സൈഡ്’.

‘ഷുവർ, മാം’

ആ കോഫിയുമായി ഞാൻ പുറത്തു അനാഥമായി കിടന്ന ഒരു കസേരയിൽ ഇരുപ്പുറപ്പിച്ചു. മേശയിൽ കോഫി ട്രേയും ഫോണും വെച്ചു. കോഫിക്ക് പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ചത്ര ചൂടില്ലായിരുന്നു. അത് കോണ്ട് തന്നെ വേഗം കുടിച്ചു തീരുമോ എന്ന് ഞാൻ ശങ്കിച്ചു. കുറച്ചു നേരം കൂടി ആ നിമിഷങ്ങൾ നീട്ടി കിട്ടാൻ വേണ്ടി ഞാൻ ഫോൺ എടുത്തു.

ആദ്യം വാട്ട്സ് ആപ്പ് തുറന്നു കോളേജ് ഗ്രൂപ്പിലേക്കാണ് കയറിയത്. പഴയതു പോലെ മെസ്സേജുകൾ ഒന്നും വരുന്നില്ല. എല്ലാവർക്കും പരസ്പരം മടുത്തു തുടങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ആദ്യകാലങ്ങളിൽ ഒരു പുതിയ കളിപ്പാട്ടവും ബാല്യവും ഒരുമിച്ചു കിട്ടിയ പോലെയായിരുന്നു വാട്ട്സ് ആപ്പ്. കോളേജിലെ നാല് വർഷക്കാലത്ത് എല്ലാവരും കുറച്ചു കൂടെ സഹിഷ്ണുത ഉള്ളവരായിരുന്നു എന്ന് തോന്നുന്നു. നാല്പതുകളുടെ മധ്യത്തിലെത്തിയിരിക്കുന്ന നമുക്കെല്ലാവർക്കും സ്വന്തമായി അഭിപ്രായമുണ്ട്. ഒരു ശരിയുണ്ട്. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ശരികളെ അംഗീകരിക്കാനുള്ള വൈകല്യം ഉണ്ട്. മിക്കവരും അത് പുറത്തു കാണിക്കാതെ മൗനം പാലിക്കുന്നു. വിരലിൽ എണ്ണാവുന്ന ചിലർ മതത്തെയും, ദൈവത്തെയും, രാഷ്ട്രീയ പാർട്ടികളെയും എതിർത്തും, അനുകൂലിച്ചും വഴക്കടിക്കുന്നു. പിന്നെ ഒരു നീണ്ട മൗനം. ഒന്ന് രണ്ടു പേർ എന്നും ഒന്നോ രണ്ടോ പാട്ടുകളും കവിതകളും ശുഭ രാത്രി സന്ദേശമായി മൂടങ്ങാതെ അയയ്ക്കുന്നു. ഞാൻ അവസാനം വന്ന മെസ്സേജ് വായിച്ചു. ഇന്നത്തെ കവിത. ചങ്ങമ്പുഴ കൃഷ്ണപിള്ളയുടെ ആത്മരഹസ്യം.



‘ സകല്പ സുഖത്തിനും മീതെയായ് മിന്നും
ദിവ്യ-മംഗള സ്വപ്നമേ, നിന്നരികിലെത്താൻ
യാതൊരു കഴിവുമില്ലാതെ, ഞാനെത്ര
കാലം ആതുര ഹൃദയനായ...’

ഈ വരികളിൽ മനസ്സുടക്കി കാഴ്ച കുടിച്ചു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു. അപ്പോഴാണ് പരിചയമില്ലാത്ത നമ്പറിൽ നിന്ന് ഒരു കോൾ വരുന്നത്. ആരോടും സംസാരിക്കാൻ ഒരു താൽപര്യവും തോന്നിയില്ല. അതിനാൽ കോൾ കട്ട് ചെയ്തു. ഉടൻ പിന്നെയും അതെ നമ്പറിൽ നിന്ന് വീണ്ടും വിളി വന്നു. ‘ഹലോ, ഹു ഇസ ദിസ്?’ കുറച്ചു അത്യുപതിയോടെ തന്നെ ചോദിച്ചു.

അങ്ങേ തലയ്ക്കൽ നിന്നും ഒരു പതിഞ്ഞ ശബ്ദത്തിൽ, ‘മീനുവല്ലേ?’

മലയാളിയാണെന്ന് മനസ്സിലായതും സംസാരിക്കാനുള്ള ആകാംക്ഷ വർദ്ധിച്ചു. ‘അതെ, എന്നെ എങ്ങനെ അറിയാം?’

‘മീനാക്ഷിയെ എങ്ങനെ അറിയാതിരിക്കും എന്ന് ചോദിക്ക്’

സുഖിഷിക്കല്ലേ..പറയൂ, ആരാണെന്ന്..

‘മുപ്പത്തിമൂന്നു വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻപേ കളഞ്ഞു പോയ ഒരു ആത്മമിത്രം. എന്ന് പറയാനാണെന്നിരിക്കും. കുറച്ചു നേരം ആലോചിക്കൂ. എന്നിട്ടു ആളെ മനസ്സിലായെങ്കിൽ മാത്രം തിരികെ വിളിക്കൂ.’

ഒന്നും തിരിച്ചു പറയാൻ അവസരം തരാതെ ഫോൺ കട്ട് ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. ആരായിരിക്കാം? മനസ്സ് പതിയെ മുപ്പത്തി മൂന്നു വർഷങ്ങൾ പുറകോട്ടു പോയി. ചങ്ങമ്പുഴയുടെ വരികൾ പിന്നെയും എന്നെ തുറിച്ചു നോക്കുന്നപോലെ തോന്നി.



'സകല്പ സുഖത്തിനും മീതെയായ് മിന്നും
 ദിവ്യ-മംഗള സ്വപ്നമേ, നിന്നരികിലെത്താൻ
 യാതൊരു കഴിവുമില്ലാതെ, ഞാനെത്ര
 കാലം ആതുര ഹൃദയനായുഴന്നിരുന്നു!'

മുപ്പത്തിമൂന്നു വർഷങ്ങൾക്കു മുൻപ്, ആയിരത്തി തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തിയഞ്ച്, അപ്പോൾ ഞാൻ എട്ടാം ക്ലാസ്സിലായിരുന്നു. അതെ, ക്ലാസ് തുടങ്ങി ഒരാഴ്ചകുള്ളിൽ ഞാൻ ട്രാൻസ്ഫർ വാങ്ങി പോയിരുന്നു. അന്ന് നഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട ആളായിരുന്നിരിക്കണം. ഇപ്പോൾ എല്ലാം വ്യക്തമാകുന്നു. ഇത് അവൻ തന്നെ. എത്ര കാലമായി ഞാൻ അവനെ സോഷ്യൽ മീഡിയ മുഴുവനും തപ്പുന്നു!. രണ്ടു പേർക്കും പരിചയം ഉള്ളവരോട് ചോദിക്കാൻ എന്തോ ഒരു മടിയായിരുന്നു. അങ്ങനെയായിരുന്നല്ലോ ഞാനും അവനും തമ്മിലുള്ള ബന്ധം.

മൂന്നു വർഷത്തിന് മുമ്പെയാണ് അവസാനമായി ഒരു അടവ് കൂടിയെടുത്തത്. ഞാൻ കാണാതെ എവിടെയെങ്കിലും ഒളിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നുവെങ്കിൽ പുറത്തു കൊണ്ടുവരുവാനായ് ഞാൻ എന്റെ മുഖപുസ്തകത്തിൽ ഒരു കഥ പോസ്റ്റ് ചെയ്തിരുന്നു. അവനു മാത്രം മനസ്സിലാവുന്ന കഥ. എന്നിട്ടും എന്നെ ഭേദി അവൻ എത്തിയില്ല. എനിക്ക് അങ്ങനെ ആഗ്രഹിക്കാനുള്ള അവകാശം ഉണ്ടോ എന്ന് പോലും തോന്നുന്നില്ല. ഒരിക്കൽ പോലും മുഖത്തോടു മുഖം നോക്കി ഞങ്ങൾ സ്നേഹത്തോടെ സംസാരിച്ചിട്ടില്ല. അവനെ വെല്ലുവിളിക്കാനും തോൽപ്പിക്കാനുമുള്ള അവസരം നോക്കി നടക്കലാണ് എന്റെ ജന്മോദ്ദേശം എന്ന് സഞ്ചു എപ്പോഴും കളിയാകുമായിരുന്നു. സഞ്ചു എന്റെ ബന്ധുവും അയൽവാസിയുമായിരുന്നെങ്കിലും അവനെന്റെ ബോധി ഗൗർവ്വം മനസ്സാക്ഷി സൂക്ഷിപ്പുകാരനുമായിരുന്നു. ഞാനെങ്ങാനും അവന്റെ അടുത്തോട്ടു പോകുന്നത് കണ്ടാൽ എവിടെ നിന്നെങ്കിലും പറന്നെത്തും. സഞ്ചുവിന്റെ വിചാരം ഞാൻ അവന്റെ കൂട്ടുകാരനെ ജീവനോടെ വിഴുങ്ങിക്കളയും എന്നാണെന്നു എനിക്ക് പലപ്പോഴും തോന്നിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.



വൈകുന്നേരങ്ങളിൽ സ്കൂൾ കഴിഞ്ഞു വരുന്ന സമയത്ത് അവന്റെ 'അമ്മ ഗേറ്റിന്റെ മുന്നിൽ നിൽക്കുണ്ടാവും. പതിയെ പതിയെ പെൺകുട്ടികളില്ലാത്ത ആന്റിയുടെ സ്നേഹം പിടിച്ചു പറ്റി. അവരുടെ വീട്ടിലെ മുഴുത്ത മഞ്ഞ റോസാഷൂവ് എന്നും എന്റെ മുടിയിൽ സ്ഥാനം പിടിച്ചു. അങ്ങനെ വീട്ടിലും അവനു സ്വൈര്യം കൊടുത്തില്ല എന്നതാണ് സത്യം. നമ്മുടെ അമ്മമാർ സ്വന്തം മക്കൾക്ക് കണ്ടു പഠിക്കാൻ ഉദാഹരണങ്ങൾ തേടി നടപ്പായിരുന്നല്ലോ അക്കാലത്ത്.

അങ്ങനെയിരിക്കെയാണ് എന്റെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ വേദനയും, അനിശ്ചിതത്വവും, മാറ്റവും സൃഷ്ടിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് ആയിരത്തി തൊള്ളായിരത്തി എൺപത്തിനാല്, ഡിസംബർ മാസത്തിലെ ഭോഷാൽ വിഷവാതക ദുരന്തം സംഭവിക്കുന്നത്. അച്ഛന്, മധ്യപ്രദേശിൽ സ്റ്റീൽ പ്ലാന്റിലായിരുന്നു ജോലി. പത്രത്തിലൂടെ ദുരന്ത വാർത്ത അറിയുന്നതല്ലാതെ അച്ഛനെ പറ്റി ഒരു മാസത്തോളം ഒരു വിവരവും ഇല്ലായിരുന്നു. എന്നും അമ്മയുടെ കണ്ണുനീര് കണ്ടായിരുന്നു സ്കൂളിലേക്ക് പോയിരുന്നത്. ഇത്രയും കഠിനാവസ്ഥയിലും കൂട്ടുകാരോടാരോടും ഞാൻ ഈ ദുഃഖത്തെ പറ്റി പറഞ്ഞില്ല. ഏകദേശം ഒരു മാസം കഴിഞ്ഞതായി ഒരു കത്തിൽ നിന്നായിരുന്നു, അപകടത്തിൽ അച്ഛന് സാരമായ പരിക്കുകളേറ്റെന്നും, ആശുപത്രിയിലായിരുന്നുവെന്നും അറിയുന്നത്. ജീവിക്കാൻ ഒരു വഴിയും ഇല്ലാതെ, രണ്ടു കുട്ടികളെ ചേർത്തുപിടിച്ചു ഉറങ്ങാതിരുന്ന അമ്മയെ സ്വപ്നം കണ്ടു ഇപ്പോഴും ഞാൻ ഞെട്ടിയുണരാറുണ്ട്.



അടുത്ത പ്രാവശ്യം നാട്ടിൽ വന്നപ്പോൾ, ഇനി ഒറ്റയ്ക്ക് കഴിയാൻ പറ്റില്ലായെന്നു 'അമ്മ തീർത്തു പറഞ്ഞു. അതൊടേ, അച്ഛൻ ഞങ്ങളെയും കൊണ്ട് ഭോഷാലിൽ പോകാൻ തീരുമാനിച്ചു. അന്ന്, അവസാന ദിവസം എല്ലാവരോടും യാത്രപറയുന്നതിനിടയിൽ അവനോടു മാപ്പു പറയണമെന്ന് തോന്നി. പക്ഷെ എനിക്കതിന് അവസരം തരാതെ അവൻ സുഖമില്ലായെന്ന് പറഞ്ഞ് ഉച്ചയ്ക്ക് തന്നെ വീട്ടിലേയ്ക്കു പോയി. വൈകുന്നേരം സ്കൂൾ കഴിഞ്ഞു ഞാൻ അവന്റെ വീട്ടിൽ പോയിരുന്നു.

“വയറു വേദനിക്കുന്നുവെന്നു പറഞ്ഞു, ഒരു പുസ്തകവുമായി അവന്റെ മുറിയിൽ കയറിയിരിപ്പുണ്ട്”. ആന്റി പറഞ്ഞു

‘ആരീ, ദേ, മീനു നിന്നെ തിരക്കി വന്നിരിക്കുന്നു.’

‘ഞാൻ വായിക്കുന്നു. അവളോട് പൊയ്ക്കോളാൻ പറയൂ’

ഉച്ചത്തിലുള്ള അവന്റെ സംസാരം കേട്ടിട്ട് ഒരു നിമിഷം പോലും അവിടെ നിൽക്കാൻ തോന്നിയില്ല. ഞാൻ ഇറങ്ങാൻ തുടങ്ങിയപ്പോൾ എന്നെ ആശ്വസിപ്പിക്കാനെന്നോണം ആന്റി പറഞ്ഞു. ‘ഇന്നലെ അകിൾ ഒരു പുതിയ പുസ്തകം വാങ്ങി കൊണ്ട് വന്നു. ഏണസ്റ്റു ഹെമിങ്ങ് വേയുടെ കിഴവനും കടലും. അതും കൊണ്ട് അപ്പോൾ മുതലേ ഇരിക്കുവായിരുന്നു. ഇന്ന് സ്കൂളിൽ നിന്ന് നേരത്തെ വന്നതും അത് കൊണ്ട് തന്നെയായിരിക്കാം.



കരച്ചിലടക്കിപിടിച്ച് ആന്റീയോട് യാത്ര പറഞ്ഞിറങ്ങുമ്പോൾ, ആരെന്നു പോലും അറിയാത്ത ഹെമിങ് വേ യെ ഞാൻ മനസ്സ് കൊണ്ട് വെറുത്തിരുന്നു. ഒരിക്കലും അയാളുടെ പുസ്തകങ്ങൾ വായിക്കില്ലായെന്നു ശപഥവും ചെയ്തു.

അതെ, ഇത് അവൻ തന്നെ. ഫോൺ എടുത്ത് ഞാൻ അപ്പോൾ തന്നെ അവനെ തിരിച്ചു വിളിച്ചു.

‘നീ ഇപ്പോ എവിടെയാണ്?’

“ഞാൻ മയാമിയിൽ നിന്ന് കീ വെസ്റ്റിലേക്ക് പോയ്ക്കൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്നു.

നീ എന്തിനാണ് കീ വെസ്റ്റിൽ പോകുന്നത്?”

‘അതിന്റെ കാരണം നിനക്കറിയാം എന്നാണല്ലോ ഞാൻ കരുതിയത്. എന്റെ ഏറ്റവും പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട എഴുത്തുകാരന്റെ വീടും എഴുത്തു മുറിയും ഒന്ന് കാണണം. അതിനായ് ഞാൻ ഇന്ത്യയിൽ നിന്ന് വന്നു.’

എനിക്ക് ആശ്ചര്യവും, വിശ്വാസമില്ലായ്മയും തോന്നി. ‘അതിനായ് മാത്രം നീ വന്നു?’ ‘അല്ല, എനിക്ക് നിന്നോട് ഒരു കടം വീട്ടാനുണ്ട്. കുറച്ചു കാര്യങ്ങൾ നിന്നോട് പറയാനുണ്ട്. പിന്നെ പറയാം എന്ന് ചിന്തിച്ചു ചിന്തിച്ചു സമയം കടന്നു പോയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇനിയും എനിക്ക് വയ്യ. എനിക്കൊന്നു കാണണം. ഇത്രയും ചുരുങ്ങിയ സമയത്തിനുള്ളിൽ നിനക്ക് ഇവിടെ വരെ എത്താൻ പറ്റുമോ എന്നറിയില്ല. എന്നാലും ഞാൻ കാത്തിരിക്കും. ഇത്രയും പറഞ്ഞു അവൻ ഫോൺ കട്ട് ചെയ്തു. എനിക്കെന്റെ കാതുകൾ വിശ്വസിക്കാൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. ഇത് സ്വപ്നമാണോ?

എന്റെ പ്രാർത്ഥന ദൈവം കേട്ടിരിക്കുന്നു. എനിക്കും ആരോ ഉണ്ടെന്ന തോന്നലിനേക്കാളും വലിയ സന്തോഷമാണും മനുഷ്യന് ലഭിക്കാനില്ല എന്ന് ഞാൻ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞു. നമുക്കുള്ളത് എത്ര കാലം കഴിഞ്ഞാലും നമ്മെ തേടിയെത്തും. എന്ന് ഏതോ പണ്ഡിതൻ പറഞ്ഞതായി എപ്പോഴോ വായിച്ചിരുന്നു.

ആദ്യത്തെ ആവേശം ഒന്നടങ്ങിയപ്പോഴാണ് ഞാൻ എന്തൊരു വിഡ്ഢിയാണെന്ന് തോന്നിയത്. മുപ്പത്തിമൂന്നു വർഷം അവനെ എങ്ങനെയൊരു മാറ്റിയിട്ടുണ്ടാവുക?



എന്റെ സുരക്ഷയെ പറ്റി പോലും ആശങ്ക തോന്നി. ഒരാശ്വാസത്തിനായി ഫോണെടുത്ത് താരയെ വിളിച്ചു. എന്നെ ആരുടെയെങ്കിലും തലയിൽ കെട്ടി വയ്ക്കാൻ കച്ച കെട്ടിയിറങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്ന എന്റെ ഉറ്റ മിത്രം. കേട്ട പാടെ അവൾക്ക് ഉത്സാഹമായി. ഇതുവരെയുള്ള ഞങ്ങളുടെ എല്ലാ കഥകളും വള്ളി പുള്ളി തെറ്റാതെ ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞു കൊടുത്തു.

'നീയിനി ഒന്നും ആലോചിക്കേണ്ട. ദൈവം കൊണ്ട് തന്നതാണെന്നു കരുതിയാൽ മതി. ഇപ്പോൾ തന്നെ മയാമിയിലേയ്ക്ക് വിമാനം കയറുക. വിമാനത്താവളത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ഒരു കാർ വാടകക്കെടുത്ത് കീ വെസ്റ്റിലേക്കു വച്ച് പിടികൂടൂ. ഇന്ന് രാത്രി തന്നെ നിനക്കവിടെ എത്താം. എന്റെ ഒരു കൂട്ടുകാരനും കുടുംബവും മയാമിയിലുണ്ട്. നിന്റെ നമ്പർ ഞാൻ അവനുമു കൊടുത്തേക്കാം. എന്താവശ്യം ഉണ്ടെങ്കിലും അവൻ നിന്നെ സഹായിക്കും'.

അവൾ തന്ന ഉറപ്പിൽ ഞാൻ രാത്രി പന്ത്രണ്ട് മണിയോടെ കീ വെസ്റ്റിലെ ഒരു ഹോട്ടലിൽ ചെക്ക് ഇൻ ചെയ്തു..

രാവിലെ അവൻ ഏണെസ്റ്റ് ഹെമിങ്ങ് വേയുടെ മുദ്രസിയത്തിൽ കാണുമെന്നെ-
നിക്കുറപ്പായിരുന്നു. മുദ്രസിയം തുറക്കുന്ന സമയവും, വിലാസവും ഉറപ്പുവരുത്തി.
ഒൻപതു മണിക്ക് തന്നെ അവിടെ എത്തണം. നല്ല ക്ഷീണം.

രാവിലെ അലാറം കേട്ടാണ് കണ്ണു തുറന്നത്. എണീറ്റ് റെഡി ആയി അടുത്തുള്ള ഒരു കഫെയിൽ നിന്ന് കാഷിയും എഗ്ഗ് വൈറ്റ് ഗാർഡൻ ഓംലറ്റും കഴിച്ച് മുദ്രസിയത്തിൽ എത്തിയപ്പോഴേയ്ക്കും സമയം 8:45 വീടിന്റെ മുന്നിലുള്ള മനോഹരമായ ഉദ്യാനത്തിൽ എന്നെയും പ്രതീക്ഷിച്ച് ഒരു ബെഞ്ച് ഒഴിഞ്ഞു കിടപ്പുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. നേരത്തെ പറഞ്ഞു ഉറപ്പിച്ച പോലെ ഞാൻ അതിൽ ഇരുപ്പായി.

'മീനു'

എല്ലാ ധൈര്യവും ചോർന്നു പോകുന്നു. തല പൊക്കി നോക്കിയില്ല. ടാൻ ലെതെറിന്റെ ഓക്സഫോർഡ് സ്റ്റൈൽ ഷൂസ് ആണ് ആദ്യം കണ്ണിൽ പെട്ടത്. ഡാർക്ക് വാഷ് ബ്ലൂ ഡെനിം ജീൻസ്. ബ്ലൂ ചെക്ക് ഷർട്ട്. നരച്ചു തുടങ്ങിയ ഫ്രഞ്ച് താടി. റെയ്ബാൻ സൺഗ്ലാസ്സ്. എന്റെ ഹൃദയമിടിപ്പ് അവനും കേൾക്കാമോ എന്ന് ഞാൻ സംശയിച്ചു.

അവൻ പയ്യ ബെഞ്ചിൽ എന്റെ അരികിൽ ഇരുന്നു. ഞാൻ കുറച്ചു നീങ്ങി കൊടുത്തു. അവന്റെ പെർഫ്യൂമിന്റെ നനുത്ത ഗന്ധം എന്നിലേക്ക് പടർന്നു.

നിശബ്ദത ഭേദിച്ച് ഞാനാണ് ചോദിച്ചത്.. “അകത്തു കയറാൻ ഞാൻ ടിക്കറ്റ് എടുത്തിട്ട് വരട്ടെ?”

‘വേണ്ട’

അപ്പോ, പിന്നെ ഇതുവരെ വന്നത്?

“എന്റെ ഏണെസ്റ്റ് ഹെമിങ്ങ് വേയും ചങ്ങമ്പുഴയും ഒക്കെ നീയാണെന്നു നിന്നെ അറിയിക്കാൻ’.

ഒരിക്കലും പ്രതീക്ഷിക്കാത്ത, എന്നാൽ കേൾക്കാൻ അത്യധികം ആഗ്രഹിച്ച വാക്കുകൾ... അതോടെ നമ്മുടെ ഇടയിലെ അപരിചിത്യത്തിന്റെ മഞ്ഞു പൊടുന്നനെ ഉരുകി തീർന്നു.

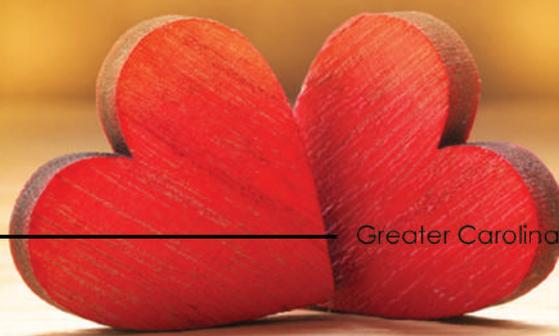
“നീ രാവിലെ എന്തെങ്കിലും കഴിച്ചോ?” അവൻ ചോദിച്ചു

“കഴിച്ചു”.

“ഒരു കോഫി കുടിക്കുന്നതിൽ വിരോധം ഉണ്ടോ?. നിന്നോടൊപ്പം ഒരു കോഫി കുടിക്കുക എന്നത് എന്റെ ബക്കറ്റ് ലിസ്റ്റിലെ ആദ്യത്തെ ഐറ്റം ആണ്”.

“ഓ! അപ്പോൾ ബക്കറ്റുമായി ആണ് ഇറങ്ങിയിരിക്കുന്നതല്ലേ?”

അവൻ ചിരിച്ചു. രണ്ടു കവിളിലെയും നൂണക്കുഴികൾ അവനെ കൂടുതൽ സുന്ദരനാക്കുന്ന പോലെ തോന്നി.





ആദ്യം കണ്ട കോഫി ഷോപ്പിലേക്ക് അവൻ കയറി. പുറകെ ഞാനും. ആ സമയം അവിടെ വലിയ തിരക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നില്ല. എന്റെ മുന്നിലാണ് അവനെങ്കിലും, കൗണ്ടറിലെ പെൺകുട്ടി തല നീട്ടി എന്നോട് എന്താ വേണ്ടതെന്നു ചോദിച്ചു. ഞാൻ രണ്ടു കാപ്പി ഓർഡർ ചെയ്തു. കാപ്പി കുടിച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ അവൻ ഒരു വെളുത്ത ഹാൻഡ് കർച്ചീഫ് എടുത്തു എന്റെ നേരെ നീട്ടി, ചുണ്ടു തുടയ്ക്കാൻ പറഞ്ഞു. പതുക്കെ ആ കർച്ചീഫിൽ ചുണ്ടു ഒപ്പിയപ്പോഴായാണ്, ബെറി ന്യൂഡ് ഷെയ്ഡ് ലെ എന്റെ ലിപ്സ്റ്റിക്ക് ആ വെളുത്ത കർച്ചീഫിൽ പടർന്നത് കാണുന്നത്. എന്റെ കണ്ണിലെ കുറ്റബോധം കണ്ടിട്ടാവണം ഒരു ചിരിയോടെ അവൻ അത് വാങ്ങി മടക്കി പോകാൻ തുടങ്ങി. 'ബക്കറ്റ് ലിസ്റ്റ് നമ്പർ 2 കഴിഞ്ഞു'.

'നമുക്ക് ഒന്ന് നടക്കാമോ?' എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു അവൻ എണീറ്റു. എവിടെയെന്നു ചോദിക്കാതെ ഞാൻ കൂടെ നടന്നു. റോഡ് മുറിച്ചു കടക്കാൻ നേരം അവൻ എന്റെ കൈയിൽ മുറുകെ പിടിച്ചു. കോർത്ത് പിടിച്ച വിരലുകളിലൂടെ എന്തോ ഒരു ശക്തി എന്നിലേയ്ക്ക് പ്രവഹിക്കുന്ന പോലെ തോന്നി. റോഡിന്റെ അപ്പുറം എത്തിയിട്ടും ഞാൻ പിടി വിട്ടില്ല. വർഷങ്ങളിലായി കൂടെ ജീവിക്കുന്ന പങ്കാളിയെ പോൽ എന്നെയും ചേർത്ത് പിടിച്ചു അവൻ നടന്നു.

ഞാൻ മൂന്നു വർഷങ്ങൾക്ക് മുൻപെഴുതിയ എന്റെ ആദ്യ പ്രണയം എന്ന നമ്മുടെ കഥ അവനെ പറഞ്ഞു കേൾപ്പിച്ചു.

'അപ്പോൾ അത്രയൊക്കെ അടിയുണ്ടാക്കിയിട്ടും നിനക്ക് എന്നോട് ഇഷ്ടമായിരുന്നല്ലോ' ഞാൻ ചിരിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് തോളിലേക്ക് ചാഞ്ഞു, ഒന്ന് കൂടെ ചേർന്ന് നടന്നു.

"അതിനു മുന്നേ നടന്ന ഒരു കാര്യം നിനക്കോർമ്മയുണ്ടോ?" അവൻ ചോദിച്ചു. 'രണ്ടാം ക്ലാസിലെ ഓണ പരീക്ഷയായിരുന്നു എന്നാണെന്റെ ഓർമ്മ. ഒരു പരീക്ഷക്ക് നിനക്ക് രണ്ടു മാർക്ക് കുറഞ്ഞു. സമീകൃതാഹാരത്തിന്റെ പേര് പറയുക എന്നതായിരുന്നു ചോദ്യം . നീ മൂട്ട എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു, ഞാൻ പാൽ എന്നും. എനിക്ക് മുഴുവൻ മാർക്കും കിട്ടി;



നിനക്ക് രണ്ടു മാർക്ക് കുറഞ്ഞു. നീ കുറെ നേരം ടീച്ചറിനോട് തർക്കിച്ചെങ്കിലും ഫലമുണ്ടായില്ല. മാർക്ക് കുറഞ്ഞു എന്ന കാരണം നീ വീട്ടിൽ പോകാതെ അവിടെ തന്നെ ഇരുന്നു.

‘എനിക്ക് നല്ലവണ്ണം ഓർമ്മയുണ്ട്. അന്ന് എല്ലാവരും എന്നെ കളിയാക്കി ചിരിച്ചു.’

ഇല്ല. ഞാൻ കളിയാക്കിയില്ല. ഞാൻ കൂട്ടുകാരോടൊപ്പം ക്ലാസ്സിൽ നിന്നിറങ്ങി പോയെങ്കിലും നീ അവിടെ ഇരുന്ന് കരയുന്നത് എന്നെ വേദനിപ്പിച്ചു. കുറച്ചു ദൂരം നടന്നു കഴിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ എനിക്ക് മുത്രമൊഴിക്കണം എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു തിരിച്ചു ഓടി ക്ലാസ്സ് മുറിയിലേയ്ക്കു വന്നു. അപ്പോൾ സുമതി ടീച്ചർ അങ്ങോട്ട് വരുന്നതും നാല്പത്തിയെട്ടു മാറ്റി അൻപതാക്കി തരുന്നതും നീ സന്തോഷത്തോടെ തുള്ളിച്ചാടി പോകുന്നതും കണ്ടിട്ടാണ് ഞാൻ തിരികെ പോയത്.

വീണ്ടും അവൻ എന്നെ തോൽപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. വേറെ ആർക്കും അറിയില്ല എന്ന് ഞാൻ കരുതിയ ആ രഹസ്യം പോലും അവൻ ഓർത്തു വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. എന്റെ ഹൃദയം സ്നേഹം കൊണ്ട് നിറഞ്ഞു.

‘നീ എവിടെയാ ഇന്നലെ താമസിച്ചത്?’ ഞാൻ ചോദിച്ചു.

“ഇവിടുന്ന് കുറച്ചു ദൂരെ. രാവിലെ ചെക്ക് ഔട്ട് ചെയ്തിട്ടാണ് വന്നത്”.

“എന്നാൽ, നമുക്ക് നിന്റെ കാറ് തിരികെ കൊടുക്കാം. അപ്പോ പിന്നെ നമുക്ക് ഒന്നിച്ചു എല്ലായിടവും പോകാമല്ലോ”.

“ഇന്ന് തന്നെ തിരികെ പോകാൻ ഉദ്ദേശിച്ചാണ് ഞാൻ വന്നത്. എന്റെ ഒരു അമ്മാവൻ അറ്റ്ലാന്റിയിൽ ഉണ്ട്. അവരുടെ വീട്ടിൽ കൂടി പോയിട്ട് രണ്ടു ദിവസത്തിനകം നാട്ടിലേയ്ക്ക് മടങ്ങണം.

എനിക്ക് സങ്കടം വന്നു. ഇന്ന് ഒരു ദിവസമെങ്കിലും എന്നോടൊത്തു ചിലവഴിക്കാമോ?





കുറച്ചു നേരം അവൻ എന്റെ കണ്ണുകളിലേയക്ക് നോക്കി നിന്നു. ശരി. നീ എന്റെ കാറിന്റെ പുറകെ വരൂ. ഈ വണ്ടി തിരികെ ഏൽപ്പിച്ചു നമുക്ക് നിന്റെ കാറിൽ തിരിച്ചു വരാം.

ഒരു ബാക്ക് പാക്ക് മാത്രമായിരുന്നു അവന്റെ ലഭ്യത. ഇവിടെ രണ്ടു മണിക്കൂർ ഫ്ലൈറ്റ് യാത്രയ്ക്ക് ഞാൻ ഒരു വലിയ സൂട്ട് കേസുമായാണല്ലോ വന്നതെന്നാർത്തു എനിക്ക് തന്നെ ചിരി വന്നു.

ഉച്ച ഭക്ഷണവും കഴിഞ്ഞു ഞങ്ങൾ തിരികെ എന്റെ മുറിയിലെത്തി. രണ്ടു പേരും കുളിച്ചു ഫ്രഷ് ആയി പഴയ ഓരോ കഥകൾ പറഞ്ഞു അടുത്തടുത്തിരുന്നു.

ഇനി ഒരിക്കലും അവൻ എന്നെ വിട്ടു പോയില്ലെങ്കിലെന്നാശിച്ചു. പക്ഷെ അങ്ങനെ ആവശ്യപ്പെടാൻ എനിക്കധികാരം ഉള്ളതായി തോന്നിയില്ല.

മാത്രമല്ല, അവന്റെ കുടുംബത്തെ പറ്റിയോ കുട്ടികളെ പറ്റിയോ ഞാൻ ഒന്നും ഇത് വരെ ചോദിച്ചില്ല. അത് അറിയണ എന്ന് തോന്നി. ഇവിടെ എന്റെ കൂടിയിരുന്ന അവൻ എന്റേത് മാത്രം. പേര് കൊണ്ട് പോലും എനിക്ക് അവന്റെ അവകാശികളെ അറിയണം.

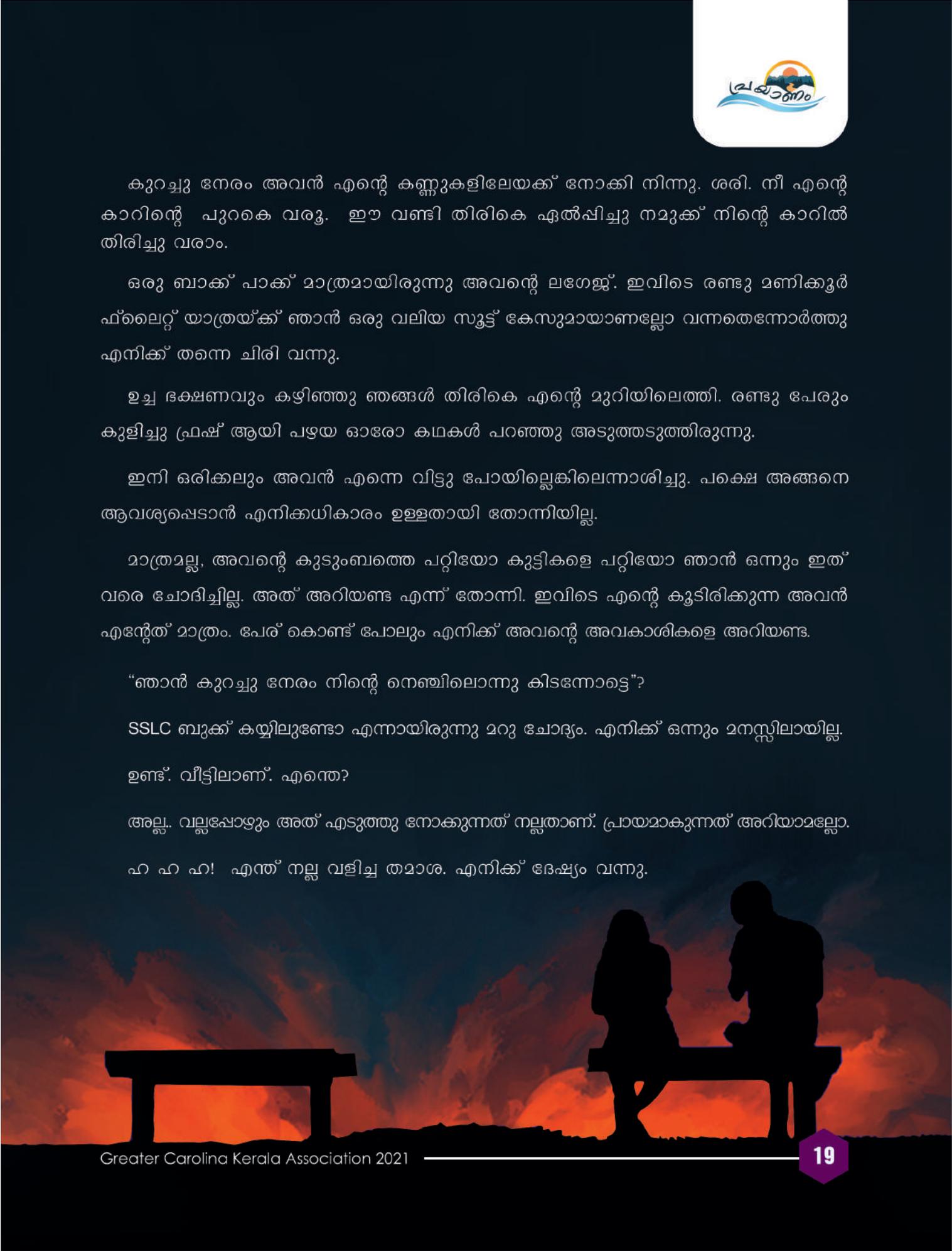
“ഞാൻ കുറച്ചു നേരം നിന്റെ നെഞ്ചിലൊന്നു കിടന്നോട്ടെ?”

SSLC ബുക്ക് കയ്യിലുണ്ടോ എന്നായിരുന്നു മറു ചോദ്യം. എനിക്ക് ഒന്നും മനസ്സിലായില്ല.

ഉണ്ട്. വീട്ടിലാണ്. എന്തെ?

അല്ല. വല്ലപ്പോഴും അത് എടുത്തു നോക്കുന്നത് നല്ലതാണ്. പ്രായമാകുന്നത് അറിയാമല്ലോ.

ഹ ഹ ഹ! എന്ത് നല്ല വളിച്ച തമാശ. എനിക്ക് ദേഷ്യം വന്നു.



ഇപ്പോ ഉറപ്പായി.. ഇതെന്റെ പഴയ മീനൂ തന്നെ എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു എന്നെ നെഞ്ചോട് ചേർത്ത് പിടിച്ചു, ദേഷ്യം കണ്ണ് നീരായി പൊടിയാൻ നിമിഷങ്ങൾ പോലും വേണ്ടി വന്നില്ല.

അയ്യേ.. എന്റെ വഴക്കാളി കുറുമ്പി ഇങ്ങനെ മാറി പോയോ?

രണ്ടു പേരും കുറെ നേരം കരഞ്ഞു. എന്റെ ജീവിതത്തെ പറ്റിയും അവൻ ഒന്നും ചോദിച്ചില്ല. എല്ലാം അവൻ അറിയുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നു എന്നെന്നിങ്ങുറപ്പായിരുന്നു. ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഇത് വരെ അനുഭവിക്കാത്ത എന്നാൽ കിട്ടിയിരുന്നെങ്കിൽ എന്നാശിച്ച ഒരു സായാഹ്നവും രാത്രിയുമായിരുന്നു അത്. എനിക്ക് സ്വപ്നം കാണാൻ അറിയുന്നതിലും അപ്പുറം അവൻ എന്നെ സ്നേഹിച്ചു. ഓരോ ചുംബനങ്ങളും എന്നിൽ പുതു ജീവൻ ഉണർത്തി. അർഹതപ്പെട്ട ഈ സ്നേഹം ഇത് വരെ നിഷേധിക്കപ്പെട്ടല്ലോ എന്നോർത്ത് വിഷമം തോന്നി. അവന്റെ കരവലയത്തിനുള്ളിൽ ഞാൻ സുരക്ഷിതയായിരുന്നു. എന്നുടലിൽ അവൻ ചുംബനത്തിൽ പൊതിഞ്ഞു കവിതകൾ രചിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരുന്നു. ആത്മാവിനെ ഉണർത്തുന്ന പ്രണയ ഗീതങ്ങൾ. കുറെ കാലങ്ങൾക്കു ശേഷം ഉറക്ക ഗുളിക എടുക്കാതെ ഞാൻ സുഖമായി ഉറങ്ങി.

“എന്നെ ഒന്ന് എയർപോർട്ട് വരെ ഡ്രോപ്പ് ചെയ്യാമോ?”

നിന്നെ ഒരിടത്തും വിടുന്നില്ല എന്ന് മനസ്സിൽ പറഞ്ഞെങ്കിലും ഞാൻ തലയാട്ടി.

എന്റെ മനസ്സ് വായിച്ച പോലെ അവൻ പറഞ്ഞു, ഞാൻ നിന്റെ കൂടെ തന്നെ എപ്പോഴും ഉണ്ടാവും. ഇനി ഒരിക്കലും നീ വിഷമിക്കരുത്, എന്റെ പഴയ മീനൂവിനെ എനിക്ക് തിരിച്ചു വേണം.

“ഇനി നമ്മൾ എന്ന് കാണും?”

“ഇത് പോലെ, ഞാൻ ഇനിയും വരും. നീ നിനച്ചിരിക്കാത്ത സമയത്ത്”. അതിനു പറ്റിയില്ലെങ്കിൽ അടുത്ത വർഷം ഇതേ ദിവസം ഞാൻ ഇവിടെ ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കും. അത് വരെ മിടുകിയായി ജീവിക്കും എന്നെന്നിങ്ങു ഉറപ്പു തരണം.

ഞാൻ സമ്മതം മൂളി.



കീ വെസ്റ്റിൽ നിന്ന് മയാമി എയർപോർട്ടിലേക്കുള്ള നാല് മണിക്കൂർ ഡ്രൈവ്. അത് ഞങ്ങൾ വളരെയധികം ആസ്വദിച്ചു. മുഹമ്മദ് റാഫിയുടെ 'തും ജോ മിൽ ഗയ ഹോ' എന്ന ഹിന്ദി പാട്ടു പ്ലേ ചെയ്തു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു.

“ഞാൻ കാർ പാർക്ക് ചെയ്തിട്ട് നിന്നോട് കൂടെ ചെക്ക് ഇൻ കൗണ്ടർ വരെ വരാം”.

“വേണ്ട, നീ പോയ്ക്കോളൂ”.

ഒരു ഗുഡ്ബൈ ഹഗ് കൊടുക്കാൻ പോലും എനിക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. പുറകെ ആളുകളെ ഡ്രോപ്പ് ചെയ്യാൻ വണ്ടികൾ വന്നു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നതിനാൽ അവനെ വിട്ടുയുടൻ എനിക്ക് അവിടെ നിന്ന് പോകേണ്ടി വന്നു. വല്ലാത്തൊരവസ്ഥ. വണ്ടിയോടിക്കാനുള്ള കാര്യക്ഷമത ഇല്ലായെന്നുറപ്പായതിനാൽ ഞാൻ അടുത്ത് കണ്ട ഒരു പാർക്കിംഗിൽ വണ്ടി നിർത്തി അനന്തതയിലേക്ക് നോക്കിയിരുന്നു.

എന്റെ റിട്ടേൺ ഫ്ലൈറ്റ് വൈകുന്നേരമായിരുന്നു. രാത്രിയോടെ തിരികെ റാലിയിൽ എത്തി. എന്നിട്ടും അവൻ അറ്റ്ലാന്റിയിൽ എത്തിയെന്നുള്ള മെസ്സേജ് ഒന്നും കണ്ടില്ല. അവന്റെ നമ്പറിൽ ഞാൻ വിളിച്ചു കൊണ്ടേയിരുന്നു. അമ്മാവന്റെ നമ്പർ വാങ്ങാമായിരുന്നു. അതും ചെയ്തില്ല. ഇനി ഇപ്പോ എന്ത് ചെയ്യും എന്നോർത്ത് ഉറക്കം വന്നില്ല.



നേരം വെളുക്കാറായപ്പോൾ സഞ്ചുവിനു മെസ്സേജ് ചെയ്താലോ എന്നോർത്തു. അവന്റെയും ഫോൺ നമ്പർ കയ്യിൽ ഇല്ല. അവൻ മെസ്സേജർ ചെയ്ത് ചെയ്യണേ എന്ന് പ്രാർത്ഥിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് ഒരു മെസ്സേജ് അയച്ചു. “സഞ്ചു, ഇത് മീനു.. നിനക്കോർമയുണ്ടാവും. ആദിയുടെ വീട്ടിൽ പോയി അവന്റെ അറ്റ്ലാന്റിയിലുള്ള അമ്മാവന്റെ നമ്പർ കണ്ടുപിടിച്ച് എന്നെ ഒന്ന് വിളിക്കാമോ? കാര്യം കുറച്ചു അർജന്റ് ആണ്”.

മെസ്സേജ് അയച്ച ശേഷം ഒന്ന് മയങ്ങി പോയി. സഞ്ചുവിന്റെ കോൾ ആണ് എന്നെ ഉണർത്തിയത്.

‘മീനു, നീ കാര്യം അറിഞ്ഞിട്ടാണോ മെസ്സേജ് ഇട്ടത്? ആദി രണ്ടു ദിവസം മുമ്പേ ഒരപകടത്തിൽ പെട്ട് നമ്മെ വിട്ടു പോയി. ഞാൻ അവിടെയായിരുന്നു. അതാണ് തിരികെ വിളിക്കാൻ താമസിച്ചത്. അവൻ പൊട്ടിക്കരയുന്നുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. അമ്മാവനും കുടുംബവും ഇന്നാണ് എത്തിയത്. അവർ വന്നിട്ടാണ് ചടങ്ങുകളൊക്കെ ചെയ്തത്.

പിന്നെ ഞാൻ ഒന്നും കേട്ടില്ല. എന്താ, സഞ്ചുവിനു ഭ്രാന്തായോ? എന്തൊക്കെ പിച്ഛം പേയും ആണ് അവൻ പറയുന്നത്. ഞാൻ ഫോൺ കട്ട് ചെയ്തു.

കുറച്ചു കഴിഞ്ഞപ്പോൾ സഞ്ചു പിന്നെയും വിളിച്ചു. ‘മീനു, എനിക്കിനിയും ഇത് നിന്നോട് പറയാതിരിക്കാൻ വയ്യ. നീ സ്കൂളിൽ നിന്ന് പോയ ശേഷം അവൻ വല്ലാത്തൊരവസ്ഥയിലായിരുന്നു. പിന്നെ പതിയെ പതിയെ അവൻ എല്ലാം മറന്നു എന്നാണ് കരുതിയത്. പക്ഷെ അവൻ ഒന്നും മറന്നിരുന്നില്ല. കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം ഞങ്ങൾ ഒത്തുകൂടിയിരുന്നു. അന്നാണ് ഞാൻ ശരിക്കും മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നത്, നിന്നോടുള്ള ഇഷ്ടം. പല പ്രാവശ്യം ഞാൻ പറഞ്ഞതാണ് നിന്നെ കോൺടാക്ട് ചെയ്യാൻ. പക്ഷെ നീ അവനെ മറന്നു, എന്നവനുറപ്പായിരുന്നു.



“ഇപ്പോ തന്നെ ആദിയുടെ അടുത്ത് പോയി, മീനൂ നിന്നെ മറന്നിട്ടില്ല എന്നെനിക്കു പറയാൻ കഴിയുന്നില്ലല്ലോ’. അവന്റെ ശബ്ദം പിന്നെയും ഇടറി.

മീനൂ എന്തിനാണ് അമ്മാവന്റെ നമ്പർ ചോദിച്ചത്? വേണമെങ്കിൽ ഞാൻ അവിടെ പോയി അത് വാങ്ങാം. പക്ഷെ ഇപ്പോൾ എല്ലാവരും ആദിയുടെ വീട്ടിൽ ഉണ്ട്.

ഇനി നമ്പറിന്റെ ആവശ്യം ഇല്ല സഞ്ജു. പിന്നെ വിളിക്കാം എന്ന് പറഞ്ഞു ഞാൻ ഫോൺ വച്ചു. എനിക്ക് ഒന്നും മനസ്സിലാവുന്നില്ല. അപ്പോൾ, എന്റെ കഴിഞ്ഞ രണ്ടു ദിവസം വെറും സ്വപ്നമായിരുന്നോ? എനിക്ക് ബോധം നഷ്ടപ്പെടുന്ന പോലെ തോന്നി. ഇല്ല! അവൻ ഇനിയും എന്നെ കാണാൻ വരും. വരാതിരിക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെ?. അടുത്ത പ്രാവശ്യം കാണുമ്പോൾ സമ്മാനമായി കൊടുക്കാൻ അവനു വേണ്ടി ഇങ്ങനെ എഴുതി.

പ്രിയമേ, നിന്റെ:

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ചുണ്ടുകളിലെന്റെ യൗവ്വനവും
കൈകളിലെന്റെ ശരീരവും
വാക്കുകളിലെന്റെ മനസ്സും
പുഞ്ചിരിയിലെന്റെ സന്തോഷവും
പ്രവൃത്തികളിലെന്റെ വിശ്വാസവും
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ORCHESTRA

THROUGH THE COLD MIST
OF AN EARLY DAWN
TWO DEER AWOKE
A MOTHER AND HER FAWN

AS THEY GAZED UP AT THE SKY
THE SUN BEGAN TO RISE
RESEMBLING A GORGEOUS BALL
OF GLOWING FIREFLIES

THE ANIMALS TOOK IN THE SCENE
AND SLOWLY BEGAN A HONEY-FILLED TUNE
THE BIRDS SINGING HARMONY
A SOUND AS BRIGHT AS THE MOON

THE OTHERS TOOK THE NOTE
AS THE FROGS BEGAN TO CROAK
THE CRICKETS WENT ON CHIRPING
HIDING IN THE ELEGANT OAK

THE SOUND OF THE TUBA
SO RASPY AND LOW
THE SOUND OF THE FLUTE
SO LIGHT IT WAS AGLOW

THE SOUND OF THE VIOLIN
SO SILKY AND HIGH
THE CHORUS OF ANIMAL SOUNDS
WITH NO TRACE OF A LIE

BUT LURKING BEHIND THE SHADOWS
WAS A DARK, UNSEEN NIGHTMARE
AS QUIET AS A MOUSE
AND A CUE TO THE SNARE

AS IT CREEPED A BIT CLOSER
CLOSER TO THE DEER
IN ITS DEADLY GREEN EYES
HUNGER WAS CLEAR

Greater Carolina Kerala Association 2021



Hridya Ajith
(Poem Winner)

THE SLEEPY DEER
DIDN'T SEEM TO NOTICE
BUT ALL THE FROGS
JUMPED FROM THEIR LOTUS

THE CRICKET'S CHIRPS
ECHOED IN DANGER
THE BIRD'S MELODY
STARTED TO GET STRANGER

THE DEER STARTED TO SENSE
THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG
THEY STOOD UP IN CONFUSION
BUT WEREN'T TOO STRONG

THEN SUDDENLY
A BLACK BLUR SHOT ACROSS
ZOOMING AS FAST AS LIGHTNING
WITH NO INTENTION OF LOSS

THE MOTHER DEER STARTED TO RUN
BUT THE FAWN WAS TOO SLOW
AND IT WAS TOO LATE
FOR THEM TO KNOW

NOW THE MUSIC WAS FAST
THE CRICKETS GAVE IT ALL THEY GOT
THE BIRDS SOUNDED DESPERATE
AND ALL THE FROG'S THROATS HAD A TIGHT KNOT

NOW THE PANTHER TOOK A LEAP
A VICTORIOUS LOOK ON ITS FACE
AND SUNK ITS CLAWS INTO THE FAWN'S NECK
WITH NO GRACE

THE ANIMALS CONTINUED THEIR SONG
FOR A SECOND OR TWO
BUT WITH A FLICK OF THE BATON
EVERYTHING FELL...SILENT

SAMMY & THE TRAIN OF WONDER

One day, a boy named Sammy, found some golden train tracks. He followed them and found a golden and scarlet train. "Wooaah", said Sammy. The train was mystic and mesmerizing. The conductor stepped out of the train and said, "Hey there kid!". Sammy turned around and said, "Hi!" "Do you want to come on the train of wonder?", The conductor asked. "What's that?," Sammy inquired. "It's a train that takes you to all your dreams and wonders", The conductor replied. "Hop on!", he said. Sammy hesitated, but then walked in. "Wooowww", said Sammy. The inside was just as good as the outside. "Cool eh?," asked the conductor. Sammy nodded. "So, lets start the train" said the conductor. Sammy took a seat. It was so comfortable and soft. Sammy felt the train start moving. He saw cows and fields and then suddenly, the train started climbing vertically. "Woah" exclaimed Sammy in surprise. Before he knew it, he was in space! "Wow it's always been my dream to go to space!", said Sammy. After the train stopped climbing, it leveled itself out, and the conductor put the train on autopilot. He stepped out of the locomotive and said to Sammy, "Say, nice dream you have kid". Thanks, Sammy replied." The train is going at 1,000,0000 times the speed of light. We should be in Saggitarius



A, the black hole at the center of our galaxy, The Milky way, in a few minutes.”, said the conductor. “Wait. WHAT ???”, screamed Sammy in surprise. He held on the handle bar tightly. He was going in. “Oh no, here we goooooo.....!”, he screamed. Before he knew it, everything started stretching around like a noodle. “Weird”, he said. Then everything started destretching and he got spat out of the black hole into a “hole”** new world. “Where am I”, Sammy asked himself. “Woah” he said as the train started slowing down. When the train stopped completely, the conductor asked Sammy to step off the train. “Holy hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia”, said Sammy as he stepped off. There were Aliens everywhere. Aliens that had two heads, aliens that had tentacles instead of arms, you name it, “Hi!”, said Sammy . The aliens were actually pretty nice. “Hi”, said the aliens. The aliens greet people the same way we do: “Hi ”, or, “Hello”. Sammy was fascinated by what he saw. The aliens said they need Sammy’s help. They said that King Grailmor, king of the galaxy that the aliens live in, is stealing all their food. The aliens eat off of caterpillars. “That’s awful! I never knew the Milky way was in such danger!”, screamed Sammy in anger. “You must be earthlings”, said the chief alien.” We’re from the Andromeda galaxy, on a planet named Neila. We’re neilings.” “Wait. We travelled to a different GALAXY through a BLACK HOLE???””, screamed Sammy. “Apparently so” said the chief Alien. After a few minutes, the aliens and Sammy came up with a plan. Sammy had a perfect idea. They were gonna stock the food barrels with fake food and drop them all over Neila because king Grailwor will collect all the food on the planet so it would take a while for king Grailwor to collect all the food. While king Grailwor was doing that, a couple of the aliens will go to king Grailwor’s palace and take all the real food and go back to Neila when king



Grailwor goes back to his palace, he will try eating the fake food but then he will realize it's fake. "Ok guys. Lets do this!" Sammy says. King Grailwor was flying for all the food and while he was doing that, some aliens snuck into his palace. "Galaxial ," one of them said. They took all the food and went back to Neila. King Grailmor went back to his palace and tried to eat. He realized it was fake " Nooooo" he yelled. "Thank you ", the aliens said to Sammy, Anytime! ", Sammy replied. "Bye" he said. "Bye!", the aliens replied. So, Sammy hopped on the train and went back to Earth. When he arrived, the conductor asked to Sammy, "did you like it kid?" "No... I LOVED IT !!!", Sammy replied. So the train left the station, and Everything....was....better! BOOM ! Sammy woke up abruptly. He apparently fell off his bed. "So it was just a dream..", Sammy said or was it!? Sammy saw a golden and scarlet train on golden train tracks with the words, "Train of wonder" on the side of it....

THE END



Ayush Nair

Brain Health and Memory

Good memory and brain health are important throughout our life. Brain health refers to how well a person's brain functions across several areas. The major components of brain health include

Cognitive health — how good you think, learn, and remember.

Motor function — how well you make and control movements, including balance.

Emotional function — how good are you in interpreting and responding to emotions (both pleasant and unpleasant)

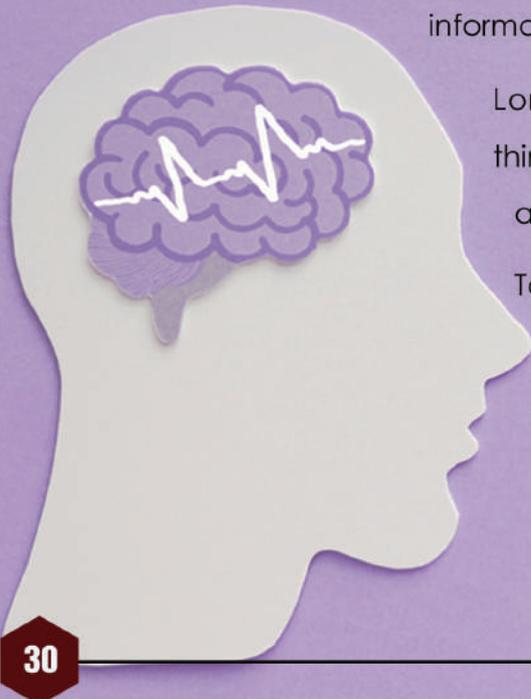
Tactile function — how good you feel and respond to sensations of touch — including pressure, pain, and temperature.

There are two major categories of memory

Short-term memory is the very short time (lasts less than one minute) that you keep something in mind before either dismissing it or transferring it to long-term memory. As we grow older, the amount of time our short-term memory can store information becomes shorter and shorter.

Long term memory: This is what we commonly think of as everyday memory and it is long lasting and usually has unlimited capacity.

Taking care of your overall physical health may help your cognitive health and memory.





Manage chronic health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, and high cholesterol. Preventing or controlling high blood pressure not only helps your heart but your brain as well.

Reduce risk for brain injuries due to falls and other accidents.

Exercise and stress management : Studies have shown that exercise increases the size of a brain structure important to memory and learning, resulting in better spatial memory. Aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, is thought to be more beneficial to cognitive health than non-aerobic stretching and toning. Long term or severe stress inhibits memory formation. Similarly, depression can cause loss of concentration, disorientation, confusion and memory problems.

Sleep

At any age, getting a good night's sleep supports brain health. Sleep problems — not getting enough sleep, sleeping poorly, and sleep disorders can lead to trouble with memory, concentration, and other cognitive functions.



Side effects from certain medicines: long term use of certain medicines may harm your memory, sleep, and brain function. For example, some drugs and combinations of medicines can affect a person's thinking and the way the brain works. Drugs that can harm older adults' cognition include, antihistamines for allergy relief, medicines for anxiety and depression, Sleep aids, Antipsychotics, and some drugs that treat urinary incontinence and also muscle relaxants.

Healthy diet

For most people, the best way to get your nutrients for brain health is from a healthy diet. Unless your health care provider has identified that you have a specific nutrient or vitamin deficiencies like folic acid, B12, or Vitamin D, there is insufficient data to justify taking any dietary supplement for brain health.

Unlike prescription and OTC medicines, dietary supplements are not subject to extensive review and approval by FDA before they are sold. Consumers should approach supplements claiming to improve or boost brain function with skepticism. Lifestyle habits such as getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, eating a healthy diet, staying mentally active and being socially engaged helps improve brain health.



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SOJOURN OF A YOUNG INTREPID

She was nowhere near ambitious while growing up. Her ego took a hard blow when the realization dawned on her that she was one among the few who failed to make a living for themselves at the end of course completion. Being an above average student at all times, she felt worthless and incapable. Instantly, an immense urge to prove her worth to herself and to the folks around her with an extreme desire to conquer the job situation gushed in. But little did she know that it was a hard battle with fate and reality and there was a long way to go.

Her parents were in no position to foster her job ego either as they had bigger and apparently more important plans to secure her life and future. One after the other, with more prioritized life situations creeping in, her dream seemed many light years away.

Her husband had left to the U.S in pursuit of better job options. She and their newborn son was to join him later after he got settled. She was looking forward to joining him in the U. S and pursuing a job there. In the interim, an opportunity flashed in front of her quite unexpectedly. She applied for an advertisement in the newspaper for an intern in a well-known finance company and, to her utter surprise, she was contacted, interviewed and selected. She gladly accepted the job and saw it as stepping stone to her career.

In her newly found job, she had to work on all days except Sundays and she gladly did without any complaints. Days quickly flew by. She connected well with her colleagues and her team except her manager. He always seemed distant and unfriendly and she always wondered why. One day while she was parking her



Opel Corsa, a Scooty came by and parked right next to her. It was her manager. As usual, he gave her a scornful look, didn't smile and walked away. The secret behind the displeasure was revealed. She thought to herself "Its only my Sojourn, so why bother??". However, the reality was, whatever meager amount she was earning was just enough to fill up gas whereas the manager would have been making at least 5 times more than her.

Upon reaching U.S, she was more than eager to file her H1 and jump start her career. But destiny disappointed her once again when the H1 quota got filled much faster that year and she couldn't make it in time. Frustrated and disheartened as she was, she assured herself that it was a wait of only one more year and it would pass quickly. In an effort to make the waiting period more productive and meaningful, she decided to get certified in Java. Within 10 months of reaching U.S, she took another trip back to India to join an institute, learn java and get certified. Back in her college days, never ever had she got a single output in any of her programing labs. It did seem rather far fetched for a person like her with little to zero programming sense to achieve this milestone. But she had decided to put an honest effort again and try her best. Luckily for her, the institute had a dump of many certification questions for an additional fee, and she made use of this to pass her exams. She returned back to the U.S after proudly acquiring 2 jumbo java certifications.

That year, she got her H1 approved and started the job hunt. By then, the job market had slowed down a little and being in a competitive job market like NY didn't help either. Recruiters were looking for competitive candidates and having no U.S experience added to the pain. The chances of finding a job looked really grim. One of their good friends in Ohio suggested that maybe he could get her an interview in his company

and if things worked out well, they could move there. Deep down in her heart, she knew programming was never her forte, but she prepared hard for the interview with both excitement and fear. She impressed her interviewer with power packed computer jargons that included 'robust and scalable systems', 'loosely coupled architecture', 'multithreading', 'façade patterns' and 'dependency injections'. She started visualizing the developers in Ohio eagerly awaiting the multi-threader from NY and started losing sleep over it. Only she and her spouse knew that she would have peed her pants if given the simplest of code to debug. Luckily for both parties, that opportunity didn't materialize as her husband couldn't find a job in Ohio within that time frame.

Again, back to square one and completely frustrated, she restarted her job hunt in NY. Recession hit the globe around the end of that year and her husband lost his job. Now the game changed from finding an additional income to bread winning and survival. Her spouse started searching for jobs everywhere in the U.S and finally found and accepted an offer in Cary, NC.

Their first impression of the new city was very painful. Coming from the hustle of NY, their first memory of NC-540, a state highway, was that of no street lights and no cars except theirs for miles. She whispered, "miles to go before I sleep". It was more than disheartening. Also, if you were to go into the inner-city roads, you could end up in lot of one lane roads and witness cows and horses grazing on the roadsides. She wondered if her next job hunt should target the farming or dairy industry. Seeing how laid back the town was, her hopes and confidence of finding a job further took a deep plunge.



Facing numerous rejections on her applications via well known job sites, she started to devote her attention to craigslist for a while. That's when an opportunity caught her eye. A startup company was hiring beginner programmers to work on a small project. She was disappointed again when her enquiry got a response stating that they had already chosen the candidates. Her spouse's idea of requesting a volunteering opportunity with no pay clicked and the white guy who was the owner of the start up was kind enough to accept it. Blessed with the gift of gab, she hooked him into believing that it was a mutually beneficial opportunity for both : U.S work experience for her and extra work done for him at no cost. But little did the kind white guy know what he was getting into.

She was terrified to go into work each day. The work was mainly in Java SWT framework, which was quite a level above basic java. She was given the simplest of bugs to resolve at first which already felt like Greek and Latin. She showed absolutely no sympathy to her husband, who used to come home after long hours of work, only to work next on her code and resolve her bugs. In the mad scramble to get her things done, many days went by without home cooked meals for dinner alongside fights and arguments over the job. She was sure her husband must have cursed this idea of his many times and must have longed to take it back. This was her last straw of hope and she was desperate to cling on and make it work somehow. It didn't take many days for the kind white guy to figure out that the intern was equivalent to a middle schooler when it came to coding. There was absolutely no output or resolution during work hours and the bugs would be resolved overnight. Being an unpaid employee turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the white guy didn't feel the need to let her go and was kind enough to allow her to continue, learn and build experience.

What an irony of fate again when the intern parked her Benz SUV alongside the owner's old Toyota Corolla. But this time, it didn't seem to bother him at all whereas she started wishing she had a Scooty to drive to work. As days went by, she was getting more and more suffocated. She was desperately wishing for another outlet but didn't want to let this go until she found a new one.

Three long miserable months felt like forever, drenched in pain, fear, sweat and prayers. Voila! Finally, there came the opportunity she had been waiting for. A well-known company in RTP was looking for beginner level candidates for testing their application. She applied with her current intern experience and was called for interview. The interviewer asked her "Why testing instead of development?". She replied mercilessly, "Development is mostly writing code and building a segment of the application. Testing gives clear overview of the overall application, helps to understand and test the quality of software before the customer is impacted and saves the organization money by catching defects earlier in the process. It is one step closer to understanding the business needs and a whole another world if mastered." Interviewers were impressed. They asked her again "where do you see yourself 5 years from now?." She replied confidently, "Much Closer to the business side, probably as a Business Analyst."





She was hired and this time she knew she would be alright. She was extremely thankful to leave the coding background behind and start something afresh. When she broke the news to the kind white guy, she could see his face jumping up with joy, probably even more than what she was feeling. After 8 long years, she finally felt great and wanted to scream to the world confidently that she did it. She couldn't sleep that night and scribbled on her Orkut Wall.

“Happy to quit the vanishing breed, the Housewife”



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“A concerted effort to preserve our heritage is a vital link to our cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational and economic legacies - all of the things that quite literally make us who we are.” - Steve Berry

While embracing our heritage and culture, presenting our performing and literary talents amidst the pandemic was an immense and challenging task. Showcasing the talents of our community during this unprecedented time has enhanced our creativity. Our new normal shifted our perspective from stage to screen. This new opportunity helped us to uncover new talents.

New GCKA board started the journey by celebrating 2020 Christmas and 2021 New Year's virtually. The changing times required immense support from the community as we needed new talents like video editors and videographers. As Henry Ford said "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success". We received a lot of support from our community. We rented L.A dance studio to record our indoor performances and used various outdoor locations as well. We really appreciate the effort and support of participants and volunteers given during both indoor and outdoor recordings, especially considering extreme weather conditions. We could successfully showcase the talents of around 100 talented people with the generous support of the GCKA community and volunteers.

The GCKA Christmas and New Year celebrations premiered via Youtube on January 30 Saturday. Our 3 months of hard work resulted in a 2 hour long movie which showcased more than 25 outstanding performances.

Just like we say every cloud has a silver lining, the pandemic brought to light new bakers and chefs. GCKA allowed new styles of cakes to our baking contest to accommodate our talented young bakers. This change resulted in a higher number of participants. Historically, our baking contest included only plum cake, this year we opened our taste buds to different flavors. The theme "Christmas" presented a variety of flavors and beautiful decorations. We are so happy that the age demographic shifted to a wider range with our youngest participant being 12 years old.

This year, as part of our Christmas celebrations, we introduced a Christmas tree competition. To widen our scope, we used the social media platforms Instagram and Facebook to vote for the winner. The winning entries accumulated around 700 likes from both accounts.

The painting and literary competitions took place just as previous years and once again it was a huge success. We received more than 70 entries in this competition. The literary and drawing competitions were conducted virtually whereas the painting competition was judged in person. "You may enrich the world in a million different ways. And you may enrich the world, simply, with your presence." - Hrishikesh Agnihotri

The most important aspect of this cultural association is embracing our cultural values and enriching our traditions. We are so privileged to serve the GCKA community by enhancing our long-lasting traditions and by introducing new ideas.





ONAM 2020



കരോലിനാ മലയാളി 2021

Christmas 2020 Cake Baking Contest



Glimpses from Christmas & New Year Programme



Christmas Lunch Distribution





GCKA Picnic – 2021



A Travelogue To Munnar (The Three Rivers) Mudhirapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundali



Munnar is a town in Kerala, India. It is one of the top hill stations and tourist destinations. It is located in the southern part of India. Some amazing spots to visit in Munnar are the Tata Tea Museum, Devikulam, Mattupetty, and Anamudi. The Tata Tea Museum is a part of Nallathanni Estate. Tata Tea Museum is a tribute to the tea plantations. Tea plantations are farms that grow different types of *Camellia Sinensis* also known around the globe as tea or chai. Devikulam is a lake town and a small hill station. The name Devikulam is a conjunction of the words, 'Devi', means goddess and 'Kulam' means pond.

Mattupetty has a dam which also has an agricultural garden. In, Mattupetty you can also get a speed boat ride through the dam. A dam is a reservoir that holds back water. Anamudi is the highest mountain in South India, it's an excellent place for adventurous trekking. Trekking is a long journey that you do by foot. When you need a place to stay on your amazing trip in



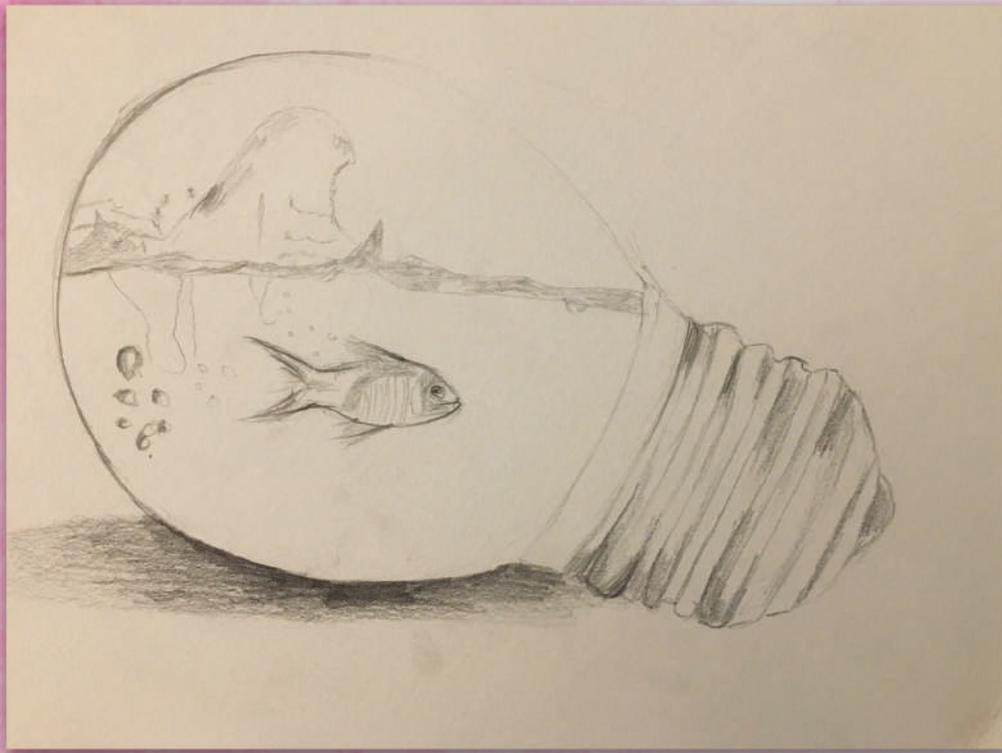
Munnar, here are a few hotels to stay in. Monsoon Grande, Casa Montana, and the Panoramic Getaway. Monsoon Grande is located 13km from the amazing Mattupetty Dam. Casa Montana has a wonderful view of the city and helps visitors relax and relieve stress.



Panoramic Getaway has a nice and cool swimming pool for you and your family. So now, we learned about a few excellent hotels in Munnar, Kerala. We can learn about the cultural background of Munnar, Kerala. Malayalam is the main language of people in Munnar, but some people talk Tamil. Malayalam is one of the Dravidian languages of South India. Munnar, is a great place to visit and enjoy yourselves. I hope you get a chance to visit Munnar and enjoy the beauty. It was so nice to see the monkeys waiting to be fed and I wondered how friendly they were. I could see the harmony in nature. I wish I could visit again, when 'Neelakurinji' blooms.



DIYA MATHEWS



AMRITA ABHILASH
Teenage Drawing - Winner



A SWEET AND SPICY LOVE STORY

Story - Remitha Satheesh

Images - Bhairavi Remitha



There she sat, in all her demure softness; decked in a pristine white bodice while her frilly, lacy golden brown skirt billowed around her in scalloped perfection. She sat waiting, waiting for her beloved, shooting coy glances towards him.

And there he was, her soulmate, suave and dashing in his rich brown coat, drowning her with the smoldering, hot look he sent in her direction. He was built like a Greek God – dark, brooding. The meat, potatoes and onions coming together in balanced perfection to create her perfect mate – the man of her dreams.



She could wait no longer.

"My hero!" She cooed, as she reached out to him. He took her hand in a gentle clasp. She burrowed herself into his steamy warmth, breathing in deep of his spicy aroma. "Mmm, you smell so good. What's that fragrance?" "You like it?" he whispered as he swept her into his arms. "It's called Garam Masala. Heady mix of cardmom, cloves, cinnamon, fennel...." He could no longer think straight. ".....and a bunch of other stuff... that's not important..." he murmured as he started losing himself in the cloudlike softness of her heaving bosom.

He could no longer hold back, and embraced her in all her glory.

"I waited all my life for you," she said, thinking back to all she had done to get here. The endless soaking in water, the horrible sensation of going around in dizzy circles and being crushed, how they drugged her with yeast, and then the final wait. The night of anticipation, her emotions brimming and bubbling as she rose up to be just perfect for him. It all seemed like a dream now that she was finally in his arms.

"Me too my love, I waited a lifetime for this moment. And I... I would rather not remember what I went through to get here."

"It's all behind us now my dearest, and we are together now. Forever!"

And she drew him into her.

"This is so good," she gasped as she soaked in all his fragrant goodness, into every pore of her being. He was totally lost. And so was she. So much so, it was next to impossible to state where he began and she ended.

Bliss

They were just perfect together. A match made in heaven. Appam and Mutton Curry.

Needless to say, they lived happily ever after.



Babu Thomas

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The Magic Forest

“Come back, Shadow!” said 5 year old AJ. He chased his snake through the California woods, then he stopped. AJ looked around. He did not know where he was and as far as he could see there was no way back. Then he saw his snake slithering on a hard platform. “At least my snake can help me get out of here,” thought AJ. He went to take his snake but something buried in the ground made him trip. As he unearthed it, he could not believe his eyes. A robot! Shouted AJ. He had always wished of owning a robot. There was a small problem though. He did not know how to make it work. He tried his luck and pressed the green power button and it brought the robot to life. The robot stated, “Hello, My name is Rex. You are in a magical forest with lots of hidden dangers, but don’t you worry. I will help you get out of here safely. In this magical forest everyday something really bad happens to people who are stuck here.” “Okay,” said AJ, but in his mind, he was very scared. Rex and AJ (with the snake) hiked for 1 day. They found a tent in the middle of the forest and slept in it. AJ was so hungry that he ate 4 peanut butter jelly sandwiches he found in the tent. There was a lot of food in the tent. At midnight, AJ heard a growl. He woke up Rex and they both went outside. A huge bear was standing outside the tent. Then they heard another growl from behind. It was another bear. AJ and Rex fought with the bears. Rex was juggling and throwing one bear from side to side. The other bear came charging at AJ, but AJ was a master at karate and

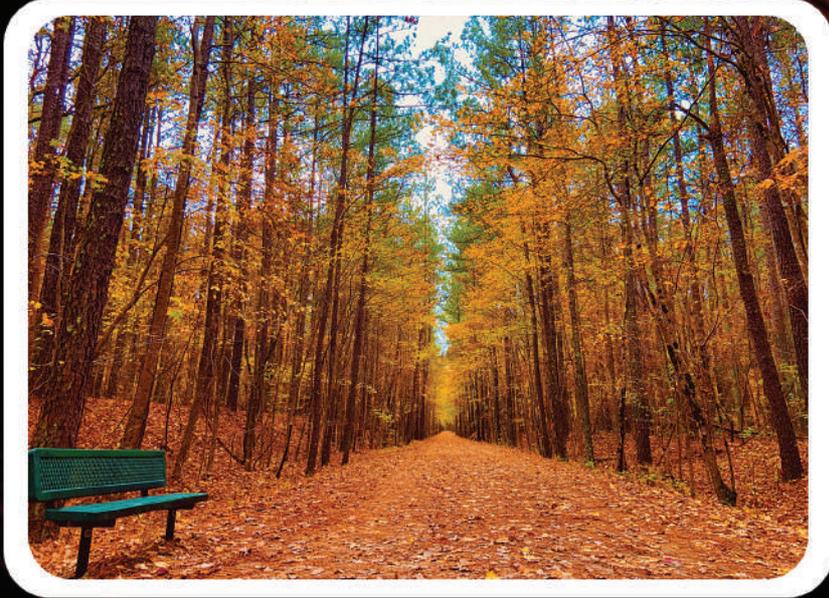


the eye and scared it away. "That was intense," said AJ. AJ and Rex continued the hike the next day. During the hike, AJ got stuck in quicksand. Rex jumped in to help him and got him back to safety. They traveled another mile and saw a tunnel. They went in it. It was filled with jewels, ornaments and gold coins. They took some and went deeper in the cave. The cave had lots of carvings. "Why are there carvings?" AJ asked Rex. "I don't know," said Rex. Then they saw a pathway going out of the cave. The next day as they were continuing their hike, they smelled smoke. "If I am not mistaken, isn't California famous for wildfires?" said AJ." It sure does smell like one approaching us," said Rex. "So let's RUN," Rex and AJ said. The wildfire had caught up to them and the only place they could go was east, so they ran east. AJ's leg got stuck in a hole and Rex had to help him get out but AJ had hurt his leg and could not run. Rex carried AJ and ran as fast as he could. Then he saw a stream with a boat tied to a tree trunk. Rex jumped into the boat along with AJ and rowed away in the boat. After the fire cooled down, they got out of the boat and rested. Rex used some leaves as medicine for AJ's leg which was bleeding slightly. They did not hike for a few days so that AJ's leg could heal. One night as they were about to go to sleep, they heard a noise. They saw a shadow move across the tent. "Was that a human?"

AJ said, shivering. "I think so," said Rex. "Do you mean that there are other humans stuck in this magical forest?" AJ said, still shivering a lot. "Yes," Rex said. The next few days there was strong wind and rain. They had to move their tent somewhere else. When the rain finally stopped they went hiking again. When they were at the mountains, Rex said, "Be careful watch out for mountain lions in this part of the forest." "Mountain lions," said AJ, shaking so badly. Then they saw the same figure as last time. AJ and Rex chased after the figure. Rex leaped at the figure and took him down. AJ said, "Who are you?" The figure said, "I am the one making bad stuff happen to you and something bad is going to happen right now but you cannot hold me accountable for that." Soon 5 mountain lions came charging at AJ and Rex at full speed. Rex and AJ ran in zigzags. 4 lions got lost in the maze but one was still chasing them. The lion pounced on AJ but AJ slid to the left and jumped from the top of the cliff. As he was falling freely he looked around and he saw his home, mom and dad. Then he remembered what Rex said. "Everything here is going to disappear when you get out of this forest, even me." AJ thought about Rex and that made him feel sad, "it's time for me to help Rex get out of that forest," said AJ and then he went back into the forest.



HRITHIK AJITH



Photography **First Rohit Peter**



Rohit Peter



Photography **Second Balu Narayanan**



Balu Narayanan



Financial report for 2020 - 2021

Manoj Balakrishnan

The main purpose of a nonprofit organization is to raise money to serve the community and advance the mission of the organization; the profits stay in the organization and will be used to sustain this mission. This is what GCKA has been all about, and I want to take this time to thank the prior GCKA BOD for handing over a solid financials. We are thankful to our sponsors, who, even during challenging times, were good enough to provide us with the funding needed to serve our community and advance the mission of GCKA.

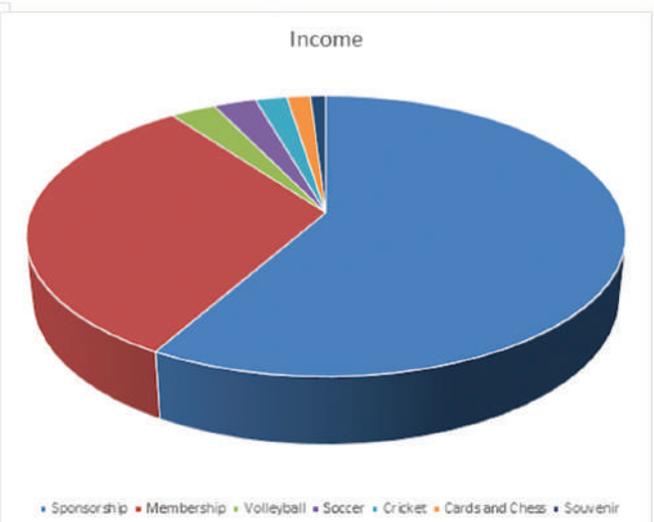
This year also we got funding using the tier based sponsorship levels of Platinum (Sebastian George - Vema Mortgage LLC), Diamond (Jubi Chackunkal - C4D Mortgage), Gold (Sunny Sebastian - Liberty Real Estate Inc.), Silver (Abu Kuttan – Real Triangle Properties and Grand India Mart - Tommy / George). In addition we got funding from our members as part of the membership fees. GCKA also conducted various sports events like Soccer, Cricket, Volleyball, Chess and Cards games through which as well we received funding.

The main responsibility of our team was to make sure that these funds are used wisely, so that we can maximize the benefits that we get out of the hard earned money from sponsorships, memberships fees, and registrations from the sports events. We did not want our members to take the burden during these difficult times. To meet this commitment, we decided against increasing membership fees, registration fees for sports. We even waived some of these costs as well as the cost for Christmas lunch.



GCKA BOD thanks all our sponsors, members, volunteers, and families for coming together as a community and making this year's events and activities possible. We look forward to continuing to grow as an organization and community in the upcoming years.

- Sebastian George - Vema Mortgage LLC
- Jubi Chackunkal - C4D Mortgage
- Sunny Sebastian - Liberty Real Estate Inc.
- Abu Kuttan - Real Triangle Properties
- Grand India Mart - Tommy/George
- Babu Thomas - Evershine Properties Inc
- Krish Parlikad - V Guard Insurance
- Binny Joseph - Binny Realty



ഒരു തണുത്ത വെളുപ്പാം കാലത്ത്

പതിവ് പോലെ ഈ കൊല്ലത്തെയും ക്രിസ്മസ് അവധികാലം പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുടെ ഒപ്പം ചിലവഴിക്കാൻ അവർ തയ്യാറെടുത്തു. കുട്ടികൾക്കൊപ്പം മുതിർന്നവരും ഉറ്റു നോക്കുന്ന ഒരു കൂടിക്കാഴ്ചയാണത്. എല്ലാ ടെൻഷനുകളും മറന്ന് ഒന്ന് ശ്രീ ആകാനും, സ്വന്തം വീട്ടിലെ പോലെ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം ചെലുത്താനും പറ്റിയ ഒരേ wavelength -ഇൽ സഞ്ചരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ചെറിയ പറ്റം കൂട്ടുകാർ. കുട്ടികൾ കളികളും സീവിയും ഒക്കെയായി അവരവരുടെ ലോകങ്ങളിൽ. വിശക്കുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമാണ് അവരെ കണി കാണാൻ കിട്ടുക. വൈകിട്ട് ഒരു 6-6.30 മണിയോടെ തുടങ്ങുന്ന മുതിർന്നവരുടെ വട്ടമേശ സമ്മേളനം പുലർച്ചെ 3-4 മണി വരെ നീളും. അകത്താക്കുന്ന പാനീയങ്ങളുടെ ഡോസ് കൂടി കൂടി വരുന്തോറും നമ്മുടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുടെ ഉള്ളിലെ പച്ചയായ മനുഷ്യർ സട കൂടഞ്ഞ് ഉയർത്തേഴുന്നേൽക്കും. ചിലർ കാലഘട്ടം മറന്ന് യൗവ്വന കാലങ്ങളിലേക്കു സഞ്ചരിക്കും, ചിലർക്ക് കാവിലമ്മയുടെ പ്രത്യേക അനുഗ്രഹം കൊണ്ട് പാട്ടും ഡാൻസും തളം കെട്ടി നിൽക്കും, ചിലർക്ക് സകടങ്ങൾ അണപൊട്ടി ഒഴുകും ഇനി മറ്റു ചിലരിലോ, മനസ്സിന്റെ ആഴങ്ങളിൽ പൂട്ടിയിട്ടു ശാന്തമായി കിടത്തിയുറക്കിയ പല അപകടകാരികളായ അസ്ഥികൂടങ്ങളും പുറത്തിറങ്ങും. ഇങ്ങനെ, വ്യക്തികളിലുള്ള വ്യത്യസ്തതകൾ ഒരുപാടാണ്. പക്ഷെ, എന്ത് തന്നെയായാലും, അവിടെ കാഴ്ച വെക്കാറുള്ള കലാപരിപാടികൾക്ക് ഒരു രഹസ്യ സ്വഭാവമുണ്ട്. ഒരു Vegas ട്രിപ്പ് എന്ന പോലെ! ആ സായാഹ്നത്തിനു തിരശീല വീഴുന്നതോടെ പിന്നീട് ആരും ആ സംഭാഷണങ്ങൾക്ക് തിരി കൊളുത്തുകയോ, അന്വേഷിച്ചു വരികയോ ഒന്നും തന്നെ ചെയ്യാറില്ല. അങ്ങനെയുള്ള ഒരു മനോഹര രാത്രിയുടെ യാമങ്ങളിൽ പൊട്ടി വിരിഞ്ഞ കുറച്ചു നിമിഷങ്ങളാണിത്.



സമയം ഏതാണ്ട് അർധരാത്രി ആയിക്കാണും. പുറത്തു നല്ല മഴ പെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട്. ചർച്ചകളുടെ ദിശ മാറി വിഷയം പ്രണയത്തിലേക്ക് കടന്നു. തുവാനത്തുമ്പികൾ എന്ന സിനിമയിലെ നമ്മുടെ ജോൺസൺ മാഷിന്റെ മാസ്റ്റരികതയുള്ള, പ്രണയം ആവാഹിക്കുന്ന, ബാക്ഗ്രൗണ്ട് മ്യൂസിക്യൂം, പദ്മരാജൻ മലയാളികളുടെ മനസ്സിൽ കോറിയിട്ട് 'ക്ലാർ' എന്ന നൊമ്പരപ്പുവും ഒക്കെയായി സംസാര വിഷയങ്ങൾ. പൊതു താല്പര്യം അനുസരിച്ച്, വേട്ടയാടുന്ന ആ മ്യൂസിക് വീണ്ടും പ്ലേയ് ചെയ്തതോടെ, നമ്മുടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുടെ ഉള്ളിലുള്ള കമിതാക്കൾ ഉണർന്നു. തങ്ങളുടെ ഇണയെ ചേർത്തു പിടിച്ച് അവർ യൗവ്വന കാലങ്ങളിലേക്ക് സഞ്ചരിച്ചു.

അവിടെയുള്ളവർക്കിടയിൽ ഏറ്റവും മനഃപൊരുത്തമുള്ള ജോഡികൾ എന്ന് ഗ്രൂപ്പ് ഐക്യവണ്ണേന പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്ന ദമ്പതിമാരാണ് ഗോപിയും രേഖയും. സാഹചര്യം എത്ര വലുതായാലും ചെറുതായാലും വാക്കിലും പ്രവൃത്തിയിലും എപ്പോഴും സ്നേഹവും ഒത്തൊരുമയുമുള്ളവർ. രേഖ ഒരു ഭാഗ്യവതി തന്നെ എന്ന് ബാക്കിയുള്ള സ്ത്രീജനങ്ങൾക്കും, ഗോപി പലപ്പോഴും തങ്ങൾക്ക് ഒരു പാരയല്ലേ എന്ന് പുരുഷന്മാർക്കും, ഉറപ്പായി ചിലപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും തോന്നിക്കാണും

ആ പ്രണയ സന്ധ്യക്ക് മാറ്റു കൂട്ടുവാണെന്നോണം നമ്മുടെ ഗോപി തന്നിരിക്കെ പ്രിയപ്പെട്ട കവിതയുടെ രണ്ട് വരി മൂളുന്നു.

'അവളുടെ കവിളിൽ തുടുവിരലാലെ കവിതകളെഴുതിയതാറെ, തരളിതയാക്കിയതാറെ, അവളെ പ്രണയിനിയാക്കിയതാറെ?'

ഗോപിയുടെ പാട്ട് കേട്ടതോടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ വിട്ടില്ല. 'ഈ പാട്ട് ഇറങ്ങിയത് നിന്റെ ക്രാമ്പസ് കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിലല്ലേ ?? സത്യം പറ, നിനക്ക് വല്ല പ്രേമവും ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നോ? 'ഗോപി മറുപടി പറഞ്ഞു, 'പഠിക്കുന്ന കാലങ്ങളിൽ ഒരു വ്യക്തിയോടെകിലും പ്രേമം തോന്നാത്ത മനുഷ്യന്മാരുണ്ടോ? എന്റെ ഭാര്യക്കും അറിയാം, എനിക്ക് ഒരു പ്രേമം ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നെന്ന്'. ഗോപിയുടെ ഈ ലഘുവായ മറുപടി കേട്ട് കൂട്ടുകാർക്ക് ജിജ്ഞാസ കൂടി.

'ആദ്യാനുരാഗം ഒരു പ്രത്യേക അനുഭൂതി അല്ലെ?, ഒരിക്കലും മറക്കില്ല എന്നൊക്കെ പറയാറുണ്ട്, ശരിയാണോ?? 'ഗോപി വീണ്ടും മാതൃകാ ഭർത്താവായി. 'മോനെ, സത്യസന്ധതയുള്ള പ്രണയത്തിന്റെ ഒരനുഭൂതി ഒന്ന് വേറെ തന്നെയാണ്. ഞാൻ അതറിഞ്ഞിട്ടുള്ളത് ഞങ്ങളുടെ engagement കഴിഞ്ഞ് കല്യാണത്തിനിടക്കുള്ള ആറു മാസക്കാലമാണ്. കോളേജിൽ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നതൊക്കെ വെറും ടൈംപാസ്സ്. 'വിഷയത്തിന്' എരുവും പുളിയും കൂടിയതോടെ എല്ലാവരുടെയും ഗ്ലാസ്സുകൾ കാലിയാകുന്നതും refill ഒഴികുന്നതും വേഗത്തിലായി. കൂട്ടുകാർ വീണ്ടും ആരാഞ്ഞു. 'ഡാ, എന്തായിരുന്നു കക്ഷിയുടെ പേര്? ഇപ്പോൾ എവിടെയുണ്ട്?' 'ഗോപി പറഞ്ഞു' പേര് പല്ലവി. ഇപ്പോൾ കാലിഫോർണിയയിൽ ഉണ്ട്. 'കൂട്ടുകാരിൽ ഒരാൾ ചാടിപ്പിടഞ്ഞ് ഫേസ്ബുക്കിൽ തപ്പി 5 പല്ലവിമാരെ കണ്ടെത്തി. മലയാളി ലാസിറ്റ് നെയിം വെച്ച് നോക്കിയപ്പോൾ അത് രണ്ടായി ചുരുങ്ങി. അതിൽ ഒരാൾ അതീവ സുന്ദരി. സാധാരണക്കാരിയായ പല്ലവിയെ ചൂണ്ടി കാണിച്ച് കൂട്ടുകാരൻ പറഞ്ഞു: 'ഇത്രത്ര മോശമില്ലല്ലോ 'ഗോപി ഉടനെ തിരുത്തി 'ഏയ്, ഇതല്ല, ആ സുന്ദരി തന്നെ 'അത് കേട്ട പാടെ കൂട്ടത്തിലെല്ലാവരും സുന്ദരിയെ കാണാൻ എഴുന്നേറ്റു വന്നു. ഇത്രയും നേരം ഒരു കൂസലുമില്ലാതെ പയറ്റ് പോലെ ഇരുന്ന രേഖ അല്പം അസ്വസ്ഥയായോ എന്നൊരു സംശയം. ഏയ്, ഉണ്ടാകില്ല, ഇവർ മാതൃക ദമ്പതികളല്ലേ?

'നീ ആള് പുലിയാണ് മോനെ, ഇതെങ്ങനെ ഒപ്പിച്ചെടുത്തു? 'ആ ചോദ്യം ഗോപിയെ അഭിമാനപൂരിതനാക്കി. 'അവൾക്കു എന്റെ പാട്ടുകൾ വലിയ ഇഷ്ടമായിരുന്നു. 'രേഖയുടെ ഹൃദയത്തിൽ ഒരു വലിയ ഇടി വെട്ടി. അപ്പോ ഈ പാട്ട് എനിക്കുള്ളതല്ല അല്ലെ? ചങ്ങാതി വീണ്ടും ചോദിച്ചു. 'നിങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ എന്താ സംഭവിച്ചത്? നിനക്ക് എങ്ങനെ ഇത് വിട്ട് കളയാൻ തോന്നി ?? 'വിട്ടു കളഞ്ഞതോ?' ഗോപി ദീർഘ നിശ്വാസമെടുത്തു.



'കോളേജിൽ രാഷ്ട്രീയവും, പ്രേമവും, പഠനവും ഒക്കെ ഒന്നിച്ചു കൊണ്ട് പോകാൻ ശ്രമിച്ചതിന്റെ ശിക്ഷയാണ് എനിക്ക് കിട്ടിയത്. അവൾ നല്ല മിടുക്കി ആയിരുന്നു. ക്യാമ്പസ് സെലക്ഷനിൽ **Banglore Siemens** - ഇൽ ജോലി വാങ്ങി പോയി. എന്റെ ഗതികേടിനു മൂന്ന് പേപ്പർ പാസ് ആവാതെ ഒരു കൊല്ലം എനിക്ക് പോയി കിട്ടി. 'ഇത്രയും നേരം ആകാംഷയുടെ മുൾമുനയിൽ ആയിരുന്ന രേഖക്ക് സമാധാനത്തിന്റെ വെള്ളക്കൊടി കണ്ട് തുടങ്ങി.



'അപ്പോ അതോടെ നിന്റെ പണി പാളി അല്ലേ? 'ഗോപിക്ക് അത് കൊണ്ടു. 'ഏയ്', പിന്നങ്ങോട്ടാണ് ഞങ്ങളുടെ പ്രേമം ഒന്ന് കൂടി മുറുകുന്നത്. രേഖക്ക് വീണ്ടും ചുവന്ന കൊടിയുടെ ദർശനം ഉണ്ടായി. 'രണ്ടു പേരും രണ്ടു സ്ഥലത്തായതുകൊണ്ടു ഫോണും ഇമെയിലും ആയിരുന്നു പ്രധാന കോൺടാക്ട്. എങ്ങിനെയെങ്കിലും ഒന്ന് പാസായി **Banglore** എത്തിയാമതി എന്നായിരുന്നു എന്റെ മനസ്സിൽ. 'രേഖയുടെ ഹൃദയം പുകഞ്ഞ് കരിയുന്നതിന്റെ മണം ഗോപിക്കൊഴിച്ച് മറ്റൊരാൾക്കും കിട്ടി തുടങ്ങി.'

എന്നിട്ടോ, പിന്നെന്തുണ്ടായി ? 'ഞാൻ കഷ്ടപ്പെട്ട് പാസ്സായി ഒരു കൊല്ലം കഴിഞ്ഞ് ബാംഗ്ലൂർ ചെല്ലുമ്പോൾ അവൾക്ക് എന്നെ വേണ്ട. ഞാൻ പോര എന്നായി. സ്വന്തം കാര്യം, വീടും, ജോലിയും ഒക്കെ ഉള്ളൊരുത്തനായി അടിച്ചു പൊളിച്ചു നടക്കുന്നു. എന്നെ കാണുന്നതേ പുള്ളം!! 'ഇത്രയും പറഞ്ഞതോടെ ഗോപിയുടെ കണ്ണുകൾ നിറഞ്ഞൊഴുകാൻ തുടങ്ങി. നല്ല ഫിറ്റ് ആയിരുന്ന ഗോപി തേങ്ങലിനിടയിൽ ഇത്രയും കൂടെ പറഞ്ഞൊഴിച്ചു 'നിങ്ങളറിയാഞ്ഞിട്ടാ, എനിക്ക് അവളെ ജീവനായിരുന്നു. 'എല്ലാവരുടെയും ശ്രദ്ധ ഒരേ സമയത്തു രേഖയിലേക്ക് തിരിഞ്ഞു. ആ നിമിഷത്തിൽ ഉടലോടെ സ്വർഗത്തിലേക്ക് പോകാൻ പുള്ളിക്കാരി ആഗ്രഹിച്ചു കാണും. ഉറക്കെ കരയണോ അതോ ഇയാളെ ഒറ്റയടക്ക് കൊല്ലണോ എന്ന് മനസ്സിലാകാതെ, സന്തോഷമായി ഗോപിയേട്ടാ' എന്ന expression ഇട്ടിരിക്കുന്ന രേഖയെ ജനത്തിന് സാധിച്ചു. Pune ഫിലിം ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട് ന്റെ **syllabus** ഇൽ ചേർക്കാൻ പുതിയൊരു expression അന്നുണ്ടായി.



കണ്ണാകെ തുടച്ച് പരിസര ബോധം വീണ്ടെടുത്ത ഗോപി ആദ്യം കണ്ടതും രേഖയുടെ മുഖം തന്നെ. അവിടെ ഒരു ദാക്ഷിണ്യവും ഇല്ലാതെ വാൾ മുർച്ച കൂട്ടുന്ന ഒരു ആരാച്ചാരുടെ മുഖം ഗോപി കണ്ടു. 'എന്നെ കൊല്ലാതിരിക്കാൻ പറ്റുമോ? ഇല്ല അല്ലെ 'എന്ന ഗോപിയുടെ വിലാപവും കൂട്ടുകാർ തിരിച്ചറിഞ്ഞു.

ആ രാത്രിക്ക് സമാപ്തിയായി. പിറ്റേ ദിവസം എല്ലാവരും സ്വന്തം വീടുകളിലേക്ക് യാത്രയായി. എന്തൊക്കെയായിരുന്നു ?? ഭാര്യയെ ഉഴുട്ടുന്നു, പാട്ട് പാടി ഉറക്കുന്നു, സാരിക്ക് match ആയിട്ടുള്ള പാലക മാല ധരിക്കുന്നില്ലേ എന്ന് ചോദിക്കുന്നു, മണ്ണാകട്ട! അയലത്തെ അദ്ദേഹത്തെ കണ്ട് പഠിക്ക് എന്ന് ഇനി ഭാര്യ പറഞ്ഞു വരില്ലേലോ എന്ന സന്തോഷം പുരുഷന്മാർക്ക് തീർച്ചയായും ഉണ്ടായി കാണും. സ്ത്രീകൾക്കാണെങ്കിലോ, രേഖയുടെ 'ഹോട്ട്' സീറ്റിൽ ഞാൻ അല്ലല്ലോ എന്ന ആശ്വാസവും.

കഴിഞ്ഞ രണ്ടര കൊല്ലമായിട്ടത് ഗോപി ഒരു യോഗിയുടെ ജീവിതം നയിക്കുന്നു. മുടങ്ങാതെ പ്രണയാമവും ധ്യാനവും പരിശീലിക്കുന്നു. ആവശ്യത്തിന് മാത്രം സംസാരം കള്ള് പിന്നീട് കൈ കൊണ്ട് തൊട്ടിട്ടില്ല. പാട്ട് അശേഷം നിർത്തി. ഫേസ്ബുക്ക് അക്കൗണ്ടും ക്ലോസ് ചെയ്തു. സർവസ്വവും രേഖയുടെ കാൽകീഴിൽ സമർപ്പിച്ച്, ഭയഭക്തിബഹുമാനത്തോടെ ജീവിച്ചു പോകുന്നു.

മദ്യപാനം ആരോഗ്യത്തിന് ഹാനികരം !



Heera Shelly





SAJNA MANOJ

Painting Adults - First

THE COLOR OF MUSIC

Small white flakes fell from the sky, in pace with the steady rumble of the rosy red car. A small girl delicately cradled a doll, as her mother smoothed down her wavy, caramel colored hair. The father lightly sang an old lullaby. Everything was calm and normal. But suddenly, the car in front swerved, causing the chain of cars behind it to put on their brakes. The red car slid, perching itself on the side of the road. Any second it could fall into the icy lake beneath. The mom quickly got out of the car with the toddler and ran, avoiding the slippery patches of ice on the road. As the father started to get out, another car slid off path, causing the small red car to tumble off the road, along with the father. The mom watched in horror, and let out a blood-curdling scream of despair. Her scream was cut off by more cars crashing, followed by the sound of an explosion and an ear splitting roar. With no time to spare, the woman desperately pushed the girl away from the hungry fire, as the flames from the explosions swallowed her up completely. The small, scared girl, was now left alone, all by herself.

I woke up, breathing heavily. Groaning, I got off of my bed. I was always awakened by this disturbing dream. I've never wanted to see a recap of my parents dying, and yet I do almost every day. While the accident left them dead, it left me with a world that would be muted forever.

I trudged downstairs, and was greeted warmly by my grandmother with a hug. She pointed to my new backpack and did a small happy dance. From my experiences, I knew that she was asking, "Are you excited for school?"





"A little, I guess," was my reply. I was starting middle school, and I was excited, but nervous at the same time. She placed a plate of hot pancakes with syrup oozing out of the sides and butter layering the fresh, fruity strawberries. I smiled at her, and she winked. I ate heartily and with a quick kiss from my grandmother, I was out the door. North Carolina is a state with mild weather, and all the proof was there. A small gust of wind whooshed past me while I made my way down the street. Every single day before the bus comes, I always go and watch a street band play music, which I assume is jazz. I absolutely love music. Just watching music helps me reduce stress, forget my worries, and much more. Ever since I was born, I've been drawn to music. To me, music is life. When I reached the place where they usually play, I found it deserted. "It must be one of their break days," I thought. I turned around and slowly made my way to my bus stop. Many kids my age were there, but I barely knew any of them. My best friend is still on vacation...on the other side of the world. "Oh well" I thought to myself. It only took a few minutes for the bus to arrive at my bus stop, and I curiously examined my old elementary school bus. Everything still looked the same. 10 minutes later I gazed at a huge building swarming with kids. Kids that I did not know. Kids that judged me because I'm deaf. Kids that teased me and asked me to listen to them talk. But of course, I couldn't. Dazed, I cautiously walked into this entirely different world.

I speed-walked to my locker hoping to get out of the busy hallway quickly. It took me a while to open my locker, but I reached my first class in the nick of time. I took a seat in the back and started doodling. I almost didn't notice when the teacher started talking. She had a warm smile and a pair of twinkling eyes. On the chalkboard, she had written Ms. Olive. While she yapped on about

something, I noticed a few kids snickering in front of me. I looked around in confusion. The teacher was talking, but...she was repeating a word over and over again. She kept looking down at a sheet labeled attendance. I groaned. My name was always first in the attendance sheet. Cheeks burning, I walked to the front of the classroom. I quietly told her that I am deaf. Looking surprised, she apologized, then realized again I couldn't hear her. She furiously scribbled on a piece of paper then handed it to me. "Heidi, please tell the class a little about yourself." I faced the row of bored kids and started talking quietly.

"Hello, um...I'm Heidi. Something that makes me different is that I am...uh... deaf." This seemed to get the attention of a few kids, so I continued. "My parents died in a car accident when I was 4, and I now live with my grandmother. I also really like music." A look of disbelief crossed about half of all the children's faces. A few cracked up thinking it was a joke, but Ms. Olive looked awed. After everyone introduced themselves, I thought about my escape plan to my next class. As soon as we were dismissed, Ms. Olive pulled me aside. Escape plan failed. She said something, then slapped her forehead playfully. She took out her notebook and wrote something on it again. "Why do you like music?" it read. She looked at me, the hope for an answer displayed on her face. The question rang in my head like a bell. Why do I like music? I didn't know. I was tongue tied. "I...I don't know," I stammered. Then I just took off.

The rest of the day was a breeze. I repeatedly had to tell my teachers that I was deaf. No one paid much attention to me, but a few girls tried to talk to me. Obviously, that didn't go well. I rushed home, relief draping over me like a warm blanket. A concerned looking Grandma appeared at the door. I rolled my eyes. She was always worried about me. "I'm fine, I'm fine," I reassured her. I threw my backpack



on the floor and rushed to get a snack. I was starving. My Grandma took a seat opposite from me and placed 2 tickets in front of me. My eyeballs nearly popped out of their sockets. There sitting smack in the middle of the table were 2 tickets to a famous orchestra show that I have always wanted to watch live. I squealed in delight and ran over to hug my grandmother. And I almost never let go.

The next day my grandmother let me skip school, because she was taking me to the orchestra and it was at 10:00 AM. I couldn't sit still. I'd only been to one live orchestra, but that was before. I would watch these talented players on the television and I was amazed by seeing them play. So, it was a dream come true to go to an orchestra. When we reached there, I saw a huge and beautiful building. Inside was shimmering diamond chandeliers and rich, red velvet carpeting. It was a breathtaking sight. A few minutes later, I was sitting at a stadium, waiting for the orchestra to come on stage. As they walked on stage and played the first note, I knew this would be the best day ever.

I sat in bed thinking about the orchestra. It was worth the money to go and watch them perform. But as I watched, I thought about why I liked music so much. After all, aren't I deaf? Music is something you hear, not see. That might be the case for most people, not me, though. But for everyone, music is a wonderful journey.

The next day I asked Ms. Olive if I could talk with her. She agreed and I started to talk about my amazing journey to the orchestra. Then I answered her question, "Why do you like music?" At the end she had tears in her eyes. She clapped delightfully, and wrote something on a piece of paper. "You're amazing," it said. "Just amazing."

The next day I was called to the principal's office. I was kind of nervous, but I kept my calm. I was ushered in by his pretty secretary and was seated in front of a tall, bald man, who I assumed was the principal. It was hard for him to communicate through paper, , but it worked. I was starstruck by the time I was done with my meeting with him. He had asked me to give a speech in front of the whole school. "What should I speak about?" I had asked. And now I was supposed to talk about why I liked music, in front of more than 1,000 kids.

My hands were sweating, and my stomach was doing flip flops. I was definitely anxious, but I knew my speech would be a life changer for many students. I wondered if I would embarrass myself in front of the whole school. My future depended on that. In a few minutes, I would be talking in front of a sizable crowd. When the principal walked off stage after finishing his introduction, I nervously entered, and started my speech.

"Hello, everyone. I'm Heidi," I started off, and continued with a shaky breath. "I was born as a normal child, but a fatal car accident left my parent's dead, and me, deaf. I now live with my loving grandmother. Ever since I was little, I have loved music. Any type of music that I can watch. You must be wondering how, since I'm deaf. Before I tell you how, you must know that, no matter what, you can do anything if you put your mind to it. Your disability shouldn't stop you from chasing your dreams. Being deaf didn't stop me. Even though I can't hear music, I can always see music. Many people would think of being deaf as a negative thing. I take my disability as





a blessing, because experiencing the world from a whole new perspective, can help you interpret it in a different way. It's the same thing with music. Music isn't just about the beautiful sounds alone. It's about the passion with which the musicians perform, their expressions, the scene of the song, and the energy they bring onto the stage. These aspects help you experience much more than the sound of music. Next time you listen to any type of music, plug your ears and just watch the music. You'll discover that you don't need to listen to music to understand it, you can absorb the sound of music by just watching it, and that is what I do. So, you don't need to have ears that work to listen to music. The musician's expressions and feelings convey everything. And that is why I like music." I smiled. "Who knew music could have such a variety of vibrant colors, waiting to be noticed?"



HRIDYA AJITH





Youth Forum Report: A Look Back Into 2020-2021

Norah Binny

On behalf of GCKA Youth BOD, I would like to say that I had an exceptional year. We were presented with multiple opportunities to serve the community and get prepared for future leadership roles.

This year's Youth BOD, led by Jeffrey Thundathil and Julia Joy, consisted of nine members: Andrea Zacharias, Michelle Puthuparampil, Jonathan Kurian, Nikita Manoj, Samyuktha Vipin, Shraavan Romy, Vasudev Menon, Anlin Thachil, and myself. Due to the nature of the past year, we held meetings on Zoom for discussing and planning GCKA events.

Christmas & New Year's Celebration

The virtual Christmas and New Year's celebration was our first successful event. Vasudev Menon did a great job with the grand finale slideshow. The rest of us, along with Tom Dominic, acted as MCs for the program.

Adopt - A - Highway

This event allows our Malayali community to give back to Wake County. Along with several youths and adult chaperones, our team worked to clean up trash along sections of Kelly Road in Apex on May 8th.

Picnic

We were able to utilize our leadership and teamwork skills at the GCKA annual picnic held on July 17th at Apex Community Park. Aleena Benny, our henna artist, did a phenomenal job at the henna station. We assisted in various games such as Tug-A-War, Candy-Picking, Box Passing, and Lime and Spoon Race.





SAUDADE

She gazed at the illuminated sky, through her windows clear
Eyes sparkling against the shadowy room
Her eyes felt heavy, her body ready to sink into the soft covers
But her mind wandered to places she yearned for

She found herself on a swing set, gladly facing the deep sea
the lonely streetlamp and the dancing flies
the midnight wind flowed through her hair as she swung higher
higher and higher, until her feet gave out

She found herself on the fresh grass in the summer
birds chirping and the constant soft talking around her
The sun shone into her body, the heat spread through her skin
warmer and warmer, until she could bear no more

She found herself in a dark corridor, shouts and voices muffled
the deserted school hallways decorated by scattered reflections
her slow walk turned into a sprint, her face beaming
faster and faster, until she could run no more

She found herself beside her family, laughing and teasing
the endless bickering and the food moving around
She ate and listened; she felt joyful and free
happier and happier until she could feel nothing else

Her eyes closed shut, and her back fell into the bed
the memories slowly kept flooding in, one after the other
the moments she felt life meant to her the most
were now past stories and thoughts, never to come back

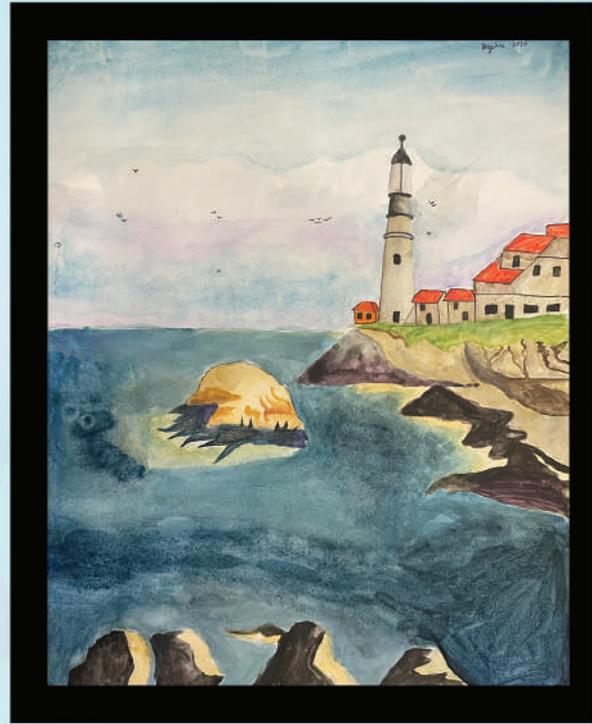
Only if she had laughed a little more, cried a little more,
the memories would have never stopped flowing through her
Maybe, just maybe, she would have been a better person
the fleeting minutes of life were all she had to make her life priceless.

Aleena Benny
Teenage Winner





ANGELINA JOBY SEBASTIAN
Kids Painting - Second



Kids Drawing - First



The Chase Across Space

Hi, my name is Bethany. I'm a pretty average kid. Or at least I was. Now, I'm pretty different than most 3rd graders. If you're interested, I'll explain what happened. So because I'm oblivious to what you're saying right now, I'll just pretend you said yes.

It all started one morning. I was dreaming about talking dogs in space. My mom yelled, "Wake up, Beth!" So I got up and walked to the bathroom to brush my teeth. I munched down my cereal and ran out the door screaming, "Bye!!!" I hopped on the bus and saw my best friend, Olivia.

"Hey Beth!" Olivia said as soon as I sat down. "Hey Olivia!" We talked about how we preferred to sleep in instead of attending school. The bus stopped at Flower Elementary, my school. We walked inside Mrs. Smith's classroom. "Hello everyone!" Mrs. Smith was nice. So anyways, at recess, we went to the playground. Me, Olivia, Kate, and Alexa (our other friends) headed to the empty corner where we always play. "Oww!" We all turned to Olivia. A soccer ball was right next to her so we didn't have to ask what happened. Some boys were playing soccer and had accidentally missed. "Oops! Sorry Olivia!" Dan (the boy who kicked the soccer ball) called. Olivia kicked the ball back and it soared super high and then rolled right into the goal! Olivia was always better at soccer than the rest of us! While she was being adored by Kate and Alexa, I felt my foot hit something hard and started to search under the mulch to find what it was. I found... A STICK. Little did I know, it was NOT a normal stick.

I took the stick and saw that it was most likely a fake. There was something odd, though I couldn't identify it. I put it back in the spot where I found it to investigate later. After recess, we went inside the school. I'll not bore you with the rest of the school day. After school, I went to Olivia's house. I knew we were going to have to do something about that seemingly fake stick. However, when I told Olivia about the stick, she looked at me very seriously for a few seconds and then burst into laughter. "Seriously, Beth! What do you expect it to be?! A magic wand?!" I sighed. I knew I'd have to either make her believe me or just go by myself. "Okay, so this is serious. It's not a prank." After much begging, she agreed. We decided we would meet the next day.

So, the next day, Olivia came to my house and we thought to sneak into our school. My mom was probably not gonna take us so we had to sneak past her. We told her we wanted to go to the park, which was close to Flower Elementary. However, when my brother Jake heard this, he wanted to go too. We knew what to do. Jake was 3 years old. He could not play on monkey bars. We would go that way while my mom and Jake went the other way. Now there was just one thing to do. Sneak into our school!!!!

We arrived at the baby park, and then Olivia and I headed to the monkey bars. I saw the school. Suddenly, my mom ran up to us. "The monkey bars are that way," she said suspiciously. "I know. We just wanted to umm... see our school." "Okayyy. Also meet me in 1 hour," she replied. We waited till my mom was out of sight and sprinted to the building. "Okay. Now how do we get in?" Olivia asked.



I took the bobby pin out of my hair and put it in the lock. After a few times, it unlocked. We snuck in. It was hard to avoid security cameras. They were everywhere! Ms. Smith's classroom was positioned at the front of the school. It would be hard to sneak past her. We could go the other direction, in front of Mr. Johnson's classroom. That would've been smart because Mr. Johnson was on a vacation, but that path did not lead to the playground, and that was the place where the so-called stick was. So we decided to create a diversion. Good thing we knew how to make a simple baking soda and vinegar bomb. I took the spy pack that I brought (It was always good to stay prepared!). I made the "bomb" and then threw it in Ms. Smith's classroom. We ran to the playground door as fast as a pair of cheetahs. We went to our corner and sat down. I dug the stick out of the ground. While we were hunched down looking at the stick, we heard a familiar voice. "Well, well, well! Who do we have here!"

We turned around and saw... Ms. Smith! "Setting a bomb in my room! I should give you detention for the rest of the school year! It is in the school handbook! And I think you have been here enough! I'm calling your parents!" Ms. Smith was angrier than I had ever seen before! We managed to mutter a sorry before she stormed away! Even though my teacher was angry, it was NOTHING compared to my mom. "Sneaking in! What were you thinking!" We were in the car and had just dropped Olivia off. Mom kept cool till then. I had stolen the stick and was pretty happy, despite recent events. I pretended to be mad, though. I marched up to my room. I found nothing when investigating the stick. In anger, I threw it across the room. But then it happened! I started to shake. The ground rumbled. The stick lit up. I passed out! When I opened my eyes, I was in SPACE!



At first, I did not recognize the place because I was in a spot with no surrounding stars or planets. Then I turned and saw it. There was a war going on! It was not ordinary people fighting though. It was ALIENS! I don't know much about wars, but this was an awkward one. All the aliens on one side were purple and the aliens on the other side were green. They all had one eye and one mouth. It seemed like they had leaders considering there were aliens with crowns. One on each side. It looked like a giant game of chess. I saw the stick floating away. I grabbed it to figure out how to get home but I passed out.

I woke up to a beeping sound. Beep beep! I looked around and saw... PURPLE ALIENS! I screamed the loudest a kid could scream! But of course, no sound in space. An alien held up a sign that said, "Friend"! I did not know what to do so I shrugged. An alien gave a piece of paper to me. I got a pen and wrote, "GET ME HOME!" The alien shrugged and hit a button. All of a sudden, I could hear again so I looked at the alien closely. I saw a crown and knew immediately that he was king of the purple aliens. "Hello, I am Gorf, king of Gorfdom." "Bethany," I said. At this point, I freaked out!

"This is the palace," Gorf said. He explained why the war was happening. "My brother Splorf is the king of the green kingdom." He told me that purple was good and green was bad. They both wanted to be king of all of space!! Gorf also explained he needed Splorf's help to send me home. Suddenly I realized that I had to stop the war in order to get home! I came up with a plan. I would trick Splorf into thinking Gorf was saying bad stuff about him. This would then cause Splorf and Gorf to fight. My clothes were all right but in order to look convincing, I needed to become green. I went to another room



and saw some face paint. Just what I needed! I grabbed the brush and green face paint. Now a helmet to breathe. I went into another room-which seemed to be a storage room- and found it. Now, I needed a tether (which is the thing that keeps astronauts from floating away from the space station when on a spacewalk). I found some strong rope. It wasn't a tether, but it was close enough. I tied it around my clothes. I tied it to the side of the spaceship. I jumped into space! I faced a lot of fighting, but with lasers instead of guns. I appeared in front of Splorf's security. Pretending to be a wounded soldier, he let me in. I said I had heard some bad things about Splorf from Gorf's palace. He was really mad! He told me he was going to march over there and show Gorf who's boss. I went back to Gorf's kingdom and I said I was going to get some water.

Just then, Splorf barged in. Gorf was confused. Splorf said he was meant to be ruler of space. This made Gorf mad. They started fighting. WITH MAGIC POWERS! Gorf had told me about this. Apparently, the previous king of space (Gorf and Splorf's dad) was born with magical powers. Something that had been passed down from him from his great-great-great grandma. It passed down to them. Anyways, Gorf blew Splorf away and Splorf sent water towards him! I did not know what to do. I thought the war should stop and I knew if the brothers united, it would. I got two of the strongest soldiers. They tore Splorf and Gorf apart. They tried to escape, but the aliens were strong. I told the brothers to work together and apologize so I could get home. They eventually escaped from the aliens and fought. Most of their fight was in silence, but after a while they got bored and started to talk. Not in the "Hi, how are you?" way. More like the " I was born to rule!" way. Here how it went down:

“You know I was meant to rule, Gorf!”

“I was the firstborn child. The law clearly states that the firstborn must inherit the throne!”

“Whatever! You may have been the firstborn, but I’m a born leader!”

“What did I even do to you? You could have ruled by my side if you weren’t terrible!”

At this point, they stopped. I could tell that the brothers knew that if they were to rule together, it would be better. “Do you want to rule space with me?” They said in unison. Then they hugged. They agreed to work together, so the war was called off and I went home. Now, I’m free! I still get to see them of course! The kings invited me to visit so I’m not throwing that stick away anytime soon! Porf’s kingdom (they named it after their father because of their different names) is a second home to me now! Yay! Wahoo! Now, gotta rush. Got to get to detention! The end!



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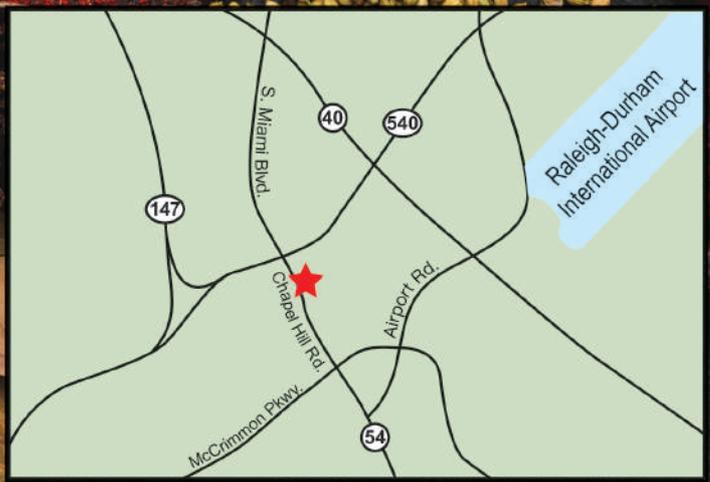
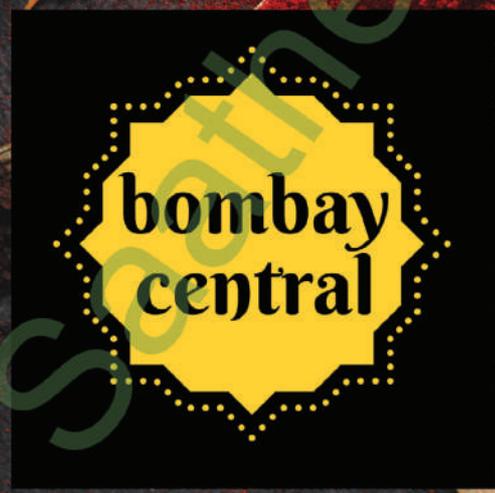
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The TRUE story of Little Red Riding Hood

Dear Reader,

I am Adrien T. Wolf. Have you ever heard of little Red Riding Hood? You may be mad at me but hear my side.

On a sunny day of April 5th, I went to pick daisies, roses and bluebells. When suddenly Little Red Riding Hood also started picking flowers . "Hello I am Adrien. Who are you?", I asked. "I am Little Red Riding Hood. But you can call me Little Red", she said. I asked, "Who are those flowers for?" She replied, "My grandmother. She is sick and my mother asked me to bring her banana nut muffins and flowers". I asked, "Where does she live?" Little Red replied, "8617 Sand Pine Street. Why?" I said, "I am earning my Elderly Help Badge for boy scouts and I wanna help her. Let us race to make it more interesting". "Alright Adrian, Alright. Bring it on!", Little Red said.

Because wolves can run 48 miles an hour and humans can run only 18 miles per hour, I quickly arrived at 8617 Sand Pine Street.

I knocked twice and said, "Hellooooooo?". A voice said, "Come in dear". I opened the door and saw a Granny in bed reading Washington Post. "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! W-w-w-who are you?", Granny said. "Adrian T. Wolf. Little Red and I met. She gave me your address so I could earn my Elderly Help Badge for boy scouts. I won't bite. By the way, me and Little Red were racing, so she will be here shortly with flowers and banana nut muffins.", I said. "BANANA NUT MUFFINS???????? They are grainy and horrible together.



Please help me.",Granny said. I thought and thought, and I finally had an idea. "How about you hide in the closet", I said. "Great. Here is a pair of pajamas and a cap", Granny replied. I quickly changed and slipped under the covers of Granny's bed. Suddenly Little Red barged in. She said, "Oh Granny, how are you doing today?". I said, "Not well at all". "Okay, okay. Why are your ears so big?", Little Red asked. I received a text from Granny (We both had exchanged our phone numbers). I read out the text, "To hear you better." Little Red said, "Okay, but why is your nose so big?". I read the text, "To smell you better". "Okay, what about your teeth?", Little Red asked. "TO EAT YOU BETTER", I screamed as I read the text. Little Red questioned me a lot that day. "Is that you, Adrien? Where is Granny? Where is the phone? I need to call 911". "Help", cried Granny from the closet.

Granny had betrayed me. Since Little Red called 911, reporters and police crowded Sand Pine Street. I was taken to jail. Whose story do you believe?

Love,
Adrien T. Wolf



RHEA PAULSON



Sahya Binu

(Poem Second)

THE PATH

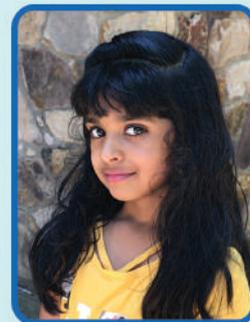
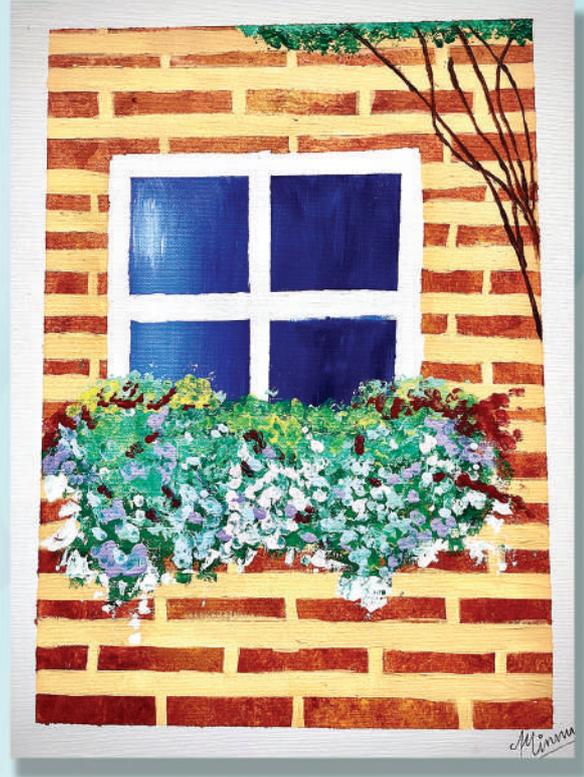
The moon was
bright, The path
was dark, Each
step felt like
a new step into
the future.

I did not know
where the path
would lead . It
felt as if it was unknown
but the moon helped me.
It guided the way.
To a secret garden
secret place.



MEENAKSHI KRISHNAN

Teenage Painting - Winner



SANAM SHAMEER

Kids Painting - Winner

The Taste Of Courage

"Hello, baby Dalia!"

"It was 1:30 in the afternoon. Afreen Hadi looked on lovingly at her baby girl, the new heir of daylight. The afternoon sun slipped through the faded curtains and fell on the baby, making her storm grey eyes shine like a million constellations.

The time had come! Dalia gleamed like the sun and looked radiant. Her brown skin turned a hint of golden, and her tiny palms lifted off the soft bedsheet gently. Afreen rushed out of the room in surprise and fetched her husband to watch the baby girl slowly becoming ready to take on the world. "She is more powerful than we expected.", Dalia's father, Farid Hadi, exclaimed while grinning at his bundle of joy.

"Your mom writes well. It felt like I was there seventeen years ago." Dalia's best friend Nova said, staring intently at the old diary.

"I agree! But one thing bothers me a little," seventeen-year-old-Dalia said while shifting through the book.

"What? It seems okay to me."

"It's nothing big. It's just that it seems as if someone else wrote this book and not my mom." "Yeah. What about it?"



"I don't know. No one expected me to show my powers that early. You know it's been so long since anyone has had this power! But according to this weird book, it comes across as if they somehow knew before. What if-"

"It's fine! Stop being paranoid! I'm sure there is an explanation. Now let's focus on getting ready on time to go for the match!"

Two years later

The grey clouds and the moon setting did not help in keeping Dalia awake. She wrapped the coat around her more tightly, and her once-illuminated palms were in her pockets. The bus stopped in front of her, and she walked to get a good seat. She sat alone, and she felt okay; being alone. The school day seemed like a never-ending loop of assignments, seminars, and tests. Everything was bleak in her eyes, and she could not wait to go home that day.

She collapsed on the bed and stared at the ceiling as soon as she got home. It had been long since she called home. Her parents asked her to move back to her hometown "for her own good." She raised her hands in front of her face and created a ball of light. But the ball turned into a shapeless cloud of light, which drifted off into the air in a wisp. She picked up her phone and saw a text message from a familiar Nova. She managed to crack a smile as she opened the app to see a long text about the latest news. Still, something felt off. Dalia silently teared up. The frustration and unfamiliar circumstances welled up inside of her creating internal strife. She felt the shadow grow larger and darker in her. But she succumbed to the darkness, hoping that one day she would feel strong enough to inch out of the horrible place.

The power of manipulating light and darkness has always been present in everyone. But, because of a mysterious force, people could not practice this ability of theirs and were locked. The Hadi family is famous for the women in their family who are most likely to show their power. Dalia's great-great-grandmother was the last person to be known for having this power, and she did great things. It is also believed that when a photokinetic person is born a child who can do umbrakinesis or the art of manipulating darkness is also born at the same time. Therefore, Dalia was kept safe at all times. Her mother often talked about the times she was almost kidnapped by unknown people when she was a child. But that did not phase Dalia's childhood. A person with such an ability also had an Achilles' heel. If this power hurts an innocent person, it will vanish from the person forever.

Dalia, meanwhile, was a teacher's favorite and scored well in her exams. She also was very popular among her friends, and everyone knew about her powers. She loved to sing and eternally won the singing competitions in her school. Some people naturally hated her because she was powerful but she was not affected by their opinions.

But her picture-perfect life turned upside down when her parents decided to send her away to her hometown.



"STOP!"

Dalia screamed and jumped up from bed, her forehead and palms sopping wet. She rubbed her throbbing temples and tried to go back to sleep, but she couldn't.

After an hour of tossing and turning, she created a weak light disk enough to see. She picked up her phone and glasses.

She wandered over to Nova's number, which hadn't been active for three weeks now, her last text being "bye."

All she could make out in that obscure, fuzzy dream is her screaming her lungs out at a dark silhouette of a person who only said one thing calmly - "Do not stand in my way, or I will end you."

The headaches continued, and Dalia began to lose her sanity. She lay on the bed, feeling homesick and lazy to the bone.

That was when her mom called. "Guess what!

We booked your tickets to come home for the summer! Start packing. Your flight is in three days." She was confused at first but turned ecstatic. She laughed contagiously.

She had had the whole house to herself. So she dusted

the burner, cradled the frankincense in her hand like a precious jewel, and arranged it on the burner. The aromatic

tones of pine and notes of citrus and spice filled the house with earthy goodness.

Her hands felt stronger and left a thin trail of brilliance as she moved.



"I don't know."

Her first day back home wasn't going well. She stared at the buttons in the elevator. She had no idea what floor her parents were on. She blindly pressed "3" and waited for her stomach to drop as she reached the top. She walks the marble-clad corridor, racking her brain on what flat number they had. "I give up," Dalia said, sighing, failing to remember the number correctly. But in the corner of her eye, she sees a familiar figure.

"Mama! You found me!"

"Of course, I would! I figured you would not remember which apartment we lived in" "I'm sorry," she said while grinning. "So where do we really live?" "Right there," Her mom said as she pointed to the end of the corridor.

She was alone at home when she said that. The holidays had finally begun, but both her mom and dad went to work. The windows had harsh afternoon sunlight pouring through it that the half-drawn curtains seemed useless. The marble tiles felt cold on her bare feet. She looked around the house, trying to make sense of the changes. Why was it so still and quiet?

She got out of the house for a walk. She felt like a stranger in her homeland. So much had changed in the past couple of years. New buildings overpowered smaller ones, and everything was more glamorous and big. All her friends are probably in different universities right now, making their future.



But something changed. Dalia noticed that ever since she came home, she felt more powerful than ever before. She shot a beam of light into the sky when no one was looking and was amazed. It was powerful and steady. So Dalia sprinted back home and fell back on her old bed, feeling a rush of energy in her.

"Let's start the search, Dalia."

"Hana. So that's her name."

Three short hours flew by since she started searching for the diary she hid in her room the first day she found it in the crack behind the almirah. She read through the entire journal and was surprised by the amount of information she didn't know. In the book was a vast collection of photokinesis forms and fighting methods. After she read the whole section, she found a faded phone number on the back. Doubting that it will work after all these years, she dialed it on the landline. Someone answered.

"Hello?"

"Hello! Is this Hana?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"I'm Dalia."

There was a long pause on the line. All Dalia heard was breathing.

"Do something for me. Leave a note or call your parents and tell them that you are coming with me."

"What? I don't even know who you are!"

"I'm coming there in a few. You will get to know everything on the way to my place. Tell your mom to come after us."

"WAIT, WHAT?"

"Not bad. Go again."

Dalia glanced in front to find three well-padded and tall men ready to start. Her six months of rigorous practice had to pay off now. She started with a bang as she used light illusions to create clones of herself, all of which mimicked her attacking stances. The real her then shot a flash of light into their eyes so it would temporarily stun them. Then she used her agility rather than her brute force to confuse the opponents and delivered a final blow by teleporting behind them and knocking them down with her signature light beam strike. She removed her helmet and celebrated with a little dance, "Yes! I did it!" Hana came onto the arena with a water bottle to keep Dalia hydrated.

Six months ago, Hana took Dalia to her spacious house and home arena and explained everything on the way.

"I'm sure your parents haven't told you much about the situation right now. You are one of the only people who have photokinesis. But there is always darkness in light. About the same time you were born, there was a baby born with the ability of umbrakinesis. We suspected that it was the mentors and guardians of the baby who was trying to kidnap you. But we could never get a hold of them.



Recently, the kid has called for a revolution, a revolution to unlock everyone's dark side. He has done enough damage already by causing chaos, and he still has the motive to kill you. He believes that the world would be better in disorder and that bad leadership just did more harm than good. He wants to 'set people free.' We didn't take it seriously then, and now he has challenged you to a fight. Rumor has it that he has already unlocked the dark side of many people. That's where you come in. Only light can defeat darkness. So you need to train under me so you can be ready to do this."

Dalia couldn't believe her ears. One moment she is being kidnapped, and she is a savior of some sort in the next? She blurted out, "Well, I am just one teenager. How can I possibly help the world? Also, I cannot learn from a person who doesn't have my power." Hana chuckled as different colors of light poured out of her small palms, "The power is in everyone. All you have to do is unlock it.

Dalia strangely felt okay in Hana's presence. She was calm and kind, and most of all, she had her powers! She felt as though she wasn't the only freak with photokinesis. Dalia's mother's fear was evident through her voice on the phone, but Dalia ignored it and waited for her to get to Hana's house. When Dalia's mother reached Hana's place, she ran over to Dalia and gave her a big hug. After a calming cup of tea, the scent of frankincense floated into the living room-where Dalia's mom started explaining the whole story to Dalia, who was already bracing herself.

Afreen said, "It's true what the legends say, the power of light was a trait passed on to younger generations in our family. But something happened in our genetics that didn't show up after your great-grandmother. Since there were no heirs of light, the heirs of darkness also stopped because they did not exist without each other. We were okay with it because there was no need for it as everyone was safe and in no threat. But just as I got pregnant with you, the news of someone performing a time-tested ritual to rekindle the power of darkness so that there will be a baby with that power came out. And their intentions were rotten. My eima Hana decided to find the long-lost rite in the catacombs underneath the Hoota caves. She successfully found it and came back to perform it on you. We had to do it so we could avoid the mass darkening of society. Yes, we knew from before that that was their intention. So we all expected that you would be born this power. The news of a new heir of light got out, and everyone was pleased at the start, but just like every other news, it soon became old news, and that's why you were still going to school like a normal kid, oblivious to what was your destiny. We wanted you to enjoy your childhood without worrying about larger problems you would have had to face anyway." The whole revelation hit Dalia like a truck, and her mind went blank.

Afreen continued, "Usually, all heirs of darkness are not bad people. They choose to be so. Nevertheless, the new heir of darkness has threatened you to fight him in six months. He wants the battle to be 'fair and square' and let you do training before the encounter. That is why we called you back here, to start training for the inevitable."



Dalia didn't talk to anyone that day, or the day after, or the day after that. She looked too sullen, and she barely ate. Hana could barely hold herself back from storming into her room and cheering her up, but Afreen told her to be patient because sugarcoating the hard truth was not the best idea. But when she saw Dalia trudge into her room for the millionth time, she rushed into the room and just said, "There is no point in ignoring the fact that you will have to do this someday. Please talk to me and your mom so we can help you. You are not alone. We are here for you every step of the way!" After a long pause, Dalia finally said, "Okay. I think I have had enough time to process the news, and I feel it is my destiny to do this. I trust you guys, and I'm ready for the next step!" Hana smiled at her and walked out of the room, yelling, "Dinner is ready! It's shawarma night."

The next day, she woke up and suddenly remembered that that day was the day her training started. She believed she was ready for the rigorous training. She walks out to see a gun and a target board hanging on a rope. Hana walks by with a cheery good morning and says, "Today, the exercise is fairly simple. We need you to be open to change and be precise. So your objective is to aim at Hex on the collarbone and strike a light beam at it."

Dalia questioned, "Who is H-"

Hana replied, "He is the jerk who wants you to die."

"He sounds like an idiot anyway. The task sounds simple," Dalia said with a smirk.

"Hana forgot to tell you that you need to hit it while it's swinging and rotating at the same time," Afreen said with a giggle. As the target kept moving fast, Dalia just said, "Let's do this." Needless to say, her light hit nowhere near the target for the next few hours, and she sat on the ground, feeling defeated. Hana walked up to her and lightly punched her on the side, hit Hex's neck while the target was still in motion, and said, "Keep your eyes moving, be light on your feet, wait for the change, and boom. It strengthens your evasiveness and accuracy. Let's take a break and move on to another task." Hana pulled a pouty Dalia away from the target and made her stand two inches from a pool of water. Dalia's face fell when she said, "Reach the finish line with this on your body." and tossed her a heavy back and front shield made of stone. After going another few hours of seeing Dalia trying to reach the finish line, splashing around, not being able to swim, Hana spoke, "All you need to do is be calm and find the best strategy to do so. It builds physical strength, endurance, and offensive tactics. Come on, let's go to the final task. There is no use in trying to do the same thing and failing." They both walked up to a small arena-like setup where she saw three tall men warming up. Hana continued, "You have to fight them with your all. Give your best effort and take them down. These are my neighbors who are soldiers in the national army and come here to work out." The haughty men just went into their fighting stance and, within two minutes, knocked Dalia out. Dalia really hated this torture by now. But Hana just said, "Now you will do these same exercises over and over as a rotation until you get better over time. Anyways, time for lunch."



Soon Afreen had to say goodbye again and left Dalia and Hana alone for six months to train for the battle. Time flew by as she kept training to be a better fighter. She watched and listened, and learned to be levelheaded. As she practiced more and more, the exercises became tougher, and she had to face the problems head-on like a leader. Weeks turned into months, and soon she was a master of all the tasks she had done so far. She was ready. And the fateful day was closing in. Just before Dalia left for the decided battleground, Hana called her aside for some advice. After she advised Dalia, she said, "You do not need me anymore, and I am ready to move on from this monotonous life. I'm going on a trip around Oman and farther. Your destiny is to defeat Hex, and mine is to help you until the fateful day and then move on when no one needs you much anymore. You are a strong, capable woman, and let no one tell you differently."

The afternoon sun was relentless, which made her more tired. The dust from the battlefield flew everywhere as the dry wind caused Dalia's eyes to water. The afternoon was right in the middle of the day, which meant neither day nor night. Hex stood opposite her, occasionally smirking at her vigorously try to see better. He finally broke the silence, "Hello, Dalia. It's nice to see you here. Your overconfidence really is very impressive, you know, showing up." Dalia yelled back as she summoned her beam, "At least I did not try and unleash darkness upon the world for selfish reasons, Hex. Do not even try justifying what you did. And it is my destiny to stop you from further doing this."

Dalia swung the beam at Hex, but he quickly formed a black shield around him, which he swiftly turned into bolts of dark energy. Dalia dodged the bolts like her life depended on it and created a long, light whip. She wielded the whip bravely and tried to catch him, who armed himself with his signature shadow sword. For once in his life, Hex doubted himself. Dalia waved her beam and aimed it at his eyes to blind him. But she did not see the black wave coming. Soon, she could not even see her palm because of the overwhelming darkness. She felt a severe hit on her calf, then on her hip, which sent her stumbling a few feet. She got up, dusted herself, and teleported out of the swarm of dark clouds right behind Hex to capture him in the clutches of the whip. But he instantly moved out of the way. Soon, light and dark crashed into each other while both of them sent out a stretch of pure power. The fight went on for a long time, filled with flashes and shadows. In the end, Dalia was pinned down. She struggled under the grip, and just as Hex was about to end her once and for all, she chanted in Arabic, "May the bad and rotten dark way, fall so light can again save the day." As she kept chanting over and over, she realized that she was invisible and Hex looked just as confused as her. She wasted no time, and she stretched her arm forward and yanked out the talisman from the chain and crushed it. With her new-found power, she blasted a brilliant wave of light into Hex's chest and took him down. By now, Hex's powers had diminished, and she trapped him with light handcuffs when she saw the police cars stop by. She thought about Hana's advice, "Do not kill him -that will just let him get away from all his crimes easily. Take away what he depends on the most. The power-hungry villain gets his power taken away, so he will want to die every single day."



"It's good to be back."

Dalia said to her mom via video call. She needed the getaway after all the hellfire she had been through. Even though the fight was secluded, everyone guessed the obvious as the news of Hex's imprisonment came out. Everyone congratulated her, and she was famous for taking him down. And she felt normal. Way too normal. She knew her life was not going to be the same anymore. She was ready for it, whatever life throws at her. She now worked closely with the government, helping them solve crimes and high-level deception scandals. Who would have thought that one shimmering girl could save the world from the reign of darkness? The ritual was now illegal, so no more people could use the rite to make themselves powerful. As she stood on the balcony that National day, she looked back at the year that changed her life. She wondered if she would ever have such an experience ever again in life. The annual fireworks started and colored the sky with brilliant red, white, and green. Probably yes, but that is just fine. Because that was just the year that light defeated darkness, but there is no light without darkness, and one day, dark and light will coexist, and that will bring balance to the world.



ALEENA BENNY



മലയാളം കളരി

ഗൗരി നായർ

'മലയാളഭാഷ തൻ മാദകഭംഗി' എന്ന കവി ഭാവന ഓർമപ്പെടുത്തിക്കൊണ്ടു തുടങ്ങട്ടെ... മറുനാട്ടിൽ വളരുന്ന നമ്മുടെ കുട്ടികൾക്ക് അവരുടെ മാതൃഭാഷയെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രാഥമികമായ അറിവ് നൽകാൻ GCKA നടത്തുന്ന ഉദ്യമമാണു "മലയാളം കളരി" പാഠശാല. അവധികാലത്ത് നാട്ടിൽ പോകുമ്പോൾ റോഡിലെ ബോർഡുകളും, സ്ഥലപ്പേരുകളും മറ്റും വായിക്കുവാനും, കൂടാതെ മുത്തശ്ശിമാരും, ബന്ധുക്കളും എന്തെങ്കിലും മലയാളത്തിൽ ചോദിച്ചാൽ അത് മനസ്സിലാക്കി മറുപടി നൽകുവാനും അവർക്ക് ഇതു വഴി സാധിക്കണം എന്ന ലളിതമായ ലക്ഷ്യമാണ് മലയാളം കളരി മുന്നിൽ വെക്കുന്നത്.

COVID-19 മഹാമാരിയുടെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിലും മലയാളം ക്ലാസുകൾ തുടർന്നും നടത്താൻ സാധിച്ചതിൽ ഈ വർഷത്തെ GCKA ഭാരവാഹികൾ എന്ന നിലയിൽ ഞങ്ങൾ കൃതാർത്ഥരാണ്. പതിവുപോലെ എല്ലാ ശനിയാഴ്ചയും നടത്തിയിരുന്ന പുതു വിദ്യാർത്ഥി (Beginner) & തുടർ വിദ്യാർത്ഥി (Intermediate) ക്ലാസ്സുകൾക്ക് മുടക്കം വരാതെ ഓൺലൈൻ ക്ലാസ്സുകൾക്കിടയിലേക്ക് മാറ്റം വരുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

അദ്ധ്യാപകരുടെയും കുട്ടികളുടെയും മാതാപിതാക്കളുടെയും കൂട്ടായ്മ കൊണ്ടാണ് ഈ സംരംഭം ഈ വർഷവും ഫലപ്രദമായി നടത്താൻ സാധിച്ചത്. ഈ വർഷത്തെ അദ്ധ്യാപകരായ സുരേഷ്, ജ്യോതി, ബിജു, ദേവി, അലീജ, ക്രിസ്റ്റീന- എന്നിവരുടെ സേവനം സ്തുത്യർഹമാണ്.



അവരുടെ ക്ഷമയ്ക്കും പ്രവർത്തനശേഷിക്കും ആത്മാർത്ഥമായ നന്ദി പ്രകാശിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. മലയാള പഠനം പ്രോത്സാഹിപ്പിക്കാൻ ഈ വർഷം GCKA ആദ്യ “മലയാളം കളരി ദിനം” ഓൺലൈൻ ആയി നടത്തി. കുട്ടികളുടെ ഭാഷാ പരിജ്ഞാനം കാഴ്ച വയ്ക്കാനും രക്ഷകർത്താൾക്കും അധ്യാപകർക്കും തമ്മിൽ അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാനും ഈ വേദി വഴിയൊരുക്കി. ഇത്തവണത്തെ GCKA ക്രിസ്തുമസ് പരിപാടിയിൽ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ അവതരിപ്പിച്ച കുഞ്ഞുണ്ണി കവിതകളും ശ്രദ്ധേയമായിരുന്നു.

മലയാളികളായ നമ്മുടെ പൈതൃകത്തിലേക്കും സംസ്കാരത്തിലേക്കും വെളിച്ചം വീശുന്ന ഈ സംരംഭത്തിന്റെ ഉന്നമനത്തിനു വേണ്ടി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നു. നോർത്ത് കരോലിനയിലെ മലയാളികളുടെ സഹകരണവും പ്രോത്സാഹനവും ഈ കളരിയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനത്തിന് തുടർന്നും ഉണ്ടാകണമെന്ന് പ്രത്യാശിക്കുന്നു. ‘മലയാളഭാഷ തൻ മാദകഭംഗി’ നമ്മുടെ കുട്ടികളുടെ മലർമന്ദഹാസമായ് എന്നും വിരിയട്ടെ!



കരോലിനാ മലയാളി 2021



സുരേഷ് ബാബു



ജ്യോതി വേണു



ദേവി ശങ്കർ



ക്രിസ്റ്റിന മനോജ്



ബിജു നായർ



അലീജ അനൂപ്



INTERMEDIATE CLASS



BEGINNER CLASS





SRIYANI RITHESH
Youngest Contestant



JOANN THOMAS
Painting Kids - Third



Unspoken Repercussions of the Pandemic

Keshav looked through the old rustic gate of his house. It's been a while since he retired from the firm he had worked for the past 34 years. Life has been peaceful by and large, but the last couple of years had been strenuous for him and his wife Vasuki.

Keshav did not have any elaborate plans on how to spend his retirement years. He was quite content looking after his house and surroundings. A small garden, the piece of land behind his house to grow some vegetables, kept him occupied. His friend circle was limited because of his reserved nature and his dislike for smoking or drinking with others of his age group. Keshav did look forward to one thing, every year; His son Karan's visit. Karan and Charvi had settled down in Calcutta and with their two kids Tanav and Tejas. Karan's frequent visits to his parents' home town eventually dwindled down to a 2 week visit every other year.

Keshav and Vasuki spend most of the time at the house. Occasional visits to the temple and to their friend's place kept them occupied at times. Life changed drastically after COVID. Neighbors started to distance themselves; mostly with good intentions. They did not want the older couple to get infected with the virus. Then the government started imposing lockdowns and that put brakes on their already limited social visits. Keshav started to question the purpose of his life. Every day seemed too boring, mundane and painful to get through. And then came the phone call. It was Karan. "Dad, things don't look that great in West Bengal. COVID is spreading at a much faster rate and we are thinking of coming down. Kids are done with school for the year and we both have permission to work from home for some time".

Drops of tears fell on Keshav's right hand on hearing the news from Karan. Emotions have been difficult for Keshav to control over the years. He was not like this during his middle age but has mellowed down over the years. Vasuki was ecstatic when she heard that her son's whole family is coming down and will be with them for some time. She had hardly spent time with Charvi and the kids recently. Her mind started to fill with memories of Karan's wedding and the birth of the kids. She had no issues with Karan marrying someone from Bengali family but communication with Charvi was a little bit of an issue for her. But somehow, Vasuki used to manage things with her broken English. Kids hardly talked to their grand parents and Vasuki thought it will be a great opportunity to rekindle the relationships with grandchildren.

The day started like any other day in the neighborhood. Newspaper boy delivering the morning newspaper, milk delivery man dropping off the daily bottle of milk, birds chirping in the background, morning dew on the grass ... Keshav and Vasuki couldn't sleep all night of the excitement. They woke up at 05:30 and were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their beloved son and family. It was almost 7'O clock. "The flight must have landed. Hope the security folks don't give them any hassles at the airport. With not many people on the highway these days, they should be here in another hour and half," Keshav told Vasuki. Vasuki was busy preparing breakfast for the family. She was not sure what the kids or Charvi would prefer for breakfast, but she knew that Karan would appreciate her idli and stew. The gate cranked open and the airport taxi soon appeared on the drive way. Karan got out of the cab first, followed by kids and Charvi. It had been couple of years since the last visit. Vasuki felt that Karan had aged since she last saw him. Must be all the pressure of meeting deadlines during the pandemic. Charvi had definitely put on some weight. Tanav and Tejas had grown considerably. "No hugging or touching Achan/Amma" Karan said sternly. The Pandemic had changed things considerably and Karan did not want his parents catching any disease.



Karan made sure that his wife and kids followed the quarantine protocol very strictly. Vasuki felt so bad that she could hardly spend any time with the kids even though they were in the same house. Charvi felt so relieved to step out of the quarantine room after 10 days. Even though the surroundings of the quaint Kerala town looked very similar to the towns in the outskirts of Calcutta, she felt a little out of place. Kids kept themselves busy playing with their cell phones and video games during the quarantine time. They did not feel much of a difference getting out of quarantine.

Karan got back to his work routine but started complaining of internet bandwidth issues immediately. He was used to the fast connectivity in Calcutta and his town had a long way to catch up, especially in this space. Keshav called his local provider to check on enhancing the internet speed but the response was far from positive. Even though Charvi was comfortable with the work experience, she found it very difficult to pass time outside her working hours. She also complained about the lack of air conditioning and the mosquito problem around the neighborhood. Vasuki tried her

level best to keep Charvi happy by cooking variety of dishes. Kids were glued to their phones or to the lone television set in the house, all the time. Keshav never got an opportunity to watch. The only thing which he loved watching in the television; the evening news. Vasuki too loved to see a couple of shows in TV during her free time but she was happy to give up that habit for the grandchildren's sake.

As the days progressed, and as everyone seemed to be adjusting to the new routines, new issues came to light. Karan's work schedule changed and the

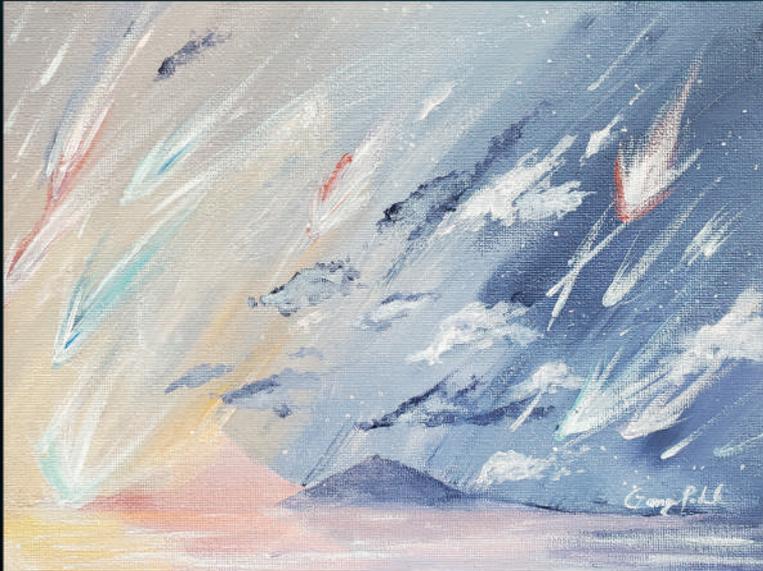
family had to make adjustments to accommodate that. Vasuki had to cook more frequently and that added more stress. Whenever the kids were home, they wanted different varieties of food. Charvi was very fond of fish and the parents wanted to make sure that she was kept happy. This warranted the need for going to the market often in a week. When Keshav and Vasuki were staying by themselves, Keshav would go to the market only once a week. Now he had to go out thrice a week to buy the necessities. Kids were frustrated sitting at home and started to venture out. They would come back home at odd times and the grandparents had to adjust to that too. On top of everything, there was the risk of kids bringing in the virus from one of their adventures and giving it to their grandparents.

Keshav felt that the peace and tranquility of his household was being disturbed by the arrival of his son and the family. What was supposed to be some quality time with his son and family was slowly turning to be a painful experience for the whole household. He felt that his privacy was being disturbed by the presence of his own son. The Pandemic seems to have changed the way of living. One question seems to linger in his mind constantly. Was the epidemic a boon or a curse for people like him?



AJITH SIVADAS





GANGA PODUVAL

Painting Teenager - Second



SWAPNA GIRIJA

Drawing Winner

A BUNNY ADVENTURE

By Sidharth Venugopalan



One day, as you're taking your afternoon walk, you hear rustling in the bushes. A tiny, white cotton ball suddenly peeks out, wiggling. You are delighted to find that it's a bunny! You watch carefully as he scurries and hops, his tiny ears twitching, his eyes darting. As he nibbles on a patch of grass, you decide to run back home and grab a carrot to give to the bunny. You quickly come back and lightly toss it to him. He looks. He listens. He sniffs the carrot. Then suddenly, he disappears!

As you look around trying to figure out where he went, you see a small burrow. You watch a little longer, until you see a tiny paw waving, and then it disappears too. Out of curiosity, you follow the bunny.

To your amazement, you have become small enough to fit in the burrow! The bunny scampers left and right, his eyes darting around, pausing to let you catch up. Then, he disappears. You take one step further, but suddenly, the walls are rushing around you, and you no longer see the tunnels of the burrow.

When you finally reach solid ground, you are in a cozy hole. There are red couches, a blazing fire, and a cute little kitchen. You see a bunny wearing a little coat, stirring something in a small pot on the stove. After you are done marveling at the bunny, you soon ask, "where am I?"





The bunny chuckles and says, "you are in my burrow. I was terribly worried you would be stuck in the river."

"Huh?"

"Well, you followed me through my burrow. I was leading you through the secret passage to Bunnylandia. Except, you got a little lost and fell into the Bunny river."

"Bunnylandia?"

"No time for questions, child. Now, let's go!"

The bunny takes your hand, and he leads you out of the burrow.

"Where are we going?" you ask.

"We are getting out of here. The bunny of evil has returned!"

But, when you step out of the burrow, a giant bunny suddenly appears.

"Quick! Run!" one of the bunny villagers says.

However, you and the bunny you followed are frozen in fear.

"So, are you scared Ploppy?" the evil bunny asks.

"Go away, Malbunny!" says Ploppy.

"Go away Malbunny! Oh, I'm so scared!" Malbunny mocked.

Then, Ploppy grabs you, but it's too late. Malbunny raises a jar full of blue dust. Ploppy gets pulled into the jar, and you see a small hologram of Ploppy trapped in it. "I have trapped that feeble bunny's soul! I have defeated him!" Malbunny shrieks. You feel anger pulsing through your veins. Then suddenly, the world whirls around you.

You open your eyes and see that you're in a jungle. You tread through a dirt road that is snaking through the middle. But, when you take your first step, you hear a caw. When you look up, you see a giant toucan! It lunges at you. But then, you raise your hand and a bright light shoots out. The toucan gets blasted away. You are surprised, but have no time to think over it. You trek a bit more through the forest, and a giant apple falls onto the floor. It rolls toward you. You leap over it, but at the same time, a banana falls and shoots its mushy fruit out at you. You crash into it and become covered in goo. Soon, the giant fruits stop falling. You look around you, and realize that the jungle has disappeared.

You had just walked right into Malbunny's palace! There, you see Ploppy trapped inside the jar. "Help! Help!" Ploppy cries. You break the jar that is imprisoning Ploppy. "Thank you child!" Ploppy whippers.

Then Malbunny suddenly appears in a whirl of smoke. You raise your arm, and the bright light shoots out of your hand again. "No! No!" Malbunny cries. Then, the light touches Malbunny, and he disappears. Ploppy joyfully cries "yay! Malbunny is defeated and you freed me! Thank you, child!" Just as you were about to say something to him, the world spins again, and you are back crouching near the entrance of the burrow.

You look around, puzzled. What had just happened? As you look back to the spot where the bunny burrow was, you realize it has disappeared. Was it all a dream? You'll never know.....





DIYA MATHEWS

Kids Drawing - Third



NEHA MARIA SANTY

Teenage Drawing - Second





Akash Prabhakar

GCKA Sports 2021 Report

Soccer – Back to the field

At the tail end of the Pandemic with the ease of covid restrictions GCKA brought back its Iconic event – “The Annual Soccer tournament”. Tournament was conducted during the month of April- May 2021. 36 men participated in the tournament. The tournament had a flying start when Joseph scored the fastest goal in the history of the tournament. The Day ended with an injury time equalizer from GCKA legend Saju. The tournament witnessed some of the exciting moments for all sports lovers. While young Joel travelled all the way from Charlotte week in week out to play and score for his Team, veteran Jake showed us how to play the game at the highest level and have fun together. It was an eye feast for the viewers whose count increased as the tournament progressed. The Finale had everything in it for the soccer fans; the Goals, possessions, tackles, Saves and Penalty among the many other exciting moments. Team Mattanchery Machans lifted the trophy and were crowned as GCKA Soccer champions on it's fifth edition.

Soccer 2021 Winners - Mattanchery Machans



Individual Awards



Player of the tournament
Bino



Top scorer
Joseph



Best Goalkeeper
Sharhan



Man of the Match Finals
- Vishakan





Cricket – The Malayalee gentlemen's game

Cricket brings nostalgic memories for Malayalees like the rain, paripuvada, Johnson Master's music and our dearest movies. As kids, we used to play it on our "veetu muttam", paddy fields, and sometimes even on the roads. Cricket taught us how to build a Partnership while we were young.

GCKA cricket was played in May/June 2021 bringing back all the nostalgia and excitement. 4 teams played against each other on warm NC spring days at the RTP grounds. The tournament had everything that cricket fans would love to see- the sixes and fours, the wickets, the catches, the fielding. Team Poralees lifted the trophy beating Amar Jawan in the finals.

Cricket 2021 Winners - Poralees



Individual Performances



Best Bowler
Shibu Vachery



Man of the Finals
Shafeer Muhammed



Player of the tournament
Rajeesh



Best Batsman
Amarnath Barathan



Women's 5K- Why should Men have all the fun?

Active participation from ladies, adults and young alike, made the event a great success this year. We pondered, why did the lady members of GCKA decide to run the 5K? Do they want to compete and be a winner? Apparently not. Do they want to be healthy and fit, and look attractive? May be :-)

But more importantly, they wanted to have fun and stop worrying about other things for a moment. The sweet release of stress brought by the rhythm of running/walking, and the eventual sense of accomplishment was noticeable in their deeply ruminative smile, moistened by the sweat streams running through their cheeks.

Winners - Category I



First - Remya Brijesh (center)
Second - Sruti Binu (right)
Third - Priya Narayanan (left)

Winners - Category II



First - Anupama Joy (center)
Second - Soumya Pillai (right)
Third - Pinky Prem (left)

Winners - Category III



First - Sahya Binu (center)
Second - Athira Namboodiri (left)
Third - Diya Nair (right)





GCKA Volleyball – Practice makes you perfect

Skills and practice make you a winner, while the former is gifted the later is acquired. That is what these men showed on the courts. While few have got the skills, most of our men overcome it through practice, as a result, the viewers get to see exciting matches. The games were well fought and eventually the winner was decided by the coaches' words- Practice.

Malayalee padayalikal lifted the trophy once again, though they were challenged by others all the way through.



Winners - Malayali Padayalikal



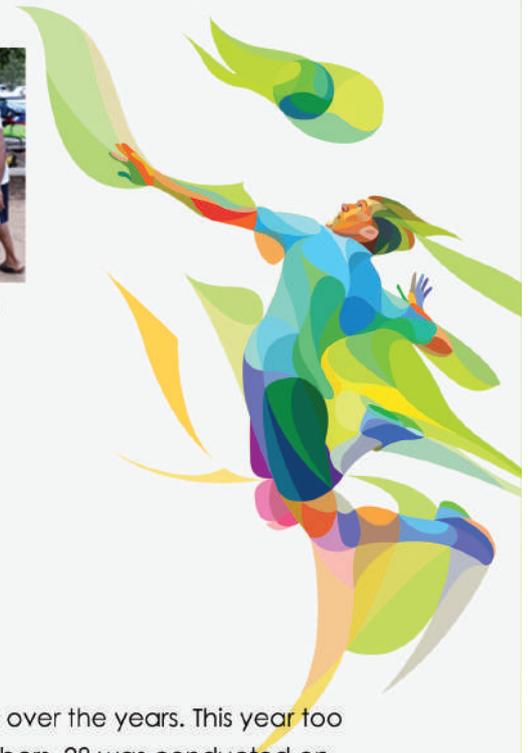
Runners up - Kerala Express



Best Offence
Joby Perrappadan



Best Defence
Arun Suresh



Cards – The Fan favorites

Cards was one of the fan favorite events among GCKA members over the years. This year too the event was conducted with active participation from GCKA members. 28 was conducted on July 25 at Apex community park.



Winners - Abison Padichira,
Santosh Varghese and Joji Thomas



Runners up - Bejoy Kochuparambil,
Shibu Vachery & Subhash Balakrishnan



CHESS Ashokanu Ksheenamakam

GCKA Chess was the last sport event from 2021 BOD. Adult and youth Chess was conducted on July 25th . All the games were competitive and were played in Apex park shelter.



Youth Winner
Joshua Paulson

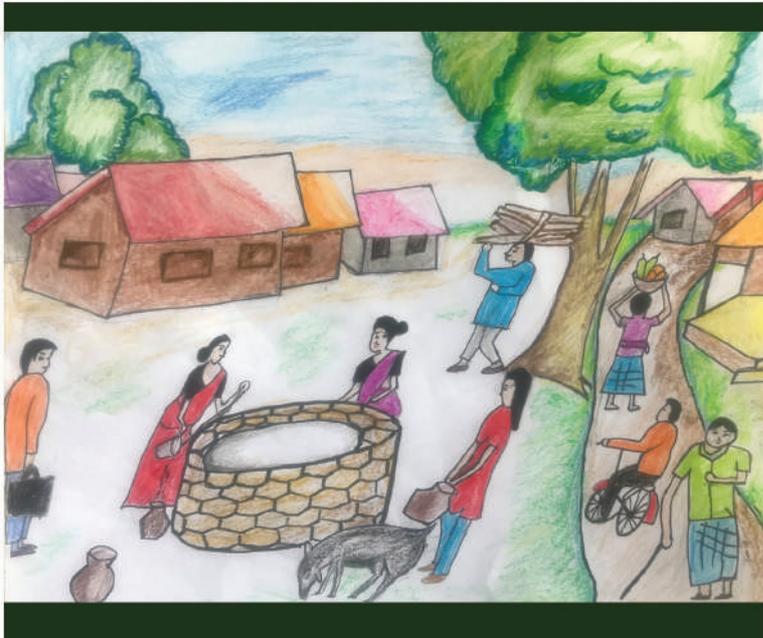
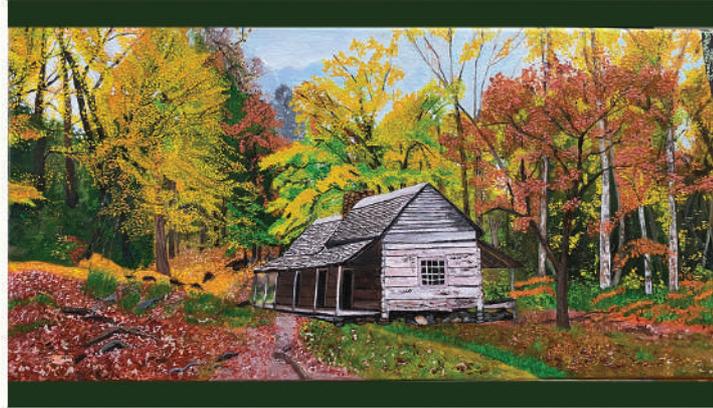


Adult Category Winner & Runner up
Remlin and Roy





ARCHANA ROBIN
Painting Adults - Second



ALLEN MATHEWS
Kids Drawing - Second

ESCAPE FROM THE MUSEUM

Chapter 1: Overslept!

"Honey you're going to be late for school," Kate's dad said as he tried to wake Kate up. As Kate woke up she looked at her alarm clock on her dresser. "AHH I AM SO LATE FOR SCHOOL," Kate yelled and quickly got out of bed to go brush her teeth and change out of her pajamas. "Woah easy, no need to be in a hurry since the school will let you in even if you're tardy," Kate's dad told her reassuringly. "YOU FORGOT!" Kate yelled at her dad. "Forgot what?" Kate's dad asked her questioningly. "I have a field trip to the museum with my class and you said you would personally drive The Adventure Club to the museum in the limo," Kate told her dad frantically. "Oh yeah I did," Kate's dad reminded himself. Kate quickly brushed her teeth, took a bath, got dressed and had enough time to eat a small breakfast. Kate and her dad quickly went to the limo and went to Claire's and Mckeyla's houses to pick them up. "First stop Claire's house," Kate told her dad and her dad zoomed to Claire's house. Luckily Claire was sitting on the front steps of her mansion waiting for Kate. "Hi what took you guys so long?"



Claire asked Kate as she got into the limo. "Sorry I overslept," Kate explained to Claire. "That's ok I did too but now let's go to Mckeyla's house," Claire said and Kate's dad zoomed to Mckeyla's house. Luckily Mckeyla was also waiting for Kate but unlike Claire she was waiting on her porch swing of her mansion. "Hi Mckeyla sorry we're late I accidentally overslept," Kate told Mckeyla apologetically. "That's ok because you gave me the perfect amount of time to review my flashcards," Mckeyla told Kate. Kate's dad once again zoomed but this time to the museum. When the girls reached the museum they saw their teacher outside with the class. The girls got out of the limo and walked up the stairs of the museum to their teacher. "Goodmorning Ms.Peters, sorry we are late," Kate told her teacher Ms.Peters. "That's ok dear," Ms.Peter told her, "The class hasn't even started the tour around the museum yet. After about ten minutes the class went inside the museum in groups of three and of course Kate, Claire and Mckeyla were all in a group together. "Wow look at that fossil," Mckeyla said pointing to a T-Rex fossil.



"Wow this place is amazing," Claire said while observing an ankylosaurus fossil. When Kate started to walk to a pterodactyl fossil she saw a marking on one of the museum tiles. "Hey guys check this out," Kate called to the other girls. "What is it?" Claire asked as she and Mckeyla walked over to Kate. "There is a marking on this tile," Kate said. "Try to step on it," Mckeyla said. Kate stepped on it. "Nothing is happening," Kate said but before she could finish that sentence the girls started screaming as they fell down a secret door. "AAAAH! THUMP!" The girls had a very rough landing but luckily they were ok! "What just happened?" Claire asked. "I don't know," Kate said. The girls walked around the dark room they were in. "Hey guys I think I found a switch," Mckeyla said then flipped a switch. The switch opened a door to a whole another place. "Wow where are we," Kate asked.



Chapter 2: Underground Lab

The girls walked around the strange place they were in. It turns out they had somehow stumbled upon a secret underground lab. "Wow I wonder what or who is down here," said Mckeyla mesmerized by the sight. "Hello!" "Did one of you say something?" Kate asked." "No," Mckeyla and Claire said in unison. The girls turned around and saw a person wearing a labcoat which made them assume he was a scientist. "Hello children," said the scientist. "Hello," the girls said nervously. "Well don't just stand there follow me," the scientist told the girls. The girls thought it would be wrong to trust the stranger but if they wanted to get out of here they had to trust him. So the girls followed the scientist to a room. "Now I would advise that you stay here please," the scientist told them with a fake smile then closed the door to the room. "I don't think I want to stay here another second," Claire said and started to run to the door. As soon as she opened the door loud alarms turned on and the girls heard footsteps coming. "Uh oh," Claire squeaked. When the door opened a dozen scientists came in and took the girls by the arm. "Hey let us go," Kate yelled at them. "No way," a male scientist told her, "you girls have seen too much."



The scientists took the girls to another room and made them sit in seats like the ones at the hospital except these have straps on them. "What are you going to do with us," Mckeyla asked, trying to free herself. "We are going to test this new invention of ours on you," said a female scientist, "our invention is called the memory washer." "You can't use that on us," Kate protested, "it's against the law." "Actually we can and we will," said the female scientist. The girls tried to break free from the chairs but they couldn't move. "BANG, BANG, BANG" "Well I guess you have some time before you forget who you are," the female scientist told the girls with a scowl. All the scientists in the room left. "What do we do now," asked Claire. "I have an idea," Mckeyla said. "What is it?" asked Kate. "So do you see that magnifying glass on that counter," Mckeyla asked Kate. "Yeah," Kate responded. "Try to reach for it," Mckeyla told Kate. Kate tried to reach for. "I got it," Kate said. "Good now try to hand it over to me," Mckeyla told Kate. Kate tried to hand the Magnifying glass to Mckeyla. "Good now Claire, try to get the mirror that's in my pocket," Mckeyla told Claire. "Ok," said Claire. Claire got the mirror from Mckeyla's pocket and tried to hand it over to her. Once Mckeyla got the Mirror she pointed it and the magnifying glass up. "What are you doing?" Kate asked. "I am trying to reflect the sunlight from that crack in the wall and use it to try to make some





type of laser to cut us free," Mckeyla said. Before Kate could respond back to the idea, Mckeyla's idea started working and she was cut free. "Yay Mckeyla," Claire cheered. Once the girls got out of the Chairs they immediately started running out of the room and started to find a way out of the underground lab. Every turn they made was a dead end so they stayed in a room instead. "How are we going to get out of here?" Kate asked. "What are we going to do?" Claire said panicking. "I don't know," said Mckeyla. "What are we going to do?" Mckeyla said, whispering to herself.



Chapter 3 : Escape

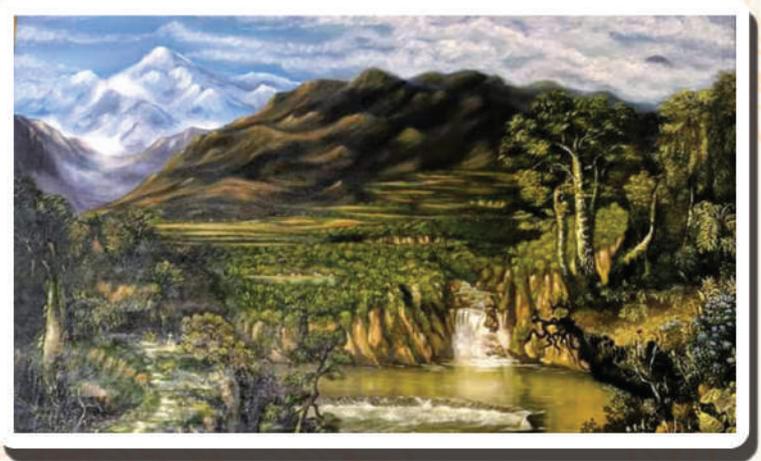
“ How are we going to get out of here if there are so many scientists acting like soldiers patrolling the perimeter?” Claire asked, looking like she is about to faint. “ I don't know but I do wish there was fresh air in here because I can't handle the smell of whatever chemicals they are using in this lab,” Kate said walking back and forth. “ Kate you're a genius,” Mckeyla said. “ I am, how,” Kate asked confused. “ Well if air is coming in then there has to be some way for it to come out,” Mckeyla said very cheerfully, “ and if air is coming in that means we should look for things like vents or if it's a possibility a window.” “ Yay Mckeyla you figured a way out,” Claire said, jumping up and down joyfully. “ Well then what are we waiting for,” Kate asked, “ let's search for a way out of here.” “ Ok so you check that side of the room,” Mckeyla told Claire and pointed to the Left, “ and you can check that side of the room,” Mckeyla said to Kate pointing to the right. “ I am going to check here,” Mckeyla told the other girls and pointed to the center of the room. After about twenty minutes the girls finally found a vent. “ Hey girls I think I found something,” said Claire. “ What is it,” asked Mckeyla. “ It's a vent!” Claire told them excitedly and



pointed to a ceiling vent. " Well let's go through it then,"Kate said. The girls climbed into the vent and started crawling out of the underground lab. " We're almost there," said Kate who was at the front. After five minutes of crawling the girls finally found the vent that led to the museum. " We made it," said Kate panting. " Yay," said Claire, panting. " Well then let's get out of here," Mckeyla said. The girls got out of the vents and landed in the gift shop part of the museum. " Now let's go find Ms.Paters," Kate said and the girls went off to find her. When the girls found their teacher she was not happy. " Where have you girls been," Ms.Peter's asked. " No where," said the girls, afraid that if they tell the truth to Ms.Peters she would blow up like a volcano. " Ok then get in line our field trip at the museum is over," Ms.Peter's told the girls. When the girls got in line the class walked out of the Museum to the bus home. " That was an interesting adventure for the adventure team," Kate told Claire and Mckeyla. " It sure was," Mckeyla said. " I can't wait for our next adventure Claire said " Yeah me too," Mckeyla whispered to herself and the girls sang songs all the way home.



SHRIYA ANAND IYER



ANITA TISHA



കർഷകശ്രീ 2021



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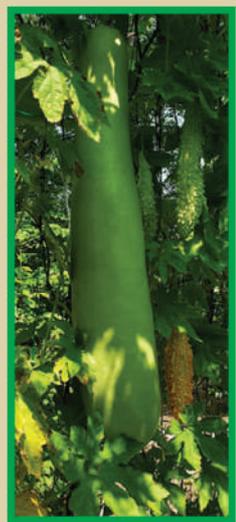


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Jacquelin Jose



Jayitri Narayanan



2021 Sports Moments





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