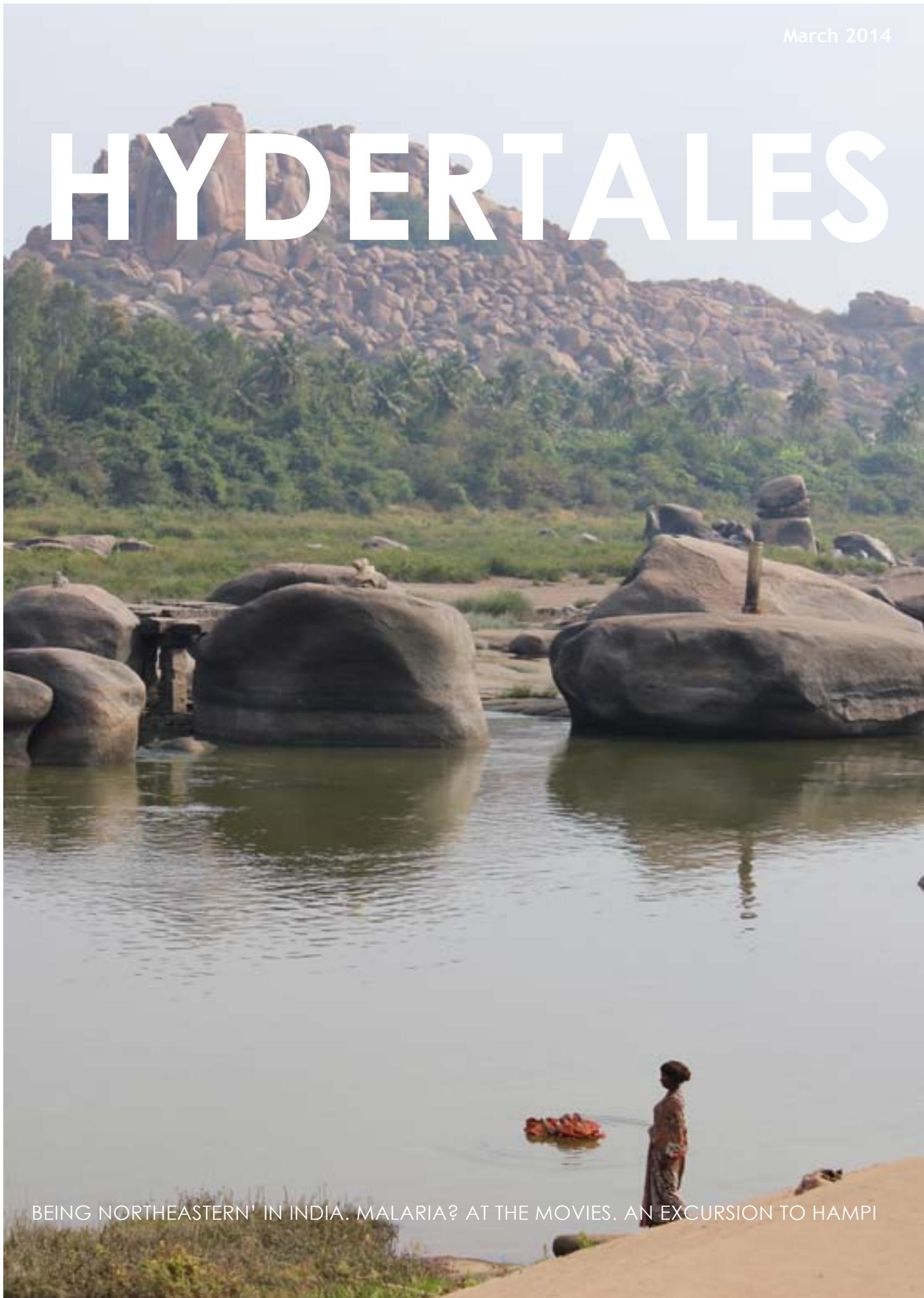


March 2014

HYDERTALES

BEING NORTHEASTERN' IN INDIA. MALARIA? AT THE MOVIES. AN EXCURSION TO HAMPPI



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear fellow CIEE students:

We can't believe it's March already! What happened to the time? We're no longer complete strangers to India – having tackled shared auto rickshaws, chai-walls, the Telugu language, and the other idiosyncrasies of living abroad with enthusiasm and naivety. Though we may no longer be helpless in this country, or rather because we are no longer this way, we should pause for a moment and reflect more on our time here. Let's think past the initial introductions and take a deeper look into our surroundings, both in our social lives and our physical surroundings. Thoughtfulness and self-reflection is something we hope is evident in the works we're presenting to you this month.

Please enjoy!
Huizhong & Huy-Liem

Huizhong Wu and Huy-Liem Nguyen
Editors of Hydertales

EDITORS
Huizhong Wu (University of Pennsylvania)
Huy-Liem Nguyen (Dickinson College)

IMAGE CREDITS
Hampi photoes by Sarah Eppler-Epstein

Issue 2, March 2014

TAGORE VS. HOMESTAY

One of the most important questions and decisions you have to face when studying abroad is where to live. This one decision impacts your entire experience. We asked two CIEE students to sound off on their respective choices.



Best part about where you're living:

Best part is that I get to actually feel like I live in India. I know how to get around, I know which rickshaws and buses to take. I feel like I'm getting an experience of living in India. I feel like I'm getting a lot more out of it.

Worst part about where you're living:

In the same vein, because we're far away. It's hard to get to things. Like "can I get home by 8 by myself?". That's an extra factor that you have to think about.

How's the food?

It's really good. Our host mom cooks and sometimes our host grandmother helps too.

One thing you would change about where you live:

I would make it closer to campus.

Favorite non-CIEE student in your living situation:

Our neighbor's kids are really cute.

What would you say to someone living in the other situation?

I would say try to get out of the bubble as much as you can because there's a lot going around outside the bubble. But also take advantage of the fact that you are on campus. And also just get involved with more things on campus.

Iris Bercovitz (George Washington University 2015)

Best part about where you're living:

The main reason I lived in Tagore was because I was already acclimated to living away from "home". My experiences with being in a home and in a family setting aren't really familiar or comfortable anymore. I just like the freedom.

Worst part about where you're living:

The bathrooms are not great.

How's the food?

I like the variety, I like that they serve Indian cuisine here in the cafeteria. I love paneer.

One thing you would change about where you live:

More outdoor space that's accessible to the students.

Favorite non-CIEE student in your living situation:

I really admire Mr. Das, he's so efficient.

What would you say to someone living in the other situation?

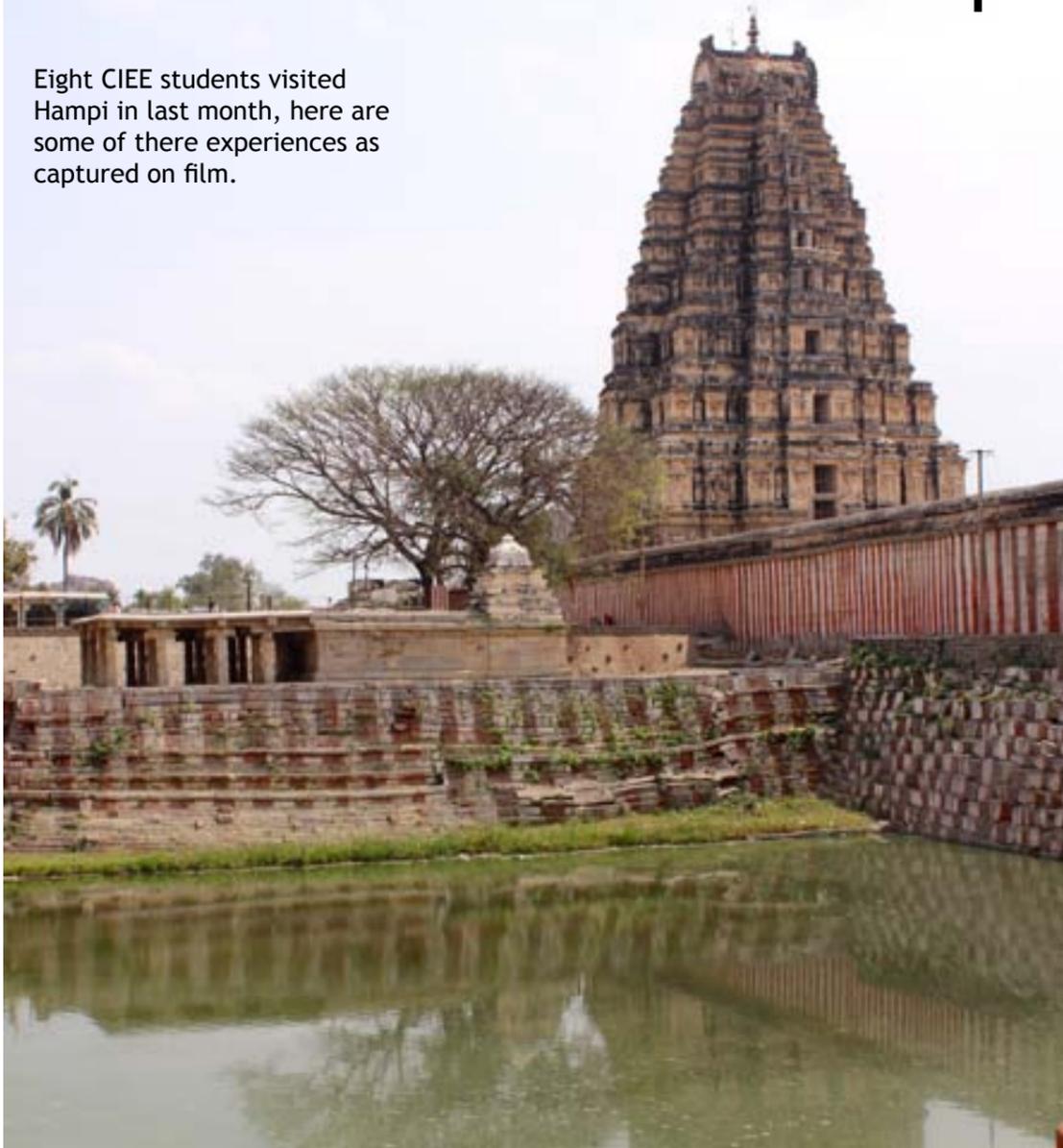
I know the commute sucks but living in a homestay is a really great and challenging experience. And good for you.

Danielle Burley (Dickinson College 2015)



Weekend in Hampi

Eight CIEE students visited Hampi in last month, here are some of there experiences as captured on film.



At Virupaksha, we saw the resident elephant, Lakshmi.



Across the river from where we stayed, we came across some friendly buffalo.

Jamie Namba (Occidental College 2015), sitting on a rock carved out by water during a hike.



Photos by Sarah Eppler-Epstein (Haverford College 2015)

Forging a 'Northeastern' identity



Students from the different Northeast states performing at Spackle, their annual cultural show. Photo courtesy of Ketho Seyie

By Huizhong Wu
(University of Penn-
sylvania 2015)

When one thinks of an Indian, the image that comes to mind is of a Hindu Brahmin. But India is a nation with many diverse and linguistic groups, including one group that has been neglected, even in the history books.

This group is what some call the Northeast. The Northeastern section of India comprises of 8 states and features over 200 languages. They are also labeled as “different” by the rest of India. On and off campus, students from these states are forced to deal with the consequences of being “different.”

The Indians from the Northeast region look different, a point that is often at the basis of this questioning of their Indian identity, first year Masters of Philosophy student in Political Science Limongi Khuvung said.

“They always see us, and ask, ‘Where are you from?’” said Philosophy professor Venusa Tinyi who has lived in Hyderabad for over a decade.

The questions continue: Are you from China? Are you from Thailand? These are common questions students and faculty alike face, both on campus and off-campus.

An ethnic and linguistic minority that can hardly be categorized under the blanket label of “Northeast”, their status in India recently came to the forefront of the news again with the death of 19 year old Nido Tania, a first-year university

student who died after being beaten by several Delhi shopkeepers, in what many have called a hate crime.

The incident has again brought up questions of identity and belonging, something that students from the Northeast face outside of their region on a daily basis.

First year Masters of Sociology student Renthungo Odyuo said that once on campus, a girl had approached him, saying, “Are you from China? I want to ask you something.”

However, many students still say that campus is a safe-space from the outside. Though they may face questions as to where they are from, they say they do not have to worry about being called racial slurs or face violent incidents.

“Inside the whole campus, there is no such [discrimination]. People accept you.” Masters of Philosophy in Sociology student Kevelil Neikha said. “Outside, in the city, I think the situation is pretty pathetic.”

There, students have been called things ranging from “chinky” to “noodles,” all targeted at their physical differences.

A source of this comfort on campus may also come from the active Northeastern student community on campus. There are over 300 students from the region on campus, and most students from each state have a committee and representation in the Northeast Students

Forum, which organizes social gatherings as well as acting as a problem solving team, Neikha explained.

2013 University of Hyderabad graduate Alung Longuah said she really liked the community she found at the University. “My two year stay at HCU was the best. I had a very wonderful time staying on campus.”

Now that she is living off-campus, in the city where there is not a large Northeastern population, she said “I miss the campus [and] seeing all the people from my place.”

Even if the campus is a relatively safe haven, problems still exist. Linguistics professor Grace Temsen said that she has often had instances where her “mainland” Indian colleagues have questioned her Indian-ness.

“I have professors asking me, ‘How come you’re Indian?’” She said. “Not once or twice. This keeps on happening.”

Odyuo does not blame anyone for these questions. “People from my place with features like me, we can’t blame ourselves, we can’t blame them,” he said. “Our features look this way.”

Still the fight for being accepted as Indian continues.

“Even when we accept ourselves as Indian, the rest of India does not accept us,” Temsen added.

Bheemavaram Bullodu

Homestay Movie Review: 2nd Edition

Lather on your mosquito repellent and pack your earplugs because Homestay Movie Review is heading to the theaters!

While you easily could have your neighbor Ajay download a version of Bheemavaram Bullodu someone filmed on their cell phone in the theater, you simply must experience the film in the singleplex yourself. Stepping into an Indian movie theater is like stepping into a different world.

As you get within three blocks of the theater, you might think a famous actor has just emerged from a limo, or perhaps a fireworks factory is in the process of exploding. Fear not - it’s just the earsplitting cacophony that is Telugu movie theaters. Audiences cheer for everything: actor Salman Khan stepping off a treadmill, prime minister candidate Narendra Modi, the diseased lung of a smoker - if its on screen, the masses will go wild. “When movie title screen comes, close your ears,” my host brother warns, advice that proves sage as the theater almost collapses when the Telugu words “Bheemavaram Bullodu” appear in front of us.

BB features the story of a

cowardly village boy who, when medical tests resulting from a misthrown metal pot reveal a brain cancer and a ten-day death sentence, decides to join his brother in the Hyderabad police to clean up the streets. Despite being a comedy, the movie starts with a surprising amount of tears, MRI machines, suicide attempts and the Telugu equivalent of funeral dirges.

Perhaps this emotional foundation makes the comedy seem that much stronger. Even if you don’t speak Telugu, much of the physical comedy translates nicely. Watch for 2014’s best use of oranges, laughing gas, disappearing babies, and surprise Jackie Chan cameos (yes, I said Jackie Chan).

If you want to understand more of the film, I highly recommend going with your host brother. His offer to clarify anything that confuses you will prove invaluable. Take this example:

HMR: Why did they pay [the fat villain]?

Host Brother: Nothing.

What really makes the movie though, is a small number of key supporting roles. If you thought the crowd went crazy for the

anti-smoking advert, wait until a small, intoxicated, famous comedian appears at the Birla Mandir. His monkey impression drive the crowd bananas! Not to mention the heroine’s best friend, who is remarkably similar to the American trope of the “Sassy Latina,” and the large blind man whose random meanderings around the City of Pearls somehow always bring him into contact with the main characters.

Despite a lack of chemistry between the leads, a fairly iterative plot, and an above average need for suspension of disbelief (even for Indian films, this movie’s concrete has a significantly higher than acceptable amount of bounce), HMR gives this film a “must see” rating. While the film itself offers a muted viewing experience, in the theater, muted is the last word you’ll hear.

P.S. I’m serious about the mosquito repellent. Your host sister got malaria at this theater last year. “Not malaria,” your host brother amends himself, “but very serious.”

By Ben Poor
(Occidental College 2015)



Bheemavaram Bullodu (2014)
Starring:
Sunil Varma and Ester Noronha
Directed by: Uday Shankar
Language: Telugu

The Hail

By Charlotte Ahlin
(Oberlin College 2015)

The hail fell as though it had a right to.

“I thought,” said Paul, “that it didn’t rain here in March.”

“It’s not raining,” said Heather, “it’s hailing.”

She stood at the window of their hotel room to watch the hail ping off the autos below.

“We get here and it starts hailing,” said Paul.

“Ooh look! Those kids are throwing ice chunks at each other. Like a snowball fight. But ice.”

“Mm,” said Paul. He sighed. Heather did not ask him what was wrong.

“It’s March,” he reiterated.

“I know,” said Heather.

She had not even once expressed her sympathy for the airline losing Paul’s bag. It was perfectly normal for bags to be delayed, the customer service woman had explained, and he could be sure that the airline would retrieve it for him. Paul had tried to calmly and politely explain that, while it might be perfectly normal for checked bags to be delayed, there was no possible explanation for his carry-on duffel bag disappearing from the overhead compartment somewhere in the airspace above Eastern Europe, and that the airline had to be kidding and was this the standard of customer service in this country? At that point Heather had sidled away to see if Indian McDonald’s still sold burgers.

Paul began to sift through Heather’s purse, thinking wistfully of the two travel-sized hand sanitizers tucked neatly into the side pocket of his absent bag.

“Let’s go out in the rain,” said Heather, whirling to face him.

“Do you have hand sanitizer?” said Paul, removing a handful of loose change and crumbs from Heather’s purse.

“No-that-stuff-just-weakens-your-immune-system, let’s go out in the rain!” Heather flopped onto the room’s double bed, hiding her surprise when it was not as soft as anticipated.

“Why do you have an unwrapped tampon in here?” asked Paul.

“The wrapper came off, I guess. I said I don’t have hand sanitizer.”

“Well, throw it out if the wrapper came off. Why are there loose raisins in your bag?”

“Gimme that,” said Heather, snatching her purse back. “Raisins are good for you. Are you coming with me or not?”

“Raisins are good for eating, not for decoration.”

“Paul.”

“Ok, ok—go out in the rain and do what?”

Heather threw her hands up, forgetting that she was still holding her purse and two sticks of chapstick went flying.

“I don’t know,” she said, “Play with those kids!”

“What, with the street kids?”

“Sure.” Heather stiffly gathered up her chapsticks from the bedspread. The windows rattled gently with the drum of hail on tin.

Paul sighed. Paul had a sigh for every occasion, each one calculated to infuriate Heather without provoking physical violence.

“Would you go out in Manhattan and dance with homeless people in the rain?” he asked

Paul saw at once that he had gone too far. Heather rose from the bed, her posture suddenly rigid, her

romper-over-leggings suddenly less ridiculous, her mop of brown hair crackling slightly with static.

“I,” she said, “am from Brooklyn.”

“No, I know,” said Paul. He swallowed to keep from laughing. “You know what I mean. I’m sorry. I’m sorry! C’mere.” He held out his arms, but Heather thwacked him with a pillow.

“I wouldn’t expect someone from Jersey to understand,” she said.

“Hey-hey, I’m from here!” Paul protested. Heather ignored him, unzipping her suitcase to dig out a rain slicker.

“I was born in Bombay,” he said.

“Mumbai. You’re not supposed to say Bombay anymore. Is my rain jacket in your suitcase?”

Paul did laugh this time. “I mean, yeah, but my mother’s from there and she always says Bombay. Why would your rain jacket be in my suitcase?”

Heather shrugged. “Right, but your dad’s American and you haven’t even been here since you were little.”

“Right, but you’ve never been here.”

Heather found the rain jacket under a wad of underwear and shook it out. “Yes, but you’re so... whatever, let’s just go do something. I’m sick of sitting after that flight,” she said, then slipped on the rain jacket and twirled for Paul’s benefit.

“No, what? I’m so what? What were you going to say?”

Heather reached up to ruffle his hair. “No-thing, Paul-y, don’t be grumpy. Let’s go, the rain’s going to stop soon!”

“It’s hail,” said Paul. He ducked her further attempts at ruffling.

“I hate when you try to be impulsive.”

“I’m not trying to be impulsive. I’m being impulsive.”

“Well, wake me when you’re done. I’m tired.” Paul sat on the bed and savagely removed his socks.

“And now you’re angry” Heather stated.

“I’m not.”

Heather began to put her shoes on as though they had done a great injustice to her.

“I’m not angry,” Paul said.

Heather stood. Her eye make-up was smeared slightly from the long flight, giving her a haunted look, pale and dangerous under the gray hail-light.

“This is what I mean,” she said.

“What’s what you mean?”

“At least I try to be impulsive. You... you didn’t even want to come here!”

Paul loosened his tie.

“I did, I said I did, in the end. I just would have liked to go to France. But we compromised.”

“France!” spat Heather. “Everyone goes to France!”

“Must be a nice place to go, then,” said Paul. He took off to tie completely, lest Heather think he was bluffing about the nap.

“But this is what I mean,” she said. She snatched his tie and held it at arm’s length. “You won’t come to couple’s yoga, you won’t go out in the rain, you wear a tie on an eighteen hour flight. You’re a... stuffed shirt!” She shook the tie for emphasis, already looking uncertain of her word choice.

“‘Stuffed shirt?’ C’mom. You sound like a Neil Simon play,” said

Paul, suppressing a smile.

“You see! You see! Neil Simon,” said Heather triumphantly.

“So, what’s wrong with Neil Simon?”

“But you won’t even read Arundhati Roy!”

Paul frowned. “It’s on my list. I put it on my kindle.”

“Kindle!” She rolled her eyes. “You’re just bougie, Paul. No sense of adventure. You’re so American.”

“Sure. I guess so.” He shrugged. He knew from experience that graceful capitulation would annoy Heather the most.

Heather deflated a little.

“All right. All right. I’ll go out in the rain alone then.”

“Hail... ok, have fun.” Paul stretched out on the bed.

“You want me to go out alone? With all those strange Indian men?”

“Sure, if I’m too American for you.”

“That’s not what I meant!” said Heather, but the color was rising in her cheeks.

“Find someone less American. If that’s all you want.”

“Paul...”

“I like my kindle. And France. It’s not even American to like France.”

“I didn’t mean to have a fight,” said Heather unconvincingly.

“No one’s fighting.”

“Oh, don’t be mean,” said Heather. She waited to see if she could come up with a better closing line, but when none came to her she flung his tie on the ground and swept up her purse before marching out the door. The hinges had been fixed so it wouldn’t slam, so Heather had to

resort to clomping down the hall as noisily as she could.

Paul rolled onto his side. He listened to the drip of icy rain slow, and then stop. He listened to the momentary silence before the city shuddered to life again. Outside the sky was a patchy gray, the sun already shouldering its way back into view. He dreaded the feel of cold tile on his bare feet when he rose to chase after Heather in the next minute or so. But he would. In a minute.

He wondered if he would ever see his duffel bag again.

The sun burst through the cloud bank, but from up in the hotel room he could not hear the pop of melting ice.

Salt of the Earth

Patrick Schlee
(Dickinson College 2015)

From behind the western mountains, the sun emerged and the azure acacia leaves glittered in the focused rays. They say the mineral-rich soil, though it appeared orange as the desert, gave the native leaves that renowned sparkle. Singers based entire albums off that time at dusk when a walk through the brush shined so romantically. But for me, struggling to stay in bed as long as possible before work, all the ghazals in the world couldn't make me hate the branches outside my window any less.

Crawling out of bed, I strapped my phone to my wrist, checking the weather, my newsfeed, the news. Updating my status, I typed: woke up by the sun, time for the harvest. FML. After wiping off my touchscreen, I sat down at the mirror, wrapping and tying my hair into a short choti. I eyed my make-up kit, resisting the urge to dash some eyeliner on, but gave in to the moisturizer, realizing how dry the day would be in the fields.

In the kitchen, Ami laid out our plates with puri and a samosa each as Khabir and Habib sat at the table, arguing over football and their favorite crime shows. I took my normal seat at the table between the two, gobbling down my food as they fought. Ami frowned at the arguing and finally yelled, "Enough already boys! Eat your food. And Habib, make sure you shut the power off before you leave today. I'm still paying for when you left it on last weekend."

"But Ami, Khabir told me he shut it down, I told you that. It was his fault..."

"I don't care whose fault it is, just double-check this time." She grabbed a samosa and left for work, adding, "Don't give the foreman any trouble, you've never worked for them before so expect the worst."

Habib muttered to himself while Khabir smirked and said, "Better get there on time then, don't want to miss a chance to give the foreman a piece of ours." Tossing his food on Habib's plate, Khabir left the table, yanking my braid as he passed by.

"Oi, Khabir!" I yelled, following him outside the tenement as we waited for Habib to lock up our house, "Don't you think you're a bit old to be pulling on girls' chotis anymore?"

"Don't you think you're a little old to be calling yourself a girl," he said, "You're almost eighteen Miriam, maybe you should start acting more like me."

"Please, like acting like you wouldn't land me in jail in a second! Amazing you're not."

"No, I think more people should act more like me. Then maybe people would stop complaining about things and start taking care of problems themselves."

"Is he talking himself up again?" My friend Hanyu broke in, joining us from her side of the tenement building. Our tiny one floor building included six tenements. My mom told me that when she first landed here twenty-odd years ago she shared her tenement with nine other people. We were lucky to have two separate rooms for four people. Hanyu slept with three of her five siblings. But despite that, she always kept a smile on throughout our walks to school or work.

"You know someday I bet he compliments himself into prison."

"That's what I said!" The two of us broke out into laughter as Khabir ignored us, feeling too mature to join our jokes. Habib locked up the front door, and we left down the road. The morning sky shined red with the dust that made the first colonists worry the planet wasn't fit for human habitation.

The azure acacias and brush, now lit a solid blue, rippled in the winds that whipped through the cotton fields, wrapping the smell of burnt fields and sandalwood around our bodies.

"So Dad finally lands in Shanghai, after like two layovers in Ares Station, and he literally collapses," Hanyu said, telling the story about her father's recent first-trip-to-Earth, "They said he was so unused to the air that it knocked him out. And it wasn't like all that stuff they usually say, about how like Earth is super polluted, but that he'd never been there before, cause he grew up on Mars y'know. Imagine...if we went there our heads might explode!"

"Haha, what if Habib went, he'd probably forget he's alien and drink groundwater," Khabir added, "Next on Strange Lives, the Man With No Stomach." We all laughed more at Habib's bulldog expression than Khabir's statement. These stories made perfect sense to us. My cousins still won't visit us, afraid of getting lung cancer or poisoned. Ami's generation, with only enough money for the ship tickets, landed here without masks, oxygen enrichment, all those things the colonists got in Narangabad. Our parents and grandparents weren't colonists as much as disposable labor. But to us, the first humans born here, this air and sky was the only thing we knew. Just like the orange dirt around us, twice as rich as Mars' soil, felt more like home than those steel streets around our Nana's home in Laputa, where Khabir joked that a mistake in the station's purifiers would poison everyone with Jupiter gases. I never slept at Nana's house again.

"You guys should really stop," said Habib, "Sometimes it feels like your jokes aren't jokes, and that I'm really doing something wrong all the time. But I know I'm not, so why do

people keep acting like I am?"

"Habib, shut up," Khabir responded, "You know we're just joking, so stop with the existential crisis already." Habib turned to the ground, avoiding our gazes for the rest of the walk.

Finally we arrived, the cane fields spread out before us. Every summer we went from field to field, cutting the cane, picking the cotton, plucking the oranges. Any work we could get during the harvest season, especially after school or during break. Usually we knew the owners, but recently plantations began buying up fields. You never could be sure who owned what anymore. Just like TV. One day you know who all the characters are, who's good and who's bad. Then suddenly heroes kills, villains save the day and the people that made you laugh aren't that funny anymore.

As frontier as this job was, the usual crowd awaited instruction around the foreman. Hanyu's family, smiling and welcoming their neighbors. The Olvera brothers, joking and high-fiving Khabir. Even the old men chewing their favorite plants, their wrinkled faces darkened by years of harvest. Sitting at a small desk, the foreman scribbled down each farmhand, all forty-seven of them. When I came up to report our names, he glanced up a moment, an eagle piercing into my eyes for any sign of ill will, before returning his gaze to the paper, muttering, "Next."

With everyone counted, the foreman rose from his seat, his chest unfolding to reveal his immense frame. The foreman held his shoulders up to show off the meat on his bones compared to the wiry farmhands masking their hardened strength from carrying heavy loads. Scanning the crowd again, eyes golden as they reflected the sun, he began to give instructions.

"Ya'll cut the cane here," he said pointing to the closest blackened field, "Each is expected to harvest two hundred stalks by the end, at least. You each get a machete and some

wrappings to pack it up. Get going, no cane, no credits."

Before the sun had been up an hour we grabbed our tools and set to work, slicing at the bottom of the towering stalks. The first cane is always the hardest to break. I chipped at the bottom of my first until it fell, then struggled to break it across my legs. When it finally broke the cut part knicked my hand and I yelped. Hanyu snorted, "Careful there Miriam, we don't want someone finding blood in their sugar packets."

"Ah, it's just a scrape," I said, "At least it wasn't the machete."

"Yeah, hey wait a minute," Hanyu read the handle, "Ionian Metals. Ain't that quality? Don't they make these by like shaving the blades with lasers, then they like magnetize the atoms so it won't dull. My mom has only one Ionian, a butchers knife. Cuts clean through bone. Magnetized laser-cut metal, only the best for your meals.' Their slogan."

"Then I guess we know why they're hiring us instead of using autos to harvest."

"Yeah, so expensive. Durable too."

"Probably still cheaper to buy these blades and hire us. Imagine, we could work all summer and still not afford this thing"

"Aw who needs a blade when you've got a phone or ebook. They're literally cheaper than a brick," said Danny Olvera, the loudest of the Olvera brothers.

"It's the principle of the thing," I said, "Here we all are, chopping cane while the foreman and his boss sit around drinking lemonade. And then they'll make all this money and we'll get 20 credits."

"The foreman wouldn't be drinking with the boss," Habib said, "He still has to watch us. And he probably doesn't make much more."

"That's not the point, Habib. It's still not fair that he makes more for beating us around."

Khabir snickered, "Well you aren't gonna make any more yapping

either." He pointed to my pile, nearly half of what everyone else already gathered. I turned away, hacking more at the stalks, feeling the sweat crawl down my face. I heard someone chewing on a stalk, the so-called perks of working in the field. Khabir nibbling on the stalks when the foreman turned his back down the line. A mouse grabbed better nibbles in-between the brush, the stalks rising to spear the sky and any bird trying to snatch baby mice from the nest. But there were no mice in these fields; they had already burned the brush for the harvest.

"Eeyuck," Khabir said, "Oi Danny, taste this sugar cane, isn't it weird?"

Danny split open a small piece and lifted it over his head, the green juice dripping sweet blood into his mouth. He choked, the juice splurting brown off his lips. Habib grabbed the piece, examined it and yelled, "The cane's bad! Look, its brown and black inside. Must be rotten."

Hanyu grabbed the piece from Habib and brought it over. The brown husk shivered with tiny insects, white gnawing bugs tunneling in the darkened meat. She dropped the cane when she saw the vermin, the smell alone wafting the memory of spoiled crop. We both smelled the fruits of our labor and turned away from the plant's core, trying to forget the paradox of this discarded life, a body rotting as it sprung from the ground.

cïee