

# PLAYER

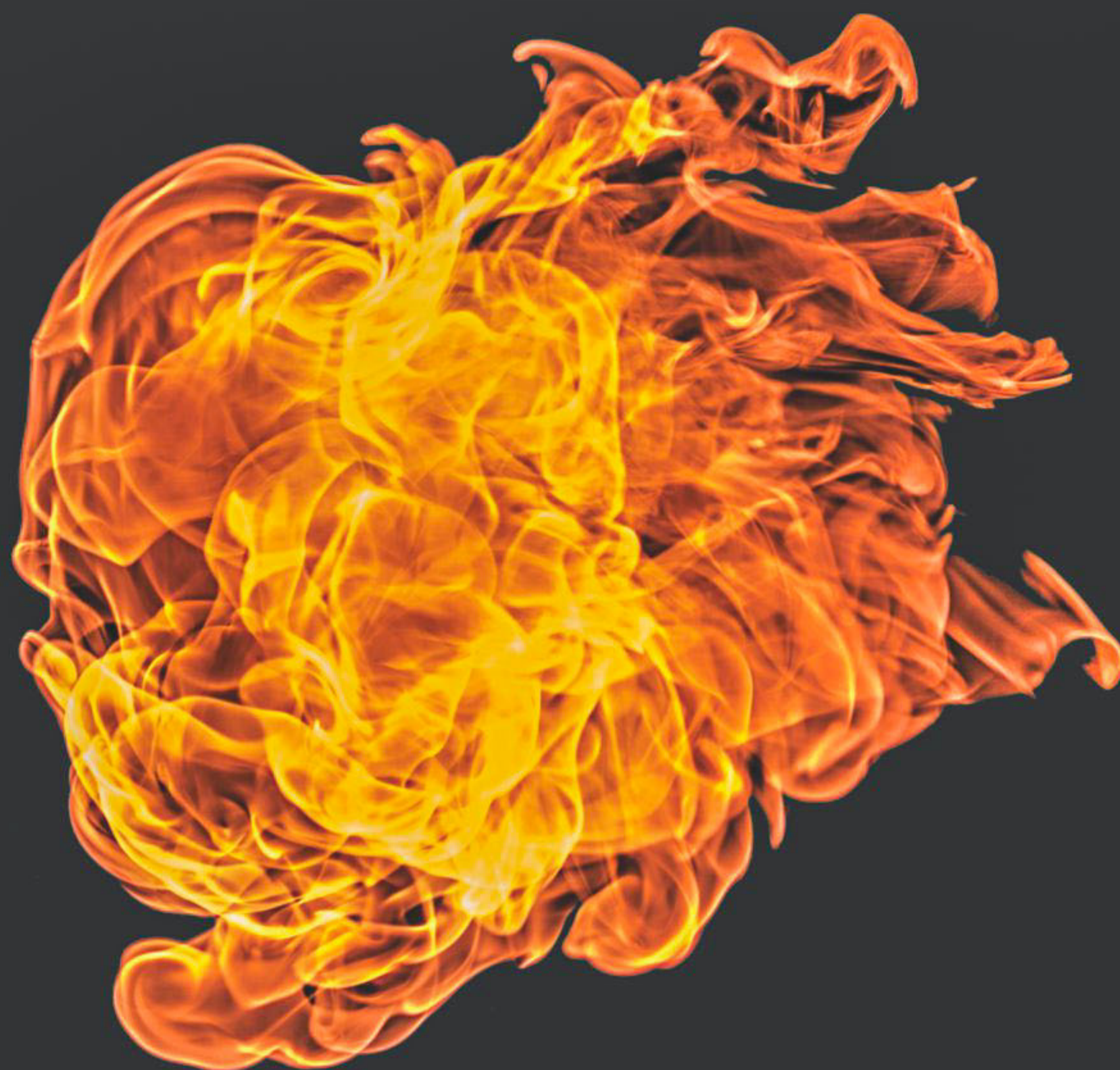
FYROZE SHAFIQUE

Tridents of assentation  
Never cease to bother me,  
When I use your weapon on you,  
That's not my fault,  
That's how it should be.

When I speak of compromise  
Not all the words are  
Meant to be true,  
Hearing voices while  
Searching beyond sound  
Is the right thing to do,  
That I knew.

I take control over you,  
When your words with my plan  
Perfectly binds,  
I'll keep doing what I always do  
Playing with your  
Playful minds.

*The writer is a student of Viqarunnisa Noon College.*



# THE FLAME

SHOUNAK REZA

Clouds have darkened the otherwise blue sky, like unwelcome guests, making it impossible for the sun to have its way. It is a relief to think that the scorching heat that usually makes its way through the bustling Dhaka streets won't torment anyone today. The other people in the room are attentively listening to the teacher. I turn my thoughts away from the sky and devote them to what he is saying. He is talking about a particular scene from Shakespeare's "As You Like It". I am familiar with the names he mentions — Rosalind, Orlando and Celia. The course syllabus was too attractive for me to resist; I signed up for it immediately. It is a month long course about the comedies of Shakespeare and although this is only the first day of the class and it has only been an hour since the class started, I have a feeling that I am going to love this course. My classmates look friendly enough — I am the youngest of the bunch. As much as I love it, I am afraid to say a word or pose questions. I am too afraid of being met with reproach.

"We are going to have a fifteen minute break now," the teacher announces. He leads us to an adjoining chamber. The table here is adorned with plates of pancakes, baked potatoes and pies- a very continental breakfast. We sit down and much to our surprise, the teacher sits with us too. They laugh over jokes and converse with one another. I want to join in too but am held back by my fears of glares and reproach.

It starts raining. Through the large window I can see the leaves of the large

mango tree next to the house being bejeweled with tiny drops of water. They flutter in silence as the drops of rain touch the ground with thuds and I want my best to converse with the others. My fears are holding me back. I remember how my classmates back in school would ridicule me whenever I tried discussing a serious topic, something that wasn't included in the textbooks, with a teacher. I remember how my interests were looked down upon, how I was mocked and teased for reading too much, for being what they called a "dork". The fire in me wasn't extinguished by any means but it ceased to power me anymore, it was shoved back to a spark.

I am jolted out of my reverie by a question someone asks me, "Won't you have tea?"

"I don't know how to make it," I blurt out, only to realise what I have just done. Oh no, I will be subjected to waves of mockery now.

But nothing happens.

After a second, the teacher speaks. "You can't? Come on, let me show you how to make it," he says kindly.

The classmate sitting next to me nods encouragingly. "Yes, yes, you should learn it now. It's very simple."

I can feel something in me as the teacher shows me how to boil water and slowly turn a teabag into a steaming cup of tea. What is it? Is it gratitude? Is it happiness? I cannot find a word for it but it doesn't matter.

I smile as I realise the spark has once again been fanned into a flame.