



Tea Time Verse

The Remnant Archive

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Message from the Editor

Dear Readers,

This issue contains the interplay between memory and transitory grief which our columnists have symbolised in their own words and to an extent, their own experiences.

Residual grief refers to the vanquished grief which is a result of a suppressed feeling or emotion. It's not an isolated emotion but a consequence or residual of feeling something else. The last year has been an achingly tender and transformative year for all of us. In times such as these, more than self reflection, what comes off wearily is the pressure to see the silver lining in our deepest darkest moments. Consequent of which are the repressed words that are somewhere lost between inception and bolted tongue.

We wanted to begin the second edition of weekly Team Time Verse with a redressal to those locked emotions. We hope you enjoy the journey that our 9 extremely talented columnists will take along with you over the next few weeks. If you like the issue, please write back to us, your praises and feedback really make us cherish the time and energy that we have put into this.

Happy reading and have a warm weekend ahead!

Warmly,
Kashvi Chandok
EIC- Fiction

Except Sunday

Poulomi Deb

And what if one of the gods does wreck me out on the wine-dark sea? I have a heart that is inured to suffering and I shall steel it to endure that too.

Homer

I air my laundry in conversations
I pick them up from the supermarket daily, at low rates.
The car swerves for me. Cloth takes so long
to rid itself of our bodies, the spokesman says.
Give the water and breeze a break.
Speak to your printed t-shirts, your breath is enough.
I recommend it myself.
Work and the kids take half a day,
but my mother dying only uses twelve minutes.
Jackets feel especially soft after those.
You won't have to fill the house scrubbing.



The Window

Anannya Uberoi

The vein-green skin of a small houseplant touched the timber wood
of my bedroom window
every morning, a leaf fell
like a soft-spoken sun speaking its rising
a bated breath
that though you are still there are things
moving, things living and things dying,
things existing, despite.

I would look outside the window
sometimes, the sky clear but riddled with contradictions
like that red-lined summer cloud caught in fire, like that scatter
of gypsy birds behind a homing pigeon, like that long tail of silence
set by the mechanisms of the day.

The other day, they burnt the plant.
The pale-brown stems of time, with all their fallen leaves
shoved into the window glass, and I cowered
like a house wren afraid of being gulped and yet
I could not stop looking outside
where the green had receded and the glass
was a pool of blue.

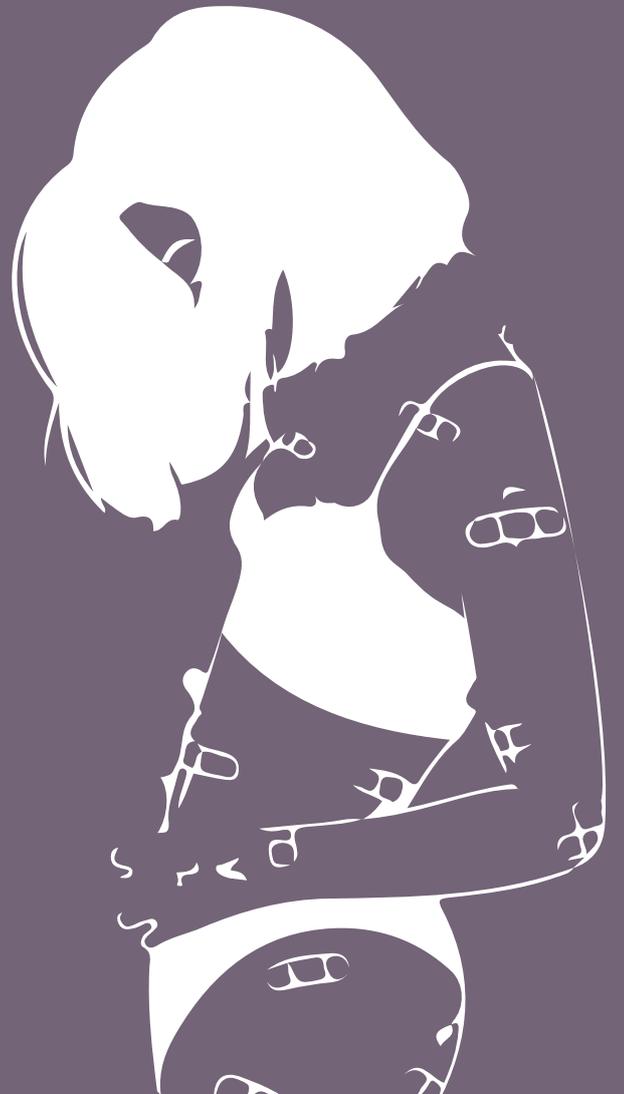
Now the morning comes without gifts
but the nights are marked by observations.
We haven't found aliens yet.
The basis of our existence is loneliness.
Yesternight a planet moved across the sky.
Something was returning,
it was not I.



I Don't Know How to Grieve

Adritanaya Tiwari

i don't know how to grieve. / i gift wrap my sorrows and throw them / into this hole in my heart / timed to open up / presents from the past / when it's full, up to the brim / it must be some sort of sorcery / every time they open / it's altogether / all at once / the bows on top / wrap themselves around my neck / suddenly I am a present I can't return.



The Kitchen

Amal Mathew

The room without the picture of God.
Has a caged songbird adoring the breath of winter on the walls.
Where the chimney smoke sweeps by the burning stove.
The stove
That I put my hand on, to see if I still bleed.

The room without the picture of God.
Leaves no door closed
but the sweetness in the air.

When I wash down the cups,
Arrange them behind the glasses on the wall.
Hoping to watch you tomorrow
drink from the cup with the yellow flowers.

The room without the picture of God.
Exchanges looks from the ashtray,
the space between cigarettes.

Neatly placed, like the tea bags. Gallery for the sliding light/air.
Visceral
arrangement of memory.

On the wall is a poster with the 99 names of God
in Arabic.

The rooms with the pictures of God.
Has pictures of rooms with God
and children on his lap.

Then a butterfly, his mother. Under an orange sapling
Somewhere in Jerusalem.
We all know what the German wrote on his letter to God.

Even one name on the picture of God is nameless.
A picture is worth a 100 words/names.

Mother's picture, now an open door to the kitchen.
The photocard smiles. Memento Mori

A single beat a day.



Veil

Harshita Vyas

The Aftermath of Refusing a
Is that your children can see you crying
Second after second, as a sea of trauma
Floods your teacup.
They can see your hands
Frozen in time, holding ginger so tenderly,
As if it is a past lost to memory.
Your children can see your eyes as they sink into the
dark universe of circles, growing bigger and bigger,
ready to swallow something, someone inside a black hole.
Your children can see early in life that you don't
have to try very hard to pretend to be happy without a veil,
That it is a generational gift,
And you are just passing it on to them.
The aftermath of refusing a veil
Is gifting your children the knowledge
That it was never about the veil, after all.



War of Poisonous Grief

Ishika Chaturvedi

I cough up a chain of discursive alphabets,
doused in ultimate rancour
on my journal's tear- stained paper, saving for myself
a vicious reminder of how I am a breath half taken
and a gasp fully swallowed- but the meaning
of all those combinations is lost because my words betray me. They feel like a
gun shot gone wrong- a bullet
that has inserted itself into my myocardium, suspending
the pattern of the blood pump in my form. And I
feel strange. Like a strange that's built
on multiple hemorrhages because the blood pump
in my body is after all, a dead end and all that flows
in me is residual grief, of how I am 19
and a half mistakes old and somehow still manage
to unlearn everything about myself, only to replace it
with the loud whispers of what people say when I
hastily breeze past them.

I stopped loving myself when I was 11 years old
and on my body, were growing stretch marks
and extra flesh that felt like nothing but an albatross
but what do I know, I was a whole of albatross myself
and now I tend to forget that my touch on my own skin
is not a caress but the scratch of a barbed wire, made
to be an alarm of how my mind has a twisted sense
of basic human emotions and that loving myself
is a phenomenon that has never been approved
by any authority whatsoever so I continue. I continue- feeling ugly, wanting to
break the mirrors
into a million little pieces to spread around the cosmos.
I continue feeling naive, wanting to lock myself
in a room where I'm not out in the open, prone
to becoming a fool. I continue feeling unintelligent, wanting to shred every inch
of every book

that is collecting years on my bookshelf. I continue-
because I've never learnt how to pause in my step, and
deter from the wrong path. I continue
to target my rage on my own self
as if it's a selfish concoction of poison and social evils,
created specifically for an *experiment*.

I drink it (the poison), sip it leisurely,
sitting perched on the armchair in the balcony, overlooking the mountains because
they're all that I'm not- tall, resilient and so
bloody gorgeous and deduct that perhaps,
I am the discursive alphabets.
You know, ones that didn't make sense?



What does Growing Up Yield?

Raunaq Saraswat

I

As a child you often led yourselves into believing that adulthood was a pleasant sail, that being an adult gave you a carefree and freewheeling life, and that it was to be aspired for, to sit in anticipation of. Flagbearers for this rosy vision were all around - the neighborhood bhai who excelled in the exhibit of staircase wit, the didi next door who was equally assertive and accepting, the seniors in school who (naturally) received greater attention than any of us kids. These were no role-models or idols, no, they were those whose demeanor you desired to don, maybe not in the entirety but in parts that were appealing (read: cool). They were, as you frequented their homes or the addas they were found at, magnets to your fantasies of being a grown-up.

II

In a role reversal, when you indeed grow up and occupy some form of commanding position over the juniors, siblings and everyone younger, you sense the fallacy in your hopes: adulthood, if anything, is not a carefree-pleasant sail. The splinters of your unfulfilled presumption are reflected once in a while, when you too are carried away in front of your juniors, and you display remarkable humour and try to come across as fun-loving and fun filled, all that you'd seen people around you be. You can only wonder if your juniors are as awed by you as you were with the suave of the bhaiyas and the didis. You hope they're not.

III

Hindsight brings more epiphanies and realizations. You're now aware of the wrongs you committed as a child, the biases you let cultivate within. It dawns upon you that mocking your friend for their skin colour was not jocular, or discrediting your girlfriend for her achievements was more than discouraging, and that you gleefully partook in all such and more insensitive acts while in school. It pains you to think further. But your ache is in itself helpless, for nothing, absolutely nothing, can shut it off. It is from yesteryears, from your childhood, and you know that the repercussions, minute and large, have ensued and evaporated,

leaving behind the perennial ache you'll have to carry. And then one day, when you're watching a movie with the mehfil of kids who are fond of you or your rep-
artee perhaps, you hear its protagonist recite a couplet, a couplet that echoes with
the cracks of your heart.

“Ajab saude-bazi hai ranj-o-gham ki, sab kuch cheen kar bhi dil bhaari kar jaata
hai”

You repeat it in your head, twice, or maybe thrice. Your eyes have moistened. And
you know that you've busted the mood of the mehfil, poked a hole in the juniors'
imagination of you, and perhaps that of adulthood too.



The Night Owl Trying to Sleep

Manya Mishra

Dear Future Lover,

Do you know that people think that we wake up to the light? They think wrong. We always wake up in the dark; eyes shut and then slowly open them to the light. I like to call it 'rising to distress' because I don't wake up like a sunflower at the break of dawn, I wake up like an owl being dragged out into the daylight - ugly, obnoxious and lethargic. Do me favour and don't talk to me until I tuck and pluck, and kiss on your stubble. Until I say 'Hi' and wet your lips with mine.

I usually don't feel like a voice in the morning; I feel like skin and hair, naked to the air around me. As damp dots of pollen carelessly stick to my body, I try not to give up existence to heat and hate. Mornings make me more of an empty vessel that is refilled with the memory of how my words roll out of my tongue peacefully. I am not used to waking up as a person, I am more full of a two-dimensional line of dreams that I had the previous night. Slowly and softly, these lines curve, and spool and move like the light in Van Gogh's paintings and then when the time is right, they grow out of my paper flesh and become waves of the ocean; and there's something very transcendent about the ocean, something that makes you and me feel small and yet ferocious at the same time. Just the idea of it, the way waves travel from a point in the middle from where you are and where the horizon is only to crash at your feet. Oceans possess the sky above them and that is precisely why the air transports the smell, the sand and the water with it. It's always white when it hits the sand, blue for a while and then far at the horizon, the colour of the sea is black with a hint of turquoise. I think I am the ocean when I am asleep and the waves of thoughts, the uprising.

On some days, I have so much to say that I join all the letters, make all the words and articulate all the sentences but then don't really say anything because I cannot. I'd like to believe that waves only rise effortlessly on a full moon night when the moon is pulling the tides with all its might. They'll be a waterbody of denial, crashing, repelling, overflowing, kissing the shore with noises that are sometimes words, sometimes not. My thoughts are everything to me or I am everything to my thoughts because they don't leave me even when I am asleep.

They're my weapon, the walls to my home, the blanket on the coldest of night, my pool of disclaimed aesthetics.

On some days, I am drowning in a pool of blue, on others, something is drowning in me and I am the pool but drowning is constant. It is my unapologetic cuss word. I like to repeat it as many times as I can because when I am talking, I am floating and when I am not I am the keedge of the ship that has sunk into the depths and hit the waterbed and more than often, I am silent. So, situationally, I am a drowned anchor in my sleep, with thoughts as heavy as the weight of an ocean. The sea is merciless and so is my mind, We drift and digress and droop, my thoughts and I, we dream and dread. This is why I want you to hold me when I am asleep, so that if I am drenched in myself, your hands around the small of my back will always remind me of my existence and that daylight awaits to hold it too.

Dear future lover, I need you to understand, there'll be days when my thoughts will be a war lost in the pit of my stomach, and I won't be able to win conversations but that doesn't mean I am not a warrior. I have things to say, words to throw, points to make, conversations to cut open and feelings to explode, but I know that on a moonless night I can only pretend to be music and maybe when the gravity is right, I might add lyrics. When the tides are high and my sail is angled perfectly, I will open my eyes to the light. When that happens, I will be fierce and own the sky and in all my freedom translate the uprising into the language of the sea at the beach, where the waves stroke my ankles and envelope my toes. Until then let me hold my thoughts and let me sleep.

Your future lover



In Search of Life

Navneet Kaur

In toilets and washrooms I flush my thoughts,
In dilapidated monuments I kiss the walls and celebrate my pain,
In eerie silences I talk to myself,
Now.

In the dusk of the day, I go out of my house,
Unnoticed,
Safe,
Comfortable,
Wondering all along : when did this shadow overtake me?

Did it all start from that city of lights?
Red, yellow, green, magenta, crimson.
Or perhaps that lover's corner in the city,
Where we sat together hours long,
Immersing our feet together in the chilly water of the pond there,
Sensing the numbness of feet and warmth of touch on hands.

Those moments of shivering,
When our bodies fused together,
Those talks that filled the city air with romance,
Those glances that even shamed pigeons kissing each other nearby.

Did it all start from there?
Or did it start when we felt that thread,
The one connected to both ends of our hearts,
Loosening every passing day and night,
Which is now,
Broken absolutely.

The black hole that exists now,
That engulfs whatever little love left in me trying to enter it,
That eats whatever little hope I try to have,
That bit by bit is enlarging the shadow that hovers on me now,

Makes me scared.

What do I do now?
Shall I gather the fumes and ashes of my time I burnt thinking about you?
And put them in the altar,
Praying to Aphrodite,
To add light in my life again?

Or let that small part of my heart beat her chest and pluck her hair?
Lament,
Cry,
And bemoan the loss of that part of my heart that expressed her mind in well structured words?
That is now struggling to exist,
And is begging at doorsteps of strangers to get food of love.

In pieces, draughts and inches I have become what I am today,
The one, waiting for the dusk to turn into midnight darkness to wail,
Running away from home,
In search of life?
.....
In search of the peace of death.



MEET THE TEAM

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