

A stylized illustration on a dark blue background. Two red koi fish with a prominent cyan stripe running down their backs are depicted. One fish is in the upper right, facing left, and the other is in the lower left, facing right. They are surrounded by large green lily pads with black outlines. Two pink flowers with yellow centers are also present: one on a lily pad in the upper left and another in the lower right. The word "FLEUR" is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image.

FLEUR

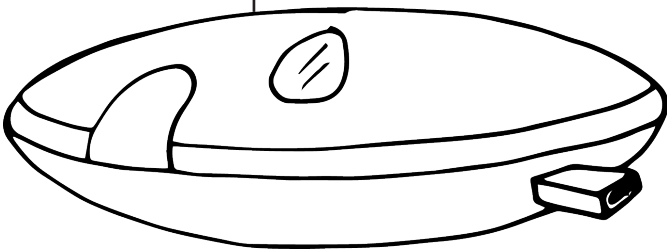
TANVI DESHPANDE

FLEUR

an introduction to a city that broke the  
barriers of possibilities

# 1

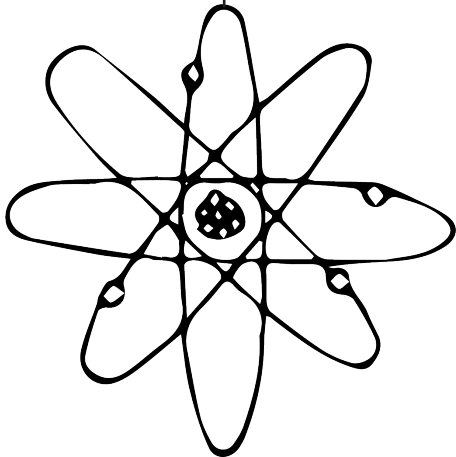
# Fireflies



I had heard the glorious tales of the city of Bluebell so many times that I believed it was necessary for me to see it for myself; to witness the magic, mystery and love if it were in fact true and real. So, I packed my bags, stuffed it with my clothes and some snacks for the road and set out on an adventure which I knew was going to be one for the books. At the port, I had to get on a boat to reach this strange place. As I reached the shore, I could only see trees and nothing else. I realized that the city of Bluebell is located 3 miles inside a thick green armour. An armour adorned with rare dainty flowers as if sent from heaven itself. Species of all sizes, shapes and colours inhabited this forest. On my way into the city, I could not believe my eyes as I thought that I saw a purple giraffe with black stripes. When I failed to find any logic, I dismissed it by thinking that I was either exhausted from my journey or there were some chemicals in the air that resulted into mysterious hallucinations. Little did I know that I was about to see many such things that didn't align with any form of logic. I could sense the eeriness in the air but paid no heed to it. As you get past the green ring, you arrive at a noiseless habitat where people live lives a little differently than every other person. People with special gifts that offer perks to their living. Using these gifts for good or evil and sometimes both. Morals have somehow lost their way in the process and have blurred the line between justice and injustice. As you venture further into this city, you will find floating houses that look like fireflies in the night light. A chic modern touch to the simple yet refreshing greenery. A view that astounds you with its complexity and leaves you wondering with the mystery that you can smell in its air.

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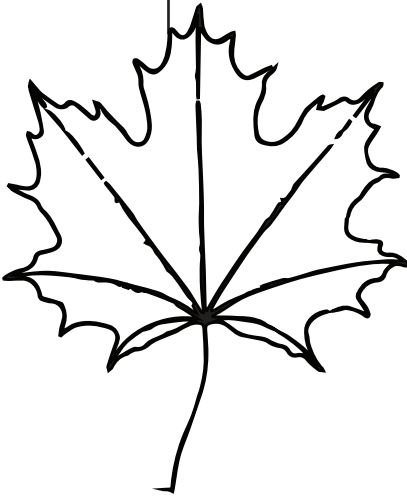
Atypical



**S**nowdrop is a city full of extraordinary people. People who have been blessed with gifts of all sorts. They had all the possible superpowers one could imagine and more. It was very puzzling to me at first, as I was seeing and witnessing things that made no sense. Wait! Is that a plane? A bird? Oh, it's them! You will not find a single person who is ordinary here. Even the people who had been deprived of these gifts were unordinary, as that is what made them unique. Walking on a single street I came across people who could read my thoughts and people who could teleport me to another land. People who could turn me into an animal and people who could make me vanish with a click of their fingers. People who could turn me into ashes with just a single breath and people who could make me instantly fall in love with them. I had to hence be careful as I did not wish to die, either from fire or from love. Even though people had these powers, I noticed that Gods and Goddesses were absent and so were their figurines. Their gifts had no explanation yet they were devoted to science. In spite of the fact that everyone had different powers, they had a few things in common. They could soar into the sky like a bird, as if it were electricity supplied to them into their blood. Everyone here was happy and content as if their troubles melt like snow on a hot summer's day. They all seemed very compassionate and kind to each other without having any expectations, a trait that the people I knew back home lacked of. Oh, how I wish I could be one of them. Be a part of a land that lacked the pains of heartbreak and misery. But I was simply an outsider passing through.

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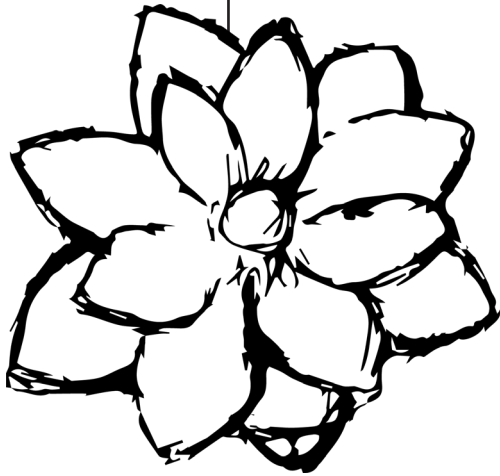
Grandeur



When you first arrive at the city of Bramble, it can be easy to make assumptions about this place. One would think that due to the way of living of the people in this city, the environment would be at risk, but I was surprised to learn that people here have adopted a sustainable way of living. They have found ways to fulfil their needs and wants and not harm the environment in the process. I could only hope for this to be the reality back home. People in my city loved to talk about how their actions are negatively affecting the environment but never took any drastic measures to try and cause less harm. The residents of Bramble, live lives worthy of kings and queens. Their floating houses are just one of the many luxuries they enjoy. These houses were a mystery to me ever since I set eyes on them for the first time. I had several questions as to the whys and the hows. Initially, I imagined them to be a product of magic because everything that existed here had powers for which there was no explanation. As I enquired, I learned that these houses worked on the principles of magnetism. The land in this city was rich in graphite which repelled the magnets attached to the bottom of these houses. It was a city that was free from the evils of plastic and others as such. It was interesting to see how the knowledge of science and the awareness towards the environment were the core foundation of this city. But it was not just their awareness towards it, they worshipped nature and had sworn to protect it. They believed it to be the origin of all life forms and the end of them as well. People here said that they could hear the nature, that they could talk to it and it back to them. They listened to the forest when it called out to them. They said to me, “You will find all the answers if you just listen”. An advice I shall never forget as it was true not only for the forest but the people around me.

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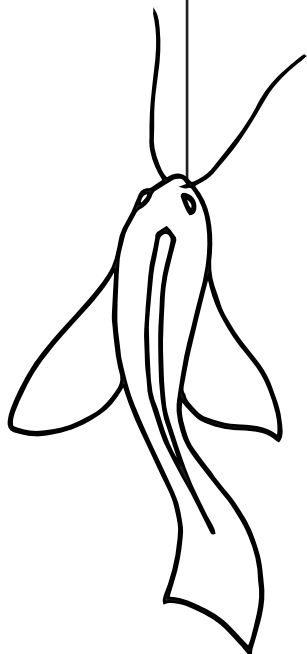
Bloom



**A** bud goes through the process of growing into a flower and then that flower goes through the process of eventually dying. But in the same plant there is another bud that goes through the cycle of life and death. People in the city of Daisy lead a similar life. Everyone here goes through the journey of birth, growth and death. They pass on their gifts to the next bud like a baton and the cycle hence goes on and on. This jungle has only a few plants and flowers but that is the reason due to which their lives are so much easier. There is not an abundance of flowers but that is one of the most beautiful features of this city. In Daisy, I did not come across any offices and was puzzled as to where did these people go to work. The presence of technology has helped people navigate their lives more efficiently. Working from their houses itself has not only enabled them to spend more time with their loved ones but also reduced commute and hence eliminated pollution of any sorts. Artificial intelligence had provided a life of comfort and ease to the residents of Daisy. The professions of these people were the only thing I found to be familiar to me. They had the basic occupations needed for sustaining; trade, farming, engineering, medicine, etc. I found Daisy to be a city full of art as I could see paintings and sculptures on every street, exhibited for everyone to see. No street was left dull. The people in this city were some of the biggest advocates of the arts and truly helped it flourish since the beginning of their existence. As I was roaming the streets in awe, I could not help but think how fortunate had I been to come upon a land so peculiar and different than mine.

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Fête



**P**oppy was a city with chessboard like roads decorated with bright markets. Every other street unlike the one before. Calling the streets colourful would be a great understatement. The markets were filled with shops that sold fresh produce. You would find every known and unknown kinds of spices, vegetables, fruits, meat and fishes in this place. As the day was turning into dusk, I felt a weak sadness in my heart because I didn't want that day to be over. But I noticed that the faces around me were lit up as if they were looking forward to the night. This was the day that I witnessed what a true celebration is all about. To the people in Poppy, each day was Christmas and people gathered on the land below them to celebrate with great enthusiasm and excitement. Everyone gathered around a small bonfire and rejoiced. They did this everyday as if it were a ritual of some sorts. Children's faces as vibrant as their clothes. Adults sharing a glass of wine and laughing their fears away. The skies lit up from the lights of the houses and the lights that hung from the twinkling stars. The ponds glowing with a blue light that looked as if it came from within the fishes. The birds marched around the bonfire as though it were a parade. The trees sang songs of the past while the stars above showed the possibilities of the future. The wind danced hand in hand with the delicate clothes people had on. The animals called out to their ancestors in the mystical night. The moon smiled down upon us as if the joy had spread as far as his land. It was the biggest the party I had ever been to. A party where there were no different groups of cool people, nerds, stoners or theatre kids. Everyone partied together with love and no prejudices in their hearts. A celebration complete with delicious food and blissful music. It was a magical night in a magical city.

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Belleza



**I**n the city of Hydrangea, beauty is personified. It was seen not only in its structure but also in its people. I felt as though my eyes and soul had never been blessed in such a way. The compassion people showed me despite them being far more superior to my ordinary self, pulled the strings of my heart and played a memorable song. Evil does exist in this beautiful city but somehow it does not outshine the magic that the good brings. Rules are non-existent but discipline is what keeps this city from going into total chaos. It seems as though it were one of the powers they possessed. People here appear to be tied together with a single thread into a garland of a variety of flowers. Everyone was different yet similar. Everyone was free. Free to love, free to paint and free to do whatever they wanted with their lives without having to worry about other people's opinions or judgements. The city was not littered with trash like politics or dictatorship, it was a truly democratic and independent city where every man was equal. People led harmonious lives and had unity amongst them. This unity was instrumental in preventing invasion or siege. These features of Hydrangea are what made her so beautifully unique. I came upon a city that thrived on the past but looked forward to the future and yet be in the present. On that one night that I spent in Hydrangea, I learned some unforgettable lessons that I cannot fathom into words. To have been to Hydrangea was an honour of the greatest form as it was a city that broke the barriers of possibilities. If I was to ever come upon this city again, I would cherish every moment a little more than I did last time.