

Book Week Short Story Competition 2021

2nd Place- Ankush S (9L)

The Climb

“Run” bellowed Jason as javelins the size of horses pelted the loose soil around them. More were hurtling towards them at unimaginable speeds. Jason, Arthur and Layla jumped, crawled and weaved their way through the dense jungle which was unfortunately part of Phantaur territory. The Phantaur were powerful elephantine beasts who were the born nemesis of humans. Both races have been in war with each other ever since, well, forever. All they wanted was a piece of land that would entitle them to an almost infinite amount of precious gems, resources and height on the other kingdoms. As they were nearing the edge of the forest, they could still hear the deep booming footsteps behind them and even the ground trembled with fear. But slowly, the drumming was fading and the group breathed out a sigh of immense relief. In an instant though, their relief was replaced with fear. A ghostly fog shrouded them. Was it an ambush? Had the Phantaur had driven them here for a reason?

They kept walking. Slowly. Layla was shivering with fear and Jason kept glancing around in anticipation. He knew something was wrong. But still, they kept walking. CRACK!

“Umm, what was that?” questioned Arthur shakily.

“Keep walking” ordered Jason with as much confidence as he could muster - it wasn’t much.

“I’m sca-” started Arthur. But it was too late. As he spun around, a scimitar thrust through his heart with the deadly accuracy of a well trained assassin. Jason screamed as Arthur thudded to the ground. Lifeless. The horrible pain visible in his eyes. Then his body was whipped away before anyone could blink. He was murdered in cold blood and the mysterious killer had vanished just as quickly as he appeared. No sword. No blood. No Arthur.

It was like nothing had even happened. Layla was down on the ground sobbing and Jason was attempting to comfort her but tears were welling up in his own eyes.

“How could that have even happened!” Layla wept. “We were miles away from them!”

“I don’t think it was a Phantaur,” murmured Jason, the realisation dawned on him. “We were way too far and besides, there is no way a Phantaur could have moved that fast.”

“Then what?” questioned Layla, rage burning in her voice. She wanted revenge.

“I don’t know but mark my words, whoever killed our friend will pay!” vowed Jason, his hand quivering with a mix of rage, fear and most of all sadness. A couple of months ago Henry; then the last sight of Jayde, his best friend with the iconic red bandana, lost in Phantaur grounds; and now Arthur.

All of a sudden, like a snake, a blanket of darkness dropped down from the trees. Jason rolled out of the way. Almost instantaneously the black clad figure was back on him and they were

stuck in a fight, Jason dodging and parrying with his wakizashi whilst his enemy thrusting with the longer reach of a scimitar. They fought and fought surprisingly well matched for one another. Layla watched dumbstruck. Jason was getting tired but he recalled a move that he used against opponents with a scimitar. Like Jayde he thought, and just like that, he threw his sword and dived at his combatant. As expected he was thrown off guard and together, they tumbled down the mountainside. Purely by luck, Jason's long coat was caught by an oddly angled tree and he was saved from the drop that awaited them. The mysterious figure on the other hand, wasn't. He was hanging with his fingertips on the cliffside.

"Not so lucky now, huh?" growled Jason, remembering Arthur. He walked up to the man and asked "Who. Are. You?" The man simply stared at him, determination in his eyes. He let go of the cliff. As he fell down to the endless void, a shabby red bandana could be seen under his black hood. Jason stared back.