

Illustration: Lavoni Raghuyal, AIS Gurugram 46, XII E



Rooted in two hearts

Kashvi Sharma & Sanvi Bhatia, AIS Gur 46, X H

On a sweet summer morning, when all was peaceful, a seed fell from the flowers of the ancient Magnolia tree. Close to her mother's roots, a tiny seedling emerged, fragile, curious and full of innocent wonder. The gentle wind whispered through the leaves as Magnolia watched her child sway softly. "You'll be called Willow," she murmured, smiling at her daughter's slender branches. Willow was the pride of the grove – sweet and full of promise. But one night, the skies turned angry. There came a violent storm sending forth torrential rains. The elders of the forest tried to shield the sapling, yet a gust of wind tore through and broke the seedling apart. Magnolia's cries echoed through the night. Death, who often snatched lives without feeling or pain, paused this time. In a moment of rare

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benevolence, he whispered to the little sapling, "You will be reborn, but not as a human nor as a tree yet something in between." And so, Willow was reborn to a woman whose name was never uttered, for her daughter was not like the others. Willow had shimmering hair like green leaves and skin as brown as bark. "A witch and her daughter!" the villagers condemned them both, so the mother fled with her child deep into the forest. She named her Willow as well, for the young girl was as graceful as a Willow tree. One morning, four-year-old Willow walked through the forest, and she felt the trees were humming to her. She followed their song until the voices became loud and clear. She reached a towering Magnolia tree with looming branches,

dark leaves and soft pink flowers. The branches bent towards her, whispering, "Willow? Willow, my dear?" Then she remembered – the storm, the love, the loss. Tears welled as she whispered, "I'm here, mother. I am finally here." Magnolia's spirit trembled with joy. Never had there been a reply to her cries before. Yet, when she asked her daughter to stay, Willow hesitated. "Mother, I can't leave my human mother. She has cared for me in this life." Magnolia's voice softened, she too, was a mother. "Darling, it'll be okay. Have we learnt nothing from the goddess of the underworld, Persephone? Even she divides her time between the Underworld and Earth." From that day onwards, Willow had two homes and two mothers – one of soil, and one of flesh. Through the seasons, they shared her company – fall and winter by the hearth, spring and summer under Magnolia's shade. Willow was finally where she belonged – a child of two worlds, rooted in two hearts.



Pic: Diya Kerur, XII J | Model: Yashasvi Aggarwal, X H; AIS Gur 46

Read Play and Win 95

Reading your favourite GT can fetch you a prize too. Complete all the boxes below. Click a picture and send it to editor@theglobaltimes.in or submit your responses by visiting The Global Times website (<http://theglobaltimes.in/readplaywin/>). Three lucky winners will win a prize every week!



Q.1 What is the lifespan of a red sea urchin?	Q.2 Mention the name of Magnolia's daughter in the story on page 8.	Q.3 Dr Chandrika Kaushik is _____ at DRDO.
Q.4 The article on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is on page _____.	Q.5 What is the scientific name of the zombie ant fungus on page 4?	Q.6 What is the headline of the perspective article on page 6?
Q.7 Which object's autobiography is featured on page 5?	Q.8 Who is the editor-in-chief of AIS Gur 46?	Q.9 What is the name of the theatre club mentioned on page 10?

Name: Class: School:

Results of Read Play & Win-94: **Lakshita Aneja**, AIS MV, IX A; **Virat Goryan**, AIS Vas 1, IV D; **Rayansh Ranjan**, AIS Noida, VII M

Writer's block

Saanjh Sahay, AIS Gur 46, X D

The pen burns my hand
Each word even more difficult
A weight I can lift no longer
I drown, forgetting to swim

Pages mock with a cold glare
I reach out for fading words
But the rope snaps every time
My hands calloused, burning red

So it's gone, isn't it?
The hunger, the need to write
I sit and stare a long, long time
At the well that had long run dry

Poem

The words once flowed like water
Now break and scatter like glass
I watch their quiet dissent, as
My hands are tied to the back

Still, I pick up the pen today
Open a blank page wide
My eyes strain with disdain
Have I killed what I loved?

Yet, tomorrow I'll try again
Stare at the blank, hollow void
Perhaps the words aren't lost
They're only just harder to find.

