

Last School

NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2024 | VOL. 3

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THE VITAL MUST BE INVITED TO COLLABORATE

JEAN-YVES LUNG

A school must be in phase with the project of the society in which it is set. In that sense, there must be a link between the Auroville project and its educative project. The paradigms must be the same, they have to be in phase, in line with each other.

What Mother presented for Auroville's law of development was not the formation of a well-designed mental ideal that then imposes itself on life, a method always arbitrary and artificial, which finally does not work, but rather that life itself would evolve and progress, by its own movement as it were.





The question then is how to invite, induce, and support this movement by which life finds its ascending path of progress. This is possible only if the vital being is included and actively part of the program. It is vital to bring enthusiasm, joy, and a conquering spirit to our growth.

THE VITAL BEING IN US
IS THE SEAT OF
IMPULSES AND DESIRES,
OF ENTHUSIASM AND
VIOLENCE, OF DYNAMIC
ENERGY AND DESPERATE
DEPRESSIONS, OF
PASSIONS AND REVOLTS.

IT CAN SET EVERYTHING
IN MOTION, BUILD AND
REALISE; BUT IT CAN
ALSO DESTROY AND MAR
EVERYTHING.

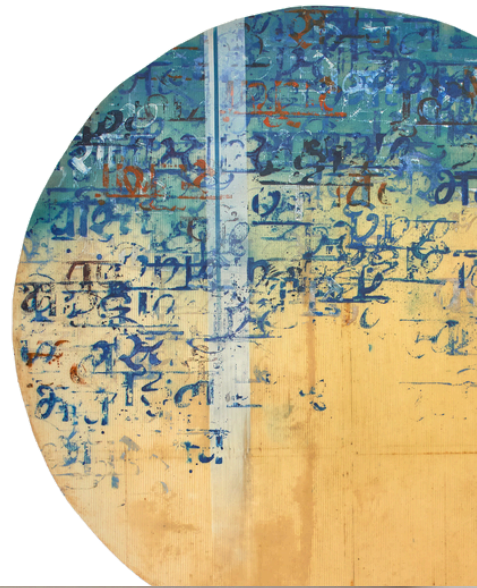
THUS IT MAY BE THE
MOST DIFFICULT PART
TO DISCIPLINE IN THE
HUMAN BEING.

For this, three things are necessary:

Firstly, there must be an aspiration, alive in the teachers' team. Values have to be lived, not preached, and they should be part of the atmosphere of the school.

Secondly, it is helpful to bring a sense of beauty and harmony through art, that refines and enriches the vital being.

Thirdly, the student must be invited to set their challenges in different domains of their nature and activities and discover experimentally that they can be victorious in each of them.



Last School

WITH THE
COLLABORATION OF
THE VITAL NO
REALISATION
SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE, NO
TRANSFORMATION
IMPRACTICABLE.

BUT THE
DIFFICULTY LIES
IN SECURING THIS
CONSTANT
COLLABORATION.”

Behind the seen

All these elements are not part of a declared curriculum for they are informal, and not really quantifiable, but they are fundamental, determining factors of the final outcome of our education, of what the students will become or the capacities they will develop, of the faith they will have in themselves, in life, in the future.

It is also the part of education that cannot be replaced by artificial intelligence.



DEAL WITH THE VITAL AS ONE DEALS
WITH A REBELLIOUS CHILD, WITH
PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE,
SHOWING IT THE TRUTH AND LIGHT,
ENDEAVOURING TO CONVINCE IT AND
AWAKEN IN IT THE GOODWILL WHICH
HAS BEEN VEILED FOR A TIME.

BY MEANS OF SUCH PATIENT
INTERVENTION EACH CRISIS CAN BE
TURNED INTO A NEW PROGRESS, INTO
ONE MORE STEP TOWARDS THE GOAL.”



WORK, EVEN
MANUAL WORK, IS
SOMETHING
INDISPENSABLE
FOR THE INNER
DISCOVERY.”



Collective exercise

This year, a student preparing for university transformed Last School's corridor into a vibrant space, painting giant flowers as both a personal challenge and a gift to the community. Shortly after, Lola, our longtime art teacher, returned and initiated for the following term, a collaborative art project with alumni, teachers, and current students.

TO LET THE
CONSCIOUSNESS
ORGANISE A BIT OF
MATTER BY MEANS OF
ONE'S BODY IS VERY
GOOD. TO ESTABLISH
ORDER AROUND ONESELF
HELPS TO BRING ORDER
WITHIN ONESELF.”

The task was to expand the floral theme into five independent yet cohesive wall paintings, each integrating inspiring quotes in multiple languages. The project culminated in a 3D installation with lights, reshaping how we navigate the space.

Weeks of collective effort followed—sanding, painting, and assembling broomstick sculptures with materials from Auroville's Eco-Service & Earth Institute, creating light designs—alumni, teachers and students worked side by side, creating a spirit of offering and creativity.

As the term began, the corridor bloomed with color bushels of broomsticks, and the school came together to clean and wax the floors, completing the transformation with hard work, care, and joy.



AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

LAST SCHOOL WORKSHOPS



LEAF AND COMPOSITION

BHAVYO TRIVEDI

This week-long workshop explored the theme of composition using nature as a muse. Simplicity was key, offering techniques step by step, like a journey of discovery.

How we started

Silhouettes of leaves were drawn and then using techniques of sketching, watercolor and inks, the composition work was worked step by step from black and white to color.

The use of different mediums and tools offered the participants a challenge to learn and adapt, to resketch and rework the compositions until they were in harmony.

*THE TREE OF EVOLUTION
I HAVE SKETCHED.
EACH BRANCH AND TWIG
AND LEAF IN ITS OWN PLACE,*

Focused on nurturing the eye to see, to find the balance between the lines and the leaves, this workshop seemingly simply offered a chance to push the students to work in unexpected ways and find solutions by themselves using watercolor and inks.

In the summer of 2024, during the term break a collaboration of students and teachers will work towards a collective installation. Preparation of the atmosphere for the school as beauty in matter is essential for our approach to education.

*A SPIRIT WANDERED
HAPPILY IN THE
WIND*

*A SPIRIT BROODED
IN THE LEAF AND
STONE*



OBSERVATION AND THE SENSE OF HARMONY

IN CONVERSATION WITH LOLA

*This entire workshop was based on observation.
Could we take the time to look, really look?*

Look here!

The first aim was to be able to see, to notice what was around us: The little leaves, small things of daily life. And see just how wonderful they could be. The joy they bring.

This is what we attempted.



WHAT NOW WE SEE
IS A SHADOW OF
WHAT MUST COME.



Composition

Working with composition means seeking harmony. Harmony in space and in form.

In this case, it meant finding the right space for each individual leaf and all the leaves as they came together on the paper. Both of these are needed to make the page interesting, the big picture and the small picture. We want to grow aware of space, empty and full.

For the first two days of the workshop simple exercises were proposed: observing and drawing leaves from a selection in the art centre and the garden, from choosing a leaf and drawing it, to later tracing the outline of one of these, and repeating it on a new sheet of paper in different ways directions so as to create a graphic composition.

These compositions were first treated in black and white to develop the skill of the control of the brush, to be able to work neat and clean and not to overlap.

And after, it was training with watercolor. And that was again just to develop the skill of the technique of watercolor, the use of that and the color, of course, the mixing of the color.

Later still the possibility of cutouts were introduced, as well as the possibility of using leaves themselves as prints.



LOST IN THE GIDDY PRONENESS OF THAT SPEED,
WHIRLED, SINKING, OVERCOME SHE DISAPPEARED,
LIKE A LEAF SPINNING FROM THE TREE OF HEAVEN,

INTO A WONDER OF MIRACULOUS DEPTHS,
ABOVE HER CLOSED A DARKNESS OF GREAT WINGS
AND SHE WAS BURIED IN A MOTHER'S BREAST.

These workshops are often structured thus:
Monday to Wednesday are organised and structured explorations of materials, approaches and techniques.

Thursday the final work begins. Whether a single piece is the proposed format, a diptych, triptych or a series, this work will bring together the skills and concentration each individual has honed over the last few days.



For the final work, you could either do a big piece with different composition squares in a larger composition, or you make several smaller pieces with many, many small compositions, and you make a collage of sorts.

So we proposed a format, we started again in black and white, and then we went to the print, then watercolor on small cards.

Students made several trials for the composition, we chose the most interesting. Like always, never be happy with the first result.

*THIS IS A POINT THAT WE EMPHASIZED.
WE WANT RESEARCH.*



*AND THEN, EACH IN
THEIR OWN WAY.*

*THE QUESTION
RETURNS, HOW
WILL YOU DO
THIS? HOW WILL
YOU FIND THE
RIGHT PLACE FOR
EACH ONE. FIND
THE BALANCE, THE
CONTRASTS, THE
JOY?*



INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

TRACKING FREE PROGRESS

DYUMAN MEZZETTI

A need was expressed by some teachers for a way of keeping track of students' progress and of matters that are explored in the school in our classes.

The Collective Diary

For this, a web-based system was designed and prepared, which allows teachers to rapidly enter short text notes for their classes, on a daily basis, directly from their phone.

Each of the notes entered into the system are linked to the period and subject of the class they refer to, along with a list of participants and their attendance for that day.

Through the system, all teachers can access everyone's schedules, and all the short notes entered by everyone. Options are provided to search information by person name, subject, and the like.

This makes it possible for teachers to know what is being worked on in their colleagues' classes, and/or what their students are being exposed to in other classes, at the same time maintaining a record for official and archiving purposes.



Since this system contains the weekly schedule of all students and teachers, a trial is being carried out to use this same system to facilitate the task of creating the schedules in the first place. Our schedules need to be highly individualized and therefore prepared manually.

The system, so far, provides a rapid way for the persons preparing the schedules, to specify person, time, and subject mappings, and visualize the schedules in table formats, while in the making. Features are provided to automatically identify likely errors in the schedule data (such as, accidentally double booking a teacher or student with multiple classes at a time, etc.)

Future ideas include the possibility of expanding the system in order to allow students to enter notes about classes from their point of view, as well as a feature to keep track, in one spot, of all book titles or media used in all classes.





FOURFOLD PERSONALITY

JEAN-YVES LUNG

The context of Last School is inextricably linked to the context of Auroville. If we hope to create an environment in which teenagers engage in the quest of self-finding, we must constantly seek ourselves, rekindle the flame of aspiration, and review our attitudes as educators and aspirants.

Reading together

As we have a new generation of young teachers, it is important to explore together the basis of Auroville Education, by reading passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A few themes have been explored.

One is the approach of the Fourfold Personality based Sri Aurobindo's *Yoga of Self-Perfection*, which has been the object of public communication in one of Auroville's Training Program.

Another is the reference to three components of action *Yajna, Dana, Tapasya* mentioned in *Essays on the Gita*, and how it could be used to calibrate and assess our work.

A last one has been to study how the informal structure of an organization determines its outcomes and how it can be introduced in our method of assessment.

This may be the object of future communication.

A collective approach to this is our bi-weekly explorations of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's works. These readings gather not only school teachers but also alumni and young adults from Auroville. Over the last few years, they have become an important part of the training for a new generation of young teachers.

This school year began with parallel explorations of Sri Aurobindo's Fourfold Personality and Soul Forces (*Synthesis of Yoga*) and The Four Aspects of the Mother (*The Mother*).

FOUR GREAT ASPECTS OF THE MOTHER, FOUR OF HER LEADING POWERS AND PERSONALITIES HAVE STOOD IN FRONT IN HER GUIDANCE OF THIS UNIVERSE AND IN HER DEALINGS WITH THE TERRESTRIAL PLAY.

In this framework, the Soul of Knowledge represents the thirst for discovery and deep inquiry, encouraging students to approach learning with a sense of rigor but also of wonder.

The Soul of Power embodies self-mastery and leadership, helping students cultivate inner strength and responsibility.

The Soul of Harmony can be awakened through art and beauty, and fosters a sense of inclusive mutuality and cooperation.

Finally, the Soul of Perfection inspires pursuit of quality in work and service, guiding students to find joy in constant progress and perfectibility.

As we explored these inner forces—Knowledge, Power, Harmony, and Perfection—we began to ask how we can bring this understanding to the students.

“WHATEVER WORK YOU DO, TAKE IT AS THE MOTHER'S AND OFFER IT TO THE MOTHER.”





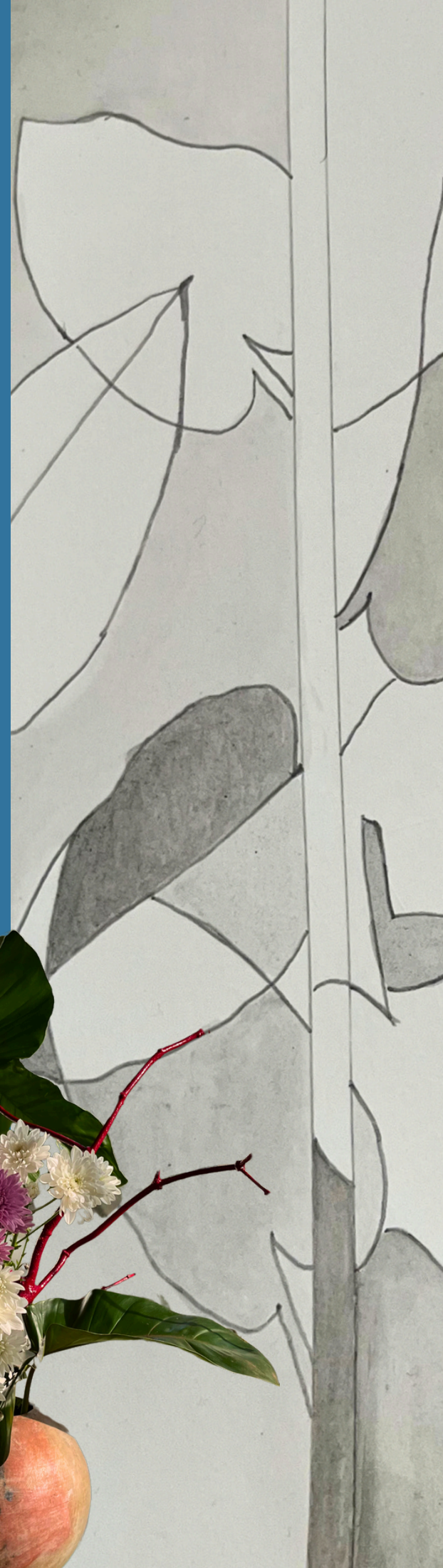
Furthermore, could it be used as a lens through which to evaluate the growth of consciousness, our progress, work at the school, and the development of the students?

A key realization in this exploration was the distinction between Soul Force—a quality to be awakened—and skills that can be acquired. While skills enhance proficiency, it is the awakened Soul Force that imbues actions with purpose and integrality. For example, students may acquire external leadership skills, yet it is only with an awakened Soul of Power that a true sense of inner strength and character emerges.

Skill is much of what education usually occupies itself with. We wish for our schools to be a place where the psychic being—the true inner self—can gradually emerge. Could an approach to seeking to awaken in each child, to draw forth each of these soul forces be an intermediary step? If so, the business of education becomes a quest, an offering, and a journey of self-discovery, rather than merely an academic pursuit.

An important component of our continuing research and experimentation is aimed at finding solutions to the issue of how to develop these rich, high-standing personalities who have a thirst for knowledge for its own sake; who have awakened their powers of will force, courage, ardor, and nobility of nature; who are persons with refined and sensitized emotions, a penchant for collaboration and finding harmonious solutions, and a consciously honed capacity for skill and industriousness.

*THIS APPROACH IS
BASED ON THE
FOURFOLD
PERSONALITY AND
SRI AUROBINDO'S
YOGA OF
SELF-PERFECTION,
WHICH HAS BEEN
SHARED PUBLICLY
IN ONE OF
AUROVILLE'S
TRAINING
PROGRAMS.*



Bridging the Gaps: Religion Series

BTG – Bridging the Gaps – is a program that aims to look at different topics that can be the cause of gaps or barriers in society.

This term we explored the vocabulary and concepts linked to different religions of the world, as compared to spirituality and Auroville, as well as the role education plays in these.

We looked at the geography of India and its states and the distribution of religions in the world. And asked for written reflections on the topic through different quotes each week.

THE OBJECTIVE STUDY OF RELIGIONS WILL BE A PART OF THE HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

RELIGIONS MAKE UP PART OF THE HISTORY OF MANKIND AND IT IS IN THIS GUISE THAT THEY WILL BE STUDIED AT AUROVILLE - NOT AS BELIEFS TO WHICH ONE OUGHT OR OUGHT NOT TO ADHERE, BUT AS PART OF A PROCESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH SHOULD LEAD MAN TOWARDS HIS SUPERIOR REALISATION.

The aims for the class was for students and teachers to notice our prejudices, study sides of human nature, analyze social media fed emotions vs research and balanced understanding, exploring over-woke extremes between “politically correct” and racism, develop the capacity for critical, and poised though as well as oral and written expression on a variety of topics.

**SMITI TEWARI ARPI
& SATYAVAN BHATT**



THE SUNBIRD CREW

AUREVAN LUNG

The Sunbird Crew began with the oldest group at Last School, many of whom are nearing the end of their time here. Without fixed curricula or board exams, we explored how they could express how they have grown and where they are at.

Mapping development

We had recently read *The Science of Living*, and Sri Aurobindo's essay on the four aspects of the Divine Mother.

Through discussion a chart of concentric circles was born.

At the heart, the central aspiration of each one, petaling out, 4 elements to link with the four soul forces.

The next circle gathers qualities they have developed or aspire to, followed by capacities and skills, and finally works, such as would be present in a portfolio, thus demonstrating aspects of their growth organised around a single centre.

Using this chart, students undertook various fantastical or realistic scenarios in which they presented themselves, and were interviewed by their peers and teacher on terms they established.

The Sunbird Crew

The Sunbird Crew evolved out of this exercise:

One student applied to be the 'scribe of the princess to write her love letters.'

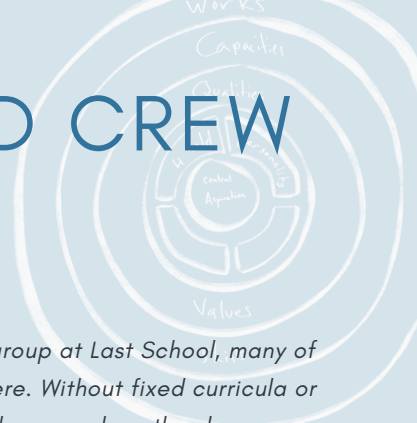
Another embodied an aspiring pirate requesting to join a renowned crew. This sparked role-play, with the class adopting accents and characters.

This was such fun to play with that, from this, the group initiated a collaborative writing project on character and world building.

A quest and plot was set, a metaphor for the various journeys the students had made together and now embarked in. The emphasis was on character development—each chapter offering perspectives on other characters, alongside advancing the plot.

Within two months a little chapter book came together, complete sketches, maps, and written works. *The Sunbird Crew*.

We co-edited each of our writing pieces. And we were able, that way, to wrap up the year, or rather the several years we had spent together, in a single writing project, full of joy, humour and adventure.

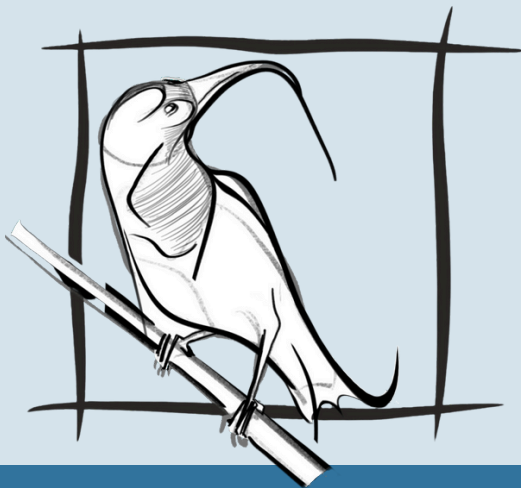


EXCERPTS FROM THE SUNBIRD CREW

AN ANCIENT DOOR, CHIPPED AND
FORGOTTEN BY TIME, I CREAK, THEN
SHUDDER, EXHALING DUST.

EIGHT RAYS SET OUT, EIGHT
DREAMERS WAKE FROM COCOONS
WRAPPED IN CHOSEN BLISS.

Aged scotch stood still against time. Honeyed warm water hit the glass, steam rose and coated the bartender in its scent. Sprinkles of cinnamon swirled down, gracing the drink with hints of sweetness and spice. Sour streams of lemon drew clouds in the warm liquid. The reflection of the ceiling alluded to birds coming home to roost, seagulls etched into panels of oak wood.



"AHOY THERE, MAY
I JOIN YOU? I HAVE
A PROPOSITION
FOR THE SUNBIRD
CREW."

THE INTERVIEW

A fantastical retelling of how the oral exercise which birthed this story, first took place in class.

A YELLOW ROOM PUBLICATION

... "Wat iz in it for you, petite?
Fame? Money? Gold tooth?"

How could she tell them what it truly meant to her? What she would prove to herself if she only became a part of this crew. She wasn't in it for fame or money, she wanted to be a part of something, finally. Maybe she wouldn't find treasure but she may find comradeship and maybe, just maybe, a family. She couldn't admit this to a group of strangers she admired. So she answered, cheeks reddening,

"Fame and money, a couple gold teeth won't hurt either."

The white haired man raised a thinning eyebrow. Feeling the attitude shift around her, she added quickly,

"But being a pirate is of the utmost importance to me. I'm not like any of these other Bob's my uncle types."

"Bob iz my uncle," said the Captain, signalling to his right.

Brushing a white curl away from his eyes, Bob grinned.

"I need to be a pirate," she pleaded, "Being a pirate is of the utmost importance to me."

Captain narrowed his eyes.

"A parrot?"

"A pirate," responded the flustered child.

"A parrot?" the Captain repeated.

The first mate shook his head, white curls shuffled. He chuckled.

"A pirate." The girl insisted.

"A parrot! N'importe quoi..."

"No!" She quaked, looking him straight in the face at last "A Pi-rate!"

"Ahh... un Peerat! Bon... d'accord Parrot," said the captain, "Wat iz your name?"

"It's Parakeet, sir."

"Oh la la, so Parrot! Mon dieu zis generation..." Grumbling, he added "Bon, if zis map indeed turns out to be fake, at least zis aventure will be filled with your tomfoolery."



BANG!

Chef plopped the heavy wrought iron skillet onto the spitting fire with a thump and a grunt. Egg at the ready, she gracefully rolled her wrist and spread fat to the far reaches of the pan, with one hand she cracked both eggs, spilling them straight into the hot pan. Instantaneously, sizzling joined the pre-existing melody of blistering, bubbling tea and steaming potatoes.

[...] She caught a whiff of parchment and cinnamon.

Chef went about her business, hacking at the chives.

"What?"

Bob's stooped figure stood in the doorway silently watching her.

CHEF



MUNDI

MONDI? MANDY? MUNDAY? IT IS A LITTLE HARD TO FIND SOMEONE WHEN NO ONE REALLY KNOWS HOW TO SPELL HIS NAME. IT WAS BELIEVED THE LAD HIMSELF KNEW NOT THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF HIS OWN NAME. FOR HE HAD NEVER BOTHERED TO LEARN HOW TO READ OR WRITE. IT SEEMS, TO THIS DAY, ANY PIECE OF PAPER ATTRIBUTED TO MANDAY HAS ACTUALLY BEEN TRANSCRIBED FROM HIS OWN WORDS ONTO PAPER BY ANOTHER PERSON.



AFTER THE BATTLE

BOB'S YOUR UNCLE

The shifting blue sea stretches out before our mighty ship like an aching expanse of light; threaded through the gently wavering tapestry, the final embers of a dying sun. Against the soft rosy sky glows the warm, crackling enemy ship we set alight.

The battle was fierce, the deck rolling under our feet as swords sang and fists flashed. Mundy's shouts as loud as his explosions, Crow's rapier flowing in silent, deadly dance. The captain, my sweet sister's son, bellowed orders as he dispatched our foes to the deep.

But now it is evening, and as is my custom, I sit on deck with my ink, quill, and bound parchment, recounting the events of the day and reflecting on my past as I watch the ship in the distance blaze up the settling blanket of dusk.

I really don't like talking, I don't understand why people talk so much and always have so many things to say. I find it a waste of time. Why talk to other people when you could work on yourself instead. The only creatures I like to talk to are my animals, they're nice, they don't disturb me much and they have eventful lives, much more interesting to hear about.

ANNE





Log 173

Sunset was nice. Captain came up to the nest. Gave him an orange. Said he was up here for the view. Said my nest was tidy. I asked for oil. Lamp is running out. Dinner was good.

Log 183

Nova said I was her friend. Not sure why. Not useful to her. She named a constellation "Clarissa". Don't see it. More square than horse.

Log 186

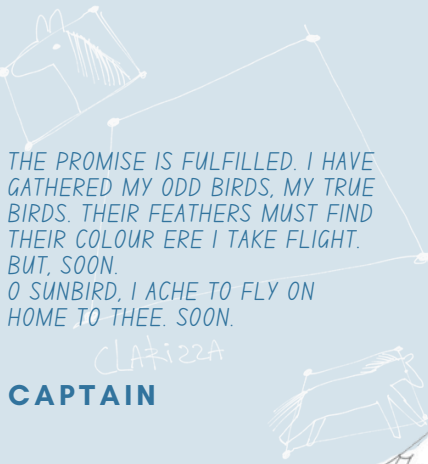
Bob's out on the deck. He's stopping Anne and Chef again. They sent a string of dried fish and a barrel of wine overboard.

That's the opposite of useful. I'm the opposite of useful. But we're all on the ship.

Log 191

Mundy's door hinge broke. Fixed it. This is where I like being. Dinner was good.

CROW



THE PROMISE IS FULFILLED. I HAVE GATHERED MY ODD BIRDS, MY TRUE BIRDS. THEIR FEATHERS MUST FIND THEIR COLOUR ERE I TAKE FLIGHT. BUT, SOON. O SUNBIRD, I ACHIEVE TO FLY ON HOME TO THEE. SOON.

CLARISSA
CAPTAIN



Entry no. 99

Dear Diary,
Chef gave me special potatoes today.
I cannot explain my elation, I could cry. They were smothered in butter and adorned by this melty, gooey thing called cheese.

NOVA



"DO YOU THINK IT MIGHT ALL BE FOR NOTHING?" SHE ASKED NERVOUSLY.

UNCLE BOB LOOKED AHEAD OF THE LINE AND SMILED. HE GENTLY TOOK HER CALLOUSED HAND INTO HIS WRINKLY ONES, AND WITH A STEADY FINGER SPELT SOMETHING ON HER PALM.

"Y-O-U-T-H" HE SPELLED, AND GAVE HER A STERN LOOK, UNABLE TO CONCEAL A SMALL SMILE.

PARAKEET SIGHED AND FROWNED, SHE WAS SULKING. HE PATTED HER ON THE BACK, AND THEY CONTINUED THE WALK IN SILENCE.

PARAKEET HAD MANY THINGS TO PONDER, LUCKY FOR HER THEY HAD SOME WAYS TO GO.

PARAKEET

Archaic and arched, I wait, cracked slightly open. I see them straggle up the rocks, sun beating down on backs bruised by the passage of time, journeys and lives flashing by, mouthfuls of memory spilling out, handed down. A pirate crew sewn together by seams of survival, revenge, revival. Arms that held, eyes that welled, wounds welded into something greater. The years, the tears, the fears overcome, always chasing the sun, the distant horizon. All they've lost along the way, and all that stays. I see them straggle up the sands, reach out their hands, till here they stand, poised, on the brink of surprising worlds.

The grim man with explosive stride and light in his eyes.
The old woman with bones of steel and feelings too deep.
The shuffling cartographer with spools of silence and a candle in his soul.

The girl with flowing curls and richer songs.
The youngster with tripping words and silky dreams
(and finally, a family).

The animal whisperer with heavy steps and belly laughs.
The crow crowned by clarity and garlanded with grace.
The captain, who holds them together, who'll hold them forever.





Last School

A UNIT OF SAIER, AUROVILLE

Last School in Auroville, India, works primarily with teenagers. Its educational approach, anchored in Sri Aurobindo, is centered on an integral development through the method of Free Progress.

The school offers an environment of beauty, where students asking their own questions, approach learning outside the constraints of traditional academic programs or external standards. Thus stepping firmly away from formal diplomas, Last School seeks to develop individuals who are better equipped to address tomorrow's complex challenges, invent new solutions, and contribute to an evolving society, rather than simply integrating into the existing one.

Last School
 After School :
 Super School
 No School



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PHOTOGRAPHY: ASHWIN EZHUMALAI

“IN THE PHYSICAL THE DIVINE MANIFESTS AS BEAUTY”
 Mother's message to Last School in 1971