THE SHIBPUR INCIDENT

-Tarun Srivastava

ACT 1:(Characters:Main Character(MC),MC's mom,MC's best friend (B))

Scene 1:(Enter MC's mom annoyed into MC's room):

Mom: Wake up you sleeping beauty. Your phone has been ringing continuously!(picks up the phone and hands it to the MC).Spare us from your sloth!

B(waiting for the MC at a tea stall):(over the phone)Rise and shine princess! Hope you had a good beauty nap. Can't keep the tea hot for too long.

Mc:(in an annoyed, startled yet sleepy tone)Who said I was napping? Are you omnipresent or what?!I am on the way, just about to reach.

B:(he'd heard MC's mom over the phone)I didn't know that you were bringing family along.(Turns to the teaseller)-Dada you're growing famous by the day. Entire families are coming to drink your chai. It seems that someday Dollychaiwala might himself come to drink your tea .

MC:Stop prying in my personal matters. I'll be there ASAP.(annoyingly hangs up the call)

Scene 2:

---MC ARRIVES AT THE TEA STALL---

B:Ahoy sleeping beauty, I mean walking beauty, here is your tea.

MC(sips the tea)*huff huff* It's hot!

B: Wow! Really? Forgot to refrigerate it for you.

MC:You never miss a chance,do you?(B nods conveying no,Imma troll you lmao *he's in a frisky mood*)Anyways have you decided on what you're going to do after boards?What are your plans?

B:Oh My God! MC talking about the future!!?? What date is today? 30th February? Is the world going to end soon? Am I in an alternate reality!? Was demonetization really a masterstroke?

MC: I have decided the take up science and pursue engineering. Learn programming,DSA,AI etc, get a job in a top MNC and earn big bucks.Enjoy life,die old.What about you?

B:Well I have similar interests but different goals.I take future ambitions seriously.Engineers are the people who shape the world and the future.I wanna become and inventor and shape the future.I wanna build a world where people don't have to suffer unnecessarily ,be it due to lack of resources or awareness.Imagine such a world so bright that you'll have to squint your eyes initially to see and when you open them completely a Utopia appears.

MC: eeeeehh?(he's not able to get the entire meaning of what B wants to say).Maybe I'm sleeping in your stead and fulfilling your part of rest too.No wonder I feel so sleepy.(laughs)Utopia? and here I thought I was the one daydreaming.

B:I am well aware that it is a near impossible task. But if people don't think you're crazy,are you dreaming high enough?

MC:*haha* Why not man,I hope you're able to build your dreamland.

B:I know I know,but someone has to do it(in a deterministic and emotional tone)

MC:Man are you ok?Getting good sleep?Who hurt you?- to the teaseller: Dada are you sure that there was chai only in the cup?

B:I don't know Man, probably puberty playing with my emotions.

MC:Yeah you're correct,it is playing with my sleep cycle,*though I like it*(in a hushed tone so nobody hears but everyone hears)

B:Naah,you're just lazy. Kumbhkarna has been real quiet since you came into existence.

MC:(towards the audience,trying to convince them):After a bellyful of chawal-dal,if a person cannot get even a few hours of power NAP,then what even is the meaning of this life.*joyfully talking about his laziness as if he is proud of it(which he actually is)*-I need to eat well and sleep well to be at the top of my game.

B: Yeah the game of looking forward to the next meal.

MC:*with a smirk on his face*Words are yours but thoughts are mine(similar to the way he said in 3 idiot:shabd aapke hai but vichaar humaare hai).

B:Man you'll never change.Be a little serious about life.

MC:We'll see when the time comes.

B: Nope you toh will still be asleep when the time comes.Anyways it's getting late,gotta head home.

later--both say their goodbyes to each other--

---------- END OF ACT 1.----------

ACT 2:(Characters: Narrator,MC's mom,MC's dad,MC's bestfriend(B),MC):

Enter the narrator

Narrator:Nobody could expect what was coming next.It all happened way too suddenly.

Scene 1:(B and MC talking over call)

(MC is sleeping as usual,the call wakes him up from his sleep)

B:Hey did you watch the news?They're talking about a new virus,it's spreading very rapidly.

MC: There's a lot of diseases in the world. I'm currently being infected with the sleepy virus (in a sleepy and comedic tone).

B:(slightly annoyed) Not everything is a jest.(in a serious tone now.)People are dying because of it,it's quite serious.

MC: Ok Ok I get it,don't be annoyed I was just kidding.Let's talk about it over chai.Meet you in the evening?

B:They've imposed a lockdown. I guess the tea party will be held up for a while.

MC:WHATT!!?? This is not fair!My freedom taken away from me noooo!(in a funny tone).Well now toh I don't have to leave the bed.More reasons to take naps.Farewell freedom,welcome sleep.Though it's a nice trade offer(could do the trade offer meme).No complaints.

B: *haha* You never change *haha*.Anyways take care.I'll talk to you later.

#Lights over B start to dim/flicker as he breaks down coughing intensively and the lights finally go out

Narrator: (in a serious tone) Everybody lost something to the pandemic. People lost friends,family,even a part of themselves.The pandemic left scars which would never recover and would forever ache.On one bleak day,something happened that would change the course of MC's life.

Scene 2:(MC's house)(in the living room)

(MC's mom comes in rushing while the dad is seated,reading some old newspaper out of habit)

Mother:(In a rushed ,panting ,frightened and mournful tone):Arey MC's dad(Tries to control herself from panicking to convey the message)-Did you hear?B has passed away!

Dad:(puts the newspaper aside,springs out from his chair and is shocked and surprised).WHAT?!No way!Does MC know?

Mom(sobbing): I haven't told him yet,how do we tell him?

Dad:It's so sad.Why B?Dear God.

---Enter MC's room:

MC is sitting on his bed writing something.

Dad(trying to calm himself and speak normally):Listen, I've something to tell you....

#Now the despair from the news will be depicted just by music and expressions.Not by words.

#MC looks up to his dad,his face drops any sort of expression,his eyes enlarge,he drop the pen from his hands and tears start coming out of that dead face,showing a complete state of shock and grief. We can use a sad background music,my personal suggestion would be an ost named somewhere else by yutaka yamada.

Narrator:(In a sad tone) All the MC could see through his teary eyes were the reflection of moments he spent with his bestfriend. He could not process the information that was given to him.But when the realisation struck he-

Cutting off the Narrator the MC breaks down and start crying,with his head held low on his bed.The lights all around the MC turn off and only one light is focused on him beyond which lies pitch black darkness.This is to show the isolation of the MC's mind from his own body and from the world around him.

#his parents try to console him,just to show that two other characters are present in the room,just to include them in the setting.

Scene 3:(This takes place after a few days of the intimation of news)

(Mom and Dad are worried about the MC)

(Discussion in the living room)

Mom to dad: It's been days,he doesn't eat much,we barely see him in the house.Go talk to him.

(Enter MC's dad in his room(lights only focus on the MC in the scenes he is in))

Dad: Son,I understand how you feel .If you want to talk about it,we are always here for you*sobbing*.

MC(starts to talk in a very low and sad tone):He was the kindest person I knew.He never judged me by my lack lustered behaviour.Always nudged me to do my best and was always there for me as a big brother.*MC gets angry*If there exists a God then He's cruel.(starts crying)I hate him.I hate myself.I couldn't do anything to help B and be there for him.He was my only friend,Why him dad,why him?!!?

Dad(in a worried and sad tone):Don't take this upon yourself,it was not in your hands,you don't have to hate yourself for it!(Comforts the MC)(with the MC crying beside him)-You know reality itself is many a times cruel.Things happen out of our control.We just have to learn to live with the scars these tragic miseries cast upon us.That's life.

#MC calms down a bit and in a calm and mournful tone he asks:

MC:Dad,if somebody wants to run away from this,where do they go?

Dad:You cannot escape life itself.You've to face it and learn to live with it,you have to. We humans are simple yet complicated`creatures,you can even call us hypocrites. In times of crisis,people realise the actual necessities of the society,right now what we need is a proper medical infrastructure to handle the pandemic and minimise the losses,people right now are demanding for it but soon after the pandemic ends,this drive too will dissipate despite the losses,people will get busy ,return to their normal life and it'll all be engulfed by their selfish desire and go away.Only the ones affected,scarred for the rest of their lives will have to face actual grief and have to suffer unnecessarily.

#MC gets up,wipes his tears,goes to his chair and starts studying with a determined countenance.Lights go out and the narrator enters.

Narrator: A sudden change of character?Maybe his father's words resonated with something we might have already come across in the play.And maybe that caused the MC to do so.The sadder part is that we in ourselves are so sufficient and possess the required resources that if we want we can elevate the living conditions of the people instantly.The pandemic affected millions of people in our country. Had there been better facilities and infrastructure,a lot more lives could have been saved.But only a fraction of the people care about others. Rest are too selfish and self driven to even hear about others' their complaints. # The narrator walks from the stage but halts midway.Couldn't guess why the MC started studying suddenly?IT was The words of his father reminded him of B and the ambition talk they did that day.MC now truly understood B's ambition and why he deemed it necessary.Let's see what the future holds in store for him.

----------END OF ACT 2----------

ACT 3(Characters: MC,MC's mom,MC's dad,Narrator,Three college mates:A,B and C)

Scene 1(MC's household)(approximately two years have passed)

Mom:Hey! Today was the college allotment result day.Which college de he get?

Dad:(with newspaper in his hands(Old habbit)):Oh shoot! It was today?!How did I forget?

(Both head to the MC's room in a slighty excited tone)

Enter the narrator.

Narrator:MC fought his battles bravely,He had issues fighting his lazy habits,the trauma his friend's demise inflicted on him, the self isolation he imposed on himself and also many unknown vices we might uncover latterly.The will to fight came from reality which was a constant reminder of his plight and he never gave up.Let's be an audience to what he's gained in the past two years and (With a little despair in his tone) -also the things he's lost.

Dad(excited):Hey son,what college did you get in.You didn't tell.

MC:(In a neutral tone):IIEST Shibpur(full name).

(Dad and mom both happy)Dad:Congrats son! Let's get you ready for your college then.Get ready we'll head out ASAP.

MC:H..head out..?(MC rarely left his home,confined himself in his room,became introverted)Go where?

Dad: OFcouse to shop your college essentials.

MC:Oh!But wait I'm not ready,I can't go out like this.Gimme some time.

Both nod and exit together.

Narrator:IIEST Shibpur huh?Sounds quite familiar na? A new domain of opportunities await the MC.But what scares me is that the boy has not seen the world outside his room .He had rarely left his house in the past two years.How will the MC socialise himself and fit in the alien place he's headed to filled with strangers?

Scene 2: The departure to Shibpur

(On the front poarch of the house)

(Mom and Dad bidding farewell)

Mom(a bit emotional):Just promise me one thing that you'll always protect the child I've raised,it is your responsibility.

(The narrator now has to integrate himself as he is breaking the fourth wall and integrating himself also in the play like fiddling with the set and stuff to make himself/herself comfortable)

Narrator: Unaware that the MC had already lost the child within him.

Mom: Also don't forget to call me daily,I can't sleep without listening to your voice.I hope you achieve what you aim for.Good luck.

#Touches both's feet and leaves with baggage.

Narrator:The baggage might seem less but it is well compensated by the emotional baggage he's carrying along with him.(Narrator now also narrates the inner feelings of the MC)

#MC comes across the deserted tea stall while on his way.Stops there for a moment ,wipes his tears with his arms and exits the stage.

Scene 3:At Shibpur

Narrator:The boy somehow managed to escape the gloomy comfines of his house cast upon him by the pandemic and the town which had spewed bad memories and nightmares in his sleep.He left the trauma and social distancing caused by his past experiences.After B's death he had locked himself up and stopped talking to other people.His parents tried their best to cheer him up but the loss was too

grave.He was in a stage of stagnation.Drowning in it little by little every night. Let's see what IIEST Shibpur,our beloved college,B-E-loved college, holds for his fate.

Enter A and B(students awaiting admission into the college)

A: Hey,what's your department?I'm A.Where are you from?

B:Infromation technology..no no.. I mean The Department of Information Technology.I'm from Narasimhanaickenpalayam,Tamil Nadu.

A:Cool,cool. Welcome to the department,IT Rocks!(mandatory audience and department service)

B:It rains a lot here.The campus looks ever more beautiful in the rain. I also want to see the swimming pool of the college!

A:haha you'll see plenty swimming pools in the rainy season.Also don't forget to carry an umbrella with you.It should be a part of your dresscode unless you want your dress to be coded with water droplets.

B:I'm so excited,the endless array of opportunities.I can't wait to explore myself.

A:Good for you.I like your energy but I didn't catch your name.

B:I'm B.

(Enter the MC with a dull and reserved countenance,seated alone at a distance from A and B)

A:Helloo!

MC:Hey.

A:So how do you like the college?

MC: (In a cold introverted tone)It's nice(without any eye contact).

#Enter C(I'm using C to show the stark difference between the MC and a normal socially inclined person).

C(Approaches A and B):Hello I'm C.How's the college.(A and B take part in the conversation but MC is scared to meet new people).

C:So what are your names and departments.

(A and B take part in the conversation while MC is scared to meet new people and open himself upto them)

WHILE ALL OF THIS IS HAPPENING WE NEED TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE LIGHT IS STILL FOCUSED MORE ON MC AND THERE IS ONLY ONE LIGHT WHICH IS SHOWING MC'S ISOLATION

C to MC:What about you bro?

MC:Hello,I'm MC.

C:Oh,okay(Is startled to see the introverted nature of the MC)

C to A and B:You know I've heard that the seniors are very helpful and super sweet.

A:Yeah and the professors too.

C:You don't say,ofcourse they are.

B:I'veheard that the Madhusudhan Bhawan....(looks at the audience)...Nevermind!

A:What is it?

B:Nothing....hehe..

C:So what are your expectations from this college?

(whosoever is a girl)(A or B):Hopefully I'll get a lot of freedom to travel and explore Kolkata(also need a joke regarding the restraints especially put on girls in college)

The other one:I like eating. I wanna eat the tasty and healthy food served in the mess.(mocking the mess food)

C to MC: What about you bro?

(MC is zoned out listening to music feeling awkward by the sudden interaction which heightened his introvertness)

----------END OF ACT 3----------

ACT 4-THE SHIBPUR INCIDENT

Enter the narrator

Narrator-After a period of two years on his lonesome,this was the first time MC has come across new people in a completely new space and a changed atmosphere but he is still confined in his mind by his past.There is so much going around hiim that is unable to absorb it all. The loss of human touch can be quite gruesome.Other people seem like aliens to him.The walls he build around himself to keep himself safe from the traumatic reality of his past was being breached by people he has never seen before. He is scared that if he let's them invade his personal space,all the miseries embedded in his memories will return.He still is yet to learn to live with them.Hopefully something miraculous happens in this rainy weather and wash away his grief.(With a hopeful tone).

C:Broooo!!!Are you okay(loudly-slightly)?I was asking if you had any expectations from this college.

MC(snaps back to reality and is startled):I..I don't know.(for he hadn't thought about what he would do after he escapes that gloomy city)

C:It's fine...Anyways evening has set and in this rainy season it'd be a crime to not crave for some chai.(MC is still lost in his own thoughts and isn't paying attention to the convo).Let's go and get some chai...(A,B and C stand up and get ready to go to the tea stall).

A:(turns back)Oooye MC!Do you wanna come for some chai?

MC:(on hearing this he is reminded of his best friend)(He get's a little emotional)Y..Yess!I would love to(Wiping his tears with his arms)

#The stage now illuminates as they walk towards the tea stall showing MC's isolation slowly fading away .From the entire play just having one light on the MC,now glows brightly throughout showing that the MC is slowly gaining back what he'd lost.He remembers his friend but this time not in a sad way but he remembers the good times he's cherished with his bestfriend at the tea stall,he is slowly gaining control over himself,learning to live with his grief.)

#All head to the tea stall and grab a cup.

C:So where are you from.

MC: I'm from so and so..

A:Hey you didn't tell what you expect from this college?What are you ambitions?

MC(gets emotional):(Pauses and thinks for a bit and then realisation strikes him as to what he actually aims now in life)-I want to become a good engineer and shape the world where people don't have to suffer unnecessarily . And I will build such a world for sure!(in a deterministic countenance)*looks up to the sky and smiles*

Narrator:Small incidents can hafe life changing impact.This is the turning point in MC's life.He is rehabilitating and trying to recover the pieces he's lost of himself.Although his bestfriend is no longer in person with him,his dream lives on within the MC.PEOPLE'S DREAMS...WILL NEVER END!

----------END OF ACT 4----------

CURTAINS----------