

FABLE FACTORY

LOOK FOR ME

TUBA TUHRA KHAN

People ask me where I'm
 As if I cocooned myself in the night.
 But why love, I'm out here, right in plain sight!
 No no, my dear, I'm not tucked away in some mountain or faraway star!
 I'm here, right here, waiting, just as you are.
 For I'm in the flutter of butterflies
 And in the buzzing noise of the beehives.
 I'm in the thump of the falling leaves
 And in the calm after a great tide.
 I'm there when you smile when the warmth of the sun hits your face.
 I'm there when you're crying and curse your miserable fate.
 I'm in a lover's first kiss.
 In their first heartbreak and their sinful bliss.
 I'm in the pain, in the glory
 In the happiness, in every part of the story.
 I'm there whether you want me or not
 In every second of your thoughts.
 I'm in the evil, in the saint
 In the beggar, in the vain.
 For I am you and everything you want me to be.
 All you need is to want
 To see.

The writer is an SSC candidate from Viqarunnisa Noon School.



OPENING NIGHT

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

"Ten minutes till show time! Why is everyone running around? Asha, where is the other half of your costume? Have you ever seen an angel with one wing!" Rasul darted through the narrow corridor backstage ducking from prop pieces and shoving tiny child actors out of his way. "You dropped your halo again!" Rasul picked up the cheap plastic wire wrapped tiara of sorts and chucked it across the hallway.

"Rasul! Hi, there's a problem," Misha said emerging from the dressing room. "The tailor accidentally delivered the wrong costumes. I've got 6 of the poor villagers dressed in giant hedgehog costumes. Didn't you say they were doing some sort of odd animal themed play on the stage downstairs?"

"Doesn't matter, there's no time. The audience will make what they will of it." Rasul bolted across the excessively air conditioned chilly backstage area clutching his clipboard with a mess of papers overflowing.

Ever since the day had started, Rasul felt things weren't right. They had prepared for the play for six months and today was opening night. The dancers had perfectly synced, Amin the stage hand had finally learned to operate his walkie-talkie and Maya had learned to lie perfectly still when she's stabbed at the end of Act Three.

Rasul was confident when he exited the theatre the night before but this morning, things didn't feel quite right. He had an inexplicable pain in his stomach from the moment he woke up. In the six months of rehearsals, he had not once been late but this morning, his Uber driver denying his trip at the last moment made him reach 15 minutes late. This was not a good sign.

"Seven minutes!" someone yelled in the background.

Rasul and Maya, the assistant director, barged into a green room. Maya had

ILLUSTRATION: **RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS**

desperately made many phone calls and crafted long emails in hopes of being made director but despite her best efforts, the board felt her level of experience was best suited in assisting Rasul. She had promised, disappointedly, that she would help make the production run seamlessly. Now, as the actors around them noticed, she was sweating visibly.

"We have a problem," Arun announced jumping up to face Rasul. "We can't find Leela." Arun's face was painted a shocking

orange with yellow and black lines criss crossing all over his skin that made his brown eyes look ghastly.

"What do you mean we can't find Leela?" Rasul demanded. He could feel the pain in his stomach kicking in again.

"I don't know. She was here when we came in but when they started hair and makeup we suddenly couldn't find her. I told Maya this morning," Arun started walking towards the door, his slender body carrying the weight of his sleek costume

well with the lower part of his costume slithering behind him.

The room was a burst of activity as all the other actors flocked to take their positions, the wings of their elaborate costumes flapping, their robes flowing behind them.

"You knew about this earlier?" Rasul asked.

"I just didn't think panicking you would help, I thought she would turn up on time," Maya announced before bolting out the door as someone yelled, "Two minutes people!"

Rasul sat down on an abandoned chair in the deserted dressing room. The room was dead silent compared to the ruckus before. The table tops were overflowing with makeup, wigs, paint and costumes. Leela being missing spelt disaster for the show and he suddenly felt six months of his hard work being squashed in one instant. He had planned every detail.

Outside, as the curtains went up, the empty stage shone with lilies sprinkled across it. And from above flew down a girl, smiling and quiet. She wasn't Leela nor did she look anything like her, but in the large, dark, hall with ricocheting music and cramped seats, who was to see and who was to know.

Mrittika Anan Rahman is a daydreamer trying hard not to run into things while walking. Find her at mrittika.anan@gmail.com