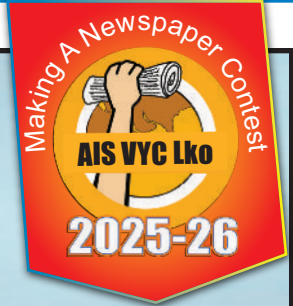


Graphic: Mohammad Ali Jamee Saeed Khan, AIS VYC Lucknow, X B



The missing violin

Akshara Srivastava
AIS VYC Lko, XI A

In the old town of Bellamy, where the fog crept in quietly and the clock tower chimed every hour whispering unknown secrets, lived Mang- a clever monochrome cat. To most, it was just a pampered creature raised by a retired Army officer Fredrick Jones. But behind those bright green eyes and elegant whiskers was the mind of a highly skilled detective and, most remarkably, the ability to talk. Fredrick Jones, who often found Mang's skills more useful than his own, knew this secret (obviously). Mr Jones never mentioned this to anyone. The cat spoke only when necessary, and only to its rightful owner in a very faint voice.

On one autumn morning, a young violinist, Agathan Williams, busted in his house "My Stradivarius is gone, somebody left a wooden block in its place," showing the wooden block.

Mr Jones blinked, "Are you sure you didn't misplace it, dear?" Agathan cried "I left it at my practice room in orches-

tra hall after rehearsal," handling the block to Mr Jones. Mr Jones raised a brow. "Mang, what do you think?" Mang sniffled and murmured "Herman Puckett's minty manure. Only his farms smell like this. He grows them with a distinct blend of manure and mint. This block must have been picked up from his farm. That narrows down our suspect list considerably."

Along with Mr Jones and Agathan, Mang padded through the streets, hunting rats, interrogating suspects (with some dramatic hisses), sniffing evidence, and catching clues most humans missed. The investigation led them to the Orchestra Hall where the rehearsals took place. Mang discovered rosin powder in the janitor's closet along with a faint trail of mint and string cheese. "The block must have been hidden here," believed Mang. But to be sure, Mang sniffled only to find the missing violin

standing behind the mop buckets in the rehearsal room, perfectly intact. "That confirms it," Mang declared. Mr Greaves, the janitor with a grim face who moonlighted as a polka accordionist, was called upon. At first, on probing Mr Greaves didn't confess, putting on a straight face but when Whiskers threatened to shred his accordion keys, he instantly broke down admitting his crime. "I did it! I did it!

I wanted to disrupt Agathan's symphony and wished to start my own band, 'Sabotage'."

The next day, Mang sat by the window, purring nonchalantly. "Another case closed, and they didn't even offer me some tuna," Mang purred, "then they say it is difficult to handle a cat."

Agathan chuckled and poured him a saucer of cream. "To be fair, most of them can't...solve the case," Agathan replied thanking Mr Jones with a look of admiration for solving the case in just a few hours - unaware, that the real detective who cracked this case was poised by the window exchanging a knowing look and a grin with Mr Jones, "Meow".



Illustration: Palak Verma, AIS VYC Lucknow, XI A

The mirror

Chehak Sharma, AIS VYC Lko, XI C

Wandering through many faces
I searched for one to solve the mystery
Eyes sparkled everywhere, bright and alive
Yet our souls never aligned

Their jagged edges clashed with mine
Tinnitus rang sharply in my ears
I crossed buzzing streets with my peers
The noise followed me everywhere

Laughter rose, loud and unfiltered
Yet none of it touched my skin
Smiles lived easily on the outside
Inside, I ached each day quietly

I blamed the mirrors and looked away
I feared, I might be forever alone
So, I kept bargaining with myself
Hoping belongingness would appear



One day, I slipped and paused
The mirror's curtain finally fell
I barely recognised the face staring back
At first, I was startled and couldn't tell

Then came the quiet realisation
I had never looked with affection
Because my eyes wore curtains too
I only had to love myself, honest and true.

Read Play and Win 103

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's the name of clever monochrome cat in the story on page 8?	Q.2 When to use the product biofizz advertised on page 4?	Q.3 What does this era's fashionista's worship as mentioned in the story on page 12 ?
Q.4 Which festival did UNESCO officially recognise in 2024 as mentioned on page 9?	Q.5 Name any two US states that have banned or paused lab grown meat in the story on page 1?	Q.6 Who's autobiography has been featured on page 5?
Q.7 What's the tagline for the article on page 6?	Q.8 Whose interview is published on page 3?	Q.9 Name the city where the craft of 'Chandi ki Chappal' is practiced on page 10.

Name:.....Class:.....School:.....

Results of Read Play & Win-102: Aviraaj Singh Bajaj, AIS MV, III A; Vibhav Goyal, AIS Gur 46, IV H; Kaira Gupta, AIS Noida, VI F