

Opportunity

strikes only once

Maulia Selvarajah (Age 14)

"You want to say that again, boy?!" yelled Mark, grabbing violently at the younger boy by the collar, and pinning him high up, against the school walls.

"Mark! What do you think you're doing! Put that boy down right now!!" Mrs Malcolm's voice thundered through the playground.

"Do you know what he said?!" Mark shouted back at the teacher, his dark brown eyes staring menacingly at the boy, who had by now turned very pale.

"I told you to put him down!" continued Mrs Malcolm. "You can tell me what he said, in my office."

He let go off the boy, who fell onto the ground, and slowly backed away, afraid that any sudden movements may cause him to be attacked once again. Mark watched the boy, scamper away, like a rodent, and then Mark made his way slowly towards the Headteacher's office. His feet trailed behind, *what's the point in hurrying?* He thought to himself, he and every other child in the school knew what was going to happen in the office. He stood in front of a great oak door with a brass panel that read HEADTEACHER MRS MALCOLM in bold. Mark thought, may be he could turn around and run out of the school, he didn't need an education he had all the knowledge in his brain.



"Hurry up, and come in Mark!" Mrs Malcolm called out from inside the room, making him jump. He had no other choice. Swallowing hard, he opened the door and walked in.

"Nice to know you bothered to come in" The headteacher said, with a smirk. "Sit down" she pointed at the chair in front of her. Mark silently sat down, waiting for her to yell, he could tell by the look on her face that she wanted to.

Without saying anything, Mrs Malcolm, bent down and retrieved a thick black folder, with his name in bold on the cover. "This is a folder, which contains every single detail about you and your history " she stopped to take a look at Mark's face before continuing. "When I first looked at this folder I was extremely impressed. Your results and achievements are far

வெயிலில் காய்வேன்
மழையில் நனைவேன்
அண்டி வந்தோர்க்கு
அடைக்கலம் தருவேன். நான் யார்?



3

2

ஊர் உண்டு மக்களில்லை
மலையுண்டு மரங்களில்லை
ஆறுண்டு நீரில்லை
அணையுண்டு கல்லில்லை
வழியுண்டு வாகனமில்லை
வண்ணமுண்டு உயிரில்லை
அது என்ன?



மனிதன் போடாத
பந்தலிலே மலர்ந்து
கிடக்கும் பூ என்ன பூ?



விடுகதை

4

ஒருவனைக் கூப்பிட்டால்
ஊரையே அழைப்பான்.
அவன் யார்?



யாரும் செய்யாத கதவு .
தானே திறந்து மூடும்.
அது என்ன?

5



விடை பக்கம் 13

higher than the average student of your age."

Mark listened to her with the most astonishment; he wasn't expecting *this* from her, and he certainly had never heard anyone give him compliments for his hard work. *Maybe that's why I gave up.*

"Mark, when your mother came in to see me, I was surprised that she wanted you to come to this school, there are so many more schools that are better and would have guaranteed, you a great career. She told me about your temper, and how you had got into the wrong crowd in your previous school. I was more than happy to welcome you, and never thought I would have to see you in my office, over your awful behaviour. I certainly didn't expect a student as bright as you, to behave in the way you so frequently like to." She stopped again, to take a breath, and glanced at Mark, he continued to stare at her, without saying a word.

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"I don't know what's got into you lately." Her voice was tense. "I've had more teachers complain about you than any other child in this entire school. We both know perfectly well that you're not stupid, or ignorant. You're 14 Mark, you aren't a baby anymore, so grow up!"

"I know that" Mark told her; he had suddenly felt annoyed with what she was saying. *She makes it sound like I'm trying to be the clown!*

"Do you? Well than I hope that you also know that if I ever hear any teacher or child complain to me about you, I will be forced to deal with you in unpleasant ways. I hope that you've also got it inside your brain that right from the moment you entered this school in December that I have treated you in a far friendlier way, because I had hoped that a child of your capacity would deserve it. Now, however I am completely disgusted with you. I'm fed up with this Mark. You are one of the most talented young boys I have ever met. The world is your oyster. You have the brains to follow whatever career you want. Do you know how many people would love to have your brain and talent? There are so many opportunities and doors open for you, so why is it that you chose to stand out in the cold?" She stopped, at the sound of knocking on her door. A small plump woman entered the room.



"Um... sorry Mrs Malcolm, but there are two visitors waiting at the reception for you" the woman said.

"Very well, I'll be there in a minute, thank you Polly." Mrs Malcolm replied, and then turned around to Mark.

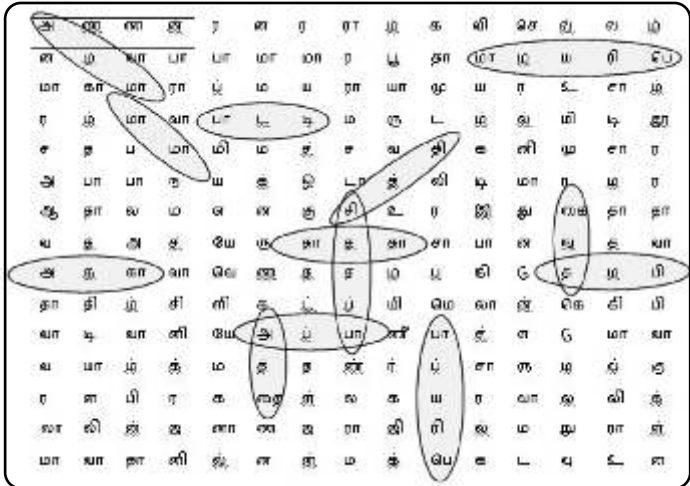
"You may go Mark. Please remember what I've told you". Mark got up

புதிர்

விடை

விடுகதை
விடை

1. குடை
2. தேசப்படம்
3. நட்சத்திரம்
4. காகம்
5. கண் இமை





from the chair and opened the door.

"One more thing, Mark." Mrs Malcolm said, as Mark turned around to face her. "Lady Opportunity never knocks twice, on any man's door" He silently nodded, and closed the door behind him. As he cycled out of school, his mind was full of thoughts.

Tension was in the air, at the school, after a few weeks, exams were on their way, and students wasted no more time. Everywhere Mark looked, students had their heads hidden behind piles of books. *Who cares about exams anyway?* He thought as he strolled past a few of his classmates. He was perhaps the only person who had not begun revising, and he wasn't afraid to say so to the other students. But no one seemed to be surprised. It's what they expected out of him.

"It's not like he cares anyway, he isn't bothered about exams." One student said to the other.

"Doesn't he know that if he doesn't pull his socks up, he'll be kicked out of the school?" The other child asked.

"Yeah. Besides he wouldn't be able to sit down and study, he can't do it, no matter how much he tries" The two children continued to talk about him. *Don't they know I can hear them talking about me?*

Mark was hurt by the way his classmates talked about him. *Is this what everyone thinks? Does no one have faith in me? Mrs. Malcolm seemed to. That's why she hasn't kicked me out yet, I guess. She's bent the rules far too much for me. I can pass these exams, if I wanted to. I'm not stupid.*



When Mark got home, he found that his mum was annoyed with him. She ignored him, and didn't say a word. *What's wrong with her?* Mark thought as he sat down on the sofa, putting his legs up on the coffee table. It was then that he noticed the letter from school. It had his current performing grades on them, and they weren't good. *So that's why mum isn't talking to me! I guess she's lost her confidence in me too.* He looked down at the column of letters. *What! I can do better than C's and D's!* He tried to explain to his mum that he could do better than that, but she didn't seem to believe him. Annoyed with everyone Mark locked himself in his room. *Even my own mum doesn't think I can do it. Well I'll show them all. I'm going to pass these exams with flying colours, and then we'll see who has the last laugh!*

Mark sat down, at his desk, and pulled out his books. He was upset *ing*

and mad. He worked through questions after questions. Reading pages of textbooks and scribbling down notes, for hours. *I'm going to prove to everyone - the teachers, students and mum that I could pass these exams. He was going to prove everyone wrong.* And so Mark spent his afternoons, and most of his spare time going over each subject, for several days, until the exams finally came. Before Mark knew it, he was sitting down at a desk in the great hall, staring at the hands of the clock, waiting to do the exam.

A few months past before the exam results finally arrived. Teachers were slowly revealing to the eager students their grades. Mark waited patiently in class for his teacher to call his name, instead the teacher asked him to go to the Head teacher's office.

Confused and worried, Mark walked over to Mrs. Malcolm's office. *Were the students right- was I finally going to get what I deserved- was I going to get expelled again? I haven't got into any fights or trouble for weeks! I've walked away from each one. So why do I have to go see her again?* Mark thought to himself, thousands of questions whizzing around in his head, as he knocked and then entered Mrs Malcolm's office.

"Come sit down Mark" Mrs Malcolm said in calm voice, holding in her hands, a set of stapled papers. Déjà vù crept into Mark's mind as he sat down in front of her with a puzzled look on his face.

"I have your exam results. I thought I might tell you in private, so that you wouldn't be embarrassed in front of the other students." She stopped, teasingly to look at the expression on his face. *I've failed haven't I? But I tried so hard this time.* Mark thought to himself as he tried to swallow the lump in his throat.

"Just tell me" He whispered to her.

"You've passed Mark" She said casually, with a smile. "I'm proud of you. I knew you could do it. You've got the highest grade in the year."

The words flew at him, as he sat staring at her. "Are you being serious?!" he asked. Mrs Malcolm smiled and slowly nodded at him. It was the most amazing words he had heard in a long time.

"You've earned it Mark. Your mother told me she noticed you locked up in your room studying. All hard work has its great rewards Mark." Mrs Malcolm said. She stood up, to shake his hands, and watched him leave.

The rest of the school already knew; shocking news flies fast! The students stood gaping at him in amazement. Mark was over the moon. He felt like jumping up and screaming.

As he rode out of school, he thought about what Mrs Malcolm had said. *I'm lucky. I had lady opportunity knocking at my door twice! But this time I won't let her go!!*

