

Progressive Education Society's Modern College  
of Arts, Science and Commerce,  
Ganeshkhind, Pune



Department of English

# *aurora*

**Literally the Literary : Confessions  
of Literaholics**

*An initiative taken for the  
students, by the students.*

**Vol. IV**

# Acknowledgements

We would like to take this as a chance to thank everyone who has helped in the making of this magazine. We always have the blessings and best wishes of the patron of Progressive Education Society Dr. GR Ekbote and his associates Prof Suresh Todkar and Dr. Prakash Dixit. We would like to thank our respected Principal, Dr. Sanjay Kharat Sir, who has inspired, encouraged, and been incredibly generous, to provide us with a platform that helps us to showcase our talents and opinions. This was an opportunity to start something new. We have been able to come up with this virtual magazine because of his involvement and dedication to this college as well as its students' interests.

Dr. Jyoti Gagangras, our Vice-Principal has also been a very supportive presence. She is very enthusiastic about all the activities and programs that are held in the college. She helped this journal come to life with her support. She was very substantial in giving us liberty in order to release this journal. Her support is greatly appreciated and has been part of the motive that kept us going.

Dr. Shampa Chakravarthy is not only our teacher, but a very optimistic and cheerful person who motivates us to delve into our interests. She pushes us to achieve far more than we thought we could. She believes in the hands-on method of teaching and has always been at our aid. This journal was just an idea, but she put so much faith in it and us. She has been the driving force behind this initiative and we are very thankful for her critique on all of the work.

We would like to thank all the members of the English Department who spared time from their busy schedule and helped us put forth our initiative and introduce the virtual journal. They have supported us in our endeavor, been proud of us for taking initiative and become the motivation we needed to succeed.

Everyone who has contributed, the budding writers and poets who have submitted their work and have been selected to feature in the journal, we thank you for being willing to participate. We would also like to appreciate your courage in overcoming your insecurities and being ready to bare your soul through your words.

# Editor's Note

This magazine is to be viewed as a launch-pad for the creative urges to blossom naturally. As the saying goes, the mind like a parachute works best when opened. This humble initiative is to set budding minds free, allowing them to roam in the realm of imagination and experience to create a world of beauty in words.

The enthusiastic write-ups are indubitably sufficient to hold the interest and admiration of the readers. This magazine is indeed a sincere attempt to create and learn the art of being aware because I believe that success depends upon our power to perceive, the power to observe and the power to explore.

We are sure that the positive attitude, hard work, sustained efforts and innovative ideas exhibited by our writers will surely stir the mind of readers, taking them to the surreal world of unalloyed joy and pleasure. We have put in relentless efforts to bring excellence to this treasure trove.

Helen Keller rightly says that the world is moved along not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

This Herculean task of editing the magazine would not have been possible without the sincere support of the members of the whole team, who sorted the items from the flood of articles we had got from our enthusiastic writers, edited and finally made a fair draft of them.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the members of the Literary Committee who dipped their oars in the turbulent and testing waters that have sailed this magazine to the shore of publication.

I believe that this magazine will enjoy your critical acclaim and prove to be gripping enough.

Roma Chiplunkar  
Editor-in-chief

*"Illusion is the first of all pleasures."*

~ Voltaire

# Catalogue of Hues

**Behind the Scenes**

**Erudite**

**Theme Cover**

**/illusions/**

**//poetry//**

*Life*

*Reality's at the Door*

*Hope to a Real World*

*A Fine Line*

**//articles//**

*Beauty of Misinterpretation*

*Book Review: "Gone Girl"*

**//short story//**

*The Realisation*

*Smoke and Mirrors*

**//Phantom of the Apparition//**

**//clues unfound//**

# Behind the Scenes



Hello, I am Kaurobi Paul. I am weirdly creative when it comes to opportunities. I find joy in enhancing my skills which begins with the journey of "a learner to an experienced" and leads to a destination named "wholesome productive human being".

Hi! I am Ritika Anchalia, I'd say I'm a bit of an introvert. A weird combination of Chandler and Joey where I handle difficult situations with sarcasm and well, I don't like sharing food. I like creative work and trying out new things; which is why I'm a part of the public outreach team!



Hey, I'm Roma Chiplunkar. I like to write essays or poems sometimes when inspiration strikes, love to listen to music a little too much every day. I dabble with photography and editing. I read a lot of books on Wattpad. I also have a tendency to procrastinate, a lot.

*"If we choose, we can live in a world of comforting illusion."*

*~ Naom Chomsky*

I'm Shruti Jadhav, a bibliophile and a polyglot. I have an unexplainable obsession with crime-thriller and true crime, be it books, documentaries, or podcasts.

Instrumental music, symphonies, and orchestras have reserved a special place in my heart, and I find joy in cooking for others. Hope you enjoy the current issue of our magazine! :)



Hello, I am Savani Nibandhe. I love to dance and write when I am super motivated. I am a part of the public outreach team in the literary committee.

Kudos to your support for this journal and hoping more support from you all in the future.

Hello everyone! My name is Sakshi Nowrangi and I love reading and writing. I'm also a huge fan of random fun facts and you may find me talking about them if I get the chance to. Also, here's a fun fact! Otters have favourite rocks that they store in underarm pockets.



*"Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so."*

*~ Douglas Adams*

Hey! My name is Isha Paranjpe. I love reading and my favorite genre is psychological fiction—there's nothing that intrigues me more than a body of work that analyses something as complex and intricate as the psychological growth of a human being. I present as an introvert, but don't let that discourage you from saying hi!



Hi, I am Bhagyashree Kashikar. A rare mix of BBC Sherlock and Jake (Brooklyn nine-nine) . I like to read fan fictions and watch anime in my free time. My affinity towards fiction pushes me towards ingenuity to create magic from my imagination that trickles down on paper.

*"I like coffee because it gives me the illusion that I might be awake."*

*~ Lewis Black*

# Erudite

Books written by her:

- A Wizard of Earthsea
- The Left Hand of Darkness
- The Dispossessed
- Always Coming Home
- So Far So Good



Ursula Kroeber Le Guin  
(1929-2018)

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin (1929-2018) was a celebrated author whose body of work includes 23 novels, 12 volumes of short stories, 11 volumes of poetry, 13 children's books, five essay collections, and four works of translation

Le Guin's first major work of science fiction, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, is considered groundbreaking for its radical investigation of gender roles and its moral and literary complexity.

Among many honors, her writing has received; a National Book Award, seven Hugo Awards, six Nebula Awards, the Howard Vursell Award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the PEN/Malamud Award, and the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters are a few to name. In 2000, she was named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress, and in 2016 she joined the shortlist of authors to be published in their lifetimes by the Library of America. Three of Le Guin's books have been finalists for the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Le Guin's poetry drew increasing critical and reader interest in the later part of her life; her final collection of poems, *So Far So Good*, was published shortly after her death.

Her novel, *The Dispossessed*, published in 1974, contrasts two forms of social organizations: capitalism and communism, in addition, along with her other work - *Always Coming Home*, published in 1985, redefined the scope and style of utopian fiction. Le Guin's poetry drew increasing critical and reader interest in the later part of her life. Her works manifest Didacticism - the idea that art and literature are means to convey information or teach the reader something of moral or practical, combined with pleasure and entertainment. Her sci-fi works are highly recommended for their literary sensibilities.

*"I talk about the gods, I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth."*

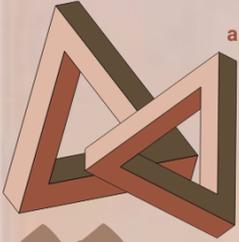
- Ursula K. Le Guin



# Illusion

[ /ɪˈluːʒ(ə)n/ noun ]

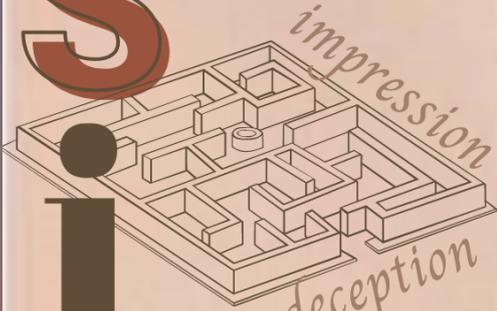
a deceptive appearance or impression.



# U

"One day everything will be well, that is our hope. Everything's well today, that is our illusion."  
- Voltaire

# S



*impression*  
*deception*



*phantom*

*pretense*



*Reality*

*fantasy*

*hallucination*

*mirage*

*semblance*

*myth*

*vision*

*imitation*

*ignis fatuus*

*delusion*

*apparition*

*imagination*

# Illusions

*please pinch me, is this really happening!?!?*

When we talk about humans, emotions and feelings are something that naturally tags along. Like everything else, it is the human tendency to deceive and get deceived. Like when we say “imagine, what if, suppose, let’s assume”. We always get played by these kinds of words and this is what leads to a false projection of things. All of this information is studied and combined to form the word “*ILLUSIONS*”.

The word illusion comes from a Latin and Old French word which was originally ‘*in*’ – against; plus, ‘*ludere*’ – play; forming the word ‘*illudere*’ meaning to mock and trick.

They are "errors" in perception as a result of unconscious expectations based on real stimuli. In other words, your brain fills in gaps on what "should" be there when there is information missing, or the brain confuses itself due to conflicting information.

They are different from a hallucination, in that an illusion misinterprets real stimuli, whereas a hallucination responds to a stimulus that doesn't exist. Maybe an illusion is a hope, a ray of sunshine, a change, a sign for us. It drives a thick line between the desperation to make something happen and the reality that life fills us with.

When we talk about an illusion in the literary world, it can be a dream, vision, or another literary device that tricks, confuses, or misleads the situation and main character. They also refer to the process of reading that leads to immersion, when the reader experiences the narrative as if it were real.

There are mainly three types of illusion:

A] Cognitive illusion:

A cognitive illusion is usually a picture that is meant to show a cryptic image or images. These images can be meant to confuse the senses or to require the mind to refocus attention to see both images and force the brain to switch back and forth between the two.

B] Physiological illusion:

A physiological illusion is created by excessive stimulation by means of brightness, color, or anything that causes stress to our retinal nerves.

C] Literal illusion:

A literal illusion is created when you have two different types of images. One is real and the other which you made up through your perspective.

The literary form of illusion is called '*Aesthetic illusion*'. It is basically a pleasurable mental state that frequently emerges during the reception of many representational texts, artifacts or performances. These representations may be fictional or factual, and in particular include narratives. Thus, aesthetic illusion has a dual nature, with readers suspended between artifice and reality.

They are two types of Aesthetic illusion:

1] Fictional Illusion:

Fictional stories are works of imagination that feature fabricated settings and characters. As fictional stories are made up, they engage the reader's imagination to construct the narrative illusion. Most literary devices and figures of speech can be utilized to help craft a successfully immersive narrative, including description, imagery, point of view, and so on. Some genres, like science fiction and fantasy, require more imagination than others, such as historical fiction or works of realism, which leverage the reader's real-world experiences and associations to create a stronger sense of verisimilitude.

2] Factual Illusion:

Works of non-fiction like biographies, historiographies, travelogues, and the like are inspired by real people or events. As these narratives are grounded in fact, they require less imagination to establish aesthetic illusion. However, literary devices that play upon our senses or emotions are still crucial to ensure the reader is engrossed with the text.

There are innumerable books and movies trying to trick our brains, break our barriers of what is real and what is an illusion but ultimately the biggest illusion is what we see ourselves as and how others perceive us.

Overall illusions are a confusing perceptive experience, albeit uniquely fascinating whichever way they are interpreted. As it is with all the things in the world, it has its positive and negative aspects. Some people can create the most beautiful illusions that we wish were real as they ring true to our minds but not in society. Whereas there are some who live in a fantasy land, ignoring the reality of the world that surrounds them, thus harming their sanity and hurting the people in their life.



*Hello, I am Kaurobi Paul. I am known for my sense of humor and hooded eyes. I believe in verbalizing my emotions. Stargazing and sunsets are my kind of things.*

*“To believe you have nothing more to learn is a dangerous illusion.”  
~ Anonymous*

# Life

Life is a dark and deep chasm,  
Full of lies spoken and truths untold,  
Existence sometimes seems to be a mockery, life's sarcasm,  
But at the same time life is the scent of clean bed sheets,  
The petrichor that invades all senses,  
A culmination of one's deeds,  
It is just a long day described in different tenses,  
Late-night studies and conversations, Coffee and sweet delights,  
Life is akin to sunrise and sunset,  
Full moon and starry nights,  
It is the confidence after a good workout sweat,  
The warmth of a child,  
comfort of a hug,  
Wearing a dress perfectly styled,  
Being fascinated by a ladybug,  
It is but an amalgamation of everyday joys, warm and sweet,  
Life is being in the moment, being present...



*I am Ajinkya Marathe. I am in Second Year Pursuing Bachelors In Arts. My hobbies include exercising in gym, listening songs, Playing badminton, reading and writing poems. My dream is to crack civil service exam and become a dashing IPS Officer.*

*"Life has no meaning the moment you lose the illusion of being eternal."*

*~ Jean-Paul Sartre*

# Reality's at the Door

“Knock, Knock”,  
It said,  
“Yes ? Who’s there ?”,  
I replied,  
“It’s time to-  
I didn’t let it finish;  
I couldn’t.

Every time I find myself here,  
I went in deeper;  
Spiraling down,  
It’s bewildering,  
yet so enthralling.

“Knock, Knock”,  
It said, again.  
“What is it ?”  
replied the bothered me.  
“It’s time to face the reality”,  
It reminded,

“But I can’t,  
I have to stay here,  
For my own good,  
For my own sanity.”



*Hi again! This is Shruti Jadhav.  
"Curiouser and curiouser" is the state of my mind,  
most of the time, which tends to make me quite  
inquisitive. Writing and drawing need to be motivated  
out of me. I'd rather prefer deep meaningful  
conversations over small talks.*

*“Illusion is an anodyne, bred by the gap between wish and reality.”*

*~ Herman Wouk*

# Hope to a real world

I'm in my senses, is what I believe.  
Looking at this ideal world, I think to relive.  
The world is happy and so am I.  
They say they don't cry, or do they lie?

The sun sets but with a hope to rise,  
People appreciate it with bright eyes!  
Rains are pleasant to refresh your mindfulness,  
And not heavy to get soaked into the past mess.

The families are truly happy and genuine,  
Not just pretending that they are in union.  
Fear of loosing is not why relations are safe  
Intimacy is the factor that relations embrace.

Love here, isn't a concept to acknowledge,  
Simply an involuntary feeling present at every stage.  
Love is not a formula that needs a proof to be found,  
Have a heart, and you'll find it all around.

Oh, my senses have betrayed me once again.  
Betrayal in the real world is a renowned pain.  
It was an illusion that was not cruel  
Hope it turns someday a bit real!



*I'm Aarohi Tengshe, pursuing Psychology as my specialization. I am a simple person in a not so simple world. I love watching movies and living in them. I am a trained Bharatnatyam dancer and I love to sing (I believe I sing well!) I write when I feel, without any professional knowledge about writing!*

*"Is not this whole world an illusion? And yet it fools everybody."*

*~ Angela Carter*

# *A Fine Line*

He sits on the edge of a wooden stool, in the dark bar  
An old-fashioned in hand, in the other, a cigar.  
He has lost count of how many glasses he has downed,  
All he is aware of is to get on stage with his trusty guitar.

He starts strumming a few chords and humming a little tune,  
A song about when he met his wife, in the Paris monsoons  
And how her dazzling smile warmed the coldest of storms,  
How he wished he could still sing to her in the afternoons;

He sang about how since the moment he set eyes on her,  
He saw her on each cobbled pavement, on every ornate mirror,  
In every lingering audience of every gig he managed to land-  
Proud eyes, cheshire smile, clapping hands and the loudest cheer.

When the audience struck in unanimous applause at the end,  
He looked out at the sea of strangers and spotted a friend;  
Same warm eyes brimming with pride and a broad smile!  
He re-adjusted his glasses but she disappeared the next second.

There is a fine line between daydreams and grandeur delusions-  
A mere pipe dream yearned wistfully or a concoction of apparitions?  
She torpedoed in and out of his life ever since that fateful night-  
One foot trembling in cognition, the other sinking in confusion.

Drink after drink, song after song, he waited to catch a glimpse  
A fleeting moment of solace fading in the blink of an eye.  
Learning to stand on his own like a child learning how to lie;  
He steered his sinking ship braving the waters, waiting to die.



*Hi, this is Ketaki Thorat! I love to learn European languages, dance and read, especially gothic literature and poetry. I am obsessed with anything and everything to do with Shakespeare.*

*"Illusion is needed to disguise the emptiness within."*

*~ Arthur Erickson*

# *Beauty Of Misinterpretation*

Illusions can be defined as the misinterpretation of a perceived object or stimulus when mixed with a mental image. This turns out to define most of the things in our life when you think about it, and that's the beauty of it. Every single person in the world perceives the same things in a spectrum of different ways that may or may not be the same.

A person may fill in the blank "\_\_ook" with the letter "l" and read it as "look" whereas someone else may fill the blank with "b" and read it as "book". That says a lot about how every single thing you perceive is just a result of how your thoughts work. Every mood and emotion you go through changes how you perceive various things. Some bereaved see their loved ones after their passing, while an anxious individual would see a stalker on every dark street and corner.

Illusions seem to work effortlessly when a magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat or how a thirsty person sees a mirage on a hot day or how 2 equal lines appear unequal when you draw arrows on them in different directions.

Along with all these conventional examples, the most common "illusion" we let ourselves thrive under is of love. It's a grandiose illusion which you create for yourself. A world you seem to look at through rose-tinted glasses. A world where everything seems happy and nothing could ever go wrong; but that's the thing about illusions. They break. As easily and effortlessly as they're made, and when that happens, the little touch of magic which made it all beautiful, vanishes. Things never feel the same anymore. The tricks don't seem too fancy when you realise that it's just your brain trying to feed you misinformation using past experiences.

When I think about it, all of the misunderstandings, misinterpretations, twisting of words, love gone sour. All of them feel like illusions we make for ourselves. Molding every single piece of information we come across with our subjective thoughts and emotions. That is what makes life so interesting for me: to think that every interaction we have may be just a tangle of illusions and perceptions.

These little illusions make the world a better place for us to live in, no matter how heartbroken we get after the disillusionment. A false sense of security somehow lulls us into thinking these illusions will last forever.

Someone once said, "Like reflections on the page, the world's what you create." So, we make a world for ourselves which is our own, no matter how biased and false it feels. It's for us to call our own. Somehow it feels weirdly optimistic to think that all we are is, entities with ever-changing perceptions and personalities with concrete mental images of ourselves imprinted on people's minds. And when they conflict—which they do, sooner or later—all we're rendered to, are mere illusions. Made up in an instant. Broken even sooner.



*Hello, I am Shreeya Panda. Writing and painting has always been a passion for me. Also I love to sketch people, characters from animes, landscapes, animals. I'm fond of kids and have enjoyed working with them in different sectors. My dream is to explore the world and become a successful psychologist.*

*"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*

*~ George Bernard Shaw*

# *the cool girl antidote*

## Book Review: Gone Girl

*"There's something disturbing about recalling a warm memory and feeling utterly cold."*

Gone Girl is a book that revolves around a couple, Nick and Amy Dunne, and their straining relationship. Nick is a former journalist who decides to move to his childhood home in North Carthage after he loses his job in New York. Amy is the child of a renowned psychologist couple who achieved fame due to the 'Amazing Amy' children's books which they based around their experiences with Amy. After they move to North Carthage, Nick decides to open a local bar with his twin sister with money loaned from Amy.

*"I was told love should be unconditional. That's the rule, everyone says so. But if love has no boundaries, no limits, no conditions, why should anyone try to do the right thing ever? If I know I am loved no matter what, where is the challenge?"*

Conflicts between the couple soon start after their move which later comes to a head with Amy's disappearance on the morning of their fifth anniversary. The police suspect that Nick had something to do with it due to the neighbours' recounts of Nick and Amy's relationship.

It is now up to Nick to try and prove his innocence, as the whole country starts to turn against him, and for us to find out what happened to Amy as we unravel clues left from their past. The book is written from varying perspectives of both Nick and Amy and is in first person which allows us to really delve into their minds and find out their thought process through every situation.

It is also a very addicting read as it is full of plot twists and turns. Gillian Flynn has perfected the knack for leading you down a road where you think you've got everything figured out but then at the end moment, she throws another twist at you that you never saw coming. The book is divided into two parts with the first part written in the way a rom-com is usually written. The second part is where we really start to discover the whole plot and get hooked on for the ride.

The characters themselves are full-fledged and you hardly get the feeling that you're reading a fictitious book, instead it almost feels like a true crime podcast or a documentary about real people and real lives. Perfect for fans of true crime, mysteries, murder mysteries, sinister plots or just bookworms looking to expand their taste.



*My name is Sakshi. I'm an avid reader and writer. I am a pianist. Delicacies like cakes and cookies are my forte, I mean I love baking. I also have a flair for the arts!*

*"It was as if he hollowed me out and filled me with feathers. He helped me be Cool Girl – I couldn't have been Cool Girl with anyone else. I wouldn't have wanted to."*

*~ Gillian Flynn, Gone Girl*

# *The Realisation*

Ritika brushed her hair with a comb as she looked at herself in the mirror. If it wasn't for Rhea, her cousin, she wouldn't have agreed to bear with Hardik for even a day more. It was her who had introduced Ritika to Hardik in their college days, who later became her husband. After ten years of marriage, they found themselves fighting over the most trivial things in the lockdown. The couple who previously managed their lives after eight hours of daily hassle were forced to live under the same roof for twenty-four hours, thanks to the virus breakout. The initial short quarrels over morning coffee slowly built up to fights that lasted for hours.

Initially, Ritika moved out to the guest room, but now she wanted to leave the apartment itself, as well as his life. They consulted a lawyer who suggested they bear with each other till the lockdown would be lifted. Having no other options at hand, the two had to oblige. It was about two weeks ago that the government had declared the termination of lockdown in their state. The two were relieved that they could finally get rid of each other, but then just two days before they were going to visit their lawyer, Ritika received a call from Rhea. She invited them for dinner over the weekend. They had decided to postpone the meeting because they couldn't say no to her. The day had arrived and the two were getting ready to leave.

Ritika wore a red saree with a maroon blouse that complimented her fair skin. Her face was making it obvious that she was in her mid-thirties. She put some foundation on her cheeks to cover up the wrinkles. She hid her age behind the makeup, just like she would hide her frustration behind her plastic smile. Just when she was about to put on her earrings, she heard a knock on her door. "Hurry up!" Hardik said from outside.

"Just a minute!" she replied loudly.

The two got into the car. Hardik sat on the passenger's seat while Ritika drove. He guided her looking at the map on his phone. They reached the hotel and he got out of the car at the entrance while she drove further. She met him at the entrance after parking the car. They looked at each other before going in.

Her heels had added a few inches to her height making her look just as tall as him. He looked at her face, "She still looks gorgeous!" he thought.

She looked in his eyes and thought, 'He doesn't even bother to compliment me anymore!'

"Let's just act as if everything is normal. She doesn't have to know about our plans at this moment." Ritika said.

"Yes." He said with a slight nod. They both turned to the door and conjured a smile on their faces, instantly.

The waiter led them to their table where Rhea was supposed to be waiting for them. They reached her table only to discover that she was not alone. A handsome man was seated by her side. They both stood up and Rhea rushed to hug Ritika. Hardik looked at him with a blank face. Rhea then greeted Hardik with a slight hug and a formal 'Hi'. Seeing the couple's confused looks, she finally introduced her company to them,

"Ritika, Hardik, meet Rahil," she paused as he offered his hand to them.

"My husband!" she said. Her excitement overflowed while showing off the wedding ring on her left hand. Ritika gasped in surprise, this was completely unexpected for her.

"Congrats!" Hardik said with excitement as he shook Rahil's hand.

"Thank you." He replied.

"When did this happen!? Why didn't you tell me about it?" Ritika threw questions at her.

"Let us sit down first." Rhea insisted.

After they were settled, Rhea continued, "Actually I was trapped in London for the whole lockdown. Around the beginning of May, I got a call from dad that mom had to be admitted. She was diagnosed positive for COVID-19 and I panicked! The first week after I received that news, I was stressed all the time.

Then one of my colleagues suggested for I join an online COVID support group. That's where we met." She looked at him lovingly.

"My father had been admitted too and he already had asthma issues," Rahil continued what she was saying, "We connected better because both of our parents were in similar situations. We continued to talk over chat. And in a few weeks we found ourselves in love!" they both smiled.

And she spoke further, "And on sixteenth June, we lost his father." Their smile faded a bit, "But Rhea was there to support me. She helped me recover." They both held their hands together.

"And we got married online! And guess what, we are going to register our marriage and move in together on Monday!"

Ritika and Hardik went silent. They had to deal with the joy of Rhea's marriage and the feelings of separation all at the same time. They both tried to go along with the conversation without letting their issues pop in. They talked about other topics and caught up with each other's lives for a while. Hardik picked up his glass of water and took a sip. From the corner of his right eye, he saw a man sitting on a table diagonally opposite to him. He was well dressed. His attire suggested that his bank balance must be a fortune. It was clear from where Hardik sat, that the man had ordered more than his capacity. What intrigued Hardik the most about the man was that at regular intervals, he seemed to be talking to a mysterious invisible entity. Hardik tried to dismiss his thoughts but he couldn't ignore him.

Finally, after a few minutes, he excused himself to use the restroom. He intentionally walked close to the table where the man was seated. He could make out from his words that the man was talking to some feminine entity. He giggled softly and continued. Ritika got distracted by a notification sound. She opened her purse and fetched her phone. While she scrolled through her phone, Rhea grabbed her free hand.

"You don't know how lucky you are Ritika. You had a loving and healthy husband to support you in your house. I was all alone in my house. Please cherish your relations." She spoke with a wry smile. Ritika was filled with guilt now. She doubted her decision.

After a few minutes, Hardik walked out of the washroom. His eyes were still fixed on that man. As he walked towards his table, he collided with the waiter. And the plates that he was holding fell on the floor distracting everyone in the hall. The man turned around to look at them.

"Oh god, I am sorry!" Hardik helped him pick up all the plates. They both smiled at each other and were about to walk away when they heard the man scream, "Roshni!" the voice echoed across the hall. Everyone looked at him. He looked tense. With wide eyes, he looked at the entire hall from corner to corner. He ran up to them and asked, "Did you... did you see my wife? She.... she was sitting before me on the table."

The waiter chose to remain silent. However Hardik spoke up,

"I am sorry Sir, but there was no one in front of you on that table."

"What?!" the man asked surprised. He looked back at the table and there was no one sitting there. He held his head and looked around with wide eyes trying to make sense of everything. He rushed out of the hotel.

"He seems insane to me," Hardik commented casually and started walking back to his table. The waiter tapped on his shoulder to stop him, and he turned around.

"Sir, do you know who he was?" the waiter asked politely.

"No," Hardik replied with confusion.

"He was Mukul Shah. The third richest man in the pharmaceutical industry in Maharashtra." The waiter replied.

"Oh! I see, but why was he acting so weird?"

The waiter smiled at his question, "It is normal to us Sir. He comes to this hotel on this day and from what I heard from the manager, he has been coming here for the last sixteen years."

"You mean to say that this madness has been happening for the last sixteen years?" he asked with a sense of astonishment in his eyes.

“No!” the waiter said firmly, “Initially for four years he came here along with his wife. Each year they would celebrate their anniversary, but then the next year his wife did not accompany him. Yet he ordered the food for two people, sat on the same table and chatted with an invisible woman before him. The manager was confused about his behaviour. He left with half of the food untouched.”

Hardik listened with all his attention, “When our manager inquired about him, he came to know that the poor lady had passed away in a car accident that year. The man was so traumatised, he couldn't believe that life had taken away his better half. A year later he reappeared in the hotel and demanded the same table. The manager felt pity for the poor man and somehow arranged the table for him even though it was already reserved for someone else. Since then, every year he comes to this hotel on this day, books the same table, orders the same food and walks out with half the food untouched. Later as instructed by the manager, we distribute the food among the staff members as a treat. Even after so many years, he still loves his wife so much!”

Hardik was speechless. All that he could have said was being said. He joined the table where he and his wife pretended to enjoy the dinner. They waved goodbye at the end of the night to the other couple and then Hardik drove them back home.

Mukul sat in his balcony staring at the dark sky. His long illusion had been shattered today. Nothing seemed to make sense to him. Suddenly he heard a familiar feminine voice calling his name, ‘Mukul’. He looked towards the direction of the voice. His wife stood before him looking at him lovingly. He closed his eyes and let the tears flow. His phone rang, it was his assistant. Mukul had been avoiding his calls for the past few days. He wanted to stay away from his business. She called him again,

‘Mukul..’

Hardik’s voice echoed in his ears, ‘I am sorry Sir, but there was no one in front of you on that table,’

His head ached. Slowly he calmed down. She called him again, ‘Mukul..’ He ignored her. He was finally getting to terms with what Hardik had said.

There was no wife. She had passed away years ago. He dismissed her voice, he dismissed all thoughts of her. He took a deep breath and dismissed her.

He opened his eyes and she was gone. The phone rang again and this time he answered it.

Meanwhile, Hardik and Ritika reached home. They silently walked into their respective rooms. Hardik changed his clothes and laid in his bed staring at the ceiling thinking about the man. Guilt had overwhelmed him. He heard a knock on the door, it was Ritika. She looked up into his eyes, her eyes reflecting the same vulnerability as his.

“There are cockroaches in my room. Do you mind if I sleep here tonight?” she asked softly.

Hardik knew she was lying but he allowed her in. Hardik and Ritika slept on the right and left edges of the bed respectively. They pretended for a while as if everything was normal. Then Hardik turned to his right, facing away from her. Ritika stared at his back wondering if she should say something. Her eyes welled up and she turned to her left weeping silently. She felt a warm and comforting hand on her shoulder. In a soft and raspy voice, he asked,

“Ritika, can we give it another try?”



*I am Loukik Satoskar. I am a second year student majoring in Psychology. I always had a keen interest in Literature and Poetry. I feel life is a long open book where I found my way to explain it through literary forms. I hope you enjoy my writeup.*

*“Losing an illusion makes you wiser than finding a truth.”*

*~ Ludwig Borne*

# *Smoke and Mirrors*

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall. Who's the fairest of them all?" As Ali read those lines he looked over to Tiya, who was fast asleep, already in dreamland. When he looked up he saw her reflection in the floor-to-ceiling mirror that Tiya was highly adamant about installing. In the mirror everything seemed so lovely, normal even, being the father of a girl and all the beauty that comes with it. With a deep sigh, he closed the book, pulled the polka-dotted blanket up to her chin, kissed her forehead goodnight and left the room.

Snow White and the Huntsman; Tiya's favourite bedtime story and her father read it to her just as engagingly as she liked. The magic mirror in the story fascinated her more than the concept of Snow White. Her fascination began when she visited the mirror maze in the amusement park, near her grandparents' home. In the mirror maze, she ran here and she ran there, sometimes colliding with the mirrors and sometimes finding the right way out. Every time she found the correct way out, she would turn around and make faces at the mirror as though there was someone on the other side getting annoyed. She laughed and she harrumphed, she ran and she jumped, she giggled and she jostled, she sighed and she tried, the thing she didn't do in that enormous box of illusive mirrors, was missing her mother.

For somewhere in the back of her head she believed her mother was on the other side of the mirror. Ever since that day she became obsessed with mirrors, she confided in them, she laughed at them, she did everything a 7-year-old would do with her best friend. Ali being the nimble and soft-hearted father that he was, participated with her in all of her mirror games.

Like every Saturday Tiya woke up at 7:40 in the morning, gave a morning kiss to her teddy, shimmied in front of the mirror and ran towards the dining table. "Dadda, good morning!" Her small, sweet voice boomed thought out their house.

Every time Ali saw his little princess he was reminded of his late wife, they both had the same unmatched energy and an aura of resounding wildness, they both got emotionally attached to things faster than the wings of a housefly; but also, grew out of things as time went by and practicality hit them (eventually).

So, Ali hoped that Tiya's obsession with mirrors would fade away with time. "Hey baby! Good morning," He chirped back just as heartily and gathered her in his arms so he could kiss her cheeks. And then he would start tickling her until she would finally give up and agrees to brush her teeth. As she brushed her teeth with her Mickey Mouse toothbrush in front of the moderate-sized oval mirror, he would cook a quick breakfast for both of them and both would hum to the songs faintly playing on the radio. A thick smell of omelettes and toasted bread always swam in the air, a glass of milk with Bournvita for the younger D'costa and a cup of coffee for the elder one. Sitting in front of each other, breakfast always began with a small thank you prayer, and even today like every Saturday, Pappu pops by to pick up the clothes for laundry, right after they have had the first bite. Tiya giggled and offered a share of her breakfast to him "Have some, Pappu bhaiya, please!" No one can say no to a 7 year old's puppy eyes, but Pappu was stern in his intentions he believed himself to be a lot poorer, respect wise.

"No, gudiya some other time maybe, right now I am in a hurry." Her face fell like a 10kg weight dropped mid-air. He noticed that and tried to rub ointment on the wound, very gently though, "If you come to my shop tomorrow I will teach you how to use the cloth folder, that you always wanted to try"

"Really?"

"Yes, really!"

Right then Ali walked out with a large bag of clothes and handed it off to Pappu. Pappu said his goodbyes and Ali resumed his breakfast.

"Dadda, Pappu bhaiya said that I can use that machine they use for folding the clothes if we go to his shop tomorrow. Can we go please?!" Unlike Pappu, her father could never turn down those puppy eyes.

"Alright, but you do know that it's not a machine, it's just a plastic slate, right?" Even though he couldn't turn her down, Ali always knew how to annoy her.

"Dadda, you are a party pooper. Do you know how cool it feels while using that machine to fold the clothes" She was a stubborn little child.

"Okay, if you say so," He said, elongating the 'so' then continued, "Now finish your breakfast we have to write the letters."

After they ate their breakfast bantering about the most random things, Ali cleaned the table and Tiya ran to get showered and collect her stationery for writing the letters. When she came out of her room balancing papers and pens and decorative tapes in her tiny hands with the tip of her tongue peeking out, Ali was engrossed in reading the newspaper.

"Dadda, come on!" She called out when he didn't notice her,

"Coming baby one minute." He requested,

"Fast Dadda!"

"Coming baccha!" He finally kept down the paper and sat down on the carpet around the centre table and they both started writing letters. This is how they spent most of their Saturday mornings, writing letters to Tiya's mother, who for her was at Santa Claus' house helping wrap gifts for children around the globe. Those letters were made to be sent to their own address so, he would never lose them.

Ali planned on giving her those letters when she turned 18, this way, she would never forget the innocence of her childhood, thus he could save a part of her mother, and he can forever keep alive the mother-daughter relationship which Tiya never got to have. He can hold on to the last shred of his wife for his daughter, without it being an emotional burden on her.

She would write her entire week's worth of frustration, happiness, sadness, questions, stories, basically everything in that piece of paper and then decorate it however she like mostly with tiny pieces of mirrors. She often wrote to her mother saying that she knew, that her mother was on the other side of the huge mirror in her room, and sometimes got frustrated when there were no responses.

Her father always distracted her with one thing or another but never told the truth. A truth that he himself didn't want to accept, a truth that he hoped she would find on her own when she matured, a truth that he knew would devastate her and him and everything in between, hence he created for her a magic wall of secrets and an illusion so strong that if it ever breaks it would bring down the home of heart and take away a piece of her fragile 7-year-old being. Of course, she often asked questions like, "Why to write letters to mamma when we can just talk to her through the mirror?", then he would answer with, "Because what if you want to tell mamma a secret and don't want your teddy to hear?", Being a small child as she was, she would believe it.

"I am done, Dadda, are you?" She asked excitedly.

"Ummm, 5 minutes more," He knew she liked the mystery of not knowing what either one had written but that never stopped her cunning tricks to read what he has written.

"Okay, then I... will go to the bathroom then," She always came up with an excuse to go behind him and try to read what he had written. Sometimes it would be "I am thirsty," sometimes "I need more colours," sometimes "I forgot the tape, I will go get it," and sometimes "I am going to ask Teddy if he wants to write something," Ali always cracked up at her futile attempts.

"Okay" He called after her, covering the sheet of paper with the sleeve of his shirt.

When they both were done Ali would collect the letters to post them in a 'secret letterbox to Santa'. Tiya always believed it was through a ginormous mirror wall, where only adults can go.

She watched cartoons, till he came back, and later they would find a unique recipe on the internet to cook for dinner that night, they would then go out to shop for the ingredients, and have lunch in a restaurant of Tiya's choice.

When they came back home, Tiya, out of tiredness, would doze off and Ali would finish reading his paper and then clean the house. After her afternoon nap, they would play lots of games; running around the house, jumping here and there, screaming and shouting, laughing and babbling.

Once they were done with their evening shenanigans, Ali as the Chef and Tiya as his Sous Chef would cook dinner according to the recipe they found on the internet. They would never have Saturday night dinner at the dining table, they always ate it on the couch while watching a movie together.

For the entire world, this would be the sweetest and the most heart-melting father-daughter relationship ever and in truth so was it for both of them, too. Sundays, just like every Saturday, would pass in utter bliss and constant chuckling, only that they were reserved for the amusement parks, and mirror mazes.

He always smiled in satisfaction as he watched his little girl playing, giggling, enjoying the little things and having the time of her life.

Whenever he saw her running through the mazes or laughing at her reflection he felt a sense of unknown happiness, even though he could never see himself in those reflections no matter how close he stood to the mirror. He just could never get a glimpse of himself in the mirrors along with his daughter playing and laughing and writing letters, which oddly didn't scare him or make him uncomfortable.

"He keeps staring at the mirror like he is watching a movie," It was a movie for him indeed, a wannabe auto-biopic.

"Any change in his demeanour?" Someone in the background asked.

"No doctor, all this old man does is stare at that mirror with a creepy smile." A lady answered the unknown voice, but he stood there, unfaltering, busy watching his little girl play.

"Ever since he lost his wife giving birth to his daughter and his daughter who couldn't survive a single breath in this world, he is stuck to that mirror. All he does is smile so sweetly that you one can't guess what goes on in his head. He doesn't even speak anything except chant his daughter's name... Doctor, is there nothing else we can do to pull him out of it?"



*Heya, I am Yamini Sujit Desai, normal and perhaps boring, but you never know, right? To follow the format: I am a fan of music and according to my mother a fan of laziness as well. I also, love to spend (waste, again according to my mother) my time watching silly sitcoms.*

*"How strange when an illusion dies. It's as though you've lost a child."*

*~ Judy Garland*



# *Phantom of the Apparition*

**A World Of Illusions**

## *World of Illusions, Hollywood Blvd, Los Angeles*



*Hollywood's famous World of Illusions has four unique experiences: Museum of Illusions, Giant's House, Upside Down House, and Smash It that transports you to a world of fantasy and imagination!*

## *OPTICAL ILLUSION BY CASA CERAMICA*



*It is for the fun-loving ones who are okay with making people scared of falling down the moment they enter a room. This vertigo-inducing warped floor system has been designed by British company Casa Ceramica. Their entryway in their Manchester showroom is designed so as to give an otherworldly appearance to an otherwise traditional setting. As the forced perspective works in only one direction, one shouldn't worry about finding their way back. According to a company source, the inspiration was to change how tiles are viewed.*

*"Animation is about creating the illusion of life, and you can't create it if you don't have one."*

*~ Brad Bird*

## *The Museum Of Illusions, New Delhi*



*This museum offers an immersive experience for people of all ages and makes it worth their time. There are a number of exhibits (in picture: clone table; anti-gravity room; head on a platter) that make it an enjoyable experience for everyone, be it children or adults*

## *A SEASON UNDER THE TREES BY FRANCOIS ADELANET*



*Called 'Qui croire?' in French, meaning what or who to believe; this landscape installation by Francois Abelanet was commissioned by the city of Paris to celebrate 'A season under the trees'. If you look from a specific angle and height, it would seem like a globe with some trees on top of it. In reality, though, it is a 1500 square meter sprawling installation. According to the website of the artist, it took 5 days and 90 people to create this 'anamorphosis' installation.*

*"Photography is a kind of virtual reality, and it helps if you can create the illusion of being in an interesting world."*

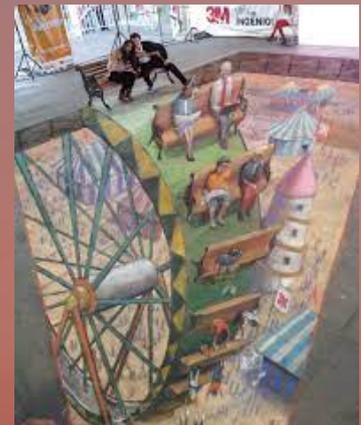
*~ Steven Pinker*

## DALSTON HOUSE BY LEANDRO ERLICH



*This art will do away with your sense of coordination altogether. Leandro Erlich, an artist from Argentina gives an interactive experience with this temporary installation in Hackney, commissioned by the Barbican Gallery, London; to participants who get the illusion of sitting on ledges, dangling and scaling the sides of buildings. It allowed people young and old to have the thrill of performing daring stunts all the while remaining safely on the ground. The structure was made to resemble the many nineteenth-century Victorian terraces lining the neighboring streets of the area. The façade lies face-up, with a mirror positioned at 45 degrees to reflect the going on below.*

## CHALK ART BY JULIAN BEEVER

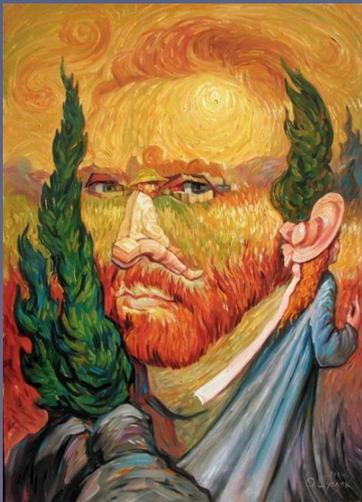


*While previously holding jobs like “photographer’s assistant, tree-planter, carpet-fitter, art teacher, English teacher, street entertainer and Punch and Judy Man,” Julian Beever landed in the perfect career—a world-renowned artist who creates terrifyingly real pavement art with chalk. Take a walk past one of Beever’s works and you could find yourself teetering atop a building in Time Square or sitting on the top of a frighteningly steep ferris wheel.*

*“Life is an illusion. I am held together in the nothingness by art.”*

*~ Anselm Kiefer*

## ILLUSIONISTIC PAINTINGS BY OLEG SHUPLYAK



*On first glance, Oleg Shuplyak's dreamy paintings appear to be classically-styled landscapes, or portraits of figures from art, culture and fiction. On second glance, the optical illusions are actually both—classic landscape imagery and figures are carefully styled to represent eyes, noses, mouths and hair to their larger counterparts (who happen to be figures like Vincent Van Gogh, Charles Darwin and John Lennon).*

## DISAPPEARING SCULPTURES BY JULIAN VOSS-ANDREAE



*German sculptor Julian Voss-Andreae creates large-scale figurative sculptures that seem to disappear depending on your point of view.*

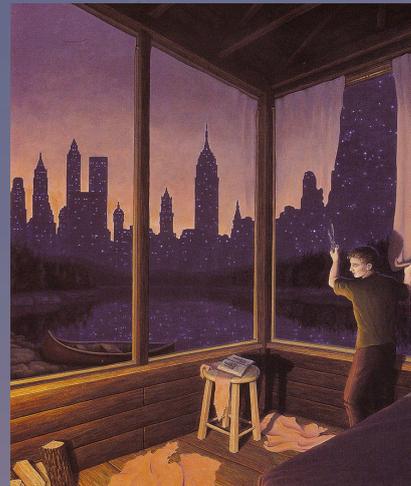
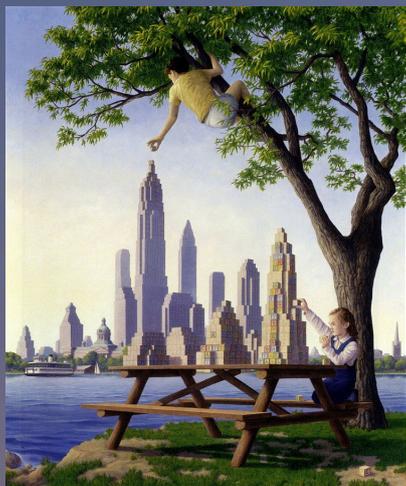
*"From certain angles, his figural sculptures disappear into the environment around them — proving humans cannot separate ourselves from nature."*

*— Madeleine Muzdakis*

*"Painting is an illusion, a piece of magic, so what you see is not what you see."*

*~ Philip Guston*

## ILLUSIONISTIC PAINTINGS BY ROBERT GONSALVES



*Canadian artist Robert Gonsalves has been creating mind bending optical illusion paintings since he was a boy. Each viewing of one of his incredible pieces throws up more questions than answers due to the often completely different yet connected "stories" and perspectives depicted. It's almost as though the viewer has to jump between different worlds within one painting.*

## OPTICAL ILLUSION ENGRAVING AT AIRAVATESVARA TEMPLE



*The Airavatesvara Temple in Kumbakonam, India contains what might be the world's oldest optical illusion and is one of the three Great Living Chola Temples, 11th- and 12th-century Hindu temples constructed during the 1,500-year Chola dynasty in modern-day southern India's state of Tamil Nadu. The bas-relief depicts the two separate animal bodies, with their heads overlapping and merged to become one shared aspect of the two figures.*

*"Sometimes my art is just an illusion - or is it?"*

*~ Criss Angel*

# Clues Unfound



## Across

3. an imaginary place of delicate beauty or magical charm
8. protective talisman that is used to protect people from nightmares
10. ability of the mind to be creative
13. having existence
14. an idea with no basis in reality

## Down

1. the ability to think clearly
2. an experience involving the apparent perception of something not present
4. series of pleasant thoughts that distract one's attention from the present
5. frightening or unpleasant dream
6. a conception or image created by the imagination and having no objective reality
7. prediction of what will happen in the future
9. condition of great mental concentration or abstraction
11. illusion
12. an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect

*"The greatest enemy of progress is the illusion of knowledge."*

*~ John Young*