



the
anthology
vol. 1

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FOREWORD

Prof Uday Damodaran

Friend, philosopher and guide, Writers INKorporated

"Why Wink?"

"But, why not wink?"

Dear Reader, what you hold in your hands now (oops, see on the screen now!) is the first issue of a labor of love!

WINK, Writers Inkorporated, is XLRI's own writers' club: a few dedicated student souls thought up the idea, followed up on it diligently, got others motivated and "hey presto!" WINK is born! This 'anthology' of poems, stories and other writings (primarily from the 2009-11 IR/ BM batch) will hopefully open up the floodgates to let flow the creativity that currently lies dammed up within XL; this first issue of the labor of love will hopefully be followed up by a large number of siblings. And, hopefully, there will be much wider participation: from the junior BM/IRs, from the GMPs, from the staff/ faculty, from families of staff/ faculty.

Don't we human beings love to communicate? Isn't it fun? Just look at the amount of time we spend communicating – in some form or the other – with other human beings. Is it not this super-developed level of communication that sets us apart from other forms of life? Isn't it important? Imagine what would have happened to the human race if our communication abilities were any lesser! So, if communicating with others is such fun and so important, should we not hone these skills? Read this issue of Anthology! And then start writing, start contributing!

The conversation that I started off this foreword with took place between Gurdit, Varun and me some months back, when they first approached me with the idea of WINK, the writers' club: "Why 'WINK'?" I asked them. "But why not wink?" they countered.

Indeed, why not wink? A wink, one of the more subtle human gestures, is used so frequently in human communication. A wink could be a single-wink or a double-wink (wink, wink!). A wink could be used to convey bonding, to convey agreement, to convey a shared sense of knowing. A wink could be used to put the receiver at ease; it could also be used to embarrass him. A wink could be surreptitious; it could be very open. A wink could evoke a smile, a blush or a slap! A wink could be flirtatious, serious or friendly. Whatever it is, a wink is a powerful means of communication; and XL's very own WINK too is all about communicating.

A deep-from-within confession: I just can't wink. Each time I try to, either my other eye too closes (that makes it a blink, not a wink!) or my face gets all contorted! Thank God for these emoticons ;)

One more confession: this anthology includes a short story from me! It is always easier to value something when you have a benchmark, a reference point. The contributions from the students are

excellent; but when read in isolation, the reader might not realize the beauty of the piece. I have reluctantly [;) wink!] agreed to have my story included only so that it can act as a datum benchmark; so that you can fully appreciate the beauty of the other pieces contributed by the students.

So go ahead and read this issue and wink! A return wink from the recipient might mean that s/he too has read this issue! Go, XL, go! Wink, XL, Wink! **Wink, XL, Wink!**

FROM THE EDITORS

Language is amazing. It's fair to say that language was probably invented primarily for communication. But look at how we use words now. The greatest speeches, the most intriguing poems, the most beautiful lyrics we read are just what they are because someone used the right words in a clever arrangement. Writing may have been about record-keeping or communication at some point; it's nothing less than an art form now.

WINK (Writers Inkorporated) was created to find the sometimes hidden, sometimes neglected talent for beautiful writing that many XLers have. We wanted to create a platform (forgive the jargon) that can be used by anyone to promote, publicise and put their writing out for public scrutiny and appreciation. It's meant to be a foundation on which to base one's growth as a writer by getting constructive feedback. More than anything, it's meant to be a forum for celebrating and appreciating fine writing.

But writing is for more than just artistic pleasure; it's also for pure expression. There are more than 60 million blogs in the world (a very conservative estimate), and more than 1 million blog posts written every day. Why do we blog? Because sometimes, it's easier to write our thoughts without having conversation interfere with them. Because sometimes, it's the best way to make a statement, to be heard, and to voice. Or maybe, just because there's so much to say, and a blog is simply the best way to express it. One of WINK's aims has been to promote its members' blogs and to try and encourage blog readership.

The WINK Anthology was conceptualised to collect a sampling of some of the best writing to come out of XLRI that we could get our hands on. It's an assortment of short stories, poems and blog posts. We hope it serves to provide inspiration for the future and encourages more contribution from the students, faculty, staff and alumni of XLRI.

We'd like to thank every contributor for allowing us to publish their writing. We'd like to thank all the faculty members who have been very supportive and without whose help, WINK would probably not have existed at all. We'd like to thank everyone who believed in WINK. More than anything, we'd like to thank you for reading this anthology and supporting WINK! Cheers to you, and here's hoping for an even better Vol. 2!

— Gurdit Singh Sachdeva,
Varun Kumar Gupta.

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SPLINTERS

Prof Madhukar Shukla

Professor, Strategy and Organisational Behavior Areas

XLRI Jamshedpur

<http://madhukarshukla.blogspot.com/>

To M...

When I was a child
I had carved a rainbow
of glassy dreams
It stretched from me to you
- or was that your image?
Then one day you came, and I said:
let us climb to the apex of our dream.
My dream was fragile,
and collapsed from the weight of our individual realities

And today when we meet,
the splinters of my colourful dreams
pierce our breath.
We look at and pass each-other
in nostalgic silence...

To A...

Do you remember!
...that glass-house of dreams
that we had built?
It had wings
and we used to fly...
Then one day a gush of breeze
brought us down.
Our palace of dreams
crashed on the rocks...
The splinters flew around
and got into our eyes.

Now, we look at each other
with distorted vision,
and our common memories
irritate our injured eyes!!

To you...

Do not say, love,
that I am surrounded
by glittering stars.
These are splinters
of my crushed up past.
They do not shine,
but reflect the moonshine,
you bring with yourself.

But do not approach me,
you'll bruise your sole.
Wait for me,
and I will reach you one day...

I am learning to fly!

CONFESSIONS

Ramaa Ramesh

PM&IR [2008-2010]

www.ramaamesh.wordpress.com

The rain beat down relentlessly, and to my eyes, each drop that struck the earth seemed like an indictment, an accusation. My mind accepted the punishment, as if each punishing splash of water would erode my guilt of seventeen long years ago. One hand tracing the familiar pattern of the zari on my pallu, I stood by the window, waiting. Somehow, I felt I would be more prepared to tell her if I could see her walking back, watch her every step until she reached the rusted iron gate. Today of all days, she was slightly late, and my mind continued to register the furious patter of the rain as it pelted against the window, on the ground- everywhere, it would seem.

In a bid to relax, I moved away and came to stand in front of the mirror perchance, though my ears were still attuned to the front door, to when her foot steps would come into hearing range. As I looked up idly into the mirror, I noticed the fine lines around my eyes, the fifty or so strands of gray in my hair, the three mild ridges on my forehead, just above my eyes, testimony to years of frowning- in concentration, at my children, over the monthly accounts, while peeling onions for the day's lunch... When was the last time I had really looked in the mirror? It did not hurt, not anymore as it initially had, to watch my once reed-thin body swell and settle into comfortable middle-aged ordinariness, characterized by rough hands from washing dishes every night after the children were sent to bed, the shapelessness of figure as a result of indifferent fattening meals of often cold dishes after the rest of them had eaten, the thinning, rapidly graying hair, ritually oiled and combed but beyond that, left unattended, the cracked feet. It didn't matter. Things like these ceased to matter over time, especially when you had to bear the caring of a middle-class family of a husband and two children. There was enough to do without having to waste time in front of a mirror.

The clock chimed four, and died away into silence. The rain had now reduced to a drizzle. My thoughts raced over the past years, and the guilt tied a familiar, hated knot in the pit of my stomach. Everyone was entitled to one mistake, one error, one terrible indulgence- mine had been many, many summers ago. And the thought of it brought fear and guilt and apprehension today, meshed together into a heavy quilt that seemed to suffocate me. Memories do not dim with time- don't believe what they tell you! At least, the ones that imprint themselves, like one of these new digital colour photographs, onto your memory- they last a lifetime, whether or not you want them to. Some memories sharpen with time... mine certainly had. And what memories they were... of right and wrong, mostly wrong, it seemed to me...

When I heard her footsteps, I sighed as relief quietly claimed me for its own, delivering me from unwanted memories. I straightened from where I had slouched against the almirah, and went forward to catch sight of her. She was turned, her back to the gate, fastening the door. My daughter. Pride usually came to the fore. She was tall, lissome, her hair long and jet black. She turned and I watched her move slowly, her measured tread bringing her closer to me, to the truth. Today, I was

distracted. I prayed briefly for strength. I had decided a week back that I would tell her today, after three hesitant years of dilly-dallying and false promises to myself. She had a right to know..

I wondered how she would take it, beyond the initial shock and disgust. Oh, they had all been disgusted- my husband, who let me know just how much every day, in every spoken word, every unspoken syllable until he had died three years back; my mother-in-law- in the contemptuous jingle of her colourful bangles, even now.

And now my daughter. What would she say?

She walked into the house, graceful as always. I sat down against the almirah, unable to wait, to act, any more than I had in the last half of my life. It was as though the strain had finally begun to snap me. I heard the water running, as she washed her feet in the bathroom, then silence. She walked out a few minutes later, changed now into a fresh salwar. I gazed at some spot in the distance, fidgeting with my toe-ring. She sat down so quietly next to me, it startled me when I turned my head and looked straight into her perceptive gaze, the brown eyes silent, mildly questioning. She scared me sometimes, my daughter, with her beyond-her-years wisdom, her shrewd assessment of people and events.

How would she assess her mother?

I blurted it out. Six scattered sentences, a quick summary of that summer seventeen years ago, her father's official trip, Rajan's visit, that fateful night, the next morning, being discovered in bed with him by my husband and mother-in-law. It was over that fast. The story of my life, the shame, the guilt, all compressed into six sentences. In any other circumstance, it would have merited a laugh, the irony.

She had stilled.

I looked away, past tears. I had cried enough to last a lifetime. Oddly enough, I felt calm. No recrimination could sway me now. I had passed judgment on myself, on my character. She could say or do nothing that would move me now.

After what seemed like an eternity, she spoke.

Why? she asked me.

I told her. About the hundreds of official trips her father used to take. I wondered if, and if so, what she would understand. I talked about the loneliness night after night for nine long years. Loneliness is a dangerous thing. It can sap your judgment. It had sapped mine. I had waited and waited and waited. My husband had become a rare commodity. I had forgotten what it was like to watch him, even, as he moved or talked or dressed. The feel of his skin. What had he been like? And Rajan had come along. Silent, understanding. Smile, talk, take a walk, hold hands, go to bed. It had been that easy. And that insane.

I had asked myself why a million times. Some questions have no answers. So I told myself. Better no answer than a soul destroying answer.

She said nothing, my daughter, my offspring. And so I sat in the silence and waited. Waited for her anger, her sorrow, her disgust. To hear her denounce me. I got silence in return.

The seconds stretched into minutes. Twenty minutes, perhaps. I felt as if she was burning me with her silence. The spot I was gazing at was fast becoming a blur.

When she spoke, the sound startled me.

And father has made you repent it ever since, day after day, night after night, each minute of your life, amma? she asked.

My head swerved so fast I caught a crick in my neck. Stretching my neck, I stared with disbelief at her, at the tone of understanding in her young voice. Her eyes were filled with tears, flowing down her cheek. She reached out a hand, and I flinched, but the hand touched my cheek, gently caressing the skin.

And she simply said: How much you must have gone through in the past seventeen years, amma! How much!

And she got up and put her arms around me.

I sat there, stunned. For several minutes, I sat as if carved out of stone, as she sobbed quietly, her arms circling me. In the seventeen years past, I had received- from the wise and old, neighbours and friends, relatives and strangers alike- words. Words of contempt for my lack of character, anger that I had deceived, disgust at the kind of upbringing I must have had, wonderment at my shamelessness, curses that I never live a life of normalcy or happiness for evermore to come, pity at my uncontrollable nature.

But in all of those moments and days and months and years, my twenty-year old daughter was first one to understand me. To weep for me, to hold me, to become one with me. Young, new to the world and its ways, her environment upset forever because of my one act, awareness that I had betrayed her father. And all she said was, How much you must have gone through in the past seventeen years, amma!

All those years had I sought understanding, yearned for it, and here was my child, and she understood. Unmarried she was, and only a child, though a wise one, and she knew.

It was too much to take. I cried, and the sound of it tore through the pain in my soul. I wept, as the pain and the guilt tore free in the face of that unqualified understanding- like a shower of sweet rain drenching the parched earth. The sobs rocked my body, and she tightened her arms around me, soothing, accepting, understanding.

And suddenly, the rain pelting the door transformed and poured its acceptance from the skies onto the washed earth.

And in that moment, my daughter became my mother.

PINK FREUD

Varun Kumar Gupta

BM [2009-2011]

www.thesleepinginsomniac.blogspot.com

Dawn had never been more beautiful. More painful, neither. Critters filled in the uncomfortable silence. Still in his arms, she rolled down the window. The wind was misty. Or, perhaps, it was the heaviness of her thoughts. It had rained, probably. There were droplets on the glass. Few and far between, like stars on a cloudy night. And there was her face - the moon - going back into the darkness of anonymity after shining so bright all night long.

It was a night of ecstasy. Of liberation. Of emancipation. Of flight. Of fantasy. Of love, or whatever was left of it.

He had never been there before - in the concaves of her body. But she didn't stop him this time, ironically, when she was about to walk away from it all in a few moments. How else could she have carried his memories with herself. She had to. She had to, if she wanted to survive among the ghosts of the past and the wolves of the future. And she did. A part of him: his being.

And then it happened. Beads. Big ones. All of a sudden. Uncontrollably. Inexplicably.

She hadn't cried for ages. Ages, that had been dark and cruel to her. Times, that had made her feel like a worthless blot on humanity. Today it whelmed over. Over and over again.

TABLE FOR TWO

Gurdit Singh Sachdeva

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.gurdit.com/blog/

I looked up at the name printed elegantly on the board by the reception, "The Red Lobster". A cold wave greeted me as I entered the air-conditioned dining hall of the quaint little restaurant. It was low-lit, a feature commonly accepted as belonging to classy restaurants; various smells of heavy food with thick gravies greeted me. The walls were adorned with paintings and the chairs and tables were decorated with exquisite carvings. I looked around for an empty table when a steward approached me.

"Can I help you, sir?" he enquired in a congenial voice.

"Yes," I replied, "I have a reservation."

I gave him my name.

"This way, please," he led the way.

I followed him to a small table for two in a corner of the restaurant that seemed to be a bit off by itself, a perfect table for a private dinner with an intimate friend. Of course, the person I was meeting was far from being on intimate terms with me today. However, I felt that our history demanded this, a small space for just the two of us to talk without being bothered by the curious glances of others.

"Thank you," I said, "I am expecting a Miss Poojary. Please bring her to this table."

"Sure, sir," he smiled, "Can I get you something to drink while you wait?"

"Yeah. Rum and coke, any white rum you have."

I leaned forward and put a 50-rupee note in his hand, taking him completely by surprise. It's not common practice to tip before the meal in India.

"I would like," I spoke deliberately, aware that I had his complete attention, "to not be bothered too much during the meal."

I debated in my mind whether my strategy would work. On the one hand, the steward might tell the waiters not to be overly enthusiastic while serving us. On the other hand, having observed the huge tip I had given him, they might do just the opposite and stand on our heads in search of a big tip for themselves.

When the drink arrived in a heavy glass, I took a sip and leaned back into the comfortable chair. It was 1:22 PM. We were supposed to meet at 1:30. I wondered how this meal would go. I was seeing her for the first time in 6 years. It wouldn't make sense not to expect her to have changed, but I

wondered if there would be anything about her that would ignite the corners of my mind, bringing colourful detail into memories that had begun to blur, losing colour in sepia-tinged nostalgia.

The most vivid one, of course, was the most recent. Out of the blue, out of 6 years of not having made any contact except a few miserable posts on each others' facebook walls, she called on my cell phone yesterday. It took me quite by surprise when she said her name. Of course, the familiarity of her voice made me recognise her almost immediately, but the shock of speaking to her after such a long time made my mind rebel and go through a list of all the Divya's I had come to know, which, admittedly, wasn't a very long list. The conversation wasn't very long. She said she was in town for a couple of days and wanted to meet me, to "catch up for old time's sake".

Old time's sake...I wondered whether that made any sense at all. As terribly clichéd as it may sound, our relationship had been a roller-coaster ride, rising to the highest crests of ecstasy during the peak of our love, and falling to the lowest troughs during the fights towards the end. It was a bit of a whirlwind romance, a quick and passionate affair that lasted for just 6 months, but it was as intense as could be for 17 year olds. Our whole worlds revolved around each other, and everything we did, we judged by the gauge of the other's reaction. We had the same favourite bands, the same favourite TV shows. Our lives intertwined so much that it became difficult to separate her dislikes from mine; no opinion was either hers or mine—we just had one common opinion, on everything. And of course, when that happens, when you lose track of yourself in someone else, the stakes get raised so high that every tiny mistake, every trivial word left unsaid, or every mistakable word said extra gets magnified a billion times. The tiny blemishes on an otherwise perfect blanket of our love became the defining points of our relationship, the seeds of discontent from which our distance grew.

The fights we had were just as intense, fuelled not only by the disappointment that this was falling apart, but also by the confusion that raged within us as we fought to find ourselves in the mess of what we had collectively grown to become. The confusion gave birth to misunderstandings and almost every conversation we had would end either in tears or in a shouting match. Gradually, though, the tide began to ebb, and so did our interactions with each other. Whatever little I could salvage of my old self, I did, but the relationship had changed me forever, forcing me to start afresh in my definition of who or what I was.

Even years later, while I sat sipping my rum and recollecting those old phone conversations and spent tears, I felt my nerves beginning to act up. I finished the drink in bigger gulps and asked for one more. Before it arrived, she did, smiling warmly at me behind the usher who led the way. I stood up and with slight hesitation, put forward my hand.

"Hi," I croaked.

She quickly masked an expression of surprise and shook my hand warmly.

"Hi! You look ... bigger," she smiled, a smile I returned in small measure.

She was dressed in a white sleeveless cotton *kurti* with a simple, yet elegant, embroidered pattern on it and a plain black *churidaar* below it. The *churidaar* matched with a black stole that she

wrapped loosely around her neck. Her lips were moistened with what I can only assume was lip gloss and a pair of moderately-sized earrings hung glittering from her ears. Though she only had minimum make-up on, she looked fabulous. Her almond-shaped eyes roved over my rough face, reflecting the lights from around us and making her eyes seem even more striking than I remembered.

The waiter took our order for appetizers and I was half-surprised when she ordered a drink for herself. Then again, I reminded myself, we hadn't met in 6 years. It shouldn't really surprise me if she had started smoking too, though I would have had to ask her to put her cigarette out if she decided to light up in my presence. I couldn't tolerate the smell. Luckily for me, she didn't. Instead, while we sat in the limited privacy the table's position offered us, she started some small talk.

She asked me about my work. I asked her about what she had been up to all these years. After completing her Master's in the USA, she had spent some time managing a friend's band. However, the band soon split up and she then started a career with an event management firm as an emcee, later moving into organisation/administration. She was still living and working in the US. And we talked, but the conversation felt formal and forced, and the smiles seemed to linger in that unknown space between real and plastic.

The starters arrived. Crispy chicken with mint sauce was my recommendation. I put a piece of it in my mouth and knew immediately that I had made a mistake, an idea which was confirmed when I noticed the expression on her face when she tasted it.

"Well, I see your taste is as bad as ever," she commented dryly.

For a second, I wasn't sure how to respond. Then we both started laughing, and the ice was cut. The conversation thereafter flowed much more smoothly and the meal began to get a lot more enjoyable (except for the chicken, which went back almost entirely untouched).

For the main course, we decided not to get too adventurous. Butter chicken with *naan* and salad was a safe bet in any restaurant, and it did not disappoint, though perhaps the chicken was a tinge too sweet. The conversation certainly was, especially when compared to the worst that could have happened.

"And do you remember Vikram?" she asked suddenly.

Of course I remembered Vikram! He was her first boyfriend after she broke up with me.

"Yeah, what's up with him?"

"Well, I haven't really been able to catch up with him, but I heard he started his own business. Mods cars and bikes...right here in Hyderabad!" she said excitedly.

"In Hyderabad? Really? Wow! I didn't think people were much into the modding scene here," I replied.

“Oh yeah! Gul was telling about how Necklace Road is still a hot scene for night-racing,” she continued.

“Ah, cool.” I pondered over this new piece of information. Racing...too risky for me. I shrugged, “Did you know Kanchan’s married?”

“Yeah, I saw that on facebook,” she said between bites, “What a complete surprise! Did she tell you in advance? Did you go for her wedding?”

“Nah...I found out on facebook too, when I saw her pictures. I lost her phone number,” I replied.

She nodded, concentrating more on the food.

As time and conversation flowed, I began to feel more comfortable. I laughed more and so did she, even at some of my not so clever jokes. It felt right, somehow, sitting opposite her at the table, having a good meal and reminiscing about days gone by. I noticed that we both carefully avoided speaking of our shared past, but that didn’t bother me much at all. In fact, it was only brought up once, and that too very indirectly when she suddenly raised her glass to toast “the excellent friendship we had”. I toasted to that, for sure.

As the alcohol level in my blood began to climb, I felt my mind thinking up strange things, conjuring up strange possibilities that I would otherwise have dismissed right away. Could this one meal be the fountainhead for something bigger and better? The vague possibility of us re-uniting occurred in some obscure corner.

“So, are you seeing someone?” she asked the question that was running through my mind.

I swallowed a particularly sweet piece of my chocolate brownie and considered the question.

“No,” I said, adding with a wink, “Why? You got any eligible single friends in the USA?”

She laughed nervously and fidgeted with her dessert spoon.

“What about you?” I asked finally.

She cleared her throat and looked away before answering.

“Actually, um...I’m getting married next month.”

The brownie got stuck in my throat. I had to make a special effort to get it down. I sputtered a bit and gulped down a lot of rum and coke. In an instant, the castle I was building in the air dropped on my head with the weight of reality. For a few brief seconds, I didn’t know how to react; I just stared at her with my mouth slightly open. My reaction appeared to have made her uncertain too, because she was apparently at a complete loss for words.

Then, automatically, I felt the corners of my mouth twitch and spread into a smile. Relieved, she smiled too.

"I-I don't know what to say," I offered, "I'm really happy for you...how long have you been together?"

"6 months," she said, "I met him at a music concert. He's a great guy and I'm really sure that he's the one, you know?"

I nodded and swallowed some more alcohol. Somehow, it had lost its edge. It was just coke with a little bitterness to it. And yet, the more I saw the happiness on her face, the more it grew in me. The initial feelings of disappointment gave way briefly to confusion as I asked myself what it was that I was feeling disappointed about, and got no logical answer. Then, the confusion gave way to a sense of calm, a feeling of genuine happiness for her.

"I was really hoping you'd come for the wedding...it's in India," she said.

"Yeah, I'll do everything I can to make it," I promised.

"That's great," she sighed in relief, "We were very good friends, and this is a really important day and it just wouldn't be the same without you there."

There was nothing I could do or say but smile. I raised my hand and we toasted again, to her future life and happiness, to children and a happy family, to a balanced career, to success.

We sat and talked for some time after the meal was done, sipping our drinks in contentment. Finally, we noticed that the restaurant had become empty except for the two of us, and the waiters were waiting, not impolitely but definitely with thinning patience, for us to leave. She offered to split the bill, but I was having none of it, of course. I left a huge tip to for the waiters, just because I felt like it.

We got up to leave. "How are you going now? Can I give you a lift?" I asked.

"I borrowed dad's car," she replied.

"Ah, ok ... great. Well, it's been great meeting you. Keep in touch?"

"Yeah, I definitely will," she said.

Suddenly, she gave me a hug, which took me completely by surprise. I hugged back, feeling her warmth on my chest. Her hair smelled lovely, like it always did.

We walked out to the parking area.

"Well, bye then," I said.

"Bye, Ankit," she gave me a quick wave of the hand.

As I pulled out of the exit gate, I thought about our meeting, of where we were and what our relationship had become. Maybe everything was in tune, falling neatly into place. Who are we to speculate otherwise, but tiny pinpricks on the infinite blanket of space and time? How significant is our loudest yell, but an insignificant whisper in the all-encompassing white noise of the universe?

Maybe, like everything else in life, relationships too have a lifetime, a beginning and an inevitable end; maybe we should learn to appreciate them while they last and savour the best parts that have been confined to the past, where they nestle comfortably in our memories.

The only constant in the universe is change itself, and relationships too must change, if only to keep themselves alive in one form or another. I had found a friend today but lost, perhaps, a lover and a best friend forever; but everything that we were, and everything that we experienced and felt together was alive in me, almost at my beck and call, ready to reappear with splendour when I needed its strength the most.

O FORTUNA

Aditya Gadre

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.riohouse.wordpress.com

Father,

It shames me to leave like this in the dead of the night, like a thief in my own house. It hurts me that I could not say a proper goodbye. But this had to be done. It would have killed me to see yours and mother's reaction to the news of the war. You are strong. I am the coward. I cannot bear to bid you farewell. Not so soon after I came back.

But I made a commitment to the army and to the country which I must fulfil. I am sure you understand. I am sure you are proud of me.

Once again I am sorry to use these insipid words on a piece of paper as a substitute for a farewell in person. I hope you'll forgive me.

Love, —

O Fortune, like the moon you are changeable, ever waxing and waning; hateful life first oppresses and then soothes as fancy takes it; poverty and power, it melts them like ice.

~ ~ ~

Father,

I hope this letter finds you and mom in good health. The Major recently succumbed to injuries received in the last round of shelling. I have been chosen to take his place. Imagine dad, your son is a Major in the army! In an hour, we go for the big push. We will be out-numbered and there is a possibility we won't make it. It is sad that I cannot put all my thoughts on this paper for there is no time. If I don't make it back, let me take this opportunity to tell you what great parents you have been.

I love you both more than anything else in the world.

Love, —

Fate, monstrous and empty, you turning wheel, you are malevolent, your favor is idle and always fades, shadowed, veiled, you plague me too. I bare my back for the sport of your wickedness.

~ ~ ~

Father,

They have broken me in ways I cannot tell you. Again and again. Now I am weak, too weak to escape with the others. I am entrusting this letter with one of the guys attempting escape. I most certainly will be dead in a few days, either because of this condition I am in, or perhaps they will show some humanity and just shoot me.

I don't want to die without apologising to you. I cannot be the son I wanted to be. I cannot take care of you in your old age. I cannot give you grandchildren. I am truly sorry.

I have just one request. Please don't blame anyone for my death. Not the army, not anyone. It was my decision. A decision I have never regretted, and don't to this day.

And always remember that I will be thinking of you both as I breathe my last.

With Love, —

In prosperity or in virtue fate is against me, Both in passion and in weakness fate always enslaves us. So at this hour pluck the vibrating strings; because fate brings down even the strong, everyone weep with me.

SLUMBER

Deepan Dasgupta

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.warandbutterfly.blogspot.com

An everlasting search for you
Amidst the chaotic urban mob.
Struggling through the slender cracks
In an act of losing myself.
Disturbed by the interlude
That eludes me to my closet.
The concrete jungle of oaks
Negotiates with the azure sky.
Dusk finds her den behind
The neatly arranged matchboxes.

*Don't let slumber caress your eyes
As the sky spits fire on me.*

The House melts down
To kiss the smoky earth.
The Yellow desperation sneaks
Into the uncomposed prelude.
The train flows part
Composing rhythms on the steel.
Your hair waving in randomness
Looking for my touch.
The darkness slithers past me
As I lie on the grave of my tales.

*Don't let slumber caress your eyes
As the charred flower is reborn.*

Words fight inside my gut
Vomiting the promise of togetherness.
Only the faint hope of haste
Lies on the disappearing lane.
Black soot lines up the decor
Of the love nest.
Gushing tears from the eyes

Keeps your face caged.
The fear of my end
Must torture your heart.

*Don't let slumber caress your eyes
As myriad tunes escape my chapped lips.*

THE TSUNAMI

Prof Uday Damodaran

Professor, Finance Area
XLRI Jamshedpur

Dusk had fallen all of a sudden, as if night was in a hurry to catch up with day. There was also a slight drizzle. The snaking, winding road looked washed and clean. The bus seemed to be gliding along the wet, black strip of road. Cutting through the thick green wall of trees on either side, the hissing sound of the bus's wheels, as they spun out the water from the road and threw it behind, completed the harmony.

There was hardly any chatter in the bus. The passengers had been lulled into a stupor by nature's own lullaby combination of light, sight and sound. It was thus that they were rudely woken up when the bus came to a screeching halt around a sharp bend. The driver had managed to stop the bus barely a few feet away from two cars that had collided head on. A rescue vehicle and ambulance seemed to have just reached the sight- the rescue personnel were jumping out of their vehicles as the bus reached the spot.

Through the fast fading light a few seemingly lifeless human forms could be seen. There was glass, metal and blood. The drizzle had become heavier. As the engine of the bus shut down there was an eerie silence that remained for a fraction of a second. It seemed to punctuate the interlude between the lullaby and the chaos that followed. All of a sudden there was a macabre orchestra of sounds. The rescue and ambulance staffs were shouting instructions to each other at the top of their voices, passengers woken up from half sleep were cross-talking trying to decipher what had happened, and then there was the sound of metal being cut open by the first rescue worker.

And through all this was the strangely un-human voice of someone screaming for mercy, asking to be spared from the pain. This was soon followed by a hair raising high-pitched wail from a person in one of the cars. The grey of dusk turned to the pitch black of a moonless night; a blanket of darkness thrown across the vast skies to cover the misery.

The bus was on its regular shuttle from a popular pilgrim town to the nearest urban centre. Being located in idyllic surroundings, the pilgrim town was as popular for its religious significance as it was for its stunning natural beauty. Around the place of worship perched majestically on the highest point in town were scores of businesses catering to every stereotypical tourist need. Vice co-existed with spirituality, cheek by jowl. The passengers of the bus were representative of the mix of visitors that regularly thronged the town: the bus had its fair share of the pious, the wild revelers and the people seeking week-end getaways from normal run-of-the-mill lives.

For the driver of the bus this journey was a re-run of the countless shuttles that he had undertaken over the years: the exaggerated joyousness of the pleasure-addicted vacationers [sensing the end of another short holiday bout of gay abandon, they were always greedy to pack in maximum entertainment into the short, remaining time] clashing with the exaggerated piousness of the holy

pilgrim fearful of the Almighty's retribution. Used to years of ferrying bus loads of this unchanging mix of passengers, he always sensed a strange sense of balance in the seeming diversity.

The first to jump off the bus, as it stopped, was the dazed looking unkempt young guy who was with the boisterous group occupying the back seats of the bus. The group looked as if they were floating on a heady sea of drugs and alcohol. Though this guy had eyes that looked glazed, looked nowhere, he headed straight towards the rescuers and immediately started helping them with strong purposeful movements; he seemed extremely focused. Watching the young guy disapprovingly, the pious looking middle aged woman with prayer beads in her hands, flashed out her cell phone and started talking in a surprisingly assertive, strong voice. From her conversation she seemed to be a businesswoman- irritated at the unexpected delay caused by the accident, she seemed to be berating someone for losing out on a profitable business opportunity.

The elderly couple at the front of the bus, as usual, seemed to be in total agreement with each other. Their verdict: they deserved what they had got. Speeding around these places seeking unending enjoyment, these were the people who were destroying the sanctity of this holy town. In their minds there was not an iota of doubt that the vehicles involved in the accident were recklessly speeding merry makers. The thirty-something smart young lady had the hint of a smile on her lips. The high pitched wail that had come from the car had reminded her of what he had told her last night. He had told her that her screams could awaken people for miles around. As she remembered with pleasure their two days and nights together, she wondered how long it would be before she could steal one more week-end of exciting clandestine meetings from her life-full procession of boring, 'normal' days.

The teenage girl traveling with her parents had seemed to be immersed in herself, with no thoughts she could spare for anyone but herself. As she now watched the scene outside she was wondering who these people were. She was wondering who they had left behind. She was wondering how it would be to suddenly not have people you had taken for granted. Her thoughts were interpreted by loud thunder and a bolt of lightning. The blanket of darkness was momentarily lifted and the scene lit up sharply for all to see. There seemed to be a wild storm building up. The rain was coming down very heavily. Something in the elements seemed to portend disaster. Suddenly the teenaged girl felt very cold; she put her hand lightly on her mother's. The man of god in the robes of a priest and the obviously-in-love couple did not even seem to have noticed anything. While the priest- with his eyes lightly closed- seemed to be in deep meditation, the couple was lost in their own private conversation. 'Accident?', the priest and the couple would have most probably asked if they had been pulled back into the world occupied by the others.

December 25, 2004: He kept his diary using the numbering scheme devised by his people; that way there were far lesser re-conciliation problems while checking back on the past. Sitting 'God-knows-where' [he particularly liked this phrase that his people had coined up!] he had a deeply disappointed look on his face. One more carefully crafted test had failed. He had chosen the location with care, he had chosen the bus load of passengers with care, and he had hoped that he would get the desired results this one time. He would have to keep trying. With a sigh he flipped the huge register shut and dropped it down. He should have been careful. The dropped register had created quite a tremor. High above him he could hear the sounds of moving water. He hoped he had not unwittingly caused something big.

CRIMSON MOON

Sumit Singla

PM&IR [2008-2010]

www.huesofinsanity.blogspot.com

They made a lovely couple, huddled together in the cold winter night on the last seat in the old decrepit bus, as it hurtled towards their destination. Like them, there were only a few passengers courageous enough to take on the challenge of the inclement weather and travelling by the rickety old bus. The bitter wind crept in through the battered windows, and toyed with their hair, throwing it into disarray. She remembered how Aakash loved the wind in her hair, and how she used to enjoy his fingers playing with her long, lush hair...

But today, Aakash seemed lost, distracted... He had that faraway expression in his eyes that he would always have when thinking of something. He stared out of the window, his eyes narrow slits against the cold, and his brow furrowed in concentration. She thought it was because she was going away. Only for a few weeks, but still... She was flying to Bangalore from Delhi to meet her parents. And if the thought of parting hurt him half as much as it hurt her, she could understand his quietness.

He hadn't talked much during the entire bus journey from Jaipur to Delhi. He'd been staring right ahead, looking worried, with an inscrutable expression on his face. How much he really loved her!! It was amazing... In such a short time, they had become so fond of each other. She smiled to herself in the semi-darkness and put her hand on Aakash's. He flinched and took it away. She was confounded. Hot tears of hurt welled up in her eyes, but she brushed them away. She justified his reaction to herself, "He must've been startled by the cold."

Finally, he turned his gaze to her. She felt the same warm, cosy feeling when his dark-brown eyes pervaded her being. The cold wind kept up its relentless attack, trying to claw its way into the warmth in her heart. She looked at him, smiling, expecting a warm hug, but he just looked at her vacantly, as if she didn't even exist. Bitter waves of disappointment washed over her as she realized that he was somehow preoccupied and not quite with her.

"Rachita, I...," he suddenly said.

"...really love you," she completed his sentence in her mind. It had been so long since he had said those magic words. She craved to hear them again.

"Uh....," Aakash hesitated.

She recalled the day that Aakash had proposed to her, and she had accepted. This was the same hesitant Aakash. That day also, if it hadn't been for her encouraging smile, she doubted if he'd have been able to utter even a word. But he had said the words, and walked arm-in-arm, gazing at the full moon, which was blushing with a shade of soft crimson. She smiled to herself and blushed lightly.

“Let’s....let’s...,” Rachita closed her eyes in sweet anticipation of his next few words.

“.....stop seeing each other,” Aakash mouthed, barely audibly. He was sweating even in the December chill. But, a huge tidal wave of relief seemed to wash over him as he got these words out of his mind.

If he had been bothered enough to watch, he would have seen the wilting of the rosy face. But he was oblivious to the slump of her shoulders, to the great tears of disbelief that welled up in her hazel eyes. Nor did he hear the huge, racking sobs that shook Rachita’s petite frame. She struggled to look for one last bit of compassion and love in his face, but found only indifference. It was not the face of the Aakash she had loved. It was a stone face.

Emotionless. Feelingless.

The din from the bus’s engine bit into her bleeding thoughts. The cauldron of her sadness brewed up a concoction of tears, bitterness and hatred. Her uncontrollable sobbing left damp spots on the seat of the bus. The bleak, cold wind whistled around her, mocking her for her naivety. Other passengers swayed with the motion of the bus, either asleep or ignoring the drama that was playing out around them. The haven the darkness provided was snatched away by the overhead lamps that had just been switched on. The crisp night air kept attacking her, disregarding her attempts to numb herself. It was a conspiracy. Against her. To strip her of dignity, her beliefs, her love, and sanity, and to inject her with tortuous betrayal.

Aakash started for the exit as the bus stopped at the airport. He walked without guilt, with his head held high. No remorse, unperturbed. Her eyes still sought him, as she moved towards the departure terminal. He walked away, and she felt something break inside her. One part of her wanted to run to him, to hug him and just cry. The other wanted to hate him for leaving her.

The plane took off, leaving Aakash behind, leaving behind all her memories, and dreams. Leaving behind the naïve, little girl she had once been. She looked out of the airplane’s window at the full moon with tear-filled eyes. It did not have its usual pallor. It had a crimson hue. As if it had been bleeding with some hurt caused to it....

Her parents waved to her as she descended the steps at Bangalore airport. “Happy Birthday, Rachita,” her mother hugged her and said, “So, what did Aakash give you as a present?”

He gave me a crimson moon Mom. A gift to keep and cherish for life. A crimson moon.

VERBIAGE

Aditya Gadre

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.riothouse.wordpress.com

Darkness. A knife. A scream. Blood. A dead body. A phone call. The Police. Only questions, no answers. No prints. No mistakes. No clues. A Discovery at last. A note. Instructions. The painting. The safe behind it. Documents. Secrets. Murders. Stolen lives. Stolen Dreams. Justice. The Light.

Editors' Note: We chose this primarily to highlight the creativity of writing an entire story without using any verbs. Also, this is a perfect example of a '55' – an entire story written in less than 55 words.

IMPELLED TERMINALS

Diwakar Kaushik

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.diwakarkaushik.wordpress.com

RIGHT TO LIVE, LEFT TO DIE!

The soul had left last Monday; the body, left glued to a bed, felt closer to the far end of the heaven stair than the elevator of the hospital. No pain, no sarcastic smile, no fighting the hope and hoping the fight. Their tears were confused and I silently slipped off their hands yesterday night. An unholy medicine which cut the story short and triggered a run towards the hypocrite certainty. I tweeted my last 140 characters on my way up:

"My heartiest thanks to the lawmakers for legalizing euthanasia. Untied wings will always be better than a decorated cage. Welcome me, lord"

ANTI GRAVITY NEEDLE

Saturday evening, A half inch eraser kisses my skin. And it begins the task ... now there is no past, no future, no loans, no broken relationships, no regret, no remorse, no sleep, no surprises, no gifts, no pain, no love, no friends, no race, no desires and no failure. A 360 degree gyration and a bean bag. Round two begins, *zzziippippp* and sky upside down ... that incomplete night erased, that curbed kiss erased, that epic fall erased and all the faces erased. My eraser, I love you and you love me.

Mumbai, 22 March 2010: Body of a twenty seven year old bank employee found in his apartment in uncertain circumstances. The case was reported to the police when the maid did not get any response after knocking for a long time. The reason of demise is assumed to be overdose of he...

BLACK AND WHITE SEMI COLONS

Player a: *Salesman*, restless, worried, draped in sweat, hopeful and uncertain. Terminate.

Player b: *Beggar*, hardly dressed. Inactive limbs. Focus on next meal, vigilant of human behaviour. Helpless but creative. Denied of essentials but gifted of persistence. Indifferent to global warming, worried of the cold night. Terminate.

Player c: *Prostitute*, Undesired object of desire. Social stigma of undying social needs. An element of strength. Alone, un-pleasured, afraid, faces red, bodies black, hearts transparent. Terminate.

Player d: *Middle aged woman*, a mother, a wife, a daughter-in-law, a friend and a lot more. A life full of roles. A lost self, still has full meaning for herself. A dependent being, for survival, for recognition for existence. Terminate.

Player e: *A girl in love*, sparkle, spring, smile, ecstasy, wait, sweet pain, fiddling with time. Terminate.

Player f: *Young kid*. Naivety, clarity, faith, love and deep sleep. Nothing else, unadulterated smile and unfaltering belief in all. All questions, no answers. Terminate.

Player g: Hypnotized youth, energetic, powerful, blinded by misread faith, misinterpreting the rules of religion, ignoring the teaching, hatred, guns, bombs, blindness, pain. Terminator.

Mumbai: *Ajmal Amir Kasab, the Pakistani terrorist who killed scores of people during the attacks on Mumbai in November 2008, was on Thursday sentenced to death. "To be hanged by the neck till death," said Tahaliyani after reading out each count.*

Game Over. Really?

AUCTIONS. OF MY IGNORANCE.

Anupam Kumar Jha

BM [2009-2011]

www.anupanjha.wordpress.com

One of those days... Was another one born.
The last cord severed and the tears rolling down;
Sought a reprieve and wished for mighty long,
That he be un'earth'ed and that his soul not be torn.

Then came the human, the one he was to be
The one who claimed the wit and all the known soiree;
And the Baptists rode along for the omen was clear
' He shalt be professed till his soul's doom be near'.

The fire was set and his name out loud
In the curse of knowledge, was he to do himself proud.
Springs and Winters passed by; he learnt them counting
And soon the civilization was upon him, unmasked and daunting.

Ignorance was sought for it could be moulded and cast
Wisdom was bought for Curiosity was an inglorious past
The currency was time and it dawned on him late
What was by design, a blatant Auction of his breath and fate

And then,
Love came by from the greens of existence
The deserts of logic and wisdom in utter resistance
All in grave pursuit, the well of her charm and emotional diction
He realised late that She was just another HUMAN.

One of those days... Was another one born.
Then came the human, the one he was to be...

A LOTTA MUSH, A LOTTA ROOM

Varun Kumar Gupta

BM [2009-2011]

www.thesleepingsomniac.blogspot.com

"Hey silly, marry me!"

"What?"

"Marry me, you shithead!"

"I can't hear you. Call me up from the next station."

"Aaaaai saaaidddd, Wouuuuuuld youuu marrrrrrrrry meeeee?" Standing on the doorsteps of C1, he screamed at the top of his voice; as if it would make up for the poor telecom connectivity.

Whoever coined the phrase "madly in love" was a genius. These two 'iddiots' knew what it meant. And they wanted to be exactly this mad all their life. Half the time they fought. The rest they made up. But they loved each other. *Madly.*

He didn't want to hear stuff about other guys. He didn't like it when she went out for coffee with them every single day. And he got irritated *way* too soon. She was paranoid about his ex. And she had a special ability to misinterpret everything he said. He cracked jokes none else on earth would even chuckle at. And she laughed her guts out every single time. Her jokes were even worse. And he made his special comments on them much to her chagrin.

Anything she loved was sure to be despised by him. Anything he fancied didn't mean anything to her. He loved butter scotch. She hated it. He preferred to keep a 'Plan B' with himself. She never cared.

She read like crazy. He thought books were dog-piss. She loved Ronan Keating. He thought it was an insult to music. He was a movie maniac. Errrr, she wasn't. She loved Julia Roberts. He was scared of the size of Julia's mouth. He smoked like a chimney. She couldn't stand the smell of it. He drank like a fish. She abhorred drunkards.

They had nothing to talk over the phone. Absolutely nothing. She never wanted to hang up. And he didn't find logic in not doing so when there was nothing to be said. She loved the silences as well. He usually didn't.

She wasn't perfect. He wasn't perfect. They broke up every week and patched up again.

He even forgot her first birthday together!!! *"Its my birthday. You can wish me now,"* she said at 0030 hours. She gave him a surprise visit a day before his first birthday together.

They had nothing in common. Unusually nothing. Creepily nothing. Zip. Zero. Zilch. They were the two opposite poles created by God in two totally different moods.

But when they met, they became the best things that ever happened to each other. The way they held hands. The way they looked at each other. The way he cared that extra bit not to hurt her while combing her hair. The way she filtered the information he didn't want to hear. The way they could just sit there, saying nothing at all and it didn't seem to bother. The way they could keep on blabbering any fucked-up shit about anything on earth. And it didn't even have to make sense. The way he patted her forehead. The way she held his hand to her cheek. The way they touched. The way they hugged. The way they kissed.

This was love. They knew it. They were sure of it.

And they both loved mushrooms.

"You know I can't."

"What you can't?"

"I can't marry you right now."

:/

"I mean, you're there on the train and I have these darn exams."

"Aaaaargh bitch. Would you tell me already?"

"Awww, that's the sweetest way a guy could ever propose. Are you even on your knees?"

"I now am, fuckwit. You know I can fall off the train like this."

"Yeah whatever. So you were saying something."

"Babe. Growing old with you and arthritis isn't half as bad and scary as sitting here near the door of this compartment. For the love of God and in the name of his arse, please be considerate enough to tell me if you would like to see this same ugly face, crooked nose and huge ears by the side of your bed every damned morning all your life?"

"Ummm. Lemme think. What are the options?"

"Well it's just me and Shahid Kapoor."

"In that case..."

There were jolts. Uncharacteristic jolts. Dammit. It shook ominously. He tried to get up stretching his arm to get hold of the rod next to the door. But somehow he couldn't. The boggie seemed to revolve around a vertical axis. He got thrown towards the ceiling that accelerated towards the ground. And his head hit it. Real bad.

Blood. Silence.

SHE

Kunal Nickkawade

BM [2009-2011]

www.bornindividualist.blogspot.com

I met her couple of years back. I was hesitant to be friends with her at first. I was acquainted with couple of her cousin sisters and was more interested in them. But there was some special bond between us. I still remember the first date. It went very well. I was very shy and didn't open up in the beginning, but she probably knew instinctively how to get me talking. I was thinking about her all night and even next day. Experienced people told me that it is 'normal' and it happens to everyone. I had really enjoyed the first date and was very keen to know her better but there were relationship gurus everywhere giving me *gyaan* on 'how to take it slowly' and 'not to scare her away'. But I knew that this relationship was something special and as always I will make my own rules rather than trusting and accepting the norms.

The disappointing part was that couple of my best friends were not really impressed by this relationship. They tried hard to convince me that this relationship won't take me anywhere. Her big brother is a cool guy and was very happy to see us together. But my friends even hated my friendship with him and basically wanted to keep me away from the entire family. The worst thing happened on eve of New Year when couple of friends of mine, she and I had gone out. I could see that she was trying hard to clear the misunderstandings but my friends were very stubborn. It was one of the very rare moments when I saw her sad and depressed. This incident however, made our relationship stronger. My friends eventually gave up for sake of our friendship but were still advising me to take it slowly.

A year later, I was selected in one of the prestigious MBA institutes in country and had to leave job and the city. When I told her, she immediately said, "I will accompany you; I promise I won't be much trouble." I checked with some people who had studied there and they told me that it is perfectly possible to take her with me. I was very happy. The first year was fun and we did many wild things together. A small private detail: she really goes down very well. It is an art and she is a master. Gradually, we have settled into a more mature relationship, but the fun and crazy part is still there.

The best part about her is that she brings out the best in me and she also brings out the worst in me. I can share any problem with her and amazingly, she has solution for every problem. No matter how many different professional streams I have selected or will select, at heart I will always be a philosopher and she has been a major reason behind this.

Of late, I am reconsidering our relationship. It hurts to even think about it, but I thought probably it is for greater good of both of us. When I shared this with her, she laughed. She was not at all angry. Probably she is too sure that I won't do so or probably she doesn't believe in the shallow concept of 'break-ups' and believes in the age old concept of 'made for each other.'

I am relieved. I too have stopped thinking too far in future and instead concentrate on enjoying our time together. There is no one like her on this earth. When she is around, she is the world for me. She is my lovely Scotch whiskey.

VENI, VIDI, VELCRO

Ishita Roy

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.pokans.blogspot.com

My life and times at XLRI

I've never really believed in "more beautiful than the dreams". That was before I came here. I've never believed in the "worse than the worst nightmares" either. But that would be because my worst nightmares (and experiences) involve me failing something/somebody or getting late to someplace important.

So when I came to XL, I resolved to wake up early, never be late to class, to stay ahead of work and be more hardworking in general. Resolutions, I'm happy to say, that were fulfilled in the first term in XL.

The second term began well, with the promise of much excitement lined up - the SIP and the Ensemble and the Alum homecoming. And if the first term saw the emergence of Ishita the diligent, the second witnessed the revelation of Ishita the unfazed. My academic career's most ironic course ever led me to pen these most memorable pieces:

Global Action Strategy

Idle thoughts will leave no trace,
Little substance, too much space,
What head or heart or soul divine,
Can tolerate such gimmickry?

Vagus

Decadent lanes in cities plagued,
More from devices than vices base,
The entrails, limbs and life blood suffer,
From the tortuous traitorous train of thoughts.

I began the third term, armed with my newfound diligence and intrepidity. But I was now attacked by the deadliest combination of villains/vices – wintry sloth & ennui and springtime complacency & joylessness. And when titans clash, sparks ensue. Sparks of creativity, such as these:

Maxims

The darkness of ignorance,
Doth many fancies make,
A halter thus innocuous,
Appears as a snake.

Fear inspires reverence,
Reverence desire,
All hope of seeing light,
Is extinguished by such fire.

Full Moon

I first glimpsed my true love,
Alas on such a fateful day,
Although my shafts had hit him true,
They'd wounded him the wrong way.

Kaliyuga

The Bharata scion, centuries ago,
Had banished the eon to realms four,
Games of chance, artificial romance,
State of fear and loss of control.

Pessimism

Invention is not the only child,
Of dotting mater necessity,
Efficiency is always bought,
At the cost of mental entropy.

The Big Picture

Moments of every colour make,
Varied and beautiful the mosaic of life,
Curse not therefore the moment black,
It too plays a joyous part.

The last month of my first year in XL washed away with it much of the energy and joy that accompanied my green & salad days here. The year ended also in ill health of body and a resurrection of terrible passions, which I continue to cling to, for lack of better pleasures.

Here, in this place, friends have revealed their beautiful faces, and taken me in their strong arms, ready to walk me to the belly of the whale, which is by no means very unpleasant. Foes, following their nature, have receded further into the darkness which renders them indistinguishable. To both these members of creation who are to me not indifferent, I wish the very best. To those who are indifferent, I wish the same.

1ST DAYS AT XL

Akshay Kumar Jain

BM [2009-2011]

<http://randomnugget.wordpress.com/>

The light of thunder,
The feel of the hail;
Wet grass under my feet,
Thunder clouds in a swell;
Surrounded by friends,
Few old, some new;
A new life, a fresh way,
Every moment being so true;
The light of the old city, faded in my thoughts,
The new surrounding green, omnipresent throughout...
New people I meet, so many more are left,
The old ones back in town, I think of the good old days;
Was a good life I had,
The set twas so true;
Its a good life ahead,
The trail lovely with hues.....

NOSTALGIA BITES

Sumit Singla

PM&IR [2008-2010]

www.huesofinsanity.blogspot.com

I walked down the lofty corridor of The Saint Thomas Men's Residence, with a wistful look on my face. Walking slowly, I absorbed all the sights – the notice board that congratulated the receivers of recent placement offers and had details of some competition or the other in garish colours, the whitewashed walls, and the lack of all human activity.

I smiled as I recalled all those futile trips I had made to the board to check if my name was on the shortlist for some company or the other. I could almost taste the feeling of defeat that had encompassed me on not seeing my name there, and feel the encouraging pats of friends on my shoulder.

I walked to the lift and smiled as I remembered the number of times that it had broken down, and I'd had to trudge up to the fourth floor using the stairs, huffing and puffing and cursing using all the expletives I knew in various languages. I decided to take the stairs this time, just to relive those memories.

Perhaps the current crop of students were on their term break. Perhaps, they were attending the class of a prof who'd have flunked them if they missed. Perhaps, they were sleeping after submitting an assignment due at 9.00 am.

Room no. 414 – the place that had seen fleeting moments of frustration, grief, delight and boredom. Sadly, it was locked. Idly, I wondered about the person who lived there now. Did he also make the room look like a tornado-struck zone? Did he take a minute out of his routine to admire the view from my window? Did his alarm ring incessantly in the morning till an irate neighbour pounded on his door in irritation? Did he belt out his brand of 'music' much to the consternation of nearby folks? Did his room also overflow with books of all kinds, shapes and sizes? And most importantly, had he inherited my love for LFC over the years?

If looks could kill, mine would have shattered that lock into a million pieces, giving me access to a flood of memories from the years gone by. But, nothing of the sort happened.

I took the lift this time.

On reaching the ground floor, I decided to go over to Rooms 15 and 16, where more laughs than an entire season of 'F.R.I.E.N.D.S.' were created and shared. Room 16 was unlocked. I couldn't resist knocking, almost expecting a familiar voice to say, "Yeahhhh, come in!" and opening the door to be greeted by some of the awesomest people on this planet.

A stranger opened the door, a questioning look in her lovely, hazel eyes. "Yes?" she asked. I snapped my gaping jaw shut, with an audible snap that made her jump. "Oh, nothing! I'm just an alumnus,

who graduated in 2010. I was visiting someone in the city today, and decided to come over to my alma mater. Sorry, if I disturbed you.”

She invited me in with a warm smile, but the room felt cold. Gone were the decorations, the charts scrawled with funny one-liners, and the book-rack with the coffee-maker on top of it. Gone were those people I’d half-expected would be lounging around the place. I didn’t see any of them there, but I still heard the faint echo of their voices and their laughter.

“Are you ok?” she asked, with some concern.

“Yes, I’m fine. Actually, I think I ought to go,” I said, looking at my watch.

I stopped by at the pond with the fountain. Multi-hued fish swam about, frolicking in the clear water. A moss-covered waterbody, with ugly catfish was what it had been, until a friend had come up with the idea to clean it up and maintain it better. We’d all pitched in – some had donated money to the cause, some had helped in selecting the right varieties of fish to keep, and others had rolled up their sleeves to do the ‘dirty’ work. (Of course, some had stood and snickered at the futility of it all, but then looking at the brightly coloured fish today, made me snicker back at them.)

The benches outside the Mother Teresa hostel were unoccupied. A strange phenomenon- made possible only by the fact that the students were not on campus. Otherwise, there would always be a bevy of folks – some reading, some engaged in long, intimate conversations with faraway loved ones, and others simply hanging out.

Ah, a familiar soul at last! Dadu – the proprietor of the campus eatery, warmly greeted me with a cup of coffee and chattered away, trying to bring me up to speed with all the changes on campus lately. I was too lost to respond, and made do with randomly sprinkled ‘hmm’s and ‘haa’s. The old rascal didn’t forget to charge me 12/- for that measly cup of weak, sugary coffee. When I pointed out that one thing that hadn’t changed on campus was his propensity to fleece his customers, he just grinned and made the age-old excuse, “Kya karen Sumit, har cheez ka rate badhta hi rehta hai”

Deciding to take a look at the classrooms of yore, I felt a twinge of sadness at seeing that they had been revamped completely, with state of the art infrastructure and advanced gadgetry. Having never been especially attached to the classrooms, (since a large component of my learning had taken place not inside but outside them) I moved on to take a look at yet another place that was special – the Placecomm office. For, it was there that the 16 of us had spent long, sleepless nights slogging towards ensuring the best of placements at XLRI. And what a brilliant job we had done too!

I strolled over to the GMP area, the location for many heart-to-heart talks with friends. The silence there threatened to choke me, so I had to beat a hasty retreat and take refuge in the huge common room of The Father Enright Men’s Residence. The old TV where we had watched countless Premier League matches, cheering on our favourite teams, was still there. The memory of bunking two important classes and a quiz just to watch Liverpool trounce the Red Devils 4-1, and revelling in the gains from the ‘tradeoff’ I had made was special.

The TT table, a little battered because of the rough handling it had undergone over the ages still stood, a relic of the times when there had been epic tournaments, having played best-of-5, best-of-10, and even last-man-standing games played amongst us.

The last stop was the iconic JLT – which had been the forbidden place early on, but had turned into a regular haunt in the final term. Funnily enough, the XL journey had begun with a dunking for ‘trespassing’ on JLT and ended with a dunking to celebrate getting placed, and the corresponding DJ nite, where all of us had exchanged hugs and fond farewells.

I walked out of the campus slowly, as a lone tear made its way down my cheek. I turned up the volume of my iPod to drown out the silence, and those haunting words pervaded my being:

“Socha tha MBA kar le, hum tum bhi thoda sa padh len, lo aa gaye hum XLR....”

JOURNEY BACK

Amit Sondhi

PM&IR [2009-2011]

So I am back in Jamshedpur :) The train from Kolkata to Jamshedpur was delayed by almost 6 hours due the two-day bandh call by Naxalites, which meant that I ended up missing the inauguration of the academic year in the morning. Had to spend the night at the Howrah station in Calcutta, while my parents were getting the heebie-jeebies and calling me after every hour. The fact that I was to travel by Gyaneshwari Express, the same train that was derailed by Naxalites a few days ago didn't help the heebie-jeebies very much. But I eventually got here without any more hassles and everything was fine.

I found that traveling while wearing an XLRI t-shirt makes co-passengers more likely to talk to you. First to start a conversation was a senior gentleman with 25 years of working experience who I met on my way to the Delhi airport. He had studied Physics, Production, Marketing and lots more stuff, had worked in manufacturing and exports, and had been in the pharmaceutical industry for the last ten years. He knew a lot about HR and seemed very pleased to talk about XL. He also was very happy to learn that I was from Punjab like him, and went on Punjabi after saying the now fairly expected "Oh I thought you were a Bengali or something". He gave me his card and bought me a soda and helped me get to my counter at the airport. :D

On the plane the lady on my right took a break from her "I am going to use my laptop at all times no matter what the flight attendants say" undertaking to ask me about my studies and specialization and interests etc. She told me she was an MBA graduate in marketing from FMS Delhi, and had been working with AC Nielson for the past ten years. This led to a barrage of questions from me about work at AC Nielson, the "culture" related aspects there, the various categories of clients etc. She asked me what sector I would prefer after graduating, and I said pretty much anything except a consultancy, before hastily clarifying that I wasn't including AC-Nielson amongst consultancies.

She then told me about her about 12 year old daughter and slightly younger son; and how it was an ordeal to bring up boys whereas girls were angels. She was nice enough to tell me about what interests her kids have, and the things they do and say. She told me that she tells her daughter that becoming a house-wife is the best career move, which the very intelligent and multi-talented daughter doesn't find amusing in the least. I got unduly encouraged by this and disclosed that I sometimes fancy becoming a stay-at-home dad. Ha Ha Ha. She made an "Ew" face for a few moments before remarking "well, men really don't have a choice". I made her share her email ID by asking her to mail the article she was reading to me. I be clever like that.

Then the person on my left caught me a bit off guard with "Oh you're from XLRI, I am joining IIM-Calcutta this year, let's shake hands!" He was a really nice chap and knew some of my seniors, and one of my classmates from XL. He had been duly indoctrinated in the XL-IIMC rivalry by his seniors and knew everything about the traditions and the "past highlights".

At the Howrah station I chatted for a couple of hours with this guy who was doing his engineering in electronics and waiting for the same train as me. Asked me the regulation questions about admission and jobs and pay packages. His dad was working for the BJP-JDU alliance in Bihar but supported Congress at the center. Yay, convenience! After several rounds of running around the national politics in circles he disclosed that he supports the Congress, but he “really, really dislikes Muslims”, nearly to the point of hating them. I pried for the reasons, which turned out to be the usual stereotypical drivel, all claimed from personal experience. I marvelled at the pervasive resilience of the “the other side is unclean” meme while wondering at the irony of saying this in the middle of the squalor that was platform number 21.

The same person was highly condemning of the Maratha nationalists in Nagpur where he lived, calling them goondas and regressive and what not. He expressed guarded disapproval of Modi’s politics in Gujarat too. I didn’t push the issue with him, but someone really needs to do a study on the mindsets of these “I am very progressive and I know some really good Muslims but really Muslims are the scum of the earth” individuals who I keep running into with annoying regularity. Perhaps the AC Nielson lady could help, she was quite emphatic about the utility of that sort of research.

Ciao!

WOH 120 GHANTEY

Nikhil Sharma

PM&IR [2009-2011]

www.entirelynikhil.blogspot.com

Author's Note:

Disclaimer: (1) This is a totally personal experience. I, for one, am not representing the people who attended around 15+ interviews. I was down and out by the 6th one itself and was actually enjoying not getting shortlists.

(2) The gender angle has been carefully avoided for obvious reasons.

Some of my observations about one of the most entertaining (in retrospect) and yet screwed up (while I was undergoing it) time of my life which really opened my eyes in every sense...Yep, the much glorified Summer Internship Process. As an observer, i.e. before I got through XL, I often came across many articles about the Internship process in many of the B-schools, the IIMs especially. The exorbitant salaries, the wonderfully veiled comments of the students expressing their happiness about getting into jobs of their liking and such like. 55% of the offers came from consulting firms, 25% from FMCG blah blah...

I now have firsthand experience of the fact that the media is at best a means of baseless communication. Not that they could do much better though.

Anyway, here goes.

Once upon a time, we were all happy and jolly. But then IT began.

One could argue that IT all started long time back when our beloved seniors put pressure on us for an activity called 'CV Preparation'. I'm skipping the details for the benefit of the readers. It would suffice to say that it involved a lot of running around, digging up your own achievements, making up new achievements at times (most times actually), glorifying yourself to the hilt so much so that you were a completely transformed person after the 159th version of your CV and began to wonder if you'd really done any of this. You get the drift.

Then came the process. Shortlist pe shortlist, shortlist pe shortlist. And when your name figures once in every 10 shortlists, you begin to doubt yourself, your CV, your achievements. Some of the thoughts which go through your head at that time are:

"Why didn't I listen to my folks and get 90% in 10th and 12th?"

"If only I had a few international papers to my name."

"Why, why oh why didn't I do anything in my Engineering???"

Soon the above thoughts die down and you begin to get into the GD mode. This is the mode where you start to "give a structure to the discussion" or forcefully, yet politely, remind others to "allow me to complete my point" and generally look in utmost earnest at all the people around you such that your head resembles a spectator of a Federer v. Nadal Wimbledon Final.

And by a complete twist of fate, guess what! You have been called for an interview! OMG! Now, it's time to see which company's interview is this? Oh...I never knew such a company existed... Nevertheless, gobble a few facts, ponder on the dreaded question, "Why HR?", sit with the Labour Law textbook in your hand in the Holding Area without bothering to read it. And basically wait till you get called. The interview goes swoosh, you don't know what happened, why, when and how. Why? Because it's all GAS. It's difficult to contain something in the pressurized gaseous form you see. Now just speed up the above 2 paragraphs by around 10 times. That's the process for you.

At the end, you get into a company, you feel elated as though that's what you wanted all along. You feel joyous, give promises of treats and generally look upon everyone like a benevolent King.

The process is such that even the most nonchalant of characters, even the ones who did not want a TAS or a HUL, even those who are perfectly content with being mediocre, begin to care and begin to fret as to what will happen to their future.

Funny how you lose your own sense of identity when you see others doing something else. And the even funnier part of this whole thing is how you begin to laugh at what you underwent a week back when you begin to put things in perspective.

And that's when I realised what a beautiful place XL is. Coz however much the competition, however much the feeling of desperation was in those 5 days, it was heartening to see that people were still the same after IT, and eventually the most important event of the day was if Bishu Da failed to come.

ROOM 119

Ashutosh Shukla

BM [2009-2011]

www.lovetoexpress.blogspot.com

'Aap jinke kareeb hote hai, vo bade khushnaseeb hote hai....'

When Pankaj Udhas sang this ghazal, probably he meant to highlight the effect of the presence and persona of the beloved damsel in the eyes of her lover.

I share the same feelings as Pankaj Udhas for these words...and probably on the grounds of love too...but it's still slightly different, for the 'damsel' here is 'my dear roomie' and the love is more brotherly than anything else.

I first met my roomie after 2 days of staying together at room 119. This can probably happen only with guys that they can live under the same roof yet not know the other person for days!! Even during mess hours, something or the other used to make sure that we didn't meet each other personally. Finally...we met courtesy our beloved neighbor 'D Mehra' and now after 1 year at XL...he is my closest buddy.

I have never seen anyone in my life who is so simple, pure and emotional at heart. I never imagined that a guy could cry for me, seriously!! It's amazingly sweet how he cares for me as a friend and yet fights with me on small-small things.

@Dewan: I really loved our all 'bakar'sessions', 'Altaf Raza songs' and 'tu-tu main-main' and I know 'Meet Chandresh Kacchy' will be jealous but still I love you man!!!

Probably the only nice thing that XL brought in my life are the friends that I got here....Meet (1+i), Gadimaaaaaa, Sumedhaaaa, KDRRRrrrrrr, Annnaaaaaa, Divya, Kunal & Dewan. I really cherish knowing them all. It's always nice to have people around who really care for you...thankfully I have been blessed with more than a couple :-D

Room 119 @XL is the one which brought me close to a lot of people mentioned above. It's undoubtedly a very special room in TFEMR for a lot of reasons. But the reason it is for me is that it's the only room in the TFEMR which stays fit in its small space with the smell of the mess food lingering around and yet gifted with a heart and a soul that reaches out to everyone who has ever been blended in the XL mystique and culture.

A lot of us sometimes miss acknowledging the small things in our lives 'coz we feel it's obvious that we value them. I do not want to make the same mistake as others.

I really want to thank Room 119, Meet, Meeti, Kshitij, Garima, Soumya, Kunal, Divya & Dewan for being a part of my life @XL. I love you all!! Thanks for being my friends :-)

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF CINEMA

Pathikrit Basu

BM [2009-2011]

The inspiration to write this article came as an epilogue to a final get-together with friends before leaving for XLRI. Coupled with the fact that many of the XLRI junta are avid movie-watchers (where else would you find a separate movie committee in a B-school?!), I was tempted to make an article out of it. (Note of precaution – If my writing seems to insult the movie-tastes of anyone, I humbly apologise; after all, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, whatever).

I had yet another disappointing movie experience (read Rajneeti), when I was suddenly inclined to pen down my ramblings once I reached home. My evaluation of Rajneeti, stripped to the barest bone, was a poorly concocted martini using 1 ounce of Godfather, 1.5 ounces of Mahabharat with a dash of Katrina Kaif (read the Sonia touch, or maybe just for the oomph factor). The end result is a mish-mash of politics mafia-style that rakes in the bucks (as we're left to ponder the probability of important politicians going on a personal killing spree on election day; imagine Buddhadeb Bhattacharya zapping Mamata Bannerjee with a Walther P99 semi-automatic on vote-day !) Please note that I'm not so disappointed with Rajneeti (it was better than the other trash released this summer); let's just say it served as the tipping point as far as my deteriorating opinion in movies is concerned.

Let me try to organize my thoughts so that I can pen them in a coherent manner for my suffering readers. I'll start with taking a dig at Hollywood, and then shift my gaze to Bollywood. Hollywood, the global brand and money-spawning machine that has become so corporatized that it is necessary now for filmmakers to choose between two regrettable but nevertheless mutually exclusive scenarios: one where you are desperate to increase ROI by another 200 basis points and other where you shed the basis points and make a quality film - and the powers-that-be insist that 200 more basis points tops, period. The most regrettable part is that the above 2 scenarios are mutually exclusive (at least, in most of the cases). It's truly a rare incident to find an original quality cinema earning big at the box-office these days. Gone are the days when films like Godfather were blockbuster hits.

With production costs and marketing budgets climbing, the average movie needs to make more than \$200 million at the box office to show a profit. It's no wonder that movie executives are always looking for ways to increase returns while minimising risk (sounds more like the mantra for all successful investors, but I digress). One of the sure-shot ways to do this is to make sequels. Piggybacking on an established franchise removes the supposed "painful" work of showing creativity in developing a new script, reduces marketing costs as the sequel is a continuation of an established brand name and characters, and most importantly assures stable returns as producers ride on a formula that has already "clicked".

Now, it seems every year around the summer season some entertainment source declares this year to be, 'the year of sequel'. I won't be doing that, as it would ignore the sheer number of sequels released the previous years, and what will surely be a similar number of sequels released next year. But I will give a brief list of the sequels released from a randomly selected year, say 2003, ordered as per their release dates (there're way too many 2's and 3's in the following list for my liking) – X-Men 2, Matrix Reloaded, 2 fast 2 furious, Charlie's Angels 2, Legally Blonde 2, Bad Boys 2, Terminator 3, Spy Kids 3, Lara Croft 2, Matrix Revolutions and finally the big one LOTR 3: The Return of the King. The only "innovation" that the creative people of Hollywood have come up in the past decade is; if sequels have become too cliché, then why not try, prequels!

And yet, despite the lack of creativity, Hollywood has become a more efficient goose that lays the golden eggs. Take George Lucas, the creator of the Star Wars franchise, for example. This guy has done nothing but bask in his after-glory for the past 3 decades, based on 1 brilliant idea that he conceived way back in 1977 which became the first Star Wars film. A rousing success, it was followed by 2 sequels. Quite understandable. But, from 1983 to 1997, what brilliant idea strikes him? Make a prequel trilogy! In between of course, he produced 3 Indiana Jones films. Still having not had his fill of Star Wars, he squeezes more dollars out of it through other media including books, television series, video games, and comic books. And, once the Star Wars mania ends, what does he do? Make a 4th Indiana Jones flick! At the end of it, Lucas is one of the American film industry's most financially successful directors/producers, with an estimated net worth of 3 billion \$. The end definitely justifies the means for Lucas, but what suffers is good cinema as a creative form vis-a-vis cinema as a business.

Now, turning to our very own Bollywood, the biggest movie making machine in the world (in terms of movie releases per year), we witness quite a different sort of malady. Not that the sequel bug hasn't hit the industry (read Krrish, Phir Hera Pheri), but it's yet to turn into an epidemic. For, while the Hollywood "creative department" copies their own movies and just tweaks them into sequels, in Bollywood, the "creative department" copies films of Hollywood. I don't wish to go into the long list of trash that our "creative-deficient" filmmakers have thrown at the public; otherwise the rest of the article space will be dedicated only to it. These days, they have come to respect the knowledge of the average Indian movie goer, for whom it is no longer an urban legend that a big chunk of the Bollywood mass produced flicks are essentially rip-offs of Hollywood flicks (that too done poorly). So, these days they've switched to ripping off foreign cinema (check Zinda) or manufacturing plots by mixing and matching plots from different sources. I don't mind films taking inspiration from other films because it's just not possible for a film to be entirely original (films like Memento, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind and certain foreign cinema of Europe, Iran and Korea may beg to differ, but that's not always possible). I wouldn't mind if films copy too, but at least it should be a good copy (as the expert forger would say, even copying is an art). That's why a film like Black can be appreciated, because, although many claim it's a copy, it's been well made.

Another feature in recent Bollywood releases is the elaborate but ineffective marketing efforts put behind releases without focussing on the fundamentals of a good success – a good story and script that clicks. Big Bollywood has flopped big time in the first half of 2010. We've had films with extensive pre-release marketing and hype that were full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Marketing alone cannot convert a potential flop to a blockbuster; it can only accentuate a potential success into a confirmed hit. On top of that, the huge but redundant marketing campaigns means a higher budget, making the losses that much bigger.

Case in point – Kites. Now this was one film that made far more news before release than after. The Roshans went all out to keep the Kites interest flying high for months. With premieres at London and New York, Kites was promoted as “Bollywood’s first international project”. The entire PR machinery of Kites worked long and hard in highlighting the Hrithik-Barbara chemistry. Stories of Hrithik’s wife Sussanne walking out of the Roshan home because of Barbara were fed to the hungry media months prior to the release date. Stylish locales, beautiful people and a distinct international feel were there all right, but somewhere the makers forgot to spare a thought for the script.

I’ll take a u-turn now and go back to the “fairer” studio – Hollywood (Please apologize for my bias towards Hollywood). Shifting my focus from movie franchises to the proliferation of films heavy on special effects and less on character development and an engaging plot, I can’t help but feel that big-budget blockbusters of today keep on driving home the point that the victory of “spectacle” over “substance” is complete. Movies like the Dark Knight are an exception rather than the norm (even this I felt was rather overrated, but still); and the brilliance of Lord of the Rings owes much to the grandeur of Tolkien’s vision. I’m inclined to believe that it all started from the Star Wars (that guy George Lucas again) saga, the film that changed movie-making and Hollywood for better “and” for worse – better as it spawned a whole new generation of action-loaded, visually dazzling blockbuster hits that raked in the dollars for Hollywood; worse as the audience is “intellectually raped” by being made to gorge on an incessant barrage of eye-popping adrenaline pumping junk films. Further, with technology engulfing the art of film-making, these pseudo-intellectual wannabes have upgraded from cheap entertainers to world-class cinema with claims for “best picture” awards (yeah, I’m talking of Avatar). It was fine as long as people accepted these films for what they were, providers of quick entertainment, but to hail these films as game-changers that will revolutionise the future of movie-making is to indirectly proclaim that cinema as an evolved art-form is dead (the only change it will bring about is to make the department of acting and screenplay redundant). What will come from now will definitely be a paradigm shift from cinema as an art-form to cinema as a complete business, where the business of returns include money and undeserving critical acclaim.

But of course, I shouldn’t be such a kill-joy; such films (that have made me prophesise the death of cinema like some prophet of doom) do effectively serve the basic purpose of entertainment. However, as part of a cognitive audience of reasonable intelligence, should we be so easily satisfied? Don’t we deserve better? Should we allow ourselves to be belittled by the film industry and accept the garbage they throw at us in the name of good entertainment? Is it asking too much to have the best of both worlds – entertainment coupled with a dimension of substance? Why can’t entertainment also encompass a good story while giving the scope for an outpouring of emotions as we watch and feel the magic of what emanates from the silver screen? If we can consider books to be an example of creativity and a source of serious leisure, why can’t cinema be perceived in a similar fashion? After all, films are cultural artefacts created by specific cultures, which reflect those cultures, and, in turn, affect them. Film is considered to be an important art form, a source of

popular entertainment and a powerful method for educating citizens and broadening their perspective. The visual elements of cinema give motion pictures a universal power of communication. Mario Puzo, in one of his novels, had written that movie-making is more evolved than writing. But, we've become so numb and used to what we see, we couldn't care less. Hence, like a weeping philosopher, I take solace in the few remnants of good cinema that come from time-to-time to remind us of all that was once beautiful of this medium that held so much potential.

C'EST LA VIE

Gurdit Singh Sachdeva

PM&IR [2009-2011]

<http://www.gurdit.com/blog/>

You turn me on; it comes as easily to you as flicking on a switch. I know you wait impatiently as I make myself hot. You know when I'm ready ... your fingers grip me tightly as you work me. Oh, the motion! To and fro, up and down, side to side ... faster and slower I go at your command. It's so smooth.

But the joy is short-lived.

Your need for me is soon exhausted, and you turn me off as abruptly as you turned me on. I'm left alone till all the heat is gone. Adding insult to injury, you touch me to make sure I'm completely cold now, and cruelly, you send me into my secluded corner.

What can I do?

C'est la vie du fer à repasser.¹

¹ Translated from French: "It is the life of an iron box".