

RESULTS

**WRITE
A SHORT
STORY**

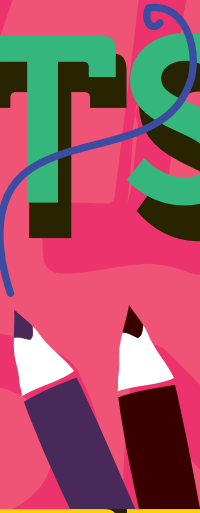


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4-	Fajr Falak	Jury	Lahore
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7-	Laryssa Savage	Jury	Lahore
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WINNERS:

RETURNING OF ODIN

Odin, the god of war, felt lonely when he wandered the cosmos alone. Utterly lonely and in despair. The days of glory were the dream of another time. Odin felt the prayers of the humans were no longer coming his way. Without the prayers Odin felt weaker by the century. With passing millennia, Odin not only felt lonely but also weak. In his desperation Odin turned towards his old for, Mr. World. Mr. World had been wary of the shenanigans of Odin. He reluctantly agreed to help Odin but on one condition, that Odin part with his favorite raven and bequest it to Mr. World.

Deprived of prayers and company Odin reluctantly agreed. But being felt cheated Odin tricked Mr. World and sent him a common raven and flew toward the skies with newfound prayers. Mr. World when found out about the trickery became extremely irritated and called for a council of god's to complain of Odin's treachery.

Odin, now powerful and full of energy found his lost identity as the god of war and defied the councils meeting. Rather he threatened the entire council. Fearing his new found power, the new god's came to realize their mistake. But the damage was done. Odin reigned with terror and absolution for many centuries.

Today, Odin's followers roam the Earth looking for ways to kill their fellow human's and wage wars with terrible ramifications.

1st Position

Name: Fatima Raza

Age: 14

City: Lahore

REPENTANCE

Their hardened faces flashed across my eyes. I shook my head to get rid of the remaining bits of hatred and self-loathing that had clogged up mind.

Their words echoed. But they sounded distant.

I didn't want them to be distant.

I wanted them close. On our stupid digital print sofa. Where they sat and talked. Where they sat and laughed. Where they sat and had an argument. Where they sat and sipped their evening tea. Where he sat complained to her about his arrogant boss. Where she sat and complained to him about our nosy neighbours.

But it faded away. It all seemed distant. Like a hazy memory.

And there was no one to blame but me.

You know what's the most difficult thing to do?

Admitting your mistake.

People spend their whole life in denial. Bringing forth all kinds of stupid and atrocious explanations as to why what happened, actually happened. They twist around the truth, the facts, the words. They misinterpret the emotions.

Only a minute percentage of people admit their mistakes.

And do you know what happens to them?

They become the embodiment of a living corpse.

Day in and day out, these horrendous black monsters consume them. These thoughts of guilt and self-loathing inhabit their souls. And they spread. To each and every inch of their being.

The first thing to shut down is their mind. The voices inside do not quiet down. They rise and compete. Like your relatives during a

heated debate over politics or cricket. And it happens. You can't escape it. No matter where you run off to. You eventually run out of places and people to go to.

And it keeps repeating itself and keeps growing. Until your mind loses to the toxic cycle. Then you are a numb being who works on repeat mode.

Then, the effects spread to your physical body. You feel tired all the time. You want to sleep alone in a dark room, in a dark corner. No matter how long you sleep for, you are still tired. You can't stomach food anymore. Nothing seems to appeal to you anymore.

Once your body loses the battle. Your relations are the next victim. They get compromised, lose their importance, and then simply don't matter anymore.

And then nothing is left. Everything fades away.

And everything was fading away. Nothing was left.

The warmth in my father's eyes was gone. His reassuring smile was now gone.

The fierceness of my mother turned to dust. And the dust blew away. It was gone.

And there is no one to blame but me.

But suddenly, there was a flare of hope.

My soul was replenished as the sound of Azaan filled my ears.

I opened the window.

It was a call of hope.

Something was there.

Not everything was gone.

My body acted on its own. And the next thing I knew, I was in the bathroom. I rolled up my sleeves with shaky hands. I turned on the tap and thoroughly washed my hands.

Thrice.

And then, blank.

I didn't know what to do next.

Do I gargle first, wash my face or blow my nose?

Everything went still for a moment.

What had I become? Why had I strayed so far from my Creator? My Allah?

What did I have, to show to my Lord? My sins? My arrogance? My pride? My indecency? My vulgarity? Social contacts? New clothing? Impressive worldly achievements? Harsh treatment towards my parents? My lies?

What exactly did I have?

Nothing.

And there was a sudden white noise in my mind.

I wanted it to stop. But it became louder.

And louder and louder.

Until I screamed.

And then it was quiet.

The hazy memory of my grandmother resurfaced. She had an unreliable memory. So, she used to do her mundane tasks over and over again. I used to watch her, as she stood up on the first call of Azaan. She would perform her Wuzu and with each step she loudly repeated one Tasbih to mark how many times she had done something.

She'd gargle, thrice. After each time she had a specific Tasbih.

SubhanAllah - Once
Alhamdulillah - Twice
Allahu Akbar- Thrice

It was soothing and calming. I always watched with curiosity and fascination.

My body started to work on its own. With each step of the Wuzu, I felt the light entering my body. And I felt each of the dirty sins that had plagued my mind, my eyes, my tongue, my ears, my hands and feet - I felt all of them slipping away. Running down the drain with the water.

All the indecency my eyes had witnessed.
All the vulgarity and lies my ears had heard.
All the lies and words of hate my tongue had formed and spewed out carelessly.
All the dirty thoughts my mind had conjured.
All the wrong my hands had done.
All the places my feet had taken me to.

I felt pure, and free. Like a newborn. I felt like I had a clean slate to write on.

I couldn't find a Jainamaz. And my life choices hit me again.

And I felt like I was losing everything all over again. All the past memories that I had just witnessed going down the drain, crept up behind me. They wrapped themselves around my ankles and the tendrils started working their way around my abdomen.

And then the Muazzin said 'Allahu Akbar.'

And the tendrils shrunk.

I kept chanting 'Allahu Akbar.'

And the tendrils recoiled as if they were being burnt.

I kept repeating the Takbir.

I felt hope building inside me.

I covered my head with a scarf, spread out the largest sheet that I could find and stood straight. I had seen my grandfather when he was sick and could not go to the Masjid. He would pray at home. He would stand straight, murmur something under his breath, and say Takbir with his hands raised up.

I had listened closely once, to find out what he whispered under his breath. He had told me it was niyat. And niyat is very important in whatever task we do. It's how our actions are judged. By our intentions.

My heart and body knew what to do next, I made niyat and said the Takbir.

The moment I entered the conversation with my Allah, my heart finally found contentment.

And my eyes - that had not shed one tear since I started violating my own soul - watered up.

And tear after tear, pleas left my softened heart.

All I knew was that my Allah is there.
Always.

Waiting for me to come back to Him.
To put my head to the ground in Sajda.
And to let it all out.
And to put my trust in Him.

He wanted me to come back to Him.
So I fled to Him.

And as I went down to do my Sajda, my breath hitched.

A light was all I saw as I recited my Kalima.

And the world faded away - it was no more.

Her parents found her dead - in the position of Sajda. Her face had a calmness to it. Like she was finally at peace.

2nd Position

Name: Haleema Sadia

Age:17

City:Multan

BEING CONTENT WITH LIFE

Since I was a child, I knew I was different, I could see things others could not, and my eyes were a portal to different realms, all of which were amazing and unique. I loved them so much. My parents always gave me weird medicines that would sometimes make them go away, but they always told me it was for the best. Everything was amazing until I became a teenager and joined middle school where life took a turn for the worst. My eyes became lifeless while the things I used to see became horrific and distorted. Due to this, I no longer had a safe haven, except my parents. Then one day, my parents told me that I had a very serious lifelong mental disorder, known as Schizophrenia. They explained that this disorder causes people to see different hallucinations at times and that it is why I take so many medications. For some reason from that point onward, my eyes began hurting more and my hallucinations became more severe.

I felt as if my eyes had deceived me my whole life and began despising the hallucinations. At school, I did not have many friends and was usually alone. As I researched more about my disorder, I learned that it made it so that people with it were not very outgoing would usually become outcasts. This was not a good thing for me either as became even sadder as the days went by. However, with every down there is an up, my parents bought me a dog and I became such good friends with it. They even got me a therapist, which helped me get very social, and I was so happy after

this change that my emotional state began regaining its optimism. My therapist recommended that I should read more books, and I have to say that from this point onward everything went up and did not come down. Reading books boosted my imagination and my hallucinations began bursting with beauty and life, my eyes regained the color they had lost and my social life was flourishing slowly but surely. I knew that I had people who believed in me and I did not give up.

During my early teenage, I was never content with my life, I used to label myself as the child with schizophrenia and nothing more, but as soon as I began looking at myself in a positive light, my life became better. In addition, I started thinking that I was not a child with schizophrenia; rather I was a unique child with numerous exceptional traits.

Therefore, I learnt that to become content with one's life, one first has to become content with oneself, whatever the obstacles one may face.

3rd Position

Name: Qazi Ammaz Farooqi

Age:12.7

City: Multan

JURY SELECTED STORIES

UNITY, DISCIPLINE AND FAITH

I can still see it: the helplessness and resignation on people's faces. Our society irrevocably brought to its knees.

I can still hear it: the cries of those who concluded that there was nothing to be done. They whispered the world good-bye.

I can still sense it: the looming darkness of an intangible presence taking the world in its choking embrace. It walked hand in hand with death.

There are some scars that even time, the gentle healer, cannot diminish.

As I crossed the school's threshold, I was greeted with a familiar sight. The jovial young guard inclined his head. I smiled in tandem but my throat closed up. It had been quite some time yet I still couldn't help looking for the wizened old guard whose former post had now been occupied. He had been there from the very beginning; back when I was a student rather than a history teacher. I shuddered subtly before casting his ghost away.

Girls sat on the front steps, close but with a telltale distance. I looked at them from the corner of my eye. They were at arm's length distance from each other. Another girl raced down the stairs as I ascended. Startled, I veered away from her. I kept watch as she disappeared around the corner before breathing in relief. I safely concluded that I had managed to establish a respectable distance from everyone around me. Realizing my train of thoughts, I flinched.

What am I doing? Everyone will think me paranoid. Better safe than sorry. That was inarguably true.

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At the first bell, I jolted, making my way way downstairs to teach the first of a long day of lessons. The students rose to greet me as usual. I couldn't help but compare their school life with mine. Everyone sat on seats that had been individually placed. I was just about to begin when a latecomer rushed into class, apologizing profusely for her tardiness. She assumed her seat at the front. Though her best friend sat just across from her, she simply waved. No handshakes, no hi-fives, no fist bumps. I supposed their parents had drilled in them the same things that had been drilled in me from experience.

"Today, we will be discussing problems of the early 2020's. Can anyone tell me one of the most incessant one?" I asked my class. I received a frenzy of answers. All the students seemed to be consciously avoiding the blatant one. "Duh," groaned a back-bencher, "It's Coronavirus!" A girl's hand flew to adjust her mask.

The others froze and gave me a perfunctory look. An uncomfortable silence ensued. All our families had faced hard times during the virus but refraining from talking about it would do no one any good. If students didn't know about the problems plaguing us in the past, they would be rendered useless to face the problems of the future. So I kept on doggedly.

"Yes exactly. Now you all must know what it was..." After thirt minutes, I brought the topic to a wrap. "How was it cured?" asked one of the students. Ah. She had asked exactly what I had been hoping for.

"As I have said, all the countries of the world were affected. After careful deliberation, the best scientists and doctors from all these countries held meetings. This was in June 2021. By then, 4/7th of the world population had been affected. Doctors and nurses had exhausted all their resources. The death toll had climbed dangerously high. Now there had been diseases before but none of them had affected the world quite like Covid-19. None of them had involved countries from all over the world. They united under a common flag to move on from these dire times. As these scientists were the best, it was of no surprise that they engineered a cure in six months, faster than anyone could have hoped. In December 2021, after the formation of the cure, it was administered to all the diseased. Finally, the end of 2022 finally rid people rid of Coronavirus."

The bell rang shrilly. I headed out, hoping to have instilled a good lesson in my students. Divided we fall, united we stand. In the decades before 2020, the world had been one big mess. Political struggles, power conflicts and fighting over disputed territories had been so common. Examples lay before, inked in the history book I held. Atrocities in Kashmir. The conflict of Israel and Palestine. The bloodbaths at Syria.

It took a disease that had rattled the world for the countries to come together. World leaders learned to trust each other. Brokered peace. They dared to hope by relying on each other. It was as if the conflicts never existed.

Coronavirus had targeted all the countries. It had not been mindful of religion or race. It had not been mindful of rich or poor. It had not been mindful of first world or third world countries. It had struck swiftly, forgetting all tangible and intangible borders. The cure was engineered once we did the same; forgot all discrimination of any kind. The cure was not a product of diligence; rather it was a product of peace and unity.

They had predicted it would take the world a year to recover. Two years, maybe. At most, a decade. To be honest, the world would never recover. Caution was now honed in its very veins, passed down one after the next. It had been two decades yet here we still were.

This crisis united all the countries. It taught the people to strive forward leading a disciplined life.

Peace could not last forever. The same worldly problems would rise once again and make us forget our humanity. This generation had to learn to be steadfast amidst all this. I took a furtive breath and continued on to the next class, ready to communicate this message to all the classes.

Jury Award

Name: Emaan Aqil

Age: 14

City: Lahore

RENT

The clouds were slowly uncovering a crescent moon, skyline was splitting into two and busy streets filled with busy lives paid no attention to the indications of a yet to come storm. Brooklyn Colwood had just woken up; her chesnut locks were being untangled by her bony fingers as she lay awake in the bed contemplating whether to go to work or not. She almost chose not to but remembered how yesterday that old Chinese man had threatened to throw out her belongings if she didn't pay her rent on time. It had been three months since she had last given her rent and every time there would be knock on her door, she would hide under her bed and pretended not to be home but yesterday that sneaky old Chinese snuck into her room through the window. Brooklyn had no other choice so with an everlasting sigh she climbed off her bed. The cold floor kissed her bare but pale feet, Brooklyn shuddered. Drops of water were leaking through the roof and were splattering on her forehead. With brutal helplessness, she looked up. She was already drenched in the flood that was yet to come.

Moon was lighting up her bright pink dress which hung above her knees and kept skimping up her thighs, her silver glittery stilettos were crunching against the black gravel but her eyes kept staring ahead. Chesnut tresses were swaying back and forth. Two crunched up fifty dollar notes were tucked under one of her breasts. She never made more than hundred as she cared deeply about her health; there wasn't any space for pleasure anymore she just wanted to pay her rent. Every night exactly at half past eight Brooklyn Colwood would put on that same pink dress and silver stilettos; would step out on the main boulevard and would wait. Sometimes during winter she would throw on her old coat but it would hide her low cut dress so she would take it off, not bothering about the unforgiving cold. There had been days Brooklyn had to return home empty handed but it never worried her; her youthful complexion was fading and her fine eyes carried heavy and permanent luggage. Her time was running out and she was aware but she had become a slave to this universe and her master was cruel.

Harry, one of her regular clients was a married man and a father of two. She liked Harry but he talked too much and every time he would pick her up, he would question her about things Brooklyn never wanted to be asked so she would just stare out the window, focusing on the tall building they would pass. Sometimes Harry would turn on the radio and would sing along encouraging Brooklyn to do the same but she would just smile and listen to the melodies. At home she would try to hum the same songs but would always forget the lyrics. There had been many other regulars but once their wife's or girlfriend would find out about their rendezvous, they would stop coming. Brooklyn was used to this so she kept herself detached. Often these men would confess their undying love for her and would praise her beauty but Brooklyn always knew it was the whisky not her. She never felt anything for them.

It was midnight. The streetlight casted a long shadow on the pathway. Brooklyn had earned her hundred; her gloomy orbs were gazing at the darkness ahead. Moonlight was lighting up her way, her freckles formed constellation on her broken face. Cherry was bleeding from her lips and her clothes were stinking of a pungent smell; brandy. She was nearing home, from a distance she could start to feel the warmth of her bed and even the splattering water leaking through her roof. A smile crossed her cherry chapped lips. Dark silhouette was making its way towards her; Brooklyn oblivious carried on until a rugged hand grabbed her elbow and yanked her off the footpath. Her screams and cries were quietened with a firm hand placed on her mouth. Silent screams filled the vacant streets.

Blood was trickling down her legs, the bright pink dress was ripped from her shoulder and her thighs but Brooklyn didn't feel cold. She had left her stilettos in the alley along with her failed cries for help. The moonlight kept guiding her through the dark. There weren't any dried tears on her face just smudged lipstick and pitiable defencelessness. She felt sick. Stopped dead in her tracks and tiredly rested her head against a lamp post; her hair were in knots. A loud sob escaped her lips and her shaky legs slumped down. With one quick movement her head jerked towards her right and her stomach emptied all its constituents. Loud coughing echoed but no one heard; everything in this city went unheard and Brooklyn knew so she screamed so loud the sky shook. No one heard her.

She kept sitting there in her own filth for the longest possible time until she realized that her predator had also taken her earnings. Anger rushed through her veins; she gathered her nearly lifeless body and stop up. Brooklyn Colwood just wanted to pay her rent on time.

Her feet halted, she wasn't sure why she was here maybe her mind was playing games with her but her heart was determined. The last thing she wanted was to watch that Chinese man throw out her things so she stepped inside the building, gritty to get her lawful earning back. The air inside was warm but to Brooklyn it felt strange and suffocating. She walked ahead. There weren't any uniform clad officers in the sight, just empty desks. Brooklyn stood there unsure but before she had a chance to turn around. A voice called from behind. "Miss" she hastily turned back and let her eyes fall on a short chubby man wearing a uniform. His eyes scanned Brooklyn, stopping at her face "come in my office please". He had a timid voice. Brooklyn followed him like a lost puppy. Upon reaching his office, he gestured towards a seat placed in front of his desk; Brooklyn gladly sat down but the itch in her legs made her wince. "Tell me from the start" he spoke with certain gentleness and opened a blank file. Her chapped lips opened and carried on their movement for twenty minutes.

"And what do you do?" a question was asked. The whole time the man had been staring at her with burning curiosity; Brooklyn hesitated.

"I work on the main Boulevard" a whisper echoed.

"Exactly what do you do?" the man was persistent.

"I work for gentlemen like you". He cruelly smiled, his had been right all along he knew it the moment she walked through those doors. With slow and patronizing movement he closed the file. Brooklyn looked up. He stood up from his seat and motioned Brooklyn to remain seated when she started to get up too. The chair next to Brooklyn was now occupied, he kept staring at her. A jagged hand settled on her thigh, she flinched but remained seated. "Girls like you should never roam around the streets, alone" he whispered.

"You can lose your way home or some other things" her head jerked toward him and stared at him with questioning eyes. A thunderous laugh boomed in the office. The man reached in his

pockets and grabbed something. He placed two scrunched up fifty dollars notes in front of Brooklyn. She kept staring at them. The man kept laughing, he stood up and reached his desk and grabbed the file. The file was chunked in the shredder. Brooklyn Colwood kept staring, she could hear his laughter but without another thought she reached for the scrunched up notes. She just wanted to pay her rent.

Jury Award

Name: Afifa Chaudhry

Age: 18

City: Lahore

SOMEONE SPECIAL

The skyline was streaked with yellow and orange as the evening set in, the sun fondled gently with the horizon, its brilliance seemed diminished, as if tired after a long day. But the bustling streets of the city were teeming with scores of people. Some gathered round outdoor coffee tables, while others seated themselves in diners for a bite to eat. Others marched briskly across the market square, shopping bags in hand, scanning the area for more to buy – the winter sale was almost over. Yet there were some who were oblivious to their surroundings, couples seated in solitude, enjoying the sunset and each other, lost into each other's eyes. She too was out but belonged to none of them, all alone, she glided through the busy market square with an upright gait.

She had dressed up for the occasion, even attracted some looks on the way. In her youth it would've been a matter of pride, now it really did not matter. Her thick blond hair were done nicely in to a bun, she wore an elegant blue cardigan over a milky pink shirt with a prominent collar, and a grey knee-length skirt. She walked comfortably in her black low-heel shoes that accentuated her style. Were it not for some graying hair and slight wrinkle marks on her face, that her light makeup failed to conceal, anyone could've mistaken her for a thirty-year-old, a 'petite' thirty-year-old. Mrs. Susane Thompkins was an exceptionally beautiful woman for her age; she had had everything in her life, and then lost it all.

She tried hard to keep her face expressionless, holding back a frown as she read people's faces – she could do that, almost like a psychic. A teenager girl, dressed casually in a pair of ripped jeans and a sleeveless top, smirked as she passed by – her eyes said it all – 'Going on a date with someone?' Susane gave her a glare and answered in her mind: 'Darling you'd better get a sense of dressing yourself before you judge others.' A middle-aged soccer mom seated on an outdoor coffee table, sipping on her latte, eyed her enviously – 'Wonder where she's headed dressed up all like that?' The answer was right on her lips, but she did not say it out aloud: 'You'd be better off watching what sort of junk you are stuffing your body with instead of being jealous if you want that figure to last.' She shook the thoughts out of her mind, nothing mattered to her, she did not care what they thought, this was her life, not theirs.

She was headed towards a florist's shop. A panorama of colors welcomed her sight from a distance and as she drew nearer, her nostrils filled with a mixture of soothing scents, the effect was elating. Flowers of all sorts were arranged in bundles: roses, lilies, daisies, lavender, buttercups, tulips... 'Tulips, his favorite,' she thought. The florist was tending the flowers, spraying them with water, the sound of approaching footsteps caused her to turn around. With a smile fixated on her face and eyes glistening with excitement, she said: "How are you Mrs. Thompkins?"

"I am fine Amy. How are you and how's your boy?"

"I am fine too. Mike's great, the other day he said his first words 'car car', could've said mama but no."

"Kids these days", she replied, holding back a laugh.

"They sure are a hoot and a half, anyways how may I help you?"

"The usual Amy."

She fished out a bunch of yellow tulips and handed them over. "You get these every Saturday, are they for someone special?" Susane smiled and said: "Yes, he's very special." She paid her and went off to find a taxi and in no time, she was seated in one. The engine roared to life and the cab cut through the city streets, stopping just once at a red light, everything seemed to pass by in a blur.

The car screeched to a halt in front of the St. Louis Church on Parker Avenue. She got off the cab and waited for the driver to drive away. Once the car was out of sight, she walked a few paces along

the lane, and then cut through an alley, to the other side. There stood the entrance to his place, two wrought iron gates, on the other side of the road.

With a slight push, the gates yawned open and she walked along the dirt-path, counting her steps, never looking up – it was a routine for her. After about seventy paces, she turned left and walked on the soft grass for a few steps and then stopped.

In front of her stood a white marble cross plunged into the earth with the engraving: 'Here lies Alexander Thompson, a beloved son.' Beloved son, and nothing else, he never lived enough to be anything more than that. He did not live, because life was unfair. All sorts demons plague this world with their existence, whereas this innocent boy never even made it to twenty five.

She stood there silently, her cheeks were wet with streams of tears that trickled down her face, her 'old' face, she looked much older now with her makeup washed off. The only person who made her feel young and lively, lay buried beneath her feet. She gently placed the Tulips, 'his favorite', at the foot of her son's tombstone, forced a smile on her face and whispered "I will always love you my boy."

No longer able to bear the sorrow, she turned around and made her way out of the graveyard. As she stepped outside of the gates, a winter breeze gently pressed against her, caressing her body – this was her son, embracing her. She wiped off the tears from her cheeks and smiled, for real this time, and promised to return the next Saturday evening.

Jury Award

Name: Syed Muhammad Khan

Age: 22

City: Lahore

CREATE!

HOW TO TELL A SHATTERED STORY

"How to tell a shattered story? By slowly becoming everybody. No. By slowly becoming everything." - Arundhati Roy.

I reread the words over and over again, my parched tongue twisting its meaning around as I run my strained fingers over the the bindings of this worn out book. It stares back at me, the title gleaming in half faded words: "The ministry of utmost happiness;" A beautiful book I accidentally came across as I went a little further than what I had planned on for my archeology dig tonight. A time capsule caught my eye, and A book preserved safely within, back from 2017 welcomed my cold hands. God knows how many centuries have passed since then, and God knows how this book managed to survive till this day, even after the uncountable wars and revolutions this planet has seen. Perhaps, because I was destined to find it tonight and mourn over our beautiful mess of a lives.

Even at that time, at least a thousand years ago, this writer named Arundhati Roy presumed that by slowly becoming everybody, and by slowly becoming everything, you could tell a shattered story. And she was right. This is exactly what we have become today. Year 3000, and we have become everything. The sky clears and clouds with the swipe of our frigid fingers. Concepts and wishes turn into reality before they even cross our minds. It never rains without our consent. Nothing is covered and nothing is coveted anymore. Everything is clutched inside our tightly clenched palms. We own it. We own this world. The tiny creatures that once roamed this land known as the essence "mother nature" are long but gone because they rendered as a hindrance between us and this unchallenged advancement. It took us about 5.543 billion years to become what we are today, but no. We, even in our in-arguably advanced glory, cannot string together words and write stories like this writer called Arundhati did a millennium ago. We can only tell a shattered story, because we became everything. There's a cure to every illness, but life on this planet is nothing but a disease. The concept of love, the origin of family, affection, tenderness and warmth, it died away with the birth of our technologically unmatched era. Nothing is human anymore. Nothing is soft or kind.

It's a shattered story.

I open the book and smell the half creased pages. Before my limited comprehension could even savour the beautiful scent properly, a tiny piece of ink stained paper, pressed between page number 231 falls out of the book. I unfold it with my fumbling hands just to uncover the handwriting of a teenager. "A list of pretty things I came across this year," reads the top first line. My eyes scan the rest of this tiny sheet, but soon enough, a burning sensation takes over my lungs as I read the text: "a baby laughing mildly over a rubber duck making squeaky sounds. A tiny glass bottle filled with sand from a Malaysian beach that my friend handed me after class on November 5th. A golden sky painted over a dying bougainvillea. Clouds floating away as I wait for my father to pick me up from college at 4pm. A half bloomed sunflower..."

The list went on. But my courage to read it any further slowly withered and faded. Is this how life used to be? How did we lose track of these tiny miracles? Did we actually foresake human nature and humanity just for this exceedingly comfortable and robotic life? Yes, I have seen human beings fly across this grey dome we call the "sky" but I have never seen this sky paint a golden or blue picture. Maybe because we intoxicated it. Maybe because we didn't appreciate it.

I have seen the sun, but I have never witnessed a sunflower, simply because we don't have them anymore. "Do they look like tiny patches of sun?" I ask in a slow whisper as I stare at this piece of paper I am holding. There's no reply. A dry laughter comes out of my throat as I wonder: we were able to invent anything and everything, but how funny is it that not even a single person alive right now can sketch me a picture of our past.

Maybe because we wanted to tell a shattered story.

I have seen children, but I have seen them as a mere product of this consumerist society. As an asset that will serve the noble sake of inventing more and more comforts the second it grows up. But I have never seen a child laugh out of involuntary happiness.

We're a shattered story.

I know how water feels, but only through bottles we made for ourselves. I haven't seen the crystal blue lakes shinning magnificently beneath the clouds. 4pm. It comes and goes every single day. Maybe it was special.

Maybe, before we become a shattered story.

I stare down at the book and the piece of paper I am holding, and I

contemplate; if this person had a list of pretty things, they must have witnessed bad things as well, because only in that case was it even possible to look up at the sky and smile. To appreciate the nice things. We don't do that here anymore. We don't recognize, we don't admire what makes us happy because nothing makes us sad. The inconvenience and the struggles are a concept unknown to us. Every single vein in my body aches, as an intense desire to feel any other emotion aside from this still satisfaction overcomes my senses. Wistful-ness, melancholy endearment. How these emotions might feel. I'll never know.

A drop of sweat trickles down from my forehead and vanishes before I even consider wiping it away; the machines know how to keep my body's temperature as desirable as possible. They won't let me feel this trauma physically. But the heart still yearns. Yearns for places untouched by man or artificial intelligence. But there isn't any left. The birds don't fly around anymore like they do in these ancient pictures we hang up on our walls. Grass and delicate flower petals are a far etched fantasy, as the ground is only a hard metallic surface now. Love has lost it's meaning as we barely consider death a threat. Everything has an answer. Every issue has a cure. Why fret over our parents and siblings and children when nothing, absolutely nothing is capable of hurting them?

I close my eyes and place the book back. Was it a book or a relic/scar/remembrance of a past we'll never relive? I don't know. We slowly became everything, and now we narrate a shattered story. This year, the year 3000, the 30th century, it's a shattered story. We're the shattered residents with a perfect facade pulled over our heads. My brain elongates the word "shattered" until it resembles a picture of me and my world. My my eyes snap back open; we'll never become human again.

Jury Award

Name:Fajr Falak

Age:18

City:Lahore

CREATE!

ABBAS!

"Abbas! ABBAS!" A screaming Ali came up to the boy eating a malai boti ka paratha "Mera blue Junaid Jamshed wala kurta kidh-" The twin paused as he stared at the chubbier version of him staring back at him with the kurta tight on his body "MOTAY!" He growled as he stomped back the hallway. "Yaar, hud hai!" Abbas yelled, the corner of his lips coated with the Maggi noodles ka chatpata flavour, he was watching his WWE walay matches, the type Azar never understood, matlab k how is throwing someone from place to place entertaining? "Abbas Bhai! Shut up!" the younger girl yelled and like her name, she was very much a flame. Hot curls of lava fluttered down her back like the sunset over the Monal hotel in Islamabad, and with her hair on fire she threw a shoe at the older boy "Aik toh you eat all day, path jao gay! Uff" the read headed girl stomped back to her room, the flame in her slithering out in all directions. The boy stared at her and then shrugged his shoulders and grabbed the Masala Lays ka packet. The door creaked open, it sounded like a dying animal crying out its sorrow through its last breath. Abbas's head spun back, his lays flew everywhere, "HAAAA!" Ali screamed as he grabbed his twin brother and ran around him, the other boy put his hand on his chest and muttered cuss words, "ullu ka patha" Abbas whispered, his hand still on his chest "Chal Ami says to pack your stuff we're visiting Dado and Baray Abu" Abbas nodded, his teeth collided with each other in anger and he walked to his room, silently.

The road trip was loud, with Ami screaming at Ali and Abbas to stop arguing like dogs. Azar sat in the corner digging into her laptop, writing. Soon, it got dark and the road lay before them like a tarmac ribbon, albeit, one that had been worn over time. A white crack ran down the center, relatively unbroken compared to the scarred and potholed concrete. They stopped at a mitti ka ghar that was perched on the plain near the woods, so old and yet so alive and welcoming, the smell of fresh biryani and aloo gosht circled around in the air. With Dado standing outside with her arms forward and her smile gentle and her dupatta over her head as it was a part of it. In each smile she was a queen, in her thoughts wisdom flowed, that old heart of hers was the source of so much to cherish. The four kids bolted towards her, their arms, holding her close as if she was going to slip away any second. She thanked

each by planting a kiss on their head. This moment of peace was interrupted by Baray Abu he entered with his dhoti and pag and he smiled "Ohhh meray bachay!" the older man smiled, showing his missing teeth and the ones about to fall, he smelled of tulsi and naswar. He pointed towards the door and gave them a little push as they walked inside the house that was welcoming from the open door to the small hallway with pictures of them that told stories of how loved these kids were. They sat at the huge mahogany table, the one that Ali loved, it was dark and it dared them to ruin the perfect shine with their unworthy fingerprints. However, the food came, jokes were made and unworthy fingerprints ruined the perfect varnish.

The four siblings walked around the choti galiyaan, their eyes circled around looking at the small mitti ke ghar with roses that encouraged, dandelions which honoured the sun formally and the daisies that dared to express their simplicity. But then, came the forbidden house, Masi Surraya's house. Her house looked as if it hadn't seen the sun in years, it was like the sun reached for the walls but they shrank away because they weren't deserving enough. Ali crept towards it, being the oldest, one and two years from the girls and 23 minutes from his twin. He put his foot inside the gateless cottage which stank like a rotting animal, whispers of cuss words from his siblings to come back circled around his hair. Masi Surraya came forward and put a hand on the boys' shoulder "Kithay chalay o putar?" the older woman muttered, her teeth piercing through her lip "W-wo I-I" the boy stuttered, his eyes fixed on something behind the old woman. The creature licked its lips and the boy welcomed darkness, his brothers shriek echoed in his ears. The younger twin stared at the old woman, with her hands wrapped around his brother's arm, ripping the flesh with her curled up nails and Abbas begged her to stop "A-aap ye kya kar rahi ho? Stop! He's going to die! We'll leave!" He took one step forward but a force pushed him five steps backwards. Azar whispered the pehla galma and ayat-ul-qursi and the old woman screeched and put her hands on her ears as puss oozed out of them. The older boy ran like a maniac along with his two siblings and he finally welcomed darkness at the gate of his house where the flowers protected him.

Masi Surraya still lives, milking her cows and talking to creatures that don't exist. Baray Abu and Dado died from unknown reasons a few years ago. Abbas still has episodes of him not being able to

save his brother, Ali has sleep paralysis episodes with the creature dragging him off his bed and Azar has lost her flame and they've moved to Pakpattan.

Jury Award

Name: Duaa Hussain

Age: 16

City: Lahore

GLIMPSE OF LIFE

"There is no life without an 'if'."

Death was curious. Staying in his realm, he was tired of hearing souls talk about the time they were alive. He wanted to meet life in person. She was said to make everything beautiful and bright. He just wanted to know how she did that.

Knowing that his existence would start to fade and cause an unbalance in the universe, he vowed to make his journey quick. Reaching a world where he saw souls wrapped with skin and hair, clothes and shoes, he felt disgusted as he walked past people who couldn't see him. For him the concept was that Humans didn't have souls; they were the souls. They just had these bodies.

"Why did people think that Life was beautiful and he was Merciless?" was the question he wanted an answer to. He walked the streets, seeing children in the park step on plants and flowers. Only he could see their little souls make their way to his realm. What was his job when the work was done all by who life was granted?

Crossing the sides, he could see mere beggars lying on the footpath, waiting for miracles to happen, all because they wanted to live. He couldn't understand why they wanted life when she was treating them so callously.

"You wouldn't feel pain if you are dead, then why not just rest in peace?" he asked but got no answer for his existence wasn't felt at that point.

He did not know how, but some way he thought of entering a white-framed building which was calling out to him—the hospital. The cries of pain, the desperate weeps, the helpless moans he heard were nothing compared to the bloody scenes he saw. He

passed different rooms until he stumbled into one with a little boy. The boy, not even eleven years old, was stuck to the bed he was lying in. he couldn't walk, couldn't speak or even breathe properly. His eyes that were filled with tears of pain and agony at first, dried down when his gaze met Death's.

He raised his shivering hand towards the Him and whispered in a hoarse, barely audible voice, "Help me..."

Death saw his suffering, wanting to get him out of this hell the boy was in.

"Trust me, you won't feel a single thing after this," Death whispered and then stroked the boy's forehead, placing a kiss there. The boy's expressions relaxed, his chest stopped heaving, the machines on the side stopped beeping.

"I'll meet you on the other side," he promised as he watched the boy's soul fade away like golden dust.

Death's time was up. He was going to go back to his realm with his questions answered without even meeting Life.

It was just before he left, he heard a woman call out to him. It was Life herself.

Her teal hair reached her waist and a lavender dress covered her peach skin. Her shining, silver-blue eyes glowered at the one in front of her. "You are not supposed to be her, Death."

Death took off his black hood, revealing a skull-like face with red eyes and raven hair that were drooping down his forehead. "I had some questions but don't worry. Now that I have them answered, I'd like to go back."

"You stole something that belongs to me!" her melodic voice yelled. Death raised a brow, "The boy? He's suffered enough from the likes of you."

"What do you want!?" she asked, agitated. "No one wants you; they want me!"

"Do you know why? Because the way you presented yourself to them was deceiving. You promised them many things but you gave them none—you made them suffer. You bribed them into believing that nothing's better than you and dying meant that they won't get anything out of it."

After a big pause, he continued, "You know what, Life? People love you and hate me because. you are the beautiful lie and I am the bitter reality. Very few actually get to live life, but in the end, they're all going to die. Just like all your promises to them,

because, in the end. . . promise are just words.”
With that, he walked into his realm, where no soul cried or suffered.
A place where Death saw nothing but peace and comfort.
He then saw the boy who was no longer in bonds, bound to the
bed he laid in as if he were chained to it.
He was free here, running around pain-free, as happy as ever. Not
living but dead.

Jury Award

Name:Izma Mamoon

Age:15

City:Lahore

THE VOICELESS

Drowning, the feeling of pain all around, drowning you. The darkness of the ally and the feeling of cold sliver slicing your neck. The sounds flooding your eyes and the memory crossing your mind as you sit at a local cafe, sitting and watching people walk by. As you're diving deep into those horrible thoughts, a friendly face appears in front of you. He talks to you in a sweet voice and it pulls you out of the dark icky swamp of your memories and makes you look towards this new face. He seems gentle and kind so you reach toward your pen and paper and write the four simple words that have taken over your life, I physically can't talk. You shove the paper towards it gently and he reads it quickly and he gives you a sympathetic smile.

You spend the rest of the afternoon talking to this man and it was the best afternoon you have had in a year. After a couple of hours, you have to part, but you agree to see him again. You meet for the next couple of weeks and you take a great liking to the man with the gentle face. After knowing him for months he finally asks why you can't speak. And that's when it hits, it's like the world is crashing down. Tears roll down your eyes as you go back to those horrible times, all the pain overwhelms you as you run, you don't know where but all you know is that you have to run. You hear him shouting and telling you that you shouldn't be afraid. That's when you stop and look at him, wondering if you should trust him. For

some reason, his face is not happy with you stoping, as you turn to look to see what is bothering him, you feel it before you see it.

You wake up with a jolt, remembering the surroundings you start to fight and shake when a familiar voice calms you. You look to your left and see the friendly face you've grown too known. He and the doctors tell you that you were hit by a car. Few days pass and you're free to go until it hits you harder than before, the doctor says he can cure your voice and that you will speak again. He recognizes the fear in your eyes and tells you it is painless. And then that friendly face appears and suddenly everything is okay.

He urges you to do it, so you will be able to free yourself. You hesitantly agree and think of all the things you will be able to do. You think of talking, you think of singing, and the greatest thing you think of is laughing. The day of the surgery comes and all the confidence of the other day has left you, but then you feel the familiar hand and look up to a friendly face. And like all the other times, you feel that everything is better, and you wait for the new life, with no misery to begin.

Hours and maybe days pass when you wake up, and as soon you open your eyes you see his face. You try your best to smile even with the tube in your lungs. The doctors come running in. You don't recognize any of them but then you see another familiar face. The same doctor who told you you would be able to talk again walked in with a huge smile. He told you you would be in the hospital for a few more weeks and then you would be free to leave.

The weeks pass and everything moved smoothly. When they take the tube out you felt like the world is in your favor. The doctor told you it would be months before you would be able to talk. But it didn't matter, a few months is better than forever. When the doctor calls and told you can try talking and using your vocal cords now, but to go slowly. You meet with the man who changed your life forever and don't tell him why. When you see him standing you run up to him and with all your might and strength and said h-hello. It was soft and a bit croaky but he didn't care. He simply smiled.

Jury Award

Name:Laryssa Savage

Age:13

City:Lahore

TEEN BLINDED BY MONEY CHANGES IN ONE EXCHANGES WITH A WISE MAN

Jason Bourne, a sixteen year old living in the rural areas of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Jason wasn't born in a rich family, his parents Mr and Mrs Bourne worked at factories. Jason would go to a free school. It wasn't a low class school, all types of children would go there. Jason would sit with kids who had wealthy parents and would get jealous. He would always complain to his parents that he wants to buy a car or a gaming console but his parents couldn't afford that. He wouldn't take the toys his parent's bought them and would break them in front of their faces which hurt them from inside.

Jason became good friends with John Wick. They were besties and would meet each other all the time. However, Jason would never call John to his house because he was always embarrassed which also bothered his parents. Jason would often steal objects from John because he was from a wealthy family. Jason was two-faced. Infront of his friend, he would try to act all cool but at home, all he would do is complain instead of being grateful for what he has. Jason would tell John to come play outside and then steal things on the way out. One thing Jason wasn't aware of was the security cameras in John's house which led to John and Jason being seperated. John's parents also filed for a restraining order. That didn't stop Jason though. He was too obsessed with money. He once broke in and tried to steal a wallet. This led John's parents to call the police. When Mr and Mrs Bourne arrived at the police station, it was 2 AM and they felt so embarrassed and grabbed Jason by the arm and took him home because luckily, John's family didn't feel the need to press charges after looking at the condition of Mr and Mrs Bourne.

Jason stopped going to John's house and started going on the streets at night because he always liked being away from his parents and his house. One day, Jason was walking home from school, which he described, the "walk of shame". Jason saw a wealthy old person. Jason planned to manipulate the old man. "Please help me, I've been starving for weeks now, I am very poor," said Jason.

"Ok, you say you are poor, I'll help you, give me one of your eyes and I'll give you 50 grand."

said the old person.

"What are you talking about, I can't do that"

said Jason

"Ok how about this, give me both of your eyes, I'll give you 1 million. If that doesn't work, give me both of your hands, I'll give you 500 grand. You are saying you are poor, I am helping you change that"

said the old person

"If you are willing to pay so much money, that means I am very wealthy."

said Jason

"You see, I am also trying to tell you how wealthy and blessed you are. Why do you think that you aren't, they are people who don't have these blessings like you. I have to go now, stay safe kid"

said the old man.

The old man was Warren Buffet who visited Albuquerque to donate to a homeless shelter. This got Jason thinking about all the mean things he said and how much he hurt his parents. He was mesmerized by what the old man had told him. He straight went to John's house and apologized. Jason had finally understood how blessed he was. He went home to his parents and apologized to them too. He never told anyone about the incident he had.

Everyone needs to be grateful with what they have.

Jason then dedicated his life to become successful but the right way. He started paying attention at school, started helping others and started to appreciate what his parents do for him. Eventually Jason graduated high-school and went to MIT to study engineering. Jason worked extremely hard and he eventually made his own company which became a fortune 500. A couple of more years of hard work, and he becomes the richest person on the planet, all thanks to the old man he met on the street. You can accomplish anything if you put in the hours, you are dedicated, and you should always believe in yourself.

15 years later, in Los Angeles. Warren Buffet has become a very old man however, he is fighting hard to protect his life work, otherwise he would go bankrupt. Warren just needed a sum of 2 billion

dollars but no-one could pay a sum that big. Not even a bank can give out such a large loan. Warren was confused and about to lose all the money had made for the past 65 years. The next day, Warren receives a call that someone offered to pay the sum and his life's work was safe. Warren was so happy and wanted to say a special thank you to the gentlemen who would do something so kind.

When Warren entered his office, there was a nice young gentleman waiting for him. Warren had no clue who it was. The man introduced himself.

"Hello Mr. Buffet, It's been a long time" said Jason.

"I'm sorry but I don't recognize you" said Warren

"That's fine. I'm Jason Bourne, but you will recognize me if I say that I'm the kid on the street, who you offered to pay for my eyes or hands. That day, you taught me a lesson. Since then, I have worked very hard and that's all because of you. I know this sum of money will never be enough to pay you back for what you did, but I would like to give back to you in any way possible."

said Jason

Warren goes over in tears and hugs Jason

"Thank You Jason."

Jury Award

Name: Eshan Mughal

Age: 15

City: Lahore

REPLICATED REALITY

Through the endless hallways filled with blue lockers and multicultural students, he stood tall with brick heavy textbooks in his hands. Dylan Anderson was in his senior year of high school only a few months away from graduation. He had blonde hair with a faded cut, skin lighter than milk due to his Swedish origin. He was about to enter the principal's office, a place where he started to visit often since the beginning of this year.

As he pushed the door open with his broad shoulders, the principal, Mr. Reynolds, greeted him. Dylan silently grabbed the chair in front of him and sat down.

"Now Dylan," he said, "I don't understand what happened to you. You used to be acing all the classes and cherished every nanosecond of school. Now you just lost your motivation and you blew your chance of going to ivy league"

"I am aware sir," he paused, "Nothing's worthwhile, after all, we just die don't we, that's reality"

"Encouraging you is a challenge, I'll just leave you at this for the day, a friend of mine once told me 'reality can sometimes be stranger than fiction'".

"Have a good day sir" Dylan said, completely ignoring him. He was soon on the busy streets of New York. As his eyelids became heavy, he found a wooden bench in Central Park to lay down and take a quick nap while birds chirped and thick green trees. Even with indistinct chatter and loud construction sounds in the city, he was able to close his eyes until he woke up to the sun waving goodbye. Suddenly, he had the presence of mind to realize that he was late for supper, he ran 2 streets north to his apartment. The apartment was pretty short considering the other buildings which stood tall, though it was pretty modern as it was built with crystal clear glass. Once he opened the modern wooden door on floor 21, he found his apartment empty without his parents. Initially, he assumed his parents were still at work until he received a call from his school friend Heidi, which he accepted casually.

"Hey Dylan, I think I'm going crazy, am I the only one who notices the peculiar fact that people have disappeared, heck some of them have frozen in time! I've tried calling my family members, all of them without a sound, you're the only one who picked up.

"Hmmm, my parents are also not here. You know what, let's meet up, the coffee shop on the 53rd." Dylan said placidly.

"Alright see you in fifteen," Heidi replied.

Once Dylan was back on the streets again, he did notice that the busy streets were pin-drop silent with barely any cars on the road. Along with that he only saw enough people to count with his fingers. On the way, he met his friend, Heidi, she had brown hair and beautiful long hair, she wore an oversized brown coat habitually.

"So, I see what you mean, Heidi," Dylan said.

"It is agitating me, what is going on?" Heidi inquired.

"I am as clueless as you are," Dylan replied.

"Look, do you see that, tell me I'm not seeing things," she said as she pointed to a man as still as a wax figure.

"Yeah I see it"

"You see what I mean, others except us don't even notice it, heck they don't even interact with us, they treat us like ghosts."

Heidi walked up to a woman nearby, and she just walked straight through Heidi, treating Heidi like a ghost. Dylan could only gawk at what he just saw, as fear and confusion took over his body. He helplessly knelt as if his soul had departed from his body and Heidi, equally dumbfounded, just stood there and looked at Dylan. Heidi glanced at her watch, and it was indeed still.

After a moment of utter tranquility, Dylan and Heidi tried to amend their feelings by agreeing to a suggestion to visit the Empire States Building, a place where Heidi had never visited before. While walking through the empty streets, and tall modern skyscrapers they appreciated the eccentric atmosphere. The gloomy night sky, and the full moon that stood still in the center of the sky, added onto the eccentricity.

Once Dylan and Heidi arrived in front of the copper revolving doors that led inside to the iconic skyscraper, they were greeted by the obvious silence. They took the giant classic elevators to reach the pinnacle of the Empire State building. Upon exiting the lift, Dylan confessed his fear of heights. Heidi only smiled and grabbed his warm hand.

"There is nothing to fear," Heidi said, "this might not even be real."

"You mean it's a dream?," Dylan inquired.

"Dream or not, this isn't real, it can't be," Heidi stated.

Overcoming his fear of heights, Dylan steadily stepped closer to the steel railing where the breathtaking view of his city could be seen. While Heidi cherished the magnificent view, Dylan still kept a distance.

"Dylan we can't stay here forever," Heidi spoke suddenly, "we should take a leap of faith." She sat on the railing of the highest floor and gestured at Dylan to come closer. Dylan approached her hesitantly but grabbed onto her hand.

"A leap of faith...." Dylan repeated, "how do we know what's on the other end?"

"We don't"

Before Dylan knew it, they both were falling rapidly down hundreds of meters. Just before Dylan could hit the floor, he whispered to himself, 'reality can be stranger than fiction'.

"Fix simulation world 1 ASAP, for stage 2 of simulation, set the year to 2540" a woman in a lab coat commanded. A team of the brightest scientists were in a lab, sitting in front of various holographic screens.

"Affirmative, location?" A man in front of a cutting edge computer asked.

"Copenhagen. New plan, they can keep their retention, I want to see how Dylan and Heidi proceed"

"Commencing Project Reality Replication part 2"

Jury Award

Name: Sangdo Choi

Age: 15

City: Lahore

UNIVERSE

In this 7th parallel universe, there is a country named "Teatasse". People who live there had teacup shaped heads. Some had longer heads and some had wider cups. And soon, the society divided the cups into their shapes. Classic cups, flare cups, and flute cups. Few wealthier cups even drew patterns and drawings into their cups, and in this society, cups with more fine quality of painting meant that they had lots of money.

Also, people could throw different objects into each other's cups. When people were thankful for someone's rightful act, people put the flower and different kinds of gifts inside the teacup as a pay-back. This was another way of conversation to people living in the 7th parallel universe, and the goddess, who was the constructor of this universe smiled while observing her children. They couldn't talk with each other, and could only give objects as their reply. As time passed, rather than giving presents to each other, they started to throw trash in people's teacups. People vandalized people's teacups, and few of them were isolated from the society. Social classes appeared and people discriminated against each other by their cup shapes. But the goddess didn't notice this kind of problem in the society. She was too exhausted to take special care of her children.

And one day, the goddess receives a message.

Dear Goddess,
Why don't you look at our society? Teacups are discriminating against each other. They divide poor and rich, they divide girls and boys, they divide by our teacup shapes. What was the purpose of you from making "Teatasse"? If you only wanted to observe us from that great sky, you don't have any right to control us. Now people who are in the same position with me, are going to rebel and change "Teatasse".
Regards,
From one of your little teacups

...And the goddess finally opens her lip.
"I've deleted the language from the teacups to show the danger of how shapeless words hurt each other. I've never let them throw garbage and think teacups are trash cans."
Why would the goddess make people's heads into teacups? Why would the goddess ban the teacups to say a word? Why would the goddess be too lazy to take care of her own universe?
"I've believed this way everyone in the society could feel happiness!"

...Because she was one of the humans, who can talk, have their own language, and also get bullied by people's words.
"This universe doesn't have any piece left. All the other countries are in the same situation. I'm going to make..."
And the sun flows, the sun starts to burn itself like a fire. And soon the fire becomes bigger and bigger.
"-a new world with happiness."

The data starts to rewind, the 7th parallel universe is now starting again. Teacups don't remain anywhere. And the goddess types something inside the world.

"...Now the 8th universe will begin..."

Goddess tears off the message the little teacup has written. She now makes a new universe, with lots of hope, that now the happiest universe will begin.

"My little teacup, flow off your worries. I'll start it all over again...Trust me, little teacup, your today will shine brighter than before."

Epilogue.

Language has given people the knowledge to develop the society. By conversations, they could discuss each other's opinion. But the

usage of language has created such problems too. People harmed each other with harsh words and kicked out people from the society.

Goddess was one of them, who was talented in creating a new system in the computer. And she was too talented to stay in that society. Everyone blamed her, and she now had lost all her jobs and career. All she'd left was her notebook.

Then she started to draw out the outline of her Utopia. There weren't any shapeless factors to disturb anyone. Everyone had to give flowers, cookies, or ones that others loved as the response. Everything was perfect...and her first "Teatasse" began, in the middle of Summer.

And the goddess's hopeless utopia is still an on-going process.

Jury Award

Name: Seoyoon Chang

Age: 15

City: South Korea