





MARCH-APRIL 2022 ISSUE 9 | VOLUME 6

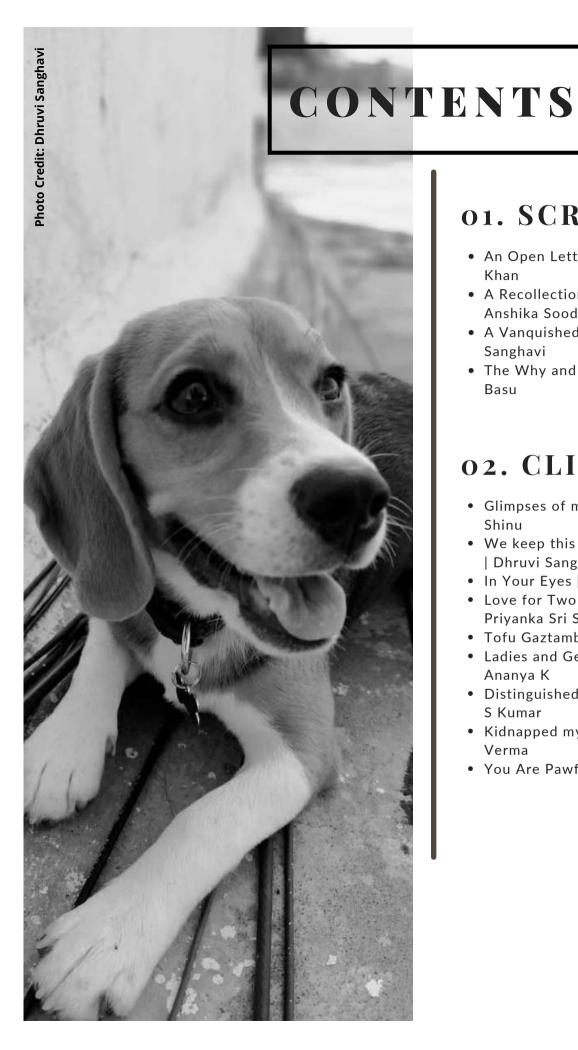


#### PET PAW-PARAZZI

By Ellipsis-The English and Cultural Studies Association, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bannerghatta Road Campus

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#### 01. SCRIBBLER

- An Open Letter to a Friend | Bilal
- A Recollection of the Past | Anshika Sood
- A Vanquished Paradise | Dhruvi Sanghavi
- The Why and the How | Amita Basu

#### o2. CLICK IT

- Glimpses of my Sun | Ashin Adai Shinu
- We keep this love in a photograph | Dhruvi Sanghavi
- In Your Eyes | Ashmita Das
- Love for Two Generations | Priyanka Sri S
- Tofu Gaztambide | Anoushka Gupta
- Ladies and Gentlemen- MUFFIN | Ananya K
- Distinguished Gentleman | Rukma S Kumar
- Kidnapped my friend's dog | Teena Verma
- You Are Pawfect | Vanshika Sood

# **FOREWORD**



Photo Credit: Harshita Rai

In the eyes of the pet-lovers, pets are precious above and beyond all else, because, why not? Litscape's Spring Issue brings you an edition where our contributors share their memories and anecdotes of their beloved furry and chirpy companions! So em-bark on this paw-some journey to uncover some purr-fect stories with us.

- Litscape Heads Harshita Rai & Nirmita Bhattacharya













# SCRIBBLER



#### AN OPEN LETTER TO A FRIEND



Bilal Khan 2033108 4ENGH

To Trivedi,

The other day, I was thinking about you. I was wondering if you are still irritated by me. And that's why I am writing this letter. I mean, wouldn't it be beautiful if you could talk? But if you could tell me what you felt, I would be scared of you as well. Do you know your name still offends my friends sometimes? How could I tell them that your name is derived from Sacred Games? "Everyone will die. Only Trivedi will survive!" I wish your siblings could have survived. I usually think of your indifferent reactions when I used to rant in front of you. You were a good listener, and I also knew you were just hungry when you used to rub against my face. I knew you would leave me as soon as I gave you your basic desire. But still, there was this appeal to cater to you. I would sometimes come home from school just to sit with you and laugh at my jokes. Jokes that were uttered just between us. I like to believe that when you went on your nightly strolls, from one roof to another, you would tell those jokes to your cat friends and validate yourself, as I did in front of you.

66

I think if this letter ever reached you, you would come back

I also think about the image of me in your mind. Was the "me" in your mind the actual "me" who adored you? The "me" who named you, protected you and nursed you.

The "me" who never cared how many times you ignored me or scratched me. A "me" who always thought that there was an absence of affection in this reality. Somehow, I would have some kind of relief knowing that there is at least one kind of "me" in your mind. I see a lot of Instagram cats, and all I see are fluffy beings in human clothing and accessories. They have expensive toys, some diabolical contraptions known as "cat towers," and one even had a full house setup. I sometimes wonder if you also wanted to be like them. If you wanted to wear my t-shirt or be me. But I think you did not want any of that. You had scratches from the fight you got into last night. I think of your fur that had patches of skin showing, which made you, you. I won't take more time. I think if this letter ever reached you, you would come back. I hope you come back. The uncertainty you left behind cries for your presence every night. I do not know where you vanished one normal day, but I know life has not been normal since. Now no one laughs when I crack jokes. Now, I have no one who absolutely hates me, yet I still love them. You are gone, yet your absence echoes, but your meows don't. There are mice everywhere, and the birds are living their best lives. All I wonder sometimes is if you are fine and still a chonky cat. At last, I would just say that I don't hope you come back, I just wish you are alive.

Yours truly...

Bilal Khan

# A RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST

Anshika Sood 2112740 2BCOMIF

In the late summer of April, you entered my life like a summer breeze,

pleasant and mellow but a breath of fresh air.

At first, I was scared by your little paws

but would still laugh at your lost cause.

When I used to come from school exhausted and drowsy, you would rush to lick my face melting all my sorrows with joy. These days I feel.

there's something missing in my life I sense it every day in my bones that how much I miss you

how much I crave your love.

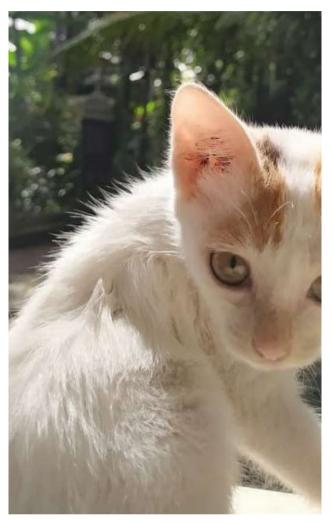
When I left you to pursue my dreams my entire world screamed for your gleam.

Gone are those days when we would snuggle all day long

keeping each other close and warm.

Now all I have are the memories of ours ingrained in my heart with the desire of us never falling apart.

If the existence of angels are real then you are my favorite epithet.





If the existence of angels are real then you are my favourite epithet

#### A VANQUISHED PARADISE



Photo Credit: Dhruvi Sanghavi

Dhruvi Sanghavi 2130384 2PSENG How do I tell people that you're gone?
It's 2 am and my pillow is drenched in tears,
And somehow, these two hours feel like a
thousand years. I can't move because of the
weight on my chest
Of sorrow and yearning,
That just won't give my brain some rest.

How do I explain to people,
That I so wish for just one last walk in the park,
Our one final rendezvous into the dark;
For one more drive in the windy breeze
With our heads in the air, our hands brushing
against trees. To have just one more conversation
about how YOU saved me, While you lovingly look
at my face
pretending to understand my misery.

How do I convey to people, That every time I stumble upon the toys on the floor, Or hear the shrill ringing bell of a visitor at the door, I can picture your tiny paws and wagging tail, Running to me in joy, each time without fail. How do I tell people that you're gone? And all that's left of you is a scream pounding in my head, Cursing me for all the things that I left unsaid. Why didn't I tell you that you were my 'goodest' girl, the best dog in the whole wide world. Why didn't I give you just one more treat? The harmful kind that you love- the ones that are so sour vet so sweet. If only I could throw you a ball. For you to fetch and relinquish your feat. Why did our journey have to end so incomplete? Why? Why is the only thing that is left of you a scream rushing through my veins,

Why is the only thing that is left of you a scream rushing through my veins, Scorching into my skin, burning up my organs in flames, This chain, this unbearable pain, How do I explain?

Our pictures are all that I own
But soaking Polaroids don't have the magic to clone,
Our beautiful story has been reduced to an ocean of
teardrops, To an unfinished sentence that will never get
its full stop.

I don't know how to explain to people that you're gone. But I do know how to describe our perfect bond, Because you were not just a pet but a best friend, a sister and so much beyond. And even though we pulled you out of your suffering,

We fell into ours.

Your name will forever be engraved in our hearts.

And until I reunite with you up there
my agony won't decrease,
Because only then will my screams of anguish turn into
smiles of peace.

# THE WHY AND THE HOW

Amita Basu Assistant Professor Psychology, BGR Minerva's pups are three months old, no longer feeding eighteen times a day, but they're hungry first thing. She feeds the three that remain with her. Then she licks them over, sniffing and assessing, while they play-yawn-scratch for fleas – multitasking, for fleas never end. They resist her grooming now, squirming vigorously. She's satisfied. Leaving her pack to babysit her three furballs, she embarks this fine spring morning on morning patrols – trailed by last week's newcomer, Ulysses: a young male on probation to

join the pack. Minerva's decided today's the last day of his probation. He doesn't know.

Crossing the street, attendant in trail, Minerva fights the urge to peer into the cardboard box where she's deposited the other three from this litter. The first pup looked alright, but spelled wrong; sure enough, he died the next morning. She picked him out of the box-of-rejects and laid him, soft-mouthed, on the rubbish heap downstreet, to give the other two chances. These two are runts. Last autumn Minerva felt herself running dry earlier than usual. She realised three pups was all she could hope to bring through the winter. The mathematics of motherhood isn't easy, but it is simple.



I'd love to be brave like you, mistress;
Bravery has nothing to do with it.

Approaching the box-of-rejects she succumbs; she slows. Neck rigid, head forward, she peers sidelong. Inside the box, on the blankets the seedy, hobbling man brought three months ago, bloated with the biscuits he brought last evening, her two runts sleep. Rapid heartbeats shake tiny bodies; kohl-rimmed eyelids flutter with dreams. Minerva's nostrils quiver. They smell healthy. She hoofs it before they can smell her, awaken, and meet her gaze.

'Thank you, seedy stranger,' she thinks. 'I forgive you the epithets you fling me across the street. Bitch, you call me. Well, what do I look like?' Minerva and Ulysses turn into the mansion-lined street. Minerva braces.

"Morning, bitch! Go to hell, bitch!" the Dalmatian's formidable bass roars from behind his high gate. The mansion behind him is big, but his people never let him indoors. His home is this tiny roofless concrete yard, which he shares with the giant black mirror-shiny car radiating heat.

"Morning, big!" Minerva replies. "How's it feel to be a living burglar-alarm?" "I've got people, bitch! They look after me!" The Dalmatian's lean-muscled body tenses into one long spring of rage. Minerva knows Big's gate is securely locked. Head raised, tail arched, she prances before the gate. "'Your people,' big! I've seen what they feed you. Dry stale bread." "You pup-murdering bitch! Everybody knows you! Nobody likes you!" The Dalmatian barks himself mad.

They exchange the same greetings every day: still, this stabs Minerva's heart. She knows she's doing right for her pups who're alive, who've a chance to stay alive. But how does a mother ever really know? Neither easy nor simple. Tossing her head, she sings, "Nobody respects you, Big. Bark-bark-barking away, guarding the people who'll toss you on a rubbish heap should you so much as sneeze. So long!"

"Why're you such a bitch!" he roars after her. The other mansions are guarded by Alsatians, Weimaraners, Pomeranians, and other imported status symbols, all tied out in sunbaked stone yards beside Mercedes, BMWs, and Volkswagens. The only walking these house dogs get is down to the corner to poop, on a five-foot lead, dragging an overworked undergrown servant-boy. Minerva greets all her acquaintances. "Why're you such a bitch!" their cacophony

He nods back towards their passage of terror. "Why're those dogs like that?" "They have people, but their people don't love them," says Minerva. "They're bored all day, they feel bad, so they make others feel bad... You told me once, young dog, that you wished you had people. That's natural – we were bred to need people. But as bad as it is having nobody, it's worse having somebody who doesn't love you." There's something worse still: to have somebody who loves you and then not. But Ulysses doesn't need to know this – not till she knows he'll stay. "Ready?" "Yes, ma'am." They trot on.

Minerva was born on the street. The first object in her awareness was Mother, nosing the litter indifferently. Mother exerted herself only to snap her pups away from her dry teats, and shuffle away, shedding pup-sized chunks of fur. Fatless, hairless, Mother would've won a 'Sexiest Bitch' contest had she been born in the mansions. But, on the streets, skinny and hairfree isn't sexy. It's a death warrant. Savage street dogs have savage beauty standards: fat and hirsute.

One evening Mother crossed the street away from her pups. They huddled together, watching her big-eyed. Next morning the glossy black ravens were picking at her innards

through the curtain of sparse fur, their faces frowning and scowling, like epicures deigning to slum it. From their open-air sewer-view eateries, the poor people threw their scraps not into dustbins but into the orphaned streetpups' mouths. So Minerva and her littermates survived a week. They were lucky: in a rich neighborhood there would've been more rubbish, but all cast into man-high heavy-lidded rubbish-bins. For, to civilized people, littering is the bigger sin.

A child found the pups, oohing and aahing, picking them up in turn to nestle under her coat. When Minerva, briefly warm, was put down again, panic seized her. She growled her littermates away. The child scolded her for being selfish, but laughingly, and picked her up again, turns be damned. She took Minerva back home, fed her, and tucked her into her soft bed. That was Minerva's first lesson in survival: take people not at their word, but at their deed.

Minerva grew rapidly. She guarded her food; her mistress let her. All day she barked through her mansion-gates at streetdogs. Her mistress scolded her, but laughingly. Minerva turned two; her mistress turned twelve, and no longer thought a snapping nobreed dog cute. She bought a snow-white Pomeranian – a yapping snapping midget Minerva hated instantly – and expelled Minerva. No pack would accept the young human-spoiled bitch. She'd never learned to grin and cower; she'd learned only her way or the highway. So she carved out her own territory.

She looks around for her attendant. Ulysses is still cowering at the other end of the street. Now he sprints towards her, tuck-tailed, eyes wide, eye-whites showing. She laughs. "You'll get used to them." Ulysses licks his lips. "Will I?" He shakes his body, vigorously head to tail. Easy to shake things off that way. But not easy today: for he suspects today's the last day of his probation.

"You'd better," says his pack leader. "I can't have you cowering anymore. Here it's alright – these fools are locked in, can't hurt us. But up ahead – if the other street dogs smell your fear, we're done for." She whirls on him and lifts her lip. "You hear me?" Ulysses flattens himself, ears pressed back, teeth exposed in imbecile grin. "Yes, ma'am. I shan't disappoint you."

"Let's go." She knows she can trust him. He can't afford to be exiled from another pack.

We humans are picking up Bangalore's street dogs and sterilizing them – ostensibly as an act of mercy, given street dogs' low quality of life: fleas, mange, fights, and starvation. Humans, judging quality of life: can you deny we have a sense of humor? After the surgery, the municipal workers are supposed to return each dog to its original territory. But the workers aren't paid enough to take pains. They deposit the dogs willy-nilly, triggering fights between strange street dogs. A fitting ending to this whole act-of-mercy scheme – for street dogs fighting was where it really started. Food is scarce. Dogs fight for scraps. Occasionally a human gets caught in the crossfire. We can't have that. This is our city. So haul out the whitewash. 'Quality of life' and 'act of mercy.' Ulysses is a victim of relocational conflict and displacement. He himself was never picked up: he's intact. That was the first thing Minerva's wet black nose checked last month.

"Now steel yourself," she warns as they turn into the second mansion-lined street. "Head up." She keeps Ulysses in sight, compelling him to walk abreast. He shakes and cowers. She nips his ear in warning. He yelps, more startled than hurt. Thereafter he holds himself reasonably upright; and, when a new bark from behind another locked gate joins the chorus of hate, only his face flinches; his legs walk on. They turn the corner. Ulysses looks ready to vomit from the strain: lean legs trembling, dirty-brown fur falling like third-class snow, stress-yawning fit to swallow his own head. "Not bad," Minerva concedes. "Take a minute and collect yourself."

One narrow driveway at first. Then she had her first litter. She could barely feed herself – how would she feed a litter?

It was impossible and she did it. For becoming a mother didn't just double her appetite – it showed her she'd been right all along: it was you versus the world, and the right choice was always you. She felt the right choice in her bones, in her teats as her six pups

pulled at them. Nothing but her own fight stood between her and death, death seven times over.

Minerva and Ulysses trot up the street between the empty lots. These lots used to stand unwalled; people used to toss rubbish here. Now they're walled off and rubbish-free – lesson: if you love something, wall it up – and sprouting big buildings. Minerva studies them, an expert after ten years in the ever-expanding suburbs. Soon there'll some people living here. People from big buildings seldom feed streetdogs: but there'll be more shops now, and where there're shops, there're scraps. The two patrolling dogs reach the eastern end of their territory. They survey the shops. Grocer's. Nothing for them here, unless a pack of biscuits slips from a shopper's bag, and Minerva's teeth can perforate the plastic.

Greengrocer's. Again nothing. As they approach, a stunted adult dog, all shame forsaken, is gnawing a disintegrating turnip. He looks up. His chin lowers in obeisance to the pavement strewn with wilted cabbage-leaves; his tail wags as if rotoring for liftoff.

Preemptive appeasement at 180mph, guarding his beggar's breakfast.

"Greetings, mistress!" he cries feebly. Minerva casts him an imperious glance. "Off on morning rounds?" Yes, she signs. "Don't suppose I could join you?" Minerva looks away. She hates saying no. Has he no shame, begging her every day? "No, I'm not worthy," the stranger sadly concludes. Minerva and Ulysses walk on. The stunted dog calls out, "Tell me, mistress! How can I become like you?'



Minerva stops and glances over her shoulder. "Suppose you're starving," she postulates, hating herself for saying 'suppose.' "You can either swallow a rotten turnip nobody wants, or fight other dogs for a scrap of meat. What d'you do?"

The stranger glances at his half-gnawed turnip, then up at Minerva, caught between a lie and a wrong answer. "I'd love to be brave like you, mistress," he begins – "Bravery has nothing to do with it." She prances on; Ulysses in tow throws back a smirk.

"So you won't tell me how?" the stunted dog calls after them. They're halfway down the road. "I couldn't stomach vegetables, not even if I were dying," Minerva calls. "That's how." What she doesn't add is: vegetables don't make good milk. Let him think it's pride. Ulysses is surprised Minerva deigns to acknowledge the stunted dog. He'd be astonished if he knew they've had this conversation often before. He asks. She replies. Nothing changes.

Dairy booth. Smells good, and the plastic milkbags are thin – but they're careful never to drop one between the refrigerated truck and the cartons stacked outside the booth. But this dairy-booth-owner also makes tea. Customers stand around blowing on the tiny hot glasses, munching biscuits, dropping crumbs. Occasionally someone throws Minerva half a biscuit – if she begs right. The morning tea-crowd has gathered. Minerva decides they'll stop by on the way home. And here, at the end of their territory, stands the chicken-shop. Minerva's pack shares this with two others, who've also arranged their territories wisely.

Early customers survey the dirty-white chickens stuffed into the stack of filthy plastic crates stacked outside the shop. Dogs from the other packs are queueing, wagging furiously whenever the butcher steps outside to retrieve another chicken, skinny throat in well-pecked fist. The queuers snarl warnings at each other not to jump rank. Dogs don't queue in a line, as we do – what sensible creature would let out of sight the object it's after? Dogs queue in a semicircle, but everybody knows his place, though he may in desperation pretend to forget it.

The other packs' dogs greet Minerva and Ulysses with lifted lips. Bad timing. The butcher steps doorwards and flings out a fistful of entrails. Minerva leaps to catch midair the liver, still hot and palpitating, blood still flowing. Liver in mouth she sprints away, legs tucked under belly, newcomer in trail. The other dogs growl and bark, but can't give chase, too busy fighting over the remaining scraps. Safely around the corner Minerva stops to eat. At a respectful distance Ulysses stands drooling, not daring to beg. She closes her eyes so as not to see him, pretending to close them in delectation. He must learn to fend for himself. She's not his mother. 'Good thing for him I'm not,' she thinks, half-vicious, half-sad.

"We'll try again later," she reassures him, licking her lips. Meat makes good milk: her pups will drink well tonight. "Just dash in boldly and snatch the choicest morsel." "But ma'am," Ulysses objects, "Your timing was picture-perfect. Isn't that just luck?" "Ha! Today I did get lucky. But I snag a mouthful or two of entrails and fat even on bad days... Now, watch." Back at the dairy-booth that sells tea, she sits, neatly on her haunches, forepaws together, head tilted, eyes as big as she can make'em without'em popping out of her skull. We bred dogs to be workers; now we want them to be toys.

"Sit as I do," she mutters. "No, fool. Closer to me. Out here you're allowed right beside me. Act democratic. They like feeding democratic dogs."

A man in a biking jacket, wielding a helmet that makes Ulysses flinch, drops two white-flour, dyed-brown biscuits before them. Minerva signs Ulysses to eat'em both – he looks at her again to make sure – and, on his behalf, wags gently. Their benefactor saunters away, chest outthrust, as if he's cured cancer. Minerva watches Ulysses eat. He'll do, she thinks, as they trot homewards. He smelled trustworthy the day he came crawling. He's small but strong, like her, and he learns fast. He just needs confidence. That'll come. She needs new blood for her children to breed with. She's nearing the end of her breeding-days: running dry, forced to abandon half her annual litter, dodging the sterilisation brigade. If she can grow her pack, maybe someday they can monopolise the chicken-shop. On this street, too, big buildings are rising. People in big buildings eat more chicken and fewer vegetables. Maybe someday every pack will have its own chicken-shop. Maybe someday dogs can stop fighting.

Back on their street she holds her head erect, staring straight ahead. But her eyes flit: first to her three pups, still alive thank god, why wouldn't they be, well-fed, play-fighting with her last year's daughter – who moped when Minerva, pregnant again, cut her loose at nine months old. But she stuck around and made herself useful, becoming third-incommand. As the balmy morning breeze wafts from the rubbish-dump upwind the hundred-rainbow of rubbish fresh and stale, organic and plastic, Minerva's eyes narrow with pleasure, and her mind mellows. She's ready to start training her successor.

Next she surveys the adults. Nine including Ulysses behind her, all sterile bar herself and her children and Ulysses. Soon she'll lead them all out on feeding rounds. She always leads them herself. She's a bitch of a certain age in a world where food-mountains festers in landfills that were once villages: she can't afford to delegate. Finally, her eyes flit to the card-It's gone. The cardboard box-of-rejects with her two runts is gone. She's so shocked

she almost gives herself away, dashes away to go looking for'em. But that would never do  $$^{18}$$ 

"All her pack up ahead are watching her, eyes indolent with morning languor, but watchful. Minerva walks onward, eyes forward.

Now that they're back home Ulysses has dropped from democratic personal distance to savage. Eleven feet behind her, he asks sotto voce, "How d'you do it, ma'am? How are

you are so tough, and how can I become like you?"

The sneak! He's watched her watching her run across the street. But he won't tattle. He can't afford to.

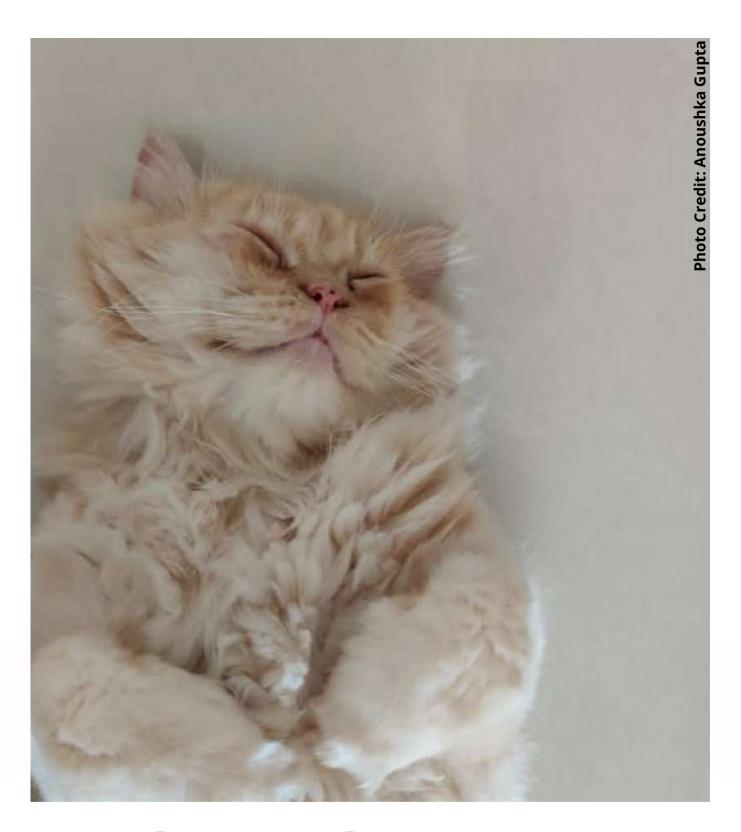
There are two kinds of dogs.

Some dogs ask Minerva why she's like this. Other dogs ask her how they can get like this. Neither kind is looking for an answer. The dogs on the mansion-lined streets don't ask her why she's a bitch; they tell her she is one. Neither are the dogs who ask her 'how' seeking a real answer. The turnip-gnawing dog chose his lifepath long ago. Now, his 'how' is not a request for a tutorial. It's an expression of admiration, so that she won't nip him; an expression of his gangster fantasy, so that she won't utterly despise him.

But facing the humble-tongued, keen-eyed newcomer this balmy spring morning, Minerva feels expansive. "How?" she repeats. "Live my life, Ulysses, and survive it, that's

how. Now tell me – d'you fancy any of my daughters? My youngest will be in heat soon." Ulysses wriggles with gratitude – that she'll let him stay, eat, breed. Minerva indulges his stammering thanks, and allows herself one last glance at the spot across the street where her runts were. Wherever they may be now, they're better off.

A mother knows.



# CLICK IT



# Ashin Adai Shinu's — — — Digital Album



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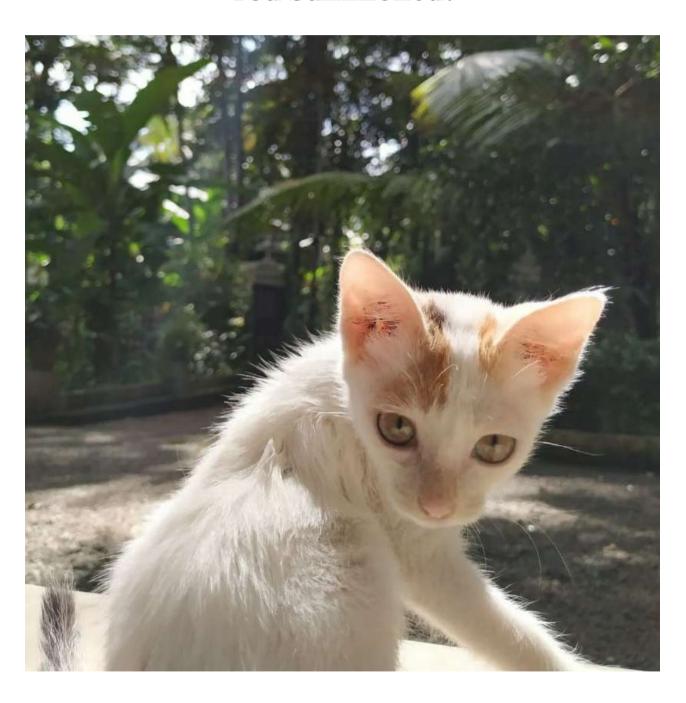


As sweet as her honey eyes





You Summoned?



#### The white wisps of a young'un



# Dhruvi Sanghavi's -

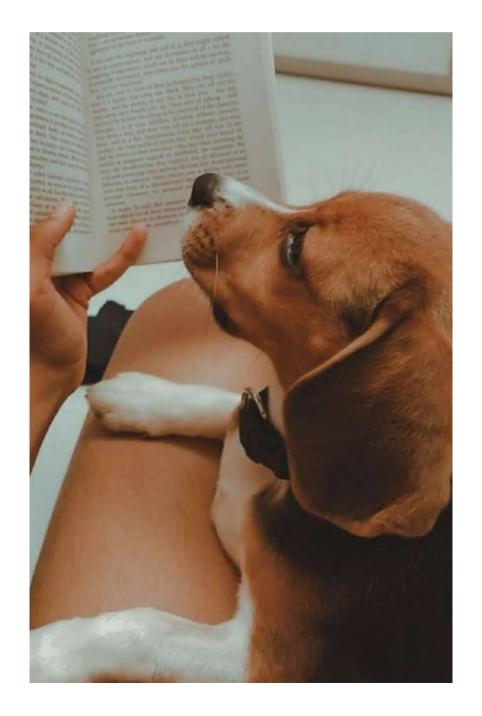
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#### Our own little book club

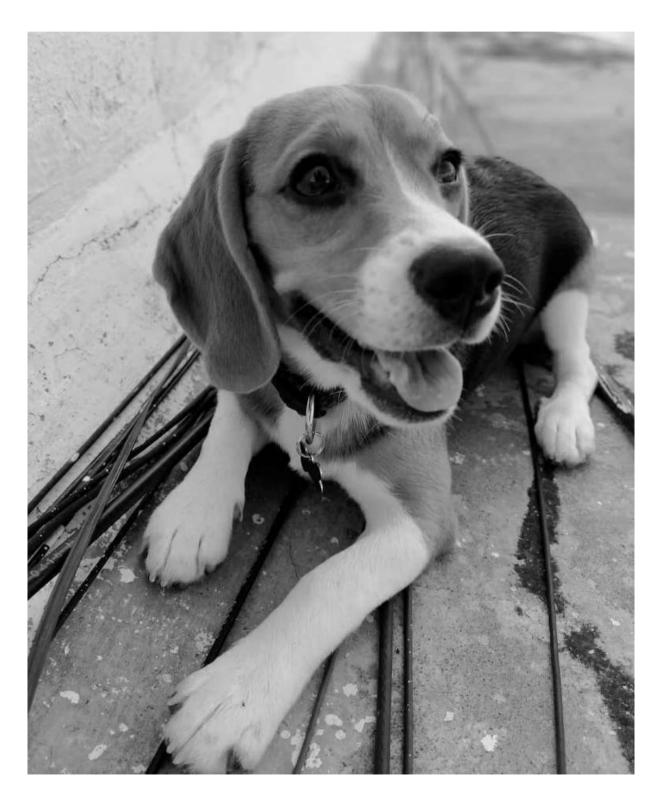


## There's no one else I'd rather kiss





I'm all the colour this picture needs



The pictures capture our last moments together in the most precious way and remind me of her love. All of these pictures were taken just a few hours before my dog was taken away from me forever.



### **Ashmita Das's**

## **Digital Album**





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# There's a different world beyond this reality in your eyes. You don't speak, your eyes reflect.



#### I see you

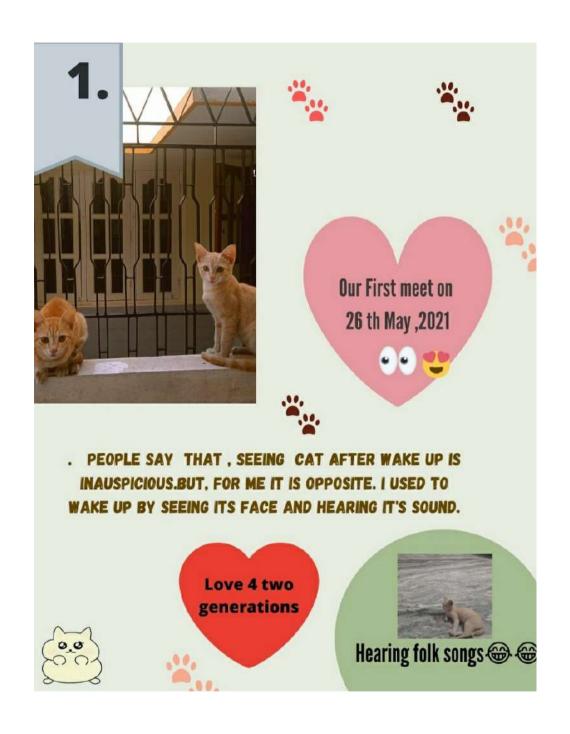


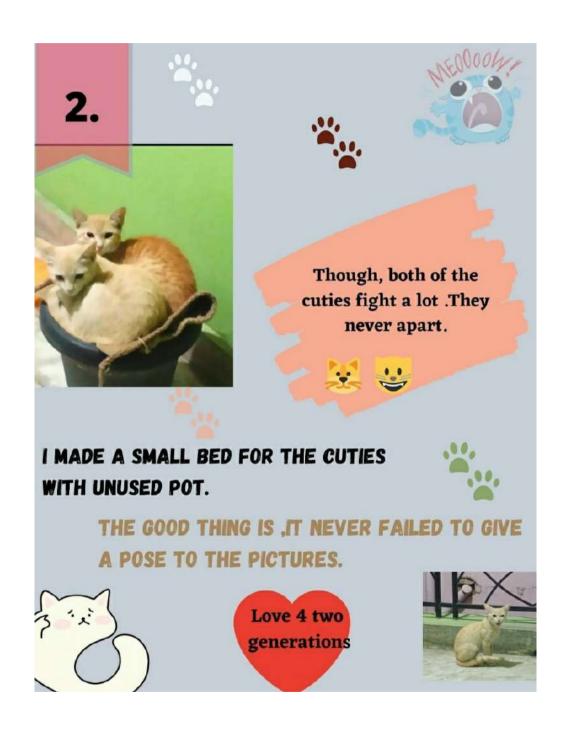
## Priyanka Sri S's

## Digital Album



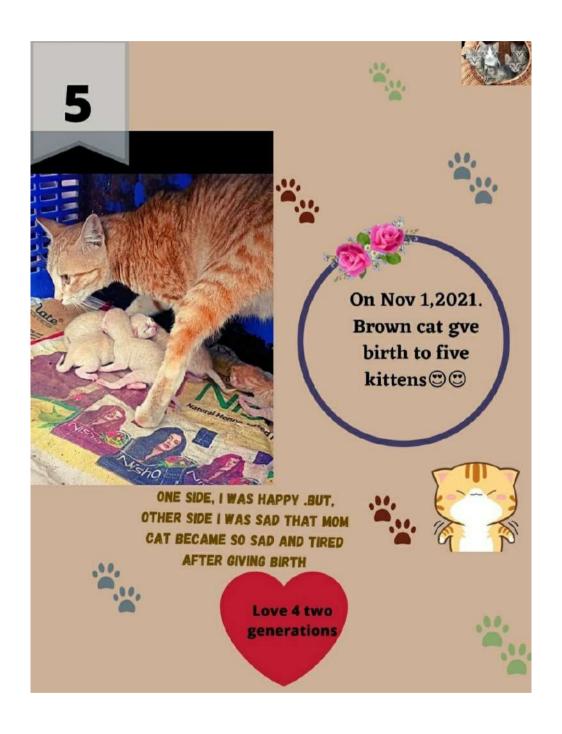
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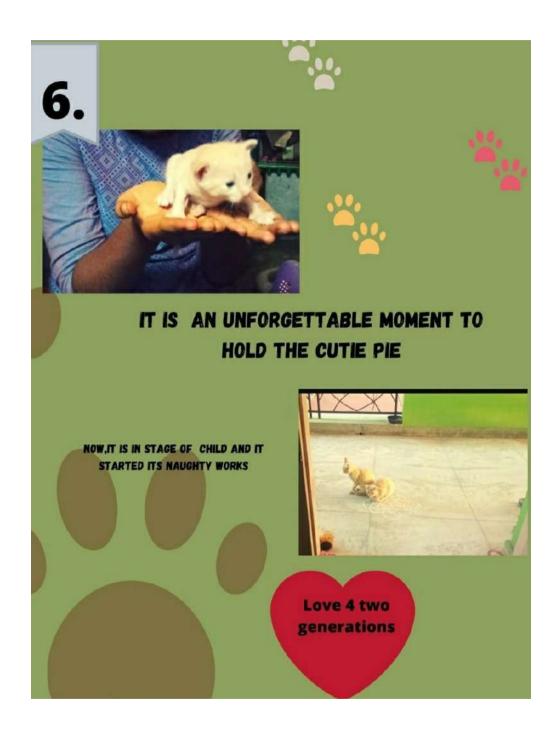


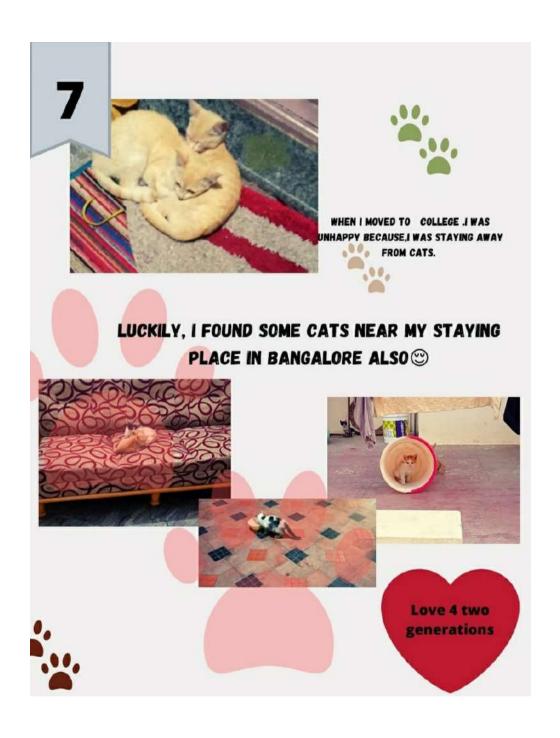








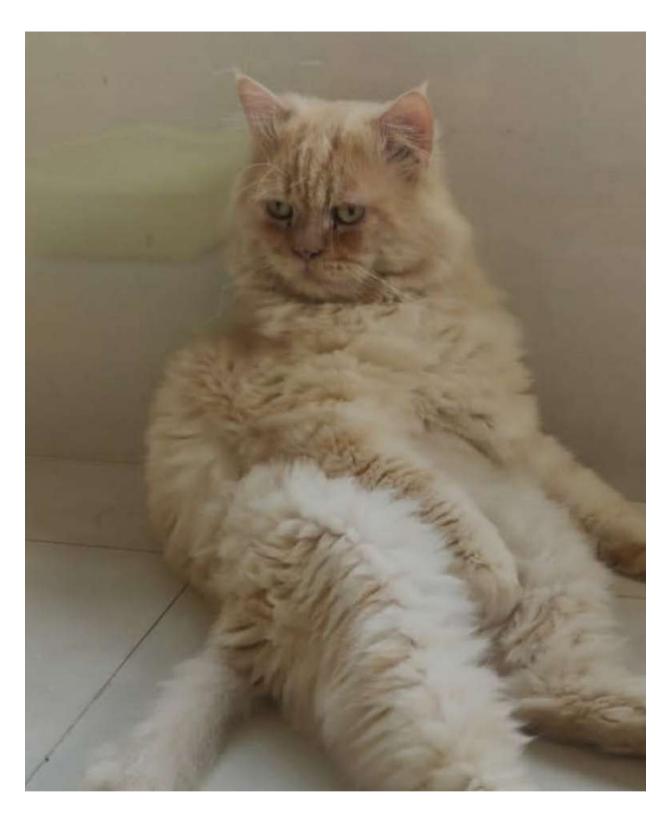




# Anoushka Gupta's — — — Digital Album

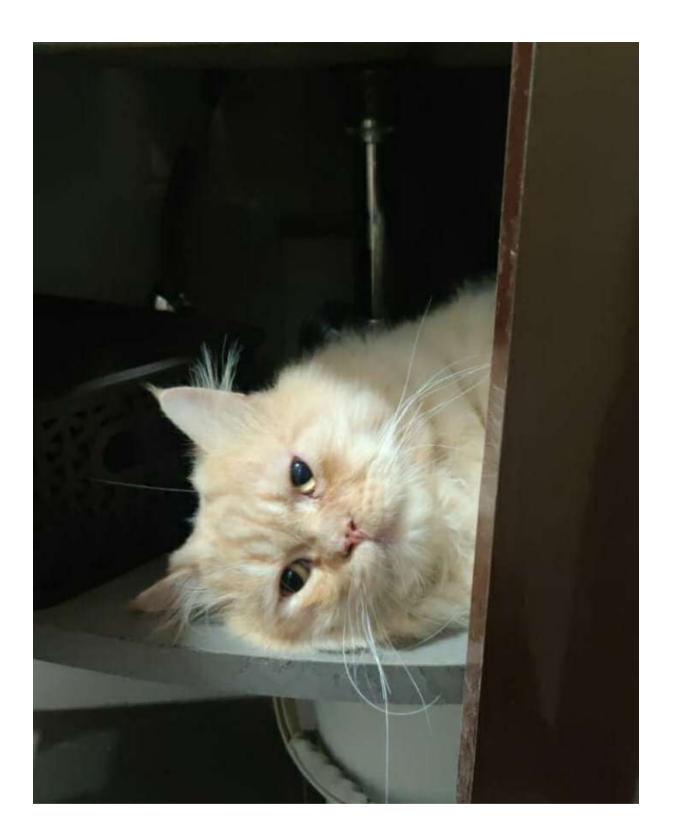


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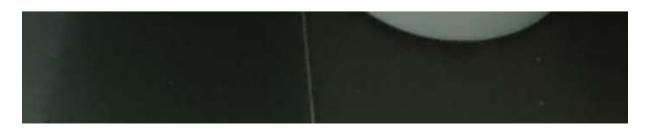


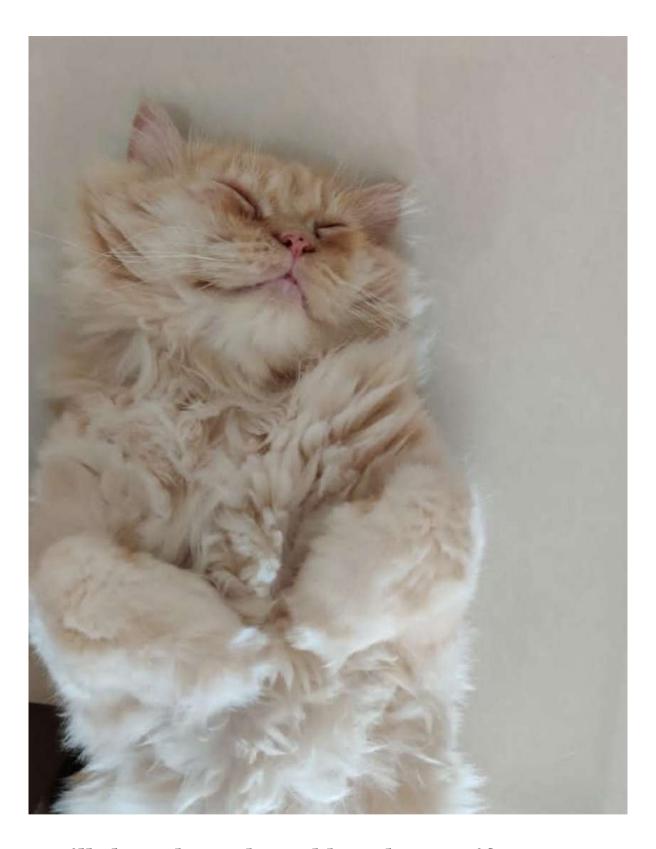
CatEO





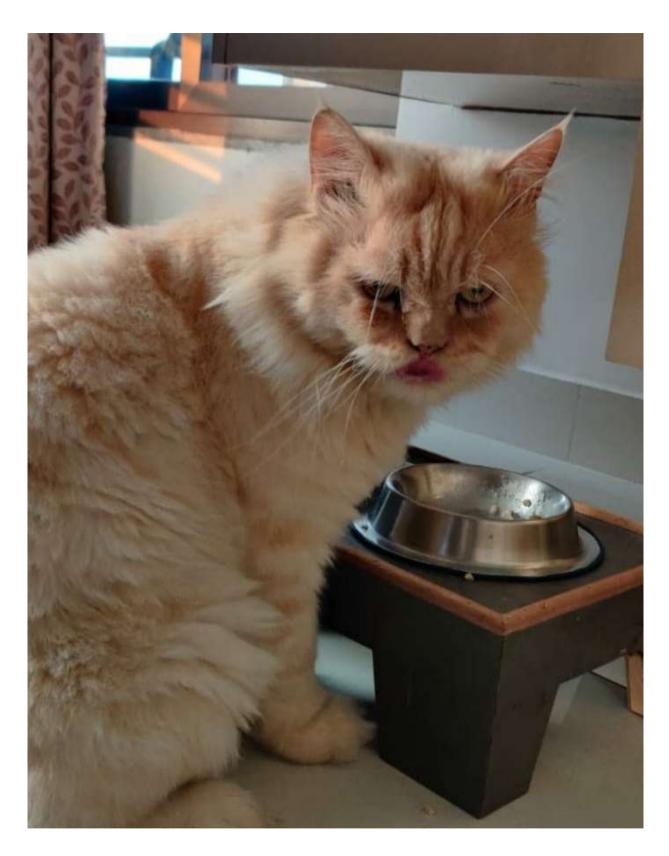
His eyes were watching God



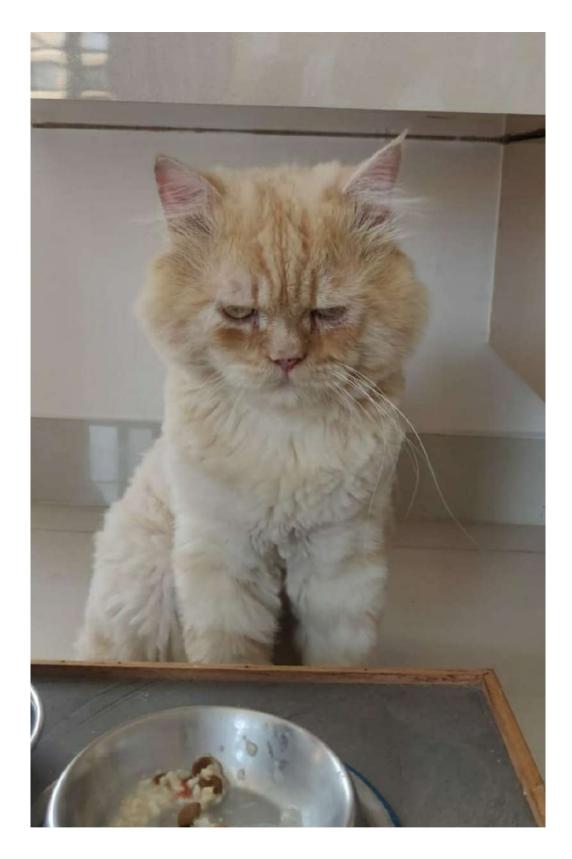


Will sleep through a robbery but not if you open the food packet





Food over hooman anyday



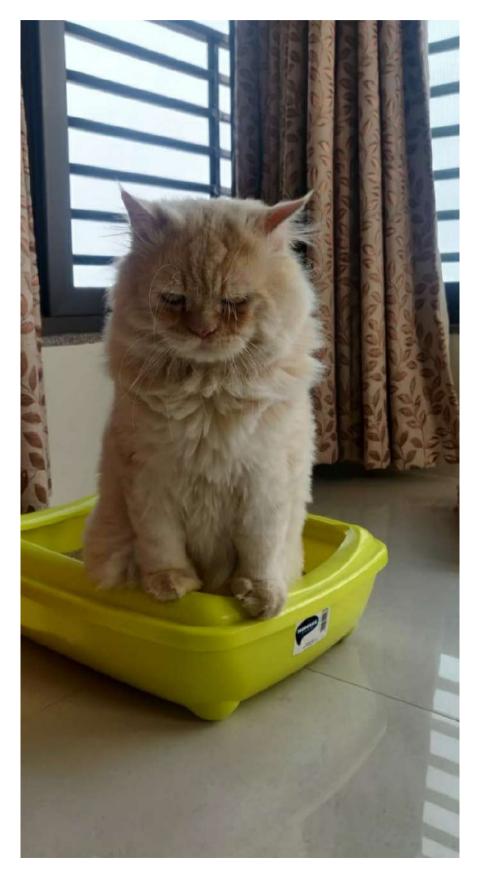
I'll eat that when hell freezes over



#### A Persian, Japanese, Spanish Indian cat

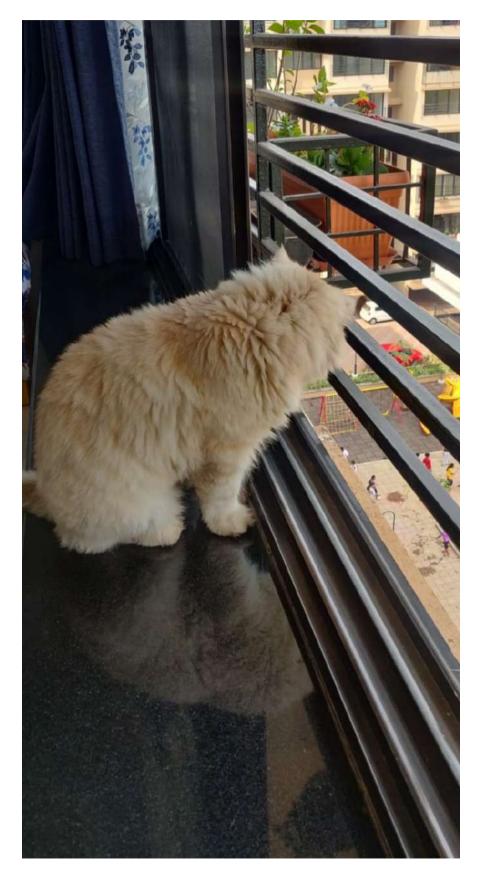


### Some privacy, please?





### Making sure all the kids are safe



### Ananya K's

### - Digital Album



4ENGH 2033140

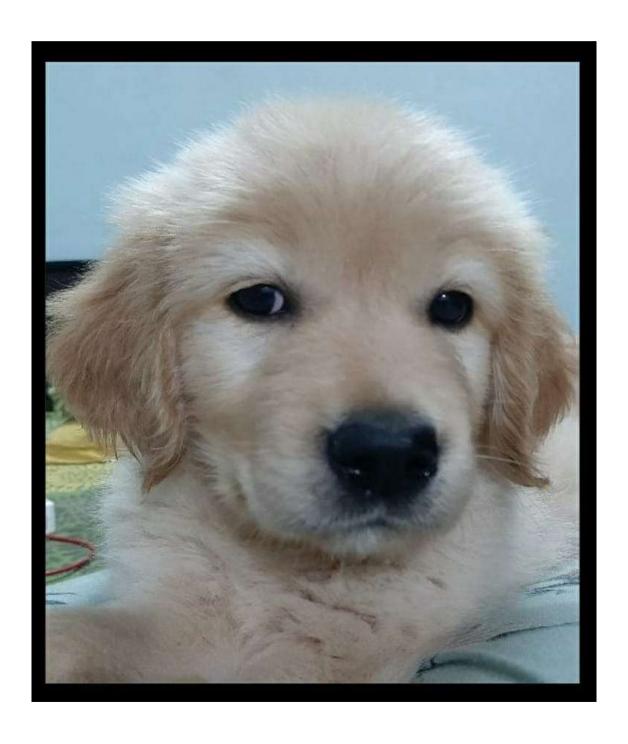
### Need an emotional support elephant to deal with the cuteness overload!



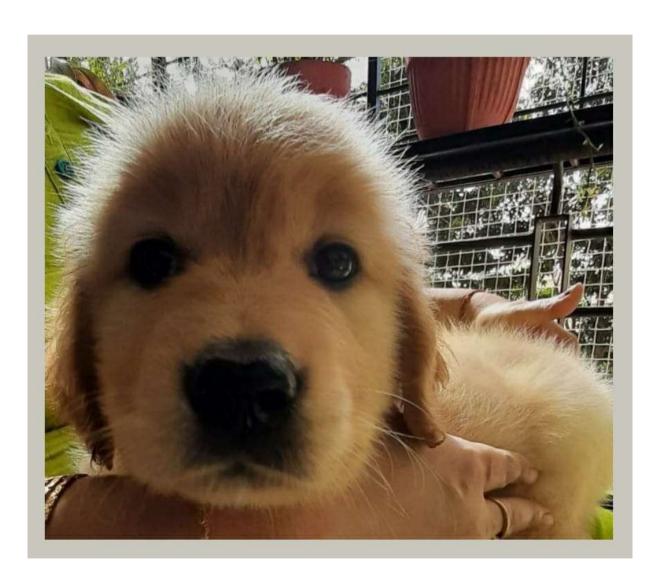
## Lord, have mercy! Being the most charming goldie is burdensome.



## Apart from being irresistibly adorable, I occasionally engage in the intellectual endeavour of judging my hoomans...



### If I were you, I'd wanna be me too! (PS- Don't tell Meghan Trainor I stole her line)



#### **Heart of Gold**



Teena Verma 4ENGH 2033184

### **Woof-Woof love!**



Rukma S Kumar 1BCB 2140724

If the whole world is against me, you'll always be there. What I believe the truth is, you are one of the best things that ever happened to me.



Vanshika Sood 2BCOM IF 2112740

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