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# Tea Time Verse

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The Remnant Archive

# Message from the Editor

Dear Readers,

This week's issue is inspired by the works of Mayank Austen Soofi or as you all might popularly know him, The Delhiwala.

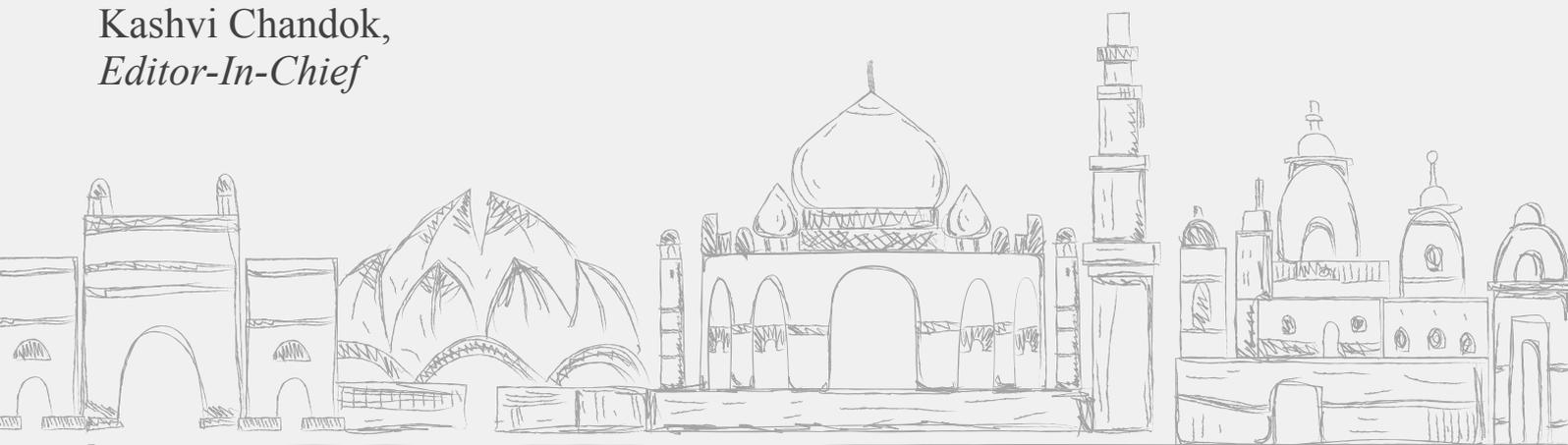
It's difficult to encompass what this issue contains. From one lens, it contains the softened fingerprints of a floundered city struggling to find a temple ground; from another, it contains the most delicately woven words that mount multitudes of human fragility. Showing tenderness is an act of bravery too, isn't it? At the same time, choosing Sufi's works as the theme for this issue was a complex resolution. How do you give words to a photographer whose visuals don't exist in a known realm of transience? Soofi's pictures reflect the utmost simplicity of the city. It reflects the bygone, the hardships, the side gaze of a street passerby with so much earnestness that it forces you to see yourself, your insecurities, privilege and indulgences in these strangers.

His honesty towards Delhi is understandable. There's so much that this city encompasses. Mahmoud Darwish, in the Presence of Absence says "Cities are smells: Acre is the smell of iodine and spices. Haifa is the smell of pine and wrinkled sheets. Moscow is the smell of vodka on ice. Cairo is the smell of mango and ginger. Beirut is the smell of the sun, sea, smoke, and lemons" If this is true then, Dilli smells like patrol, wilted amaltas and lousy nationalism of vandalised walls.

Lastly, our columnists have outdone themselves in writing for this issue. Needless to say, this issue will leave an ingrained longing to keep cathartic fires burning. Please don't hesitate in writing to us if you like a piece or what we do in general, it makes us cherish the time and energy we've put into building these issues even more.

Have a warm weekend ahead,

Kashvi Chandok,  
*Editor-In-Chief*



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*Cover page by Anthropology on Pinterest*

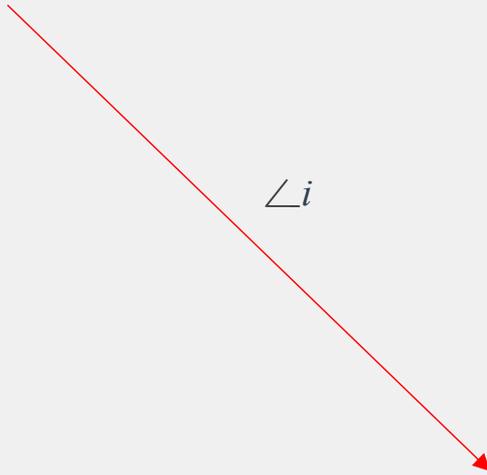




# Everywhere At the End of Time

*Amal Mathew*

AIR



$\angle i$

Memory of light, without direction

*Under Water*

Refract at the agreed index of 1.33.

How long must one arrive before/after the light?

It is shapeless, the newborn's breath.

Silence that pins the air, to the walls  
and chests of eunuchs. Dancing away, to tomorrow.

Watching away,

The hearth, I will teach my son.

How to catch the falling light, in a black box.

John Nash, without light.

*Well above sea level*

Almost drowned his son of 2.

How long do you think before the light came for him?

Memory is a funny surface; you learn to bounce off.

Better yet, an intangible geometry under water.

Where light weighs different  
around your

Neck, ankle, and femur. From stages 1 – 6.

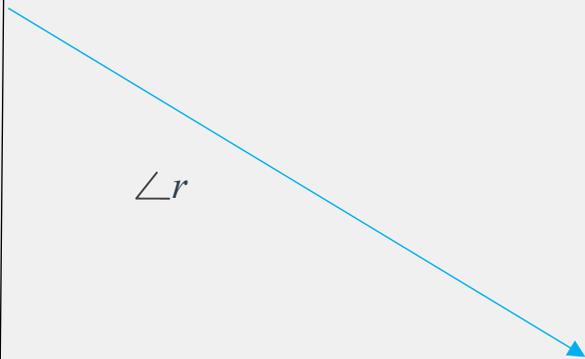
The longest memory you hold on to

Is not your mother.

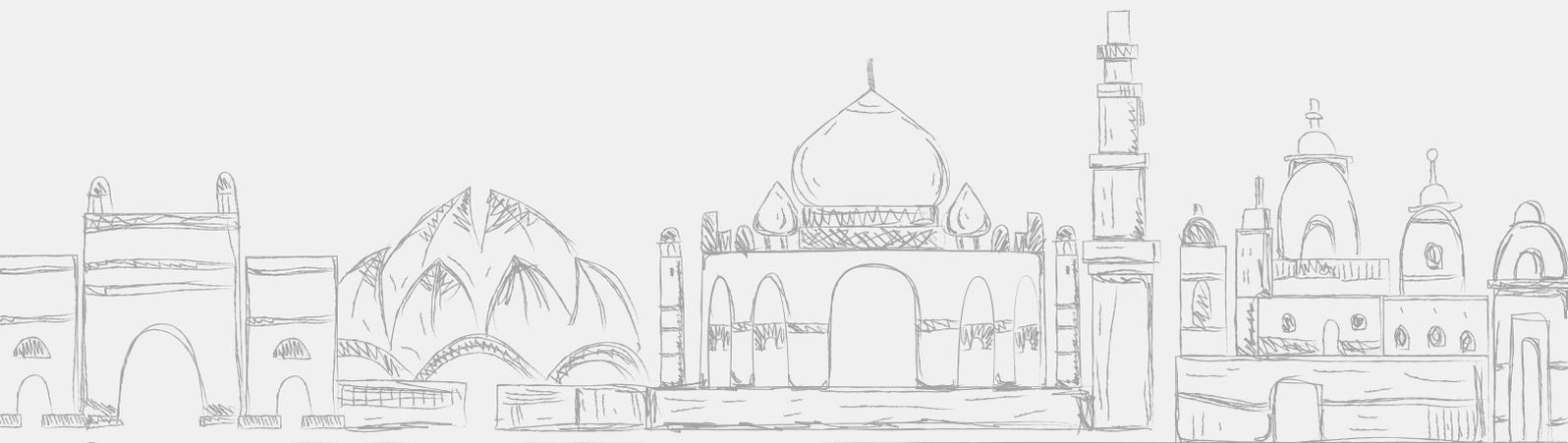
“When all else fails, patients can be heard humming  
their favorite song, making movements with their  
hands.

And when the humming goes away, usually they do  
too.”

$\angle r$



WATER



۴۸۶  
شکل من کلیمات

مزار

شیرازی قیصر

بنت  
شیرازی سلیمان  
۱۱ محرم ۱۳۰۵



## A Love Lost, and Delhi

*Ishika Chaturvedi*

दिल्ली के ना थे कूचे, औराक़- ए- मुसव्वर थे  
जो शक़ल नज़र आई, तस्वीर नज़र आई

- mir taqi mir

This city is a dark poem  
of verses full of promises and moments,  
with vibrant rhymes and bright rhythms  
reminding a yesterday of burning sultanates  
and a tomorrow of a crowd that seems to be holding hands and  
joining hearts.

It is a classic movie  
running in black and white, upgrading to sepia  
with sweaty foreheads and gaudy festivities  
with all the times of joy, celebrated like  
the last of a lifetime,  
where people chant routines like the morning azaan  
and revel in the beauty like a devotee to a Dargah,  
murmuring Zouk's shayaris on the way to work  
and buying gajra on their path home.

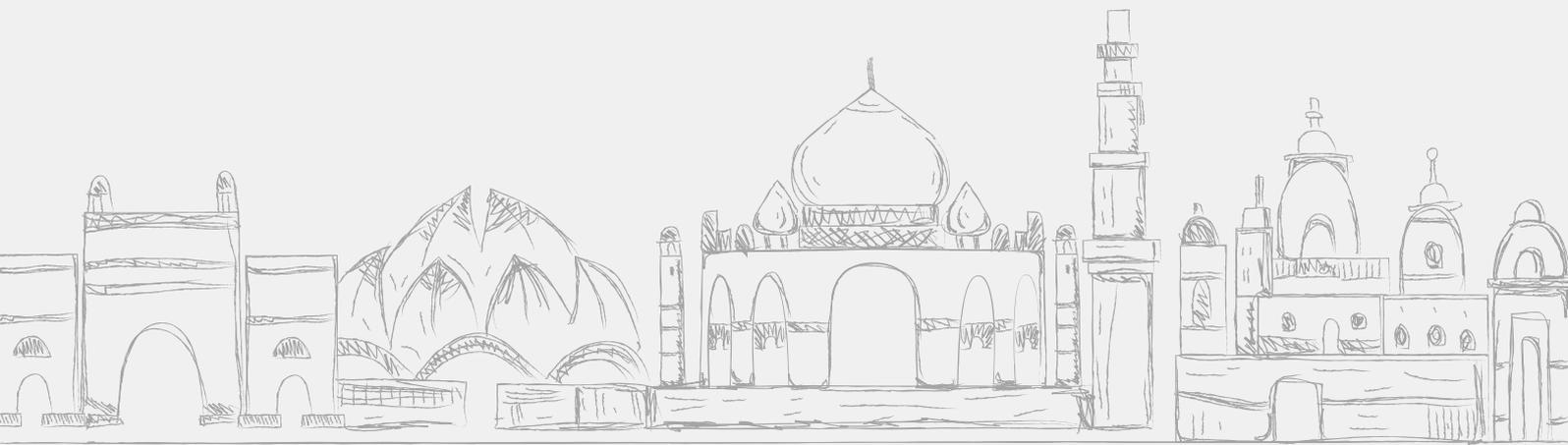
This city, this city doesn't sleep  
it keeps the beggars hungry, awake and the rich,  
partying away.

It has kids who wear scowls selling balloons of smiles,  
it has chefs who cook go to sleep empty- stomached,  
it has tailors who wear tattered scraps,  
and politicians who only buys and barter.



It is rush away from rushed emotions,  
a home away from a home abused,  
a livelihood away from a hood of life  
a prayer away from a dead religion  
and an irony away from all ironies.  
Here, we pride ourselves in breathing toxicities  
and boasting in the streets of Chandni Chowk, of a love lost  
but a love done well.

Delhi is but a battle until quite,  
a funeral of surrenders and uncompleted wishes  
where the deathbed is a monument  
and the grave is a flowerbed.





## Coping

*Poulomi Deb*

It's not a bad day, it's a pandemic. It's not a bad day, a pandemic, she thought again. We are coping. It's not a scary day, her mother crooned as the girl was forced out to buy vegetables from the market, which was at least an hour away. A few steps along the pavement, she realized with a jolt that she had forgotten her mask and sanitizer. She returned outside, and just so happened to notice an onion falling out of a vendor's cart. It tumbled towards the mud, propelling her to fetch it. As she stood up, she realized she was somehow in the market. Her eyes grazed every corner of the surrounding street until she found the roof of her maroon-cream house, the balcony with a swing. Calls of petals, fruit and fish rang over her thoughts, stopping them midway. She stuffed confusion, pepper & four tomatoes in her bag and hurried upstairs to the second floor. Still, her bewilderment at suddenly reaching could not help but remain. After her groceries and polishing off a snack from the sweetshop, she called her mother. But as she waited for her to answer, she noticed a banner attached to a street light. It read: In view of Friday the 13th 2020, the government, in partnership with sixty-three markets across the country, has offered a one-day discount on distance. What a good day.





## A Tree Love Affair

*Navneet Kaur*

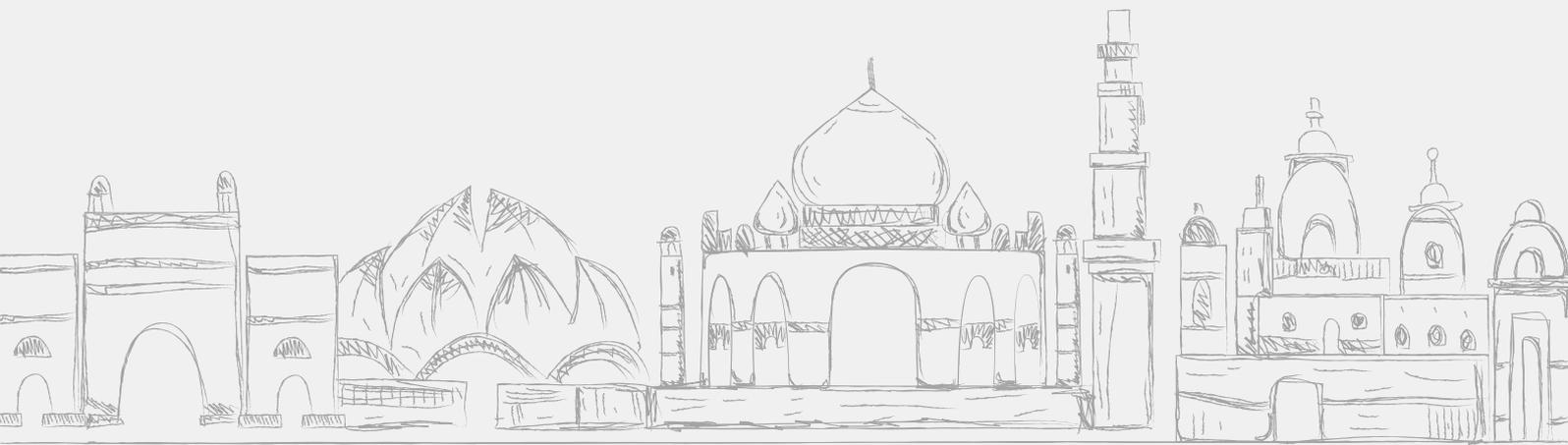
I arrive before you,  
And am looking for a fragrant tree,  
Probably a neem that bears those off white flowers in winter,  
Which have the fragrance of fresh love,  
Like the one blossoming between us.

I sit there, on a carpet,  
Gossiping with the sparrows,  
Telling them how madly you are in love with me,  
How excited you sounded the last night,  
When we were planning this meet.

I meanwhile watch lovers around me,  
Some holding hands,  
Others kissing,  
Giving me couple goals?  
Perhaps making me yearn more...

I imagine you coming from behind,  
And putting your hands on my eyes.

I then watch you through the dim-shining Sun rays.  
Your face has a calm serenity,  
As peaceful as that tree shade we are sitting in.  
Your eyes have a twinkle,  
Which are looking deep into my own.



You look at me closely,  
From head to toes,  
As if wanting to capture me in your heart forever.

You look a little confused,  
Ahhhh! Can understand why!  
The moment we are in seems pure,  
Soft , calm, gentle, divine,  
And you were a little anxious, right?  
Thinking how meeting under a tree would fare?

Well, I am waiting...  
Till then having a chit-chat with the red roses bush,  
Who is giving me love advice to make it a grand "affair".

Everything I have imagined in my head,  
I today want to do it all.  
Come over fast...  
I am waiting...





## My Home is No More, Lost in the Fire you Stoked

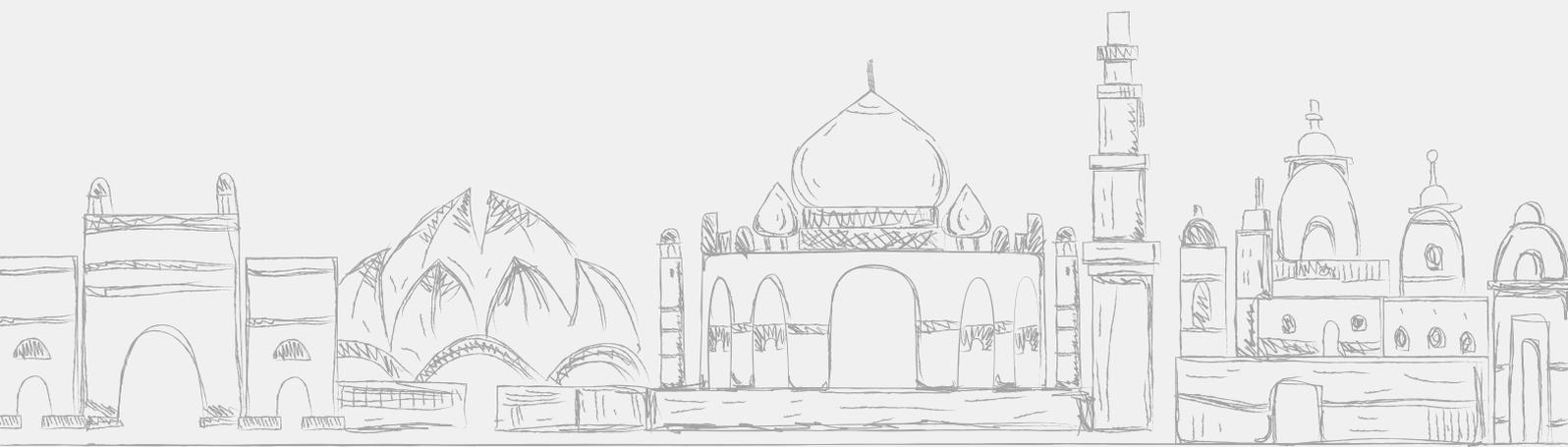
*Raunaq Saraswat*

Smoke doesn't see the man it itches and twitches. The man, though, can see through the smoke, through the smokescreen he lends himself to. He can see everything but the ashes, the remains of the fire that was lit to create the smoke. If he looks down at the wooden logs, he'll see the ashes, but his eyes will burn unbearably. He chooses to look up and away, through the smokescreen. "Let the woods burn as long as they warm me," he tells himself. The woods are ablaze.

The phone dances to the ringer tone. "Bollywood-esque," he tells his friends. His friends and him: they are building someone's home, whose they do not know. They are making an abode in return of running theirs. Masonry. All of them are looking atop the fire except for Chacha. Chacha is sitting stiff and straight, looking pointedly at the fire, his eyes too accustomed to the fire to feel the heat. The woods are ablaze.

"Yes, yes do as I told you. Paint it saffron in total. Total saffron. Leave no spot. Everyone should know our cultural colour. No, no, not colours. Only one colour, saffron," he is screaming in the phone, streamlining the smoke. He is also speaking to the air around him, to no one, to every one. Only one colour. The two friends are laughing, mocking the caller's inability to understand the difference between colour and colours. They seem to know it. Chacha continues to gaze at the fire. He doesn't laugh. The woods are ablaze.

Chacha doesn't know how to say what he sees. He is envisioning his home. Home that was alive until his son was seen with his friend. Friend who didn't know her fault until the neighbours told her about the boy's religion. Chacha saw the saffron bands at the foreheads of the neighbours when they came to abuse the family.



They were all strangers in that moment. Chacha didn't know what to say to them either. The family left the village. Chacha left his home. The woods are ablaze.

The fumes have begun to settle down. There is no smoke now, no smokescreen. The phone rings again. He yells the same words. Only one colour. Two friends are amused again. Chacha doesn't partake in the humour. The woods are no longer ablaze. Chacha cannot unsee the ashes the fire has left.





## Flowers on the Menu

*Anannya Uberoi*

Rock - cauldron working over a small fire,  
the pan on the stove bubbling gently,  
everything mellowed to three degrees under  
in the Delhi winter.

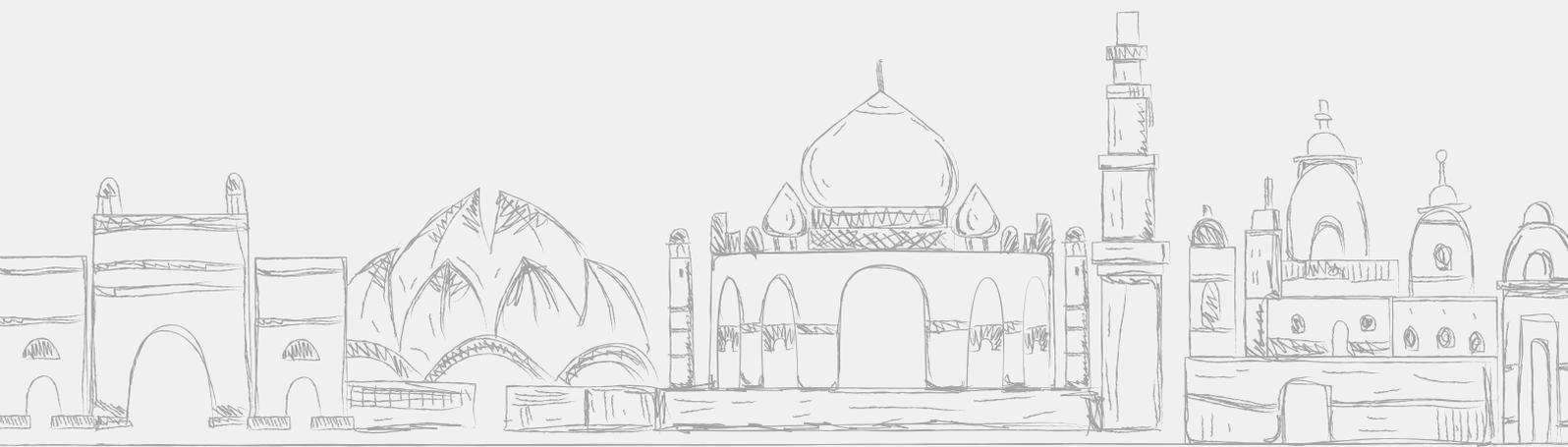
This is what happens when you put flowers on the menu.  
Rose-smellstretched across the corners of the tabletop  
half-incoming tray, like aunty's leg crossed over the other  
while sunning chilis on her green *dupatta*.

The meat has browned well for sale, today.  
Steel kettle from their wedding gifts, cannister of biscuits,  
and the hidden teapot—all night, the flowers grew in its belly  
before somebody harvested them and dressed them on a paper plate.

Uncle says,  
the color of the tea tells you everything there is to know about it.  
Today he brewed it secretly with four petals  
and look, how *red* it has come.

The ceramic ones suspended in the love-tunes of time,  
a stack of disposable cups, for the non-lovers  
and a cloth growing russet from dusting the mess  
every time

Uncle becomes quieter to accommodate conversation.  
The sun sets beneath a long train of yellowing cities,  
and then there is a dove saying, there is this.  
There is this rose-colored now.





## Expose

*Manya Mishra*

my palms expose me, while everything a perfect camouflage with the air and incompetent social existence, my fingers cause a rebellion by flying into the air, breathing on their own, disobeying every law of touch, I barely master disguise when it comes to touching. if we ever meet, you're bound to see my fingers first, then my wrists and then my terrible unruly hair, and only later will you see me, a warm red, unable to decide whether it is anger or fear, both full of blood rushing to my palms. I count a lot and point even more, my hands raise in conversations like I was made hands first. so when you see me next, be my guest, hold my hands, feel me exposed.



# MEET THE TEAM

**Kashvi Chandok**

*EIC Fiction*

**Nehal Lala**

*EIC Non Fiction*

**Arshiya Mahajan** *Creative*

*Director*

**Zarnab Tufail**

*Editor, TTV*

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*Ishika Chaturvedi*

*Poulomi Deb*

*Amal Joseph*

*Anannya Uberoi*

*Raunaq Saraswat*

*Navneet Kaur*

*Manya Mishra*

