

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



Department of English

# aurora

Literally the Literary:  
Confessions of Literaholics

## The Cursed Grimoire

The one to leave these pages unread  
Shall be banished to the realm of the undead

Vol. V

# Salvete!

555; The Change

A change is occurring...

**The universe is moving things around and so am I...**

It is a tale as old as time. Curses are cast on the unfortunate throughout life. You have heard about the curse cast on Medusa. You have heard about the curse of the Pharaoh's tomb. Perhaps, closer to home, you have grown up hearing about the curse cast by Shiva on Brahma.

But have you heard about the curse I have cast on your precious magazine? Muhahahaha, it is the 'Curse of the Grimoire'. Fear not, dear readers, for I allow you to read the entries and relish your time with this edition. However, you must proceed with caution and with the knowledge that it is now indeed, cursed. Why this curse you ask? This curse occurs on any slice of amalgamated writing, for you cretins who do not understand, it is the blurbs inked by myriads of mere mortals that are stitched together!

Many moons ago, a witch wrote the most magnificent grimoire with the help of her coven, which was stolen by a delinquent to sell it just for a few pennies without knowing its worth. Alas, the coven did not know of this little fact and blamed the poor witch for hiding it to keep all the knowledge to herself and she was banished from the coven. In her wrath, she cast this criminal curse. It is all thanks to you that I have been able to return after 555 years to curse the 5th edition of this magazine. How fortunate are we that it so happens to be on Halloween as well?

Readers, you must also realise the pains I have taken to condemn this magazine, after all, this curse is not your run-of-the-mill kind. It is a powerful curse that holds strong and will not break unless...

Ah! Silly me! how can I willingly give away the antidote? It is up to you to decide whether this curse remains or breaks tonight!

# Acknowledgements

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

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

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

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

We would also like to thank Payal Chakravarthy, our guest writer for this edition and Dr. Chakravarthy's daughter, who has taken the time to pen down an article all about Halloween, its history and present-day culture.

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

*~deditionem imperium tibi resistere non potest~*

# Editor's Note

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Roma Chiplunkar  
Editor-in-chief

*"Everybody is a book of blood;  
wherever we're opened, we're red." ~ Clive Barker*

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# The Coven



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

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



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



~perdes sensus et inti in alteram partem cadunt~

I'm Shruti Jadhav, a bibliophile and a polyglot. I have an unexplainable obsession with crime-thriller and true crime, be it books, documentaries, or podcasts. Instrumental music, symphonies, and orchestras have reserved a special place in my heart, and I find joy in cooking for others. Hope you enjoy the current issue of our magazine! :)



Hello, I am Savani Nibandhe. I love to dance and write when I am super motivated. I am a part of the public outreach team in the literary committee. Kudos to your support for this journal and hoping more support from you all in the future.

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



*~Dominus tenebrarum te vocat indulgere~*

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



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

~qui autem laesus erit vindicabitur~



# Erudite



Stephen Edwin King  
(1947 - )

## Stephen - King of Horror

Books written by him:

- Carrie (1974)
- The Shinning (1977)
- Pet Semetary (1983)
- IT (1986)

King was born in 1947 and grew up in the poverty-stricken city of Durham, Maine. He was the younger son of a working single mother whose husband, a merchant mariner, left the family when King was still a little child. King, a lifelong lover of science fiction, started taking his writing seriously while he was a student at the University of Maine Orono. In 1969, he met Tabitha there, who would later become his wife.

One of the first people to read Stephen's short stories in college was Tabitha, who loaned him her typewriter and refused to let him accept a job that paid more but would give him less time for creativity. Additionally, Tabitha was the one who found Stephen's trash can full of what would later become "Carrie" draught pages. She brought them back, telling him to keep developing the concept. Since then, King has kept up the encouragement Tabitha gave him. He routinely and enthusiastically gives book reviews to both well-known and up-and-coming authors, stating a desire to leave publishing in a better state than he found it. Both of their sons, Joe Hill and Owen King, as well as Tabitha, are renowned authors in their own right.

It is virtually impossible to describe Stephen King's impact. He has dominated the genre writing scene for the past forty years, unlike any author. He is the only author in history to have more than 30 books that have appeared at the top of the bestseller list.

Even if horror is still King's forte, as the world was reminded when "IT" broke a record for the highest film office income, it's not his sole literary genre. King now has more than 70 published works, many of which have attained cultural significance. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of high-quality Stephen King horror adaptations, from the small-screen versions of "Gerald's Game" and "Castle Rock" to the remake of "Pet Semetary," which, based on the first teaser, appears to be a promising continuation of the trend.

If you are a King fan or are pondering about becoming one, there has never been a better time to discover more about why King is such a respected cultural phenomenon. Because, in King's perspective, modern works like "Stranger Things," whose adolescent cast closely resembles his ensemble of geeky preteen friends from "IT," already exist.

Without "The Shining" and Stanley Kubrick's great film adaptation, "Here's Johnny!" would be a meaningless talk show catchphrase, and parodies like the Simpsons' annual "The Treehouse of Horror" would be far less fleshed out.

The New Yorker, Harper's, and Playboy are just a few of the periodicals that have published King's work. Literary authors like "Haruki Murakami" and "Sherman Alexie," as well as genre pioneers like the "Lost" producers, have all been affected by the author. He has also received almost every significant prize for horror, mystery, science fiction, and fantasy.

Stephen King, one of the most acclaimed authors of the 20th century, said, "I don't know if I want to be considered seriously per se since in the end posterity judges whether it's excellent work or if it's lasting work. Leaving aside shifting societal perceptions of genre literature, King's writing has always exhibited important literary traits, notably enduring literary themes that have affected how we comprehend terror as well as ourselves.

It's this core optimism, more than his ability to scare us, that makes King so beloved by readers. Even in his bleakest works, he retains his ability to empathize deeply with his characters and to see even his monsters as fundamentally human.



***Hi, I'm Bhagyashri Kashikar. I'm known for laughing at inappropriate times and impromptu singing. I'm a serial introvert, and a feminist. I believe that "Your gut feelings are your guardian angels".***

*"I recognize terror as the finest emotion and so I will try to terrorize the reader. But if I find that I cannot terrify, I will try to horrify, and if I find that I cannot horrify, I'll go for the gross-out. I'm not proud." ~ Stephen King*

# Samhain

This is a feature article by our guest writer, Payal Chakravarthy who has a bubbly personality and is a huge fan of Halloween with a penchant for all things spooky. She watches a lot of paranormal documentaries and horror movies, reads numerous books of the horror genre and has attended countless Halloween fairs, carnivals and such events, having lived in the US, and the UK and is currently settled in Canada as a citizen; which made this article a perfect addition to this volume.

Halloween is one of the most celebrated festivals after Christmas, which although is part of the western world but has considerably gained traction over the years and is celebrated across different countries and cultures.

On this day, people of all ages and children dress up in costumes of their favourite fictional characters or monsters/ ghosts and celebrate by decorating their homes in spooky themes; carving out pumpkins and lighting them; going “trick or treating” in their costumes and/or visit parties hosted by friends or family, parades, fairs, carnivals to mark the end of harvest or Autumn season and welcome the Winter season or “the dark half of the year”.

The reason behind dressing up in costumes and carving out pumpkins with spooky faces and lighting them is related to the history of this festival which was originally called All Hallows Eve. According to history, the tradition of celebrating Halloween started from the Celtic festival Samhain (pronounced as Sow-in), where people would wear costumes and light a bonfire to ward off ghosts, evil spirits or monsters. The Celts believed that it is on this day, the barrier between the physical world i.e. human world and the spirit world breaks down and ushers in ghosts, spirits (good and evil), and monsters and allows them to interact with humans freely. It is during this time that people lighted hearth fires in family homes and left them to burn out while they gathered the harvest and would later come together to light the bonfire and celebrate the end of the harvest season.

The reason behind carving pumpkins in spooky themes and lighting them with candles is more recent than ancient due to the influence of Hollywood horror movies. People have adapted it like a fun tradition which engages the entire family together to decorate their houses, and porches with spooky themes to fool the otherworldly entities and avoid being attacked, or possessed by them on October 31st.

The tradition of “trick or treat” is also adapted from ancient traditions where it is believed that if a ghost or otherworldly creatures visit your home, they need to be given some kind of offerings or “treats”, to appease them and avoid being “tricked” or possessed by them on Halloween.

In recent times, the celebration of the festival also includes going to movie theatres or drive-ins, to watch horror movies that are either funny, thrilling or gory in nature. Although it is part of the western culture, Halloween has been adopted by some middle eastern and eastern cultures as well in good spirits. Some staunch religious believers may not like the concept and refrain from celebrating it as well.

In North America and western Europe, tourism also boosts a lot during this period as people visit different haunted locations that have a history of ghost sightings or thrilling history. Post-Covid, the haunted tours are conducted virtually to help everyone experience the thrill and learn more about the history of some haunted locations, especially in North America.

I have had the opportunity to spend a few years in UK and USA and am now settled in Canada. Speaking about my personal Halloween experiences, I was lucky to witness people dressed in costumes at Piccadilly Circus, London, UK and be part of a Haunted Boat Tour in Chicago where the guide shared fascinating and thrilling facts/ history about the different buildings like the famous Hancock Tower which is believed to be a gateway to other worlds or a source of connect with the aliens or ghosts. This place is also famous for a weird phenomenon which occurs every year, in which, the spiders climb in the reverse direction for an unexplained reason! Apart from this, Lake Illinois in Chicago is very famous for sightings of Ghost ships and spirits of the dead, who were part of a very weird accident that involved the capsizing of a boat near the boarding dock/pier.



*Hello, I am Payal Chakravarthy, a passionate travel photoblogger and travel enthusiast. I love off-the-beaten-path experiences.*

*~phasmatos tribum plaga bullies societatis in aeternum~*

# The Dark Day

And the dark day is here  
Witnessing every inch of the sphere  
This red moon and unholy land  
This black sky and dreadful sand  
Shivering wind of winter nights  
And merciless chill outside.

And the dark day is here  
Witnessing every inch of the sphere  
Shut the door from impending violence  
Haunted hours depict an echo of silence  
Pirates who rob souls, traitors who cheat time  
Awaken once again to suck life.

And the dark day is here  
Witnessing every inch of the sphere  
Shadow of the unknown, disgust so pure  
Lying inside the heart wickedness for sure  
Cause nothing is left, this night will finish  
When the sun will be up, the fog will diminish.



*This is Chandrika Kesharwani, a student of SYBA, Economics Special. I started writing during the pandemic and it turned out to be very peaceful and soothing. I write this poem "The Dark Day" on the theme "Halloween" which deals with a spooky and creepy Dark Day of dead entities.*

*"It is a mistake to fancy that horror is associated inextricably with darkness, silence, and solitude." ~ H.P. Lovecraft*

# Spooky Candies

A knock on the door, a thud on the window  
You looked around at me with a questioning face,  
I pointed towards the kitchen  
With a heavenly smell as soothing as an embrace

We stepped inside to silent static on the television  
A pumpkin dangling from the ceiling  
A laugh vibrated on the dining table  
From candies, you are unfeeling

We grab hands and run around the corner  
Jumping on a plastic corpse  
Still hearing the candy laughs in sparks.  
Boooo!



*Hello, My name is Kaurobi Paul. Awkwardly,  
I am known for being skilled at all the  
things I do. I quote a lot from my own  
experiences.*

*"Halloween was confusing. All my life my parents said, 'Never take candy from strangers.' And then they dressed me up and said, 'Go beg for it.'" ~ Rita Rudner*

# Ars Goetia

## Book Review

"The demons are more numerous than we are and they stand over the earth like mountains surrounding a pit. Each and every one of us has a thousand demons to our left and ten thousand demons to our right." ~ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate; Berakhot 6a

Hello believers, non-believers and everyone in between, we all love to read, hear, watch and talk about mythical creatures like ghosts, demons, witches and others. The curiosity to know about the unknown is something we all possess. As the magazine title is 'The Cursed Grimorie' I want to introduce you all to one of the finest works in this genre 'The Lesser Key of Solomon: Ars Goetia'.

Before we get in-depth with 'Ars Geotia', let's get to know the other four books from the series of 'The Lesser Key of Solomon'. All five books were written in the 17th century in Latin inspired by the works of King Solomon. The four books are - 'Ars Theurgic-Goetia' which talks about angel magic; closely parallel to Trithemius' Steganographia and deals with spirits of the cardinal points, explaining names, characteristics and seals of 31 aerial spirits that King Solomon evoked. 'Ars Paulina' contains detailed descriptions of how to deal with the angels. 'Ars Almadel' explains how the alma del, or a wax tablet with a protective symbol drawn upon it has instructions concerning the colours, material and rituals necessary for the construction of the alma del. 'Ars Notoria' is a collection of prayers, mixed with kabbalistic phrases and magical words from several languages.

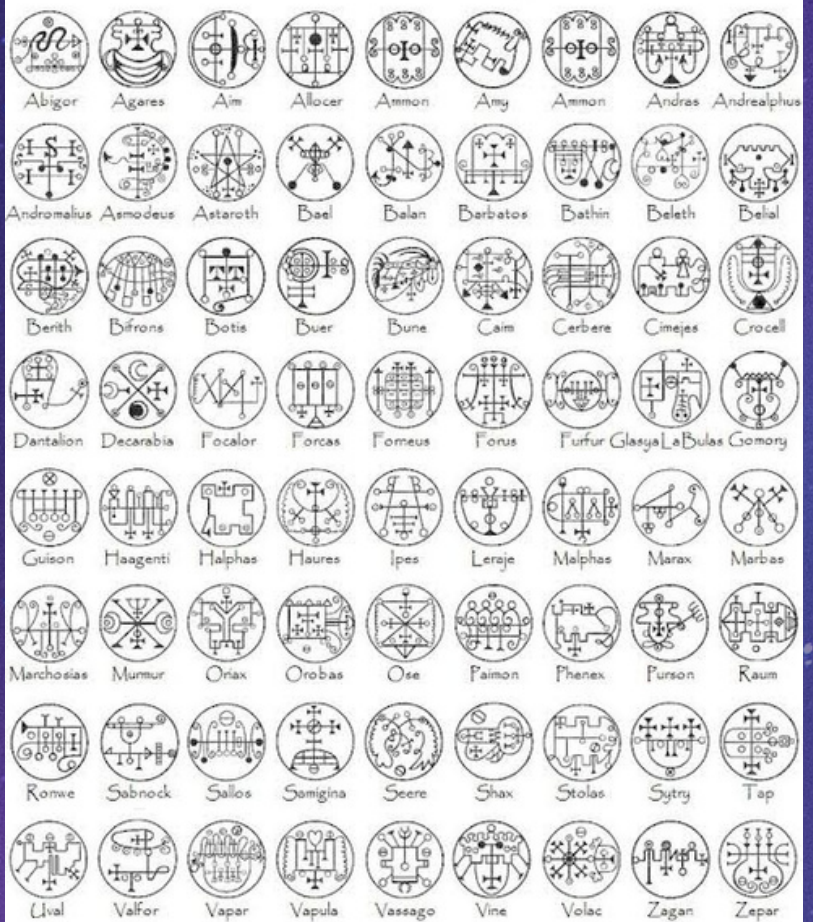
'Ars Geotia' contains names, positions, powers, motives, appearances and summoning knowledge of 72 demons from hell. The word 'Geotia' itself means practice which involves invoking demons or angels. Written to oppose 72 angels of Shem HaMephorash. The book differentiates demons into a noble hierarchy; Kings, Dukes, Princes, Counts, Knights and Presidents. Demons from this book are referred to as 'Geotials'.

The most famous version of the book is written in 1904, 'The Book of Goetia Solomon the King', re-written by Aleister Crowley who was an occultist. Many of us are already familiar with the demons discussed in this book, like our favourite doll 'Annabelle' which is possessed by 'Malthus'; Nun 'Valac'; 'King Paimon' from the movie 'Hereditary' and many other movies, shows, books and games have references from this book.

This book is truly sinister and one of a kind. Reading this gives you a true sense and experience of the world of horror. If you're brave enough, try summoning your own favourite demon.



## SEALS OF SOLOMON'S 72 DEMONS



*I'm Simran Malu, a student of TYBA, English Special. This book made me want to summon my own favourite demon.*



# All Hallows Eve

The big bright sun of October shined boldly in the sky as the circle ladies taking inspiration from the sun chatted away bold and bright "... And then my Sonu loudly whispered in his father's ears that, But papa you haven't showered today. All of Sonu's father's friends heard it and started laughing uncontrollably. Sonu's father was so embarrassed that he had no other choice but to laugh along with them" said Sonu's mother.

"Oh God!! That's nothing, let me tell you what Adu did the other day, we were going to the market to buy vegetables but he wanted to go to the park. So his fath--" Advait's mother, Shalini was cut off by a loud horn of a car asking them to move. The group of ladies standing relatively in midst of the road sneered at the car driver called him a bad name or two then moved their mid-afternoon chattering session to the curb. Before Shalini could continue, their children's school bus arrived. 5 kids stepped down from the bus, all dishevelled and in dire attention of their mothers. The group of ladies immediately leapt and stomped to get a hold of their children. After sparing a farewell they all went home.

The moment Advait and Shalini entered their home, she asked him about his day and Advait in his bubbly and excited manner instead of answering her, asked, "What's Halloween?" Shalini got as confused as ever and countered him, "Where did you hear that?"

"In school, Neha Miss said that after Diwali we will celebrate Halloween. She didn't say what it is though" Advait replied. "But I don't know what it is, does papa know?" He continued.

"We will have to ask him" his mother replied.

The minute Advait's father stepped into their home, he jumped on his lap and without missing a beat asked "Papa, papa do you know what is Halloween?"

"No beta, I don't know. Where did you hear that word?" His father, Manish, asked.

"Then how will you tell the story of Halloween?" Advait answers completely ignoring his father's question.

Advait studies at a small private school, where the yearly fees are as minimal as his height, however for a man like Manish who runs a small-scale garage shop, he has to conjure up penny after penny to pay the tuition. Manish, an honest, hardworking and happy man grew up listening to stories of Akbar and Birbal, Shivaji Maharaj, great Kings and Queens of India and Panchatantra. Naturally, he himself developed a knack for telling stories, and it became a tradition in Saraswati High School that Advait's father must officially tell stories to his classmate on every festive occasion. Manish severely enjoyed narrating stories to small children, it was like an untamed hobby of his that he portrayed every once in a while. Advait's teachers undeniably had no objection to having an unpaid storyteller to come and enhance every school function with his child-like enthusiasm and likeableness. Advait's expectant eyes bore into Manish's soul, tugging him into a sympathetic agreement. Despite Manish being illiterate on the comings and goings of the western world, only hearing bits and pieces of information from his customers as he dipped his fingers into grease and dirt; he tightened his worries and gave an encouraging smile to his son.

"I only have to tell a story, right? Then there's no problem. Storytelling comes to me like the back of my hand." Manish said in a pretentious proud voice.

Advait squealed in joy and ran off to tell this news to his friends. Shalini handed him a glass of water and asked "Why did you tell him that, now what will we do? We don't know anything about hallo-in."

"It's not hallo-in, it's hello-win. It most definitely means that in their culture they welcome victory and win over bad on this day, I am telling you." Manish said to his wife with a mocking laugh.

"We should try to put that word in Google," Shalini suggested.

They both excitedly opened the only smartphone in the house and eagerly searched for everything except Halloween. Even Google was incapable of guessing what they were trying to search.

After numerous combinations of letters in Marathi and broken English and their limited supply of internet, they finally stumbled upon the spookiness of Halloween. As they attempted to read or in a real sense mumbled illogical syllables they understood even less than they already knew.

"You know what we should do, we should watch a YouTube video," Manish suggested as the last remaining option. Their hopeful eyes lit up and they fumbled through various animated versions of Halloween.

"So, they welcome ghosts in their home! What kind of festival is this? Shiva Shiva" Shalini exclaimed dramatically and immediately started praying, "We will not celebrate this festival at all. We'll give Adu something nice to eat instead" she continued without letting Manish react.

"But Shal-" Manish tried to stop his wife's rant.

"But what but, we will absolutely not invite ghosts into our house. Diwali is right in the corridor and Adu is asking us to invite ghosts into our house. I still have to clean the house, cook sweets and namkeens, there is so much work to do and he wants me to drop everything and play ghost ghost with him? I am going give him 2 tight slaps." Shalini continued her angry rant.

"Hey, Shalu! Hear what they are saying properly. They don't invite ghosts they burn fire so the ghosts will get scared and run away. Halloween is celebrated to keep the ghosts away" Manish cleared her misunderstanding.

"Really?"

"Really" Manish slightly relieved but still on the edge of his seat offered the glass of water back to Shalini and she drank the whole glass in one breath.

"Okay then we will celebrate Halloween for Adu but only this year, it's not our festival and we shouldn't angry our Gods by celebrating this fancy dress competition every year." Shalini declared.

"It's not a fancy dress competition they dress up that way to-" Manish tried to negotiate but she cut him off saying, "You save these stories for the kids, don't try to fool me."

She said with mock-accusing fingers pointed at him. He giggled and hooked his finger to hers like a fish hook and with a mock innocence said, "Okay ma'am".

"But what about our expenses, how will we afford Hallo-in?" Shalini asked her expression changing drastically.

"Don't worry, we will do something."

After a few stories about what happened at work, they both set out to finish their daily chores, as well as prepare for both Diwali and Halloween. They divided the work amongst themselves, Manish will focus on his stories and help Shalini in cleaning while Shalini will manage Advait's costumes. They started their preparations by counting down to each and every penny they had in their pockets. In the evening when Advait returned home he found his parents sitting on the sofa with pen, and paper and fluxed tension between them. He carefully strides towards them.

"What happened?"

"Nothing, we are writing down the expense for the festivals. Beta I am sorry but I don't think we can celebrate Hallo-in. Your birthday is coming next month so we'll give a big party for your friends, I will cook whatever you want." Shalini tried to make him understand even as her own heart breaks a little. Manish and Shalini won't accept it but they both were a tad bit more excited than Advait to celebrate their own version of Halloween.

"No no no no please Maa I want to do Halloween, I already promised all my friends. You can take money from my piggy bank, but please I want to do Halloween." Advait pleaded with tears forming in his eyes on cue.

"But Beta, then we will not be able to celebrate your birthday, and we can't do this every year." Manish tried to reason with him.

"Birthday comes every year, I don't want to celebrate my birthday, I will celebrate my birthday next year, but please I want to do Halloween only one time, please." He said, now with tears streaming down his face.

"Are you sure? You won't be stubborn and demand to celebrate it next year as well?" Shalini asked him as she placed his growing body in her protective embrace.

"I am sure" He confirmed between hiccups.

"Okay then tell us who do you want to dress up as?"

"Spiderman" Advait replied without wasting a second.

"No you have to dress up as something scary," Manish said.

"Then who should I dress like?" Advait said to himself.

"You remember the Vikram Betal story pappa told you?" Shalini interjected. Advait nodded his head.

"Then you can dress up as Betal we still have our old white curtains. I can stitch a costume for you out of that curtain. The floral print has anyway wilted due to the sun." She explained.

"But what about the white hair?" Advait questioned.

"We still have those newspaper pom-poms from your annual gathering last year we can paint them white and use them," Shalini suggested.

"Perfect" "Okay" Manish and Advait said at the same time.

The next day in school Advait proudly bragged about how his parents were going to celebrate Halloween just for his sake and how they were going to do it in a grand way, although he left out the negotiations he did with them. One of his friends eagerly asked him if they were going to have a huge pumpkin carved into a scary face. However, Advait unaware of any such thing was caught off guard and told his friends they were. A wave of 'oohs' and 'ahhs' and 'wow' rippled through the groups of boys. Another one of his friends asked if they will also buy a lot of candies and chocolates. Again Advait was caught off guard and lied to their faces and again a ripple of amazement spread through the group. The rest of the day chocolates and carved pumpkins were the only things he could think about.

The moment he stepped home he turned to his mother and told her everything that happened in the school with puppy eyes and manipulative innocence, burdening her tired soul and persuading her into an agreement once more. The moment Manish stepped into the house Shalini turned to him with problem alert written all over her face. Now, they both shared the burden and Advait shared the feeling of young uncharted worry that his friends will laugh at him.

Just like the day before they had a small meeting, "Advait we will buy the big pumpkin but only if it is within budget if not we will use your punctured football okay?" Manish conferred with his son.

"Okay but the ball has to look exactly like a pumpkin," Advait said.

"How can a ball look exactly like a pumpkin? But forget it, we will think about it at that time." Shalini replied and continued, "And about those chocolates, we still have a packet of chocolates left from your last birthday we can just use those."

"Then, I will cook Tila-chi-wadi (Sweet made from sesame and jaggery), we can mix it with the chocolate, okay?" Shalini bargained.

"Fine"

"And I will narrate the mysterious story of Hallo-win"

"Yes!" Advait exclaimed.

The day count for Halloween was descending as was their savings account. The pumpkin alone cost them 200 rupees, way over budget but Advait's lighted-up face at the sight of it numbed Manish's heart into purchasing it. For the next two days, they had to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner made out of every single part of the pumpkin. The hand-stitched Betal costume was ready with a twist of faded flowers. The newspaper wig was being dried under the fast-rotating blades of the fan. The smell of melted jaggery mixed with sesame seeds was fresh in the air and the unnamed guilty feeling was in Manish and Shalini's hearts.

They both spent the whole Diwali worrying about Halloween, the cleaning of the house was done as if brushing a hand on dust, the sweets and namkeens were left unattended, there was no money left for new clothes and the Diya's were left undecorated. All of this was forgotten in the anticipation of Happy Halloween. Both husband and wife felt guilty for not celebrating Diwali as it must be but they pushed it under the carpet where all the unsaid problems of middle-class Indians belong.

Finally, the day came, Advait was ready in his Betal costume and unusually thick white hair, holding a large pumpkin carved with a crooked smile and cross eyes. He eagerly waited for his father to step out of the bathroom so they could leave for his school. Manish had decided to keep the garage closed for the day, Shalini was ready in a nicely draped saree, her finest jewellery and a pair of new sandals, and her function-oriented purse strapped to her shoulder with a large tin full of chocolates and tila-chi-wadi.

"Pappa! Come fast, we are getting late" Advait hurried. He couldn't wait to impress his friends.

Manish came out of the bathroom dressed like Vikram. Halfway through their preparations, Manish had decided to surprise Advait and Shalini, he had secretly rented the costume from the money he kept aside for emergencies.

Advait's face turned happier which was practically impossible as Manish lifted him on his back.

"Yay! We are going to have the best costume!" Advait said with enthusiasm. "Pappa are you ready with the story?"

"Always. Come on now or we will be late" Manish said.

When they reached the school, Advait leapt out of the rickshaw and started running towards the school gate despite his mother's warnings to slow down. After paying the rickshaw driver Manish and Shalini ran after him, but the minute they entered the school gate, they noticed that every child was wearing the school uniform. Everyone looked at them with a mix of curiosity and amusement.

Confused Advait ran back to his parents and asked, "Did we get the date of Halloween wrong? Why is no one dressed?"

"Maybe they are the ones who don't know anything about Hallo-in but don't worry when your father will tell them the story they will immediately want to dress up like you." Shalini confidently tried to cheer him up.

"Yes let's go to your classroom all your friends must already be there." Manish said suggestively, as he futilely tried to fix the nervousness.

When they entered Advait's classroom a dead silence spread across the room, Manish misled by the silence, took advantage of it and straight away jumped into the story as Advait and Shalini settled themselves down on benches. Shalini found it odd that not even a single one of the kids were dressed and was now profusely worried about what was happening, but there was no time to back out as Manish had already started his story.

"Once upon a time 2000 years ago, in a far far away land called Ireland, a group of people named Samhain celebrated the new year two months before the whole world. On November 1st the Samhain new year began, this day was known as the end of hot summers and long days, end of harvest and stark-lit sunlight. It was believed that from this day on cold weather and dark days start, it was a well-known fact and a rumour that this was the start of a dark and saddening month for humans. On one hand, they welcomed the new year and on the other, they locked themselves in their houses only stepping out for a limited time in the afternoon when there was light.

However, people believed that the night before the new year, the night before November 1st, the boundaries between the land of living beings and the land of dead spirits blurred. That the invisible wall between the living and the dead came down--"

"Mr. Manish Pandhare! What are you doing?" Advait's class teacher, Mrs Vartak burst out from the hallway, when Manish had the kids wrapped in curiosity and wonderment.



"I am telling them the story of Halloween," Manish said with an obvious look. Shalini immediately ran to his side. "Advait told us that you are celebrating Halloween at the school so we dressed up for it. And Shalini made the sweets and chocolates, we even got the carved pumpkin. Like always I am telling the children the story behind the festival." Manish explained.

"We are doing no such thing, today is a normal day. We are celebrating anything. Halloween is a festival of western culture and we strictly believe in teaching our kids the importance of our Indian culture. I don't know from where Advait got the idea of Halloween" Mrs Vartak defended.

Shalini and Manish exchanged confused looks and in sync channelled their confusion towards Advait.

"But Ma'am Shardul told me that you said we are celebrating Halloween and that you have asked my father to come and tell the story," Advait said with a sad and unapologetic look.

"When did this happen?" Mrs Vartak asked.

"Two days before the Diwali holidays"

"Shardul come here." Mrs Vartak said.

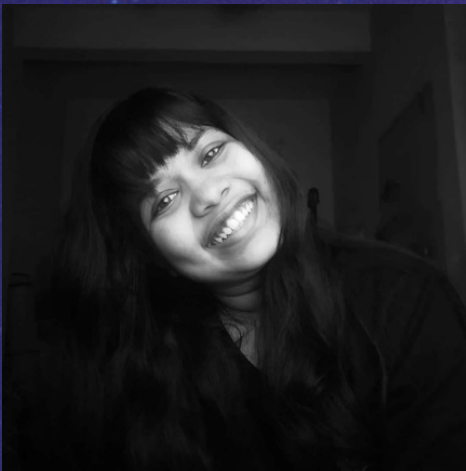
Shardul walked to the front of the class with his head bowed down and hands behind his back. Without his teacher questioning him he blurted out, "Sorry Ma'am, it was Karan's idea."

"Ma'am it was not my idea. Ask anyone" Karan immediately defended.

"Shardul, tell me what happened and Karan, you too come here." Mrs Vartak demanded with angry eyes.

"But Ma'am, I didn't do anything" Karan protested.

Meanwhile, Manish in his Vikram costume, Advait in his Betal costume with pumpkin in hand and Shalini dressed to attend a wedding with a large tiffin, stood there in absolute horror and utter confusion on their faces. Shardul revealed the true story that he, Karan and a few other friends had decided to prank Advait when he went to the bathroom for a slightly longer time, returning when the subject period was over and Vartak Ma'am had left. They told him about the Halloween celebration, thinking they will call it off the next day but seeing Advait's excitement they decided to have fun with him even more. They had decided to call him during the holidays and tell him that it was just a prank but every one of them had forgotten.



*Hello, Yamini Sujit Desai here.  
I am in TYBA right now, psychology special, other than that, I am your typical sitcom and web series fangirl, an ardently sincere reader and a dedicated Avengers admirer who has not and will not agree to read or watch Harry Potter for unknown reasons.*

*"Maybe all the schemes of the devil were nothing compared to what man could think up." ~ Joe Hill*

# On the Rainy Night

It was around one in the early morning. A new moon night and dead silence around, except for the noises of rain clutter coming through the window. It was an unabated downpour in Mumbai.

She was half asleep, sitting alone on the bench which was around the corridor of a Hospital. Her family members were not around as they were busy attending to one of their close relatives. The one who was rushed to the Hospital for urgent medical treatment. Obviously, she was trying to muster up courage primarily because she was alone in an unfamiliar place. Besides none of the family members were present. She was unaware of what was happening around her. Her heart was filled with fear of the unknown and uncertainty. The dwindling light and the unpleasant howl of dogs from outside added fuel to the fear she was strangled in. She was desperate for a human presence and a company to feel light.

Just at that time, a beautiful lady emerged out of nowhere. The look on the face of the little girl, merely the visual of someone around at that weird hour filled her heart with a lot of joy and brought in a lot of reassuring hope, confidence, and strength. She was covered in a white sari with profound compassion on her face. She sat next to the little girl, putting her hand over her shoulder, and with a lot of love and care asked her to stay calm. Her gesture of putting her hand over the little girl and pulling her closer and offering her lap to lie down was good enough for her to bring back that assuring and fearless courage and that was what exactly she needed for that little girl to plunge back into the sleep.

As she woke up the next day, she looked for the same angel woman who appeared in front of her the previous night, She enquired about her to the hospital staff, and checked with the family members. But it failed to get a reference about her existence, which is when it clicked her.

She overheard her Mom saying "You know what there do exist some good souls around, they are harmless, although we cannot always see they do appear from nowhere when we are in trouble, help us and disappear" hearing these words suddenly a cold shiver ran down her spine.

*~ Hi! I am Bhumi Calcuttawala, a student of FYBA.*

*"At first cock-crow the ghosts must go back to their quiet graves below." ~ Theodosia Garrison*

# Fortunate Happenstance

I caught a kid by his shoulders. My bejeweled fingers appeared large in contrast to his slight frame. Pointing at the stop sign, I told him to wait.

Cars hued with reds, blues, and whites, all racing. Ceaseless and persevering. Aren't I similar, I thought. Leisurely chasing my promise.

I've seen her, through icicles and fallen red leaves, through flames and thickets of green. Always within my grasp, but I could never reach far enough. There have been brief moments, when our tips grazed, and we breathed the same breath. I remember thinking if only the poets were right, my heart would surely burst.

Unannounced, a raindrop fell on my brow. Soon more would follow. Men and women dispersed, looking for a roof, an asylum from the relentless torrent unleashed. With the strange looks pointed at me, their thoughts might as well have been telepathic. Would he prefer being soaked to the bones before opening the fancy umbrella? However, it wasn't favorable. There have been times I was called reckless for weeks at a stretch. Surely, now was not the time.

Sensing a gaze, I focused my attention across the street, Caught you. Strengthening my pace I reached her side.

Awfully early as always, an amused smile ensued.

Too dazed for a retort I compliment her, Your youth remains a mystery, my lady.

All ages perish at your feet yet you inherit nothing from them but for their wisdom.

Youth was never in my realm, it is yours to give.

Glancing behind me she spoke, It's time. Intoxicated, I drew a trembling breath. Please, I begged, don't take this from me... Just a little b... this time at least.

All playfulness gone, her eyes met mine. Our time will come, perhaps sooner than we think. Our creator has meant for us to be with one another.

After a long respite, I added.

Yes, the longest. She agreed. Scattered with murderously tiny moments of our togetherness.

A tire screeched and came to halt behind me. Fumes and screams of disbelief seemed soundless. We stood, memorizing the same details we would never forget, counting the seconds until reality would break our reverie.

May destiny be kind to us, she prayed as her frame began waning from my sight. Rainwater gushed on the pavement that was once dry beneath her feet.

And fortune be with you, Life. I blessed her. Unsheathing my scythe I strode to reap the soul she abandoned.



*Hey, I am Anusha, TY, psych major. An avid reader of fictitious stories and fantastical lands. My books are scattered with highlighted quotes. I will stop mid conversation and say, 'Doesn't the moon look pretty tonight?'*

*"Death twitches my ear; 'Live,' he says...  
'I'm coming.'" ~ Virgil*

# Beneath the Holy Spirits

In a small village called Palitana, there existed a sacred hill. The village is a part of the Bhavnagar district of Gujarat state, where it is well known for the influence of Jainism. The small hill consists of more than 300 temples devoted to 24 Tirthankaras of the Jain religion. On top of this hill is the main temple of Lord Adeshwara, the 1st tirthankara. It is the biggest and the most blessed temple with the oldest carvings and jet-black stones. It is visited every year by pilgrims. It is considered a divine purpose.

Behind the temple of Adeshwara, there is a long-enclosed passage which leads you to a cave, it is a cave of mystery, as it is said that whoever enters that cave will never come back. Many priests and nuns who live up to and worship the temples have experienced negative energy from that cave. They hear music at night and can sometimes see light coming out of it, but nobody dares to go and check on these abnormal activities. People are petrified in the monsoon season as the rain makes the situation horrific. The people of the village, from the foot of the hill, suspected of hearing the music and sometimes seeing a red light shining from the tip of the mountain.

One day the priest of the main temple saw an unusual sight. He was astonished to see a small bronze sculpture of a lady sitting on the lap of the deity. He thought it was a prank played by a fellow priest or young monks, as he was very strict and particular about the rituals of the temple. So he gathered everyone around the temple and asked them to confess, but nobody agreed on performing this kind of mischief. Then he held a punishment for the gathered group so that they would spill out the name of the prankster, but nobody said anything. They tried to convince the priest that no one knows of it, and perhaps it must be that an outsider would have done it.

The priest did not listen to anyone and punished them after all. After completing the punishment, the fellow priests and monks decided to sit and discuss who had done this ridiculous prank and was responsible for the group's punishment, but they all ended up laughing and chatting as if nothing had happened. The small idol was wrapped in a cloth and buried in the ground near the temple.

The next day, the main priest opened the doors and the idol of the lady stood right in front of his eyes again. He was furious at the recurring action, as it was considered immoral to keep a sculpture of a human on the divine sculpture of God. He was anguished and wished to punish all the members of the priest community as he thought a lesson was supposed to be taught. He also appointed a group of senior monks to guard the gates and doors of the temple and stay up all night. He closed the temple doors early and added extra locks to them. The bronze lady sculpture was again wrapped in a cloth and thrown in the river which flowed down the hill.

The next morning, in spite of the security, the idol of the lady was situated in the same place as the previous days. This infuriated the priest and he decided to shut the temple for everyone, including himself. The pilgrims were informed and they had to return back sorrowfully. This time, the idol of the lady was melted and amalgamated with other metal vessels of bronze. A committee of senior priests and religious scholars was called and they discussed the incident. They suspected it to be an act of necromancy or black magic. They doubted every person outside the committee. They decided on informing the religious heads of other towns to help with a solution or guidance in this case.

On the very same day, a young boy who worked as a peon noticed something very strange. He was living in the nearby village and climbed up every day to earn a small wage by cleaning the temple. Nobody knew his real name as he was known by his nickname-Malu. He used to wear baggy clothes which were probably given to him by someone. He wore a small silver ring, which had a pattern of Swastik on it, on his index finger which was very dear to him; as it was his grandfather's last memory gift. While cleaning the temple premises he saw a few red-coloured footsteps at the mouth of the cave. He got scared at first but then decided to clean them. The poor boy could not remove the stains at all. He then decided to call the head priest and his committee, and confront the truth of how he had found them. As he went into the office, he was kicked out by the guards because of the least importance and respect given to the cleaners and peons in the community.

He then tried to shout from the window but was shooed off and this time they threw him out of the gates of the main temple. He tried to climb a tree and jump on the premises. He went behind the temple near the cave entrance.

The footsteps had vanished which left the boy in vain. He wanted to tell everyone the truth by showing them their footsteps.

The next day, the same incidents of the idol and footsteps were witnessed by Malu. This time he goes to the office crying and begs them to come with him. After seeing the manner of his insistence, the priest agrees to accompany him and whether he is telling the truth. The priest along with the guards followed the boy and reached the opening of the cave. They were left awestruck. They not only saw the red footsteps but also saw them vanish after a while as they went back inside the cave. Hence, they decided to look into the matter as the situation was getting out of control and it had created terror in the minds of the people.

That very afternoon, the committee sat for a long discussion and concluded to shut the cave with concrete. An announcement was made of a religious Shanti Homa in the temple to eradicate evil spirits or any paranormal activity henceforth. The priesthood also decided to meditate every morning and evening to increase positivity.

The next day, the temple was opened for cleaning and the preparation of Homa. They were shocked to see the idol of the lady again in the same place. This time the additional suspense was because of the footsteps entering the temple and not just near the cave. A message was written on the right-hand side of the wall in red colour material which looked like blood or vermilion. The message read, "I WANT YOU TO SEND ME BACK IN THE CAVE WITH CELEBRATIONS THAT LOOK JUST LIKE THE WEDDING OF A YOUNG GIRL WHO IS SENT BY HER FAMILY TO HER NEW FAMILY". The priest was terrified and confused as to who would take the idol in the cave. He then decided to send Malu with the lady idol as he is innocent and would do anything under pressure for bribery of huge money. They wrapped the figure in red cloth and decorated it with jewellery and glittered stole. Malu declined the bribe and tried to run away but he was forced by the guards to enter the cave.

That afternoon during the Shanti Homa, the priests chanted mantras and oblation of ghee to the sacred fire while the guards played dhols and banjaras to celebrate the see-off ritual of the well-decorated statue of the lady.



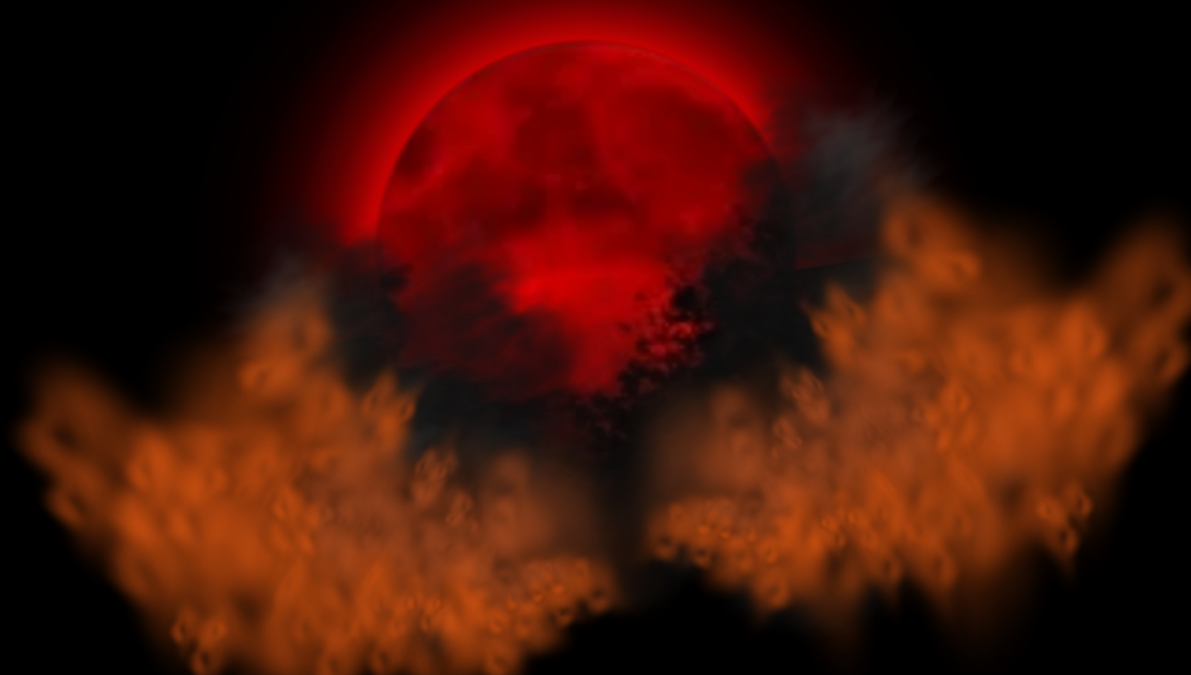
Malu was dressed in new clothes and held the sculpture in his hands. He looked back again and again as he did not wish to go into the cave, but there was no other way, for he was threatened by the guards. As Malu went in, the priest showed his cunning side and ordered the cave entrance to be closed with a big stone so that it was almost impossible to shift it back. The Homa ended and all the priests and monks celebrated for they thought they got rid of the evil spirit or the idol in the simplest way possible. They also decided to open the temple for everyone the next day.

The most shocking event in the history of the temple took place the next day. The group of priests along with the head priest, after opening the doors of the temple and entering God's chamber, saw the same bronze idol along with a shining silver Swastika ring in its arm. It was very well recognized by all as it belonged to Malu and it was his prized possession. They were so shocked that the head priest fainted and others began to cry. They then saw the message written on the right wall saying "YOU HAVE SINNED. YOU BETRAYED. YOU CHEATED. YOU DISAPPOINTED. YOU DISSATISFIED. THE CHILD IS MINE AND HIS REVENGE IS MY REVENGE. I AM COMING FOR YOU ALL."



*Hello, Yashvi Gala here! I'm from Pune and a student of TYBA, Psychology special. I love to wander in nature and go on treks. Humour is one of the things which helps me to be creative. I'm a sports enthusiast and enjoy playing football.*

*"Danger doesn't lurk at every corner. It's just hanging out, waiting for fear and horror to show up." ~ anonymous*



# HOUSE OF HORRORS



# Toire no Hanako-san

Hanako-san, or Toire no Hanako-san ("Hanako of the Toilet"), is a spirit of a Japanese young girl named Hanako-san who haunts school toilets. It is said that Hanako-san is the ghost of a girl from the World War II-era who was killed while playing hide-and-seek during an air raid, or that she committed suicide in a school toilet due to bullying. She is commonly described as having a bobbed haircut and as wearing a red skirt or dress.

Between the hours of one and three in the morning in the girl's washroom, if you knock three times on the third stall on the third floor of the elementary school and ask if Hanako-san is there (or is done yet), you will hear a response of what seems like an innocent, sometimes scared school-girl. She calls out to you, "I'm here," or "I'm done" and the stall door opens just a crack. You will then witness the appearance of a bloody or ghostly hand; the hand, or Hanako-san herself, may pull the individual into the toilet, which may lead to Hell; or the individual may be eaten by a three-headed lizard who claims that the individual was invading Hanako's privacy.

# The Last Bus to Fragrant Hills

On November 14, 1995, a dark and stormy night, the last bus for Route 375 (or 302, or 330, according to some people) was heading to Beijing's Fragrant Hills. An old woman was waiting at a bus stop for the midnight bus, picking up a conversation with the only other person at the stop, who was a quiet young gentleman waiting for the same bus. When the midnight bus finally came, they both boarded it. As the night went on and the passengers were dwindling, two men waved the bus down.

The driver stopped, and he saw that there were actually three men: the two and a third man that they were supporting between them, holding him up by his shoulders. The bus driver was initially reluctant to pick the men up because they weren't waiting at a bus stop, however, the driver reluctantly decided to let them on after the conductor reminded him that it was the last bus.

Once the mysterious roadside men were on board, the passengers were surprised to see they were wearing robes from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and their faces looked extraordinarily pale. Naturally, commuters were a bit uneasy with the whole situation, but the conductor cooled things over by telling them they were likely actors who had no time to change costumes before leaving work.

Slowly the bus began to empty of passengers until only the old lady and the young man remained inside with the mystery men. All was quiet until the old woman abruptly accused the man of stealing her wallet—a claim that resulted in an intense argument. The quarrel was resolved when the old lady insisted the pair get off the bus and go to the nearest police station.

Once off the bus, the young man grew enraged with the old woman, realizing he had just gotten off the last bus and that there was no police station in sight. What he was unaware of was that the old woman had noticed something about the three men he had not. "The wind coming in from the window raised their robes, and I saw they didn't have any legs!" the old lady told the man. Because the new three passengers weren't touching the ground at all and were floating, they were not living people at all, she explained. The story never does divulge much about what happened to the pair after leaving the bus—but if what happens next is true, then the young man owes his life to the old woman.

The following morning, Bus Number 375 was reported missing and, according to some variations of the story, it would be three days until it was found. The bus was eventually recovered in a reservoir miles away from its final destination at Fragrant Hills and inside it were three severely decomposed bodies. In some versions of this tale, police found that the gas tank was filled with blood instead of petrol.

# The Loch Ness Monster

The Loch Ness Monster of Scotland. It swims in the depths of Loch Ness, the second-deepest lake in Scotland. These sightings go way, way back—stone carvings by the Pict (ancient people who lived in eastern Scotland) of a "mysterious beast with flippers" have been discovered.

In 1993, when a road adjacent to Loch Ness was finished, offering an unobstructed view of the lake. In April a couple saw an enormous animal—which they compared to a dragon or a prehistoric monster, and after it crossed their car's path, it disappeared into the water. The incident was reported in a Scottish newspaper, and numerous sightings followed.

In 1934 English physician Robert Kenneth Wilson photographed the alleged creature. The iconic image—known as the "surgeon's photograph"—appeared to show the monster's small head and neck.

# The 100 Steps Cemetery

The 100 Steps Cemetery is located in the city of Brazil in Clay County, Indiana, United States. It is called '100 Steps' because the visitors must ascend 100 steps to reach the summit.

The legend is, at midnight, under a moonless sky, a visitor must ascend the steps, counting as they go. One should count 100 total steps by the time the summit is reached. Then, the visitor should walk back down and count the number of steps a second time. At the bottom, the visitor should have a different number. The mismatch, supposedly, is caused by a supernatural sleight of hand. Then the visitors should again climb to the top of the stairs, counting as they go, arriving at 100 steps at the top. On the summit, the visitor should turn around and look down the hill. A ghost of the first caretaker appears and reveals the manner in which the visitor will die in a spectral vision. With the ghostly fortune finished, the visitor should descend the steps, counting again as they go. At the bottom, if the number of steps is the same as the way up, then the vision was wrong. If there is a mismatch, the visitor will die in the manner revealed by the phantom caretaker.

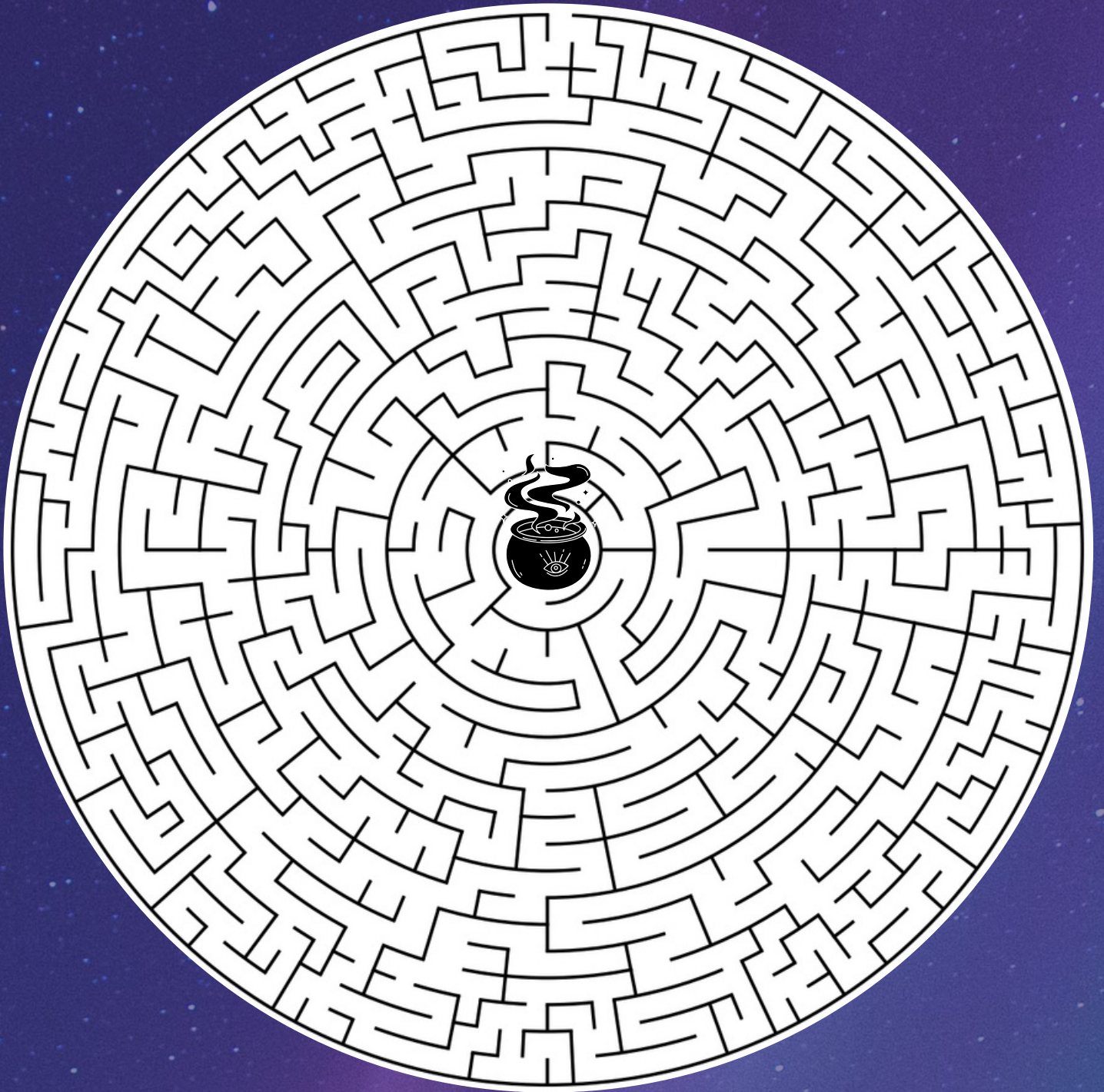
During the process, if the visitor leaves the path, or doesn't count the steps, a devilish hand will force the person to the ground, leaving a deep red handprint for several days.

# The Skinwalker

According to the Navajo tribe, a skinwalker (yee naaldlooshii) is a kind of wicked sorcerer who can transform into, occupy or disguise themselves as an animal. Navajo are very reluctant to share information about the Skinwalkers with anyone outside their tribe, thus it is difficult for outsiders to understand the true nature of Skinwalkers.

The topic of Skinwalkers has grown to include paranormal study boards and creepypasta threads where they vary from being the traditional witches of Navajo lore to more radical beings such as cryptids, aliens, demons or any other assortment of fantastical beasts. They are almost universally described as evil creatures, just like in traditional stories.

# Labyrinth



*"On Halloween, witches come true; wild ghosts escape from dreams. Each monster dances in the park." ~ Nick Gordon*