

In the absence of a light source

A.M. FAHAD

Grief is a lonely river
 Like a fisherman's song with an empty net
 Like a father walking home with empty hands
 Like a mother's existence
 Moonlight under a bamboo forest
 Birdsong or a death poem
 Today, I am an unwritten song
 A longing, a daydream, a hope
 Tomorrow, I will be the dust
 You were birthed from
 When the sun reflects off the floor tile
 There is warmth to be found at the base
 Lean on the sink, it's fragile, but it's there
 Tie together all the broken fragments piece by piece
 Cover your skin with patchwork and paint
 Quilted heliotrope- face the sun-
 Tilted posture and wilted spine
 Fat and slow cumulonimbus clouds
 Gaze at you from a distance- moving
 So inconspicuously, it's hard to see outside when
 You're so up close to the vanishing points of your vertices
 A-three-point perspective of all the lives
 You have dreamed of living but instead found yourself
 Sprawled down on the bathroom floor on a warm Thursday evening
 I promise you this
 When you stop clawing your eyes out
 You will find what you are looking for
 Even when and, alliteration for emphasis,
 Especially when
 The sun above your head is unkind
 You will start to see
 Beyond the absence of it
 In the absence of a light source
 With our sticks and rocks
 We will build a make-shift version of it
 That works just finely enough
 For us to wait out the storm outside

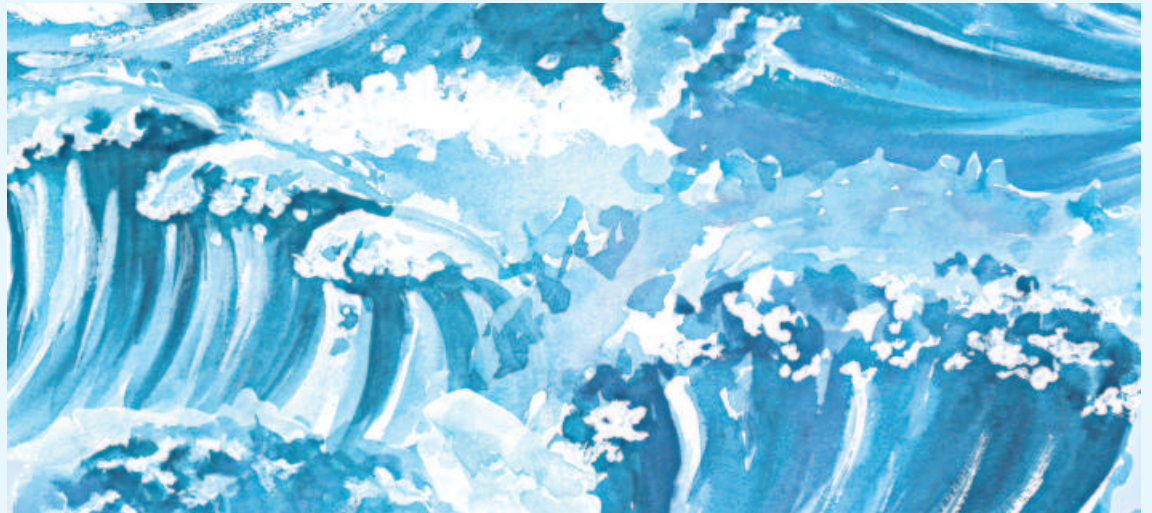


ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

A Dead River is

ALL I WANT

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

You know those instances when we start off in the wide, turbulent currents of a river making its way downstream? Something about them makes the tiny hairs on the back of my neck stand perpendicularly. Alert, electrified. Waiting to grasp onto a rare rock, I find myself panting, falling up and down, trying to stay afloat, pushed along in the intensity of the water's movements. I lay thirsting for the moment when the

river will dry up under the scrutiny of the tropical sun, wanting to appease the parchedness of my throat in the tiny rivulets and isolated pools that inevitably form beneath the death of the river. I want to feast upon the corpse of the river. I want you to taste every last tasteless drop on the groaning riverbed. All I desire for, is to be dragged away by the protruding bones of my ankles so I can see you in the beads of condensation trickling its way down the limbs of the screaming, crimson foliage.

HOUSE OF CARDS

WAZIHA AZIZ

Welcome, weary traveler! To my humble abode.
 Come, come. I'll show you how these cards are angled around the hollow of each room.
 Of course, to enter my house is a promise not to make yourself at home. I'll serve you airy tea at my airy table and have our airy conversation in this airy room before you take your airy leave.
 Fear not, these cards are arranged to keep the air inside.
 Pray, stay. If anything I worship the delay,
 I'm sorry. But solitude makes a woman seek God in most peculiar places.
 Tell me, who have you left? Who are you going to? Who has helped hold up your home?
 Maybe there is no answer. Maybe I will hand you a piece of me to take with you as you leave. Maybe Your exiting exhale will sustain my house of cards
 Or maybe cause collapse.



ILLUSTRATION: **SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM**

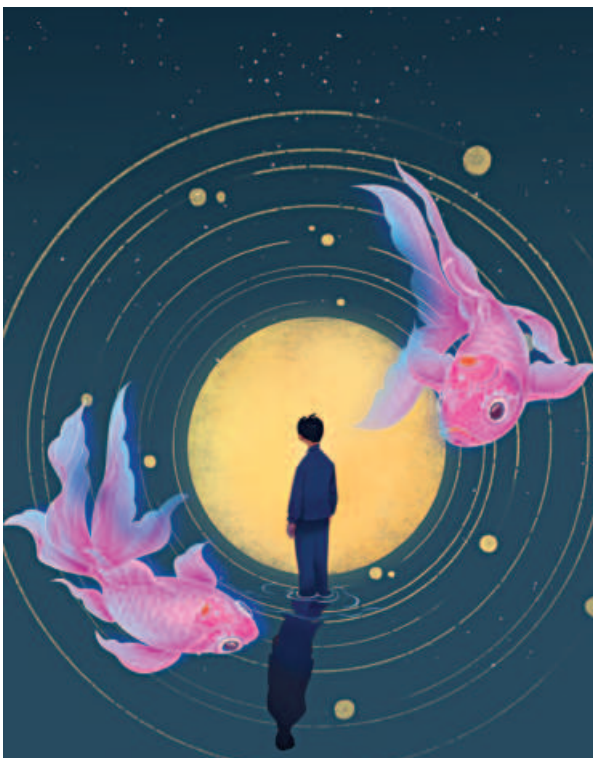


ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**