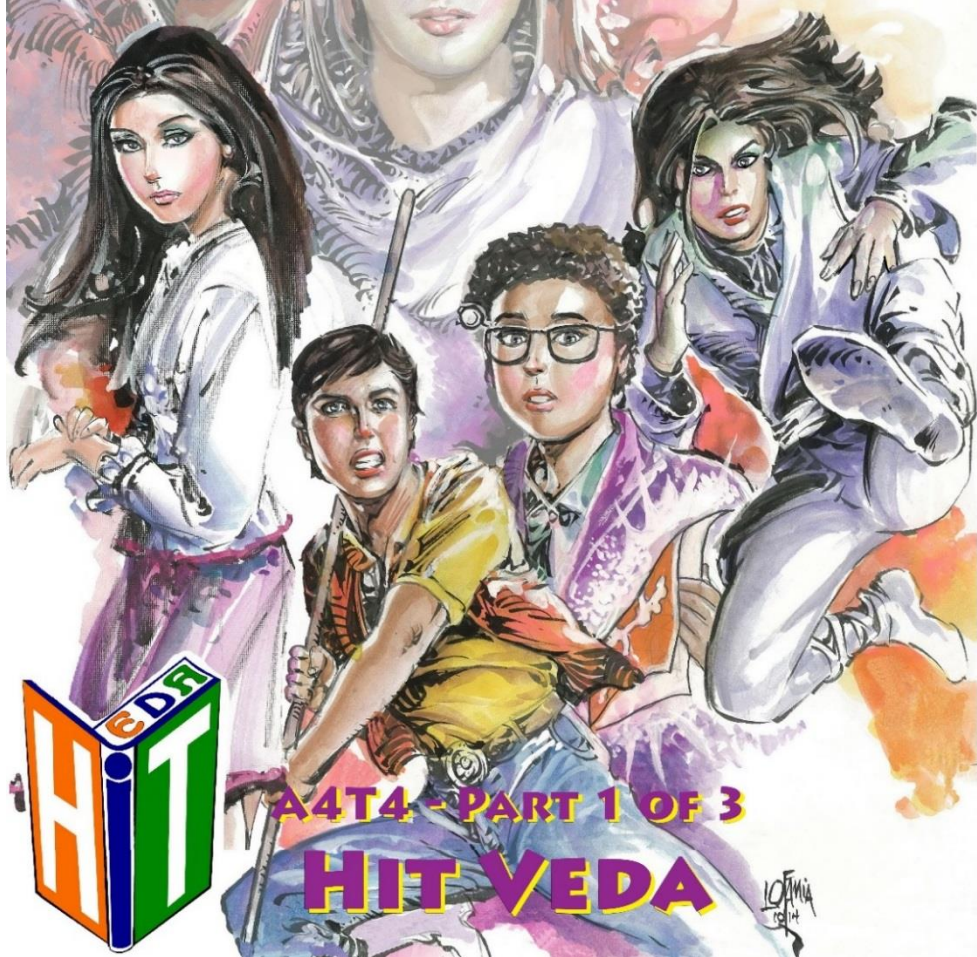


ADVENCHAAR, ADVENTURE!



A4T4 - PART 1 OF 3

HIT VEDA

LOFIA
2014

ADVENCHAAR, ADVENTURE!

**Part One of Three
of**

AdvenChaar And The Treasure In The Tunnels (A4T4)

BY HIT VEDA

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P.S.: Educators are warned: This book cannot or at least should not come within paanch gilli, paanch danda of homework, unless she approves it. Miracles have been known to happen. Applications for miracles should be sent to us in quadruplicate at least. Remember, she does not 'do triplicate'.

Updates: www.advenchaar.com; Facebook: Hit Veda; Twitter: @hitveda.

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Dedicated to my Grandfather, who believed in me, even unto his last breath; my late niece Amrin (Guddo); and my sister, Fatima, who chose to go walkabout.

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‘*Gothic Nilajja*’ illustration used with permission from Steve Gan.

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APPENDIX A:

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

THE ADVENCHAAR: (*eldest to youngest*)

Amanat Shoor: 13 years, elder twin (Dec 25)

Aman Shoor: 13 years, younger twin (Dec 25)

Ayelan Jaanazad, 12 years, ten months (Feb 14)

Aura Baaz, 12 years, eight months (Apr 15)

THE GOOD GUYS:

Free-bos:

Sensei-bo (~ गुरु-बो [*sensei* = teacher], our AdvenChaar's tutor)

Ooki-bo (~ बड़ा-बो [*ooki* = big], *Su-Pa-Bo*/Super-bo prototype)

Kirei-bo (~ हसीन-बो [*kirei* = pretty], *Wanda-Bo*/Wonder-bo model)

Family and Friends:

Dhaal Shoor (the twins' father)

Veera Shoor [*née* Kalipaattram] (the twins' mother)

Lalkaar Shoor (the twins' paternal grandfather)

Garjana Kalipaattram (the twins' maternal grandmother)

Morya *kaka* (Chanderi Wada's owner, antiquarian)

Pir Baba / Pir Uncle (Shivapur *dargah*'s caretaker, mystic)

Staff at the Shoor Mansion:

Shaila (Shailaja), Laila (Delaila) and Suhaila (domestic helpers)

Dattu (Odd-job man, drunkard, bard, trouble-maker)

Adamsher Singh (chauffeur)

Nichirobo (Japan Robotics Corporation):

Shotaku Taichi (CEO, swordsman, mystic)

Himiko Yukikaze (robotics expert, *kendo* and judo specialist)

Achaar Yaar:

Eclectic group of A4 fans we shall meet through the series.

THE BAD GUYS:

Humans:

Vikathor Kupoot

Nilajja / Sulajja

Bhaggu (a.k.a. 'Chhatti Se Chhutti'; छट्टी से छुट्टी)

Miscellaneous goons

Bad-bos:

Thoda sabar, mere magar! (थोड़ा सबर, मेरे मगर!) Wait for *Part Two*

OTHERS:

Morya kaka's ancestors

'Cocktail Mary' Braganza

'Mocktail Mary' or 'Chhoti' (छोटी) Mary (Mary Jr.)

Groundkeeper at The Poona Club; his family; his ancestors

Charita and her descendants

Various clients at *Cocktail Mary's* bar, including Nihil

A South Indian king; Prime Minister; traitorous courtiers (1800s)

A South Indian queen; infant son; 100-strong retinue (1800s)

Colonialists of various nationalities (1800s)

Officials / representatives of various institutions, clubs, colleges

KNOWN UNKNOWNs:

Nichirobo's Founder

Sulajja's Akka

A mining engineer from France



NOTES TO THE READER:

- Read **Appendix A** [*Cast of Principal Characters*], to get an idea of the main personae. This will help you understand the story better.
- If you want to know how to pronounce the names used herein, please refer to **Appendix B**, towards the end of the book.
- For a full profile of each member of the AdvenChaar, see **Appendix C**, also towards the end of the book.
- The text inside the boxes at the beginning of each chapter is a summary of the chapter's contents.
- The first six chapters of this book should help you get to know the AdvenChaar; some of the 'Good Guys' at Shoor Mansion and elsewhere; and how they interact with each other. Those who might find the pace a little slow could go straight to Chapter 7. (*You will miss several 'Auracles' and a few 'Ayeronies' though.*)
- Have you read the disclaimer yet?

MOSTLY HARMFUL

Where we meet (briefly) android guru Sensei-bo, timid Suhaila and amused Veera Shoor; where we meet violent, violent, violent Aura Baaz; where three other voices are heard (briefly); where Aura gets linked to The Godfather; where magnets are discussed (less often than Sensei-bo wants); where homework and schoolwork are attacked (more often than Sensei-bo wants); where we meet the AU-RA-KA-DHO-SA (or OWI-RA-KA-DHO-SA as those who receive this 'Fist Of Aura' call it); and where I advise rude or ignorant persons on how to avoid getting a black eye or two, if not a worse punishment, delivered promptly by she who is dubbed 'Mostly Harmful!'



agnets!” declared Sensei-bo in his maddeningly sensible voice. “Yes, I assert that *that* is the reason. It has all to do with magnets.”

Four young voices pierced through the lush green surroundings of the spacious clubhouse. The owners of these voices were replying to their guru in varying degrees of loudness while showing different emotions.

Suhaila, the timidest of the three domestic helpers in the Shoor household, squeaked in alarm. She spooked easily. The three helpers were aiding Veera Shoor in the kitchen. Unsurprisingly, it faced the clubhouse – a recently upgraded part of the Shoor Mansion.

The voices succeeded in distracting Veera as well. She stopped stirring the contents of the giant pot on the stove and looked up. Then, she put her maternal instinct to work. She checked out the entire range of sensory and extra-sensory data available. After all, two of those voices belonged to her dearly loved twins. Meanwhile, the other two were those of her equally dearly cherished wards.

She replayed these outbursts in her mind. Two had been loud groans. One had been a louder cry of glee. The fourth voice, also as was usual, had sounded concerned. All was as it should be. There was no cause for alarm for her or the helpers. However, she predicted that exactly two of those four young voices could soon have *some* cause for alarm.

A wry smile played on her lips. She told Suhaila: “It is all right, dear. I feel Sensei-bo is giving out a new home-study assignment and they are reacting to it.” Three faces soon reflected Veera’s amused look. Then they all giggled heartily. This act was immediately followed by a set of four less hearty sighs. These were expressed to a lesser – *much, much* lesser – extent, to sympathise with those two troubled young voices.

This foursome then returned to the task at hand. Soon, vast quantities of food would be needed to fill three hungry and voracious young bellies and, please note, one gargantuan appetite. Thankfully, it was for dinner!

Most mothers possess an uncanny ability. They can tell the difference between a mild annoyance and an act that could be really harmful to their children. Veera was uncannier than most others in this respect. Formidable in her own right, she used to train a specialist commando

squad at the Commissioner of Police's office in Pune before willingly accepting married life and motherhood.

Veera was tall in stature and action; qualities that her twins inherited. She still retained her zeal and zest despite middle age and a few grey hairs creeping up. In fact, her work-hardened body and disciplined mind had first sought fresh motivation in trying to protect the quartet from harm.

Recent incidents had forced her to tone down this supervision. Sadly, nowadays, others needed protection from our youngsters more often than our quartet did from the villainous plots and schemes of others. After all, we *are* talking about the AdvenChaar! So, she let them be by themselves, even appearing disinterested in their doings!

Meanwhile, in the clubhouse, two of the voices cried disappointedly: “Huh?!” and “What?” The first contained a large measure of disgust; the latter, of exasperation. As expected, a third voice bellowed jubilantly: “Assignment!”

Further, as was also customary, the owner of the fourth voice expressed concern. She asked gently: “Sensei-bo *wa daijobu desu ka?*” (Sensei-bo, are you all right?” *) In exchange, that person received a quiet nod of assent and understanding from the android.

=====

(*) *Sensei-bo is the first ever android built by Nichirobo, a Japanese firm. He is our quartet's home tutor and has been with them for some time. Just how long that has been is not for this adventure. Meanwhile, the owner of this particular solicitous voice sometimes uses what little Japanese she knows when interacting with their guru. 'Why is she concerned about an 'android', ' you ask? Do you want all the answers in Chapter 1, Part 1, Book 1, of what is hopefully going to be a long series of books? I'll likely ask this in Ch. 48, Pt. 2, Bk. 3, too. Ha-ha!*

“I think whatever circuits Sensei-bo has inside him have finally failed,” one of the two irate voices ‘*grrr-ated*’, ‘*grrr-owled*’ and ‘*grrr-rumbled*’. While doing so, it used as much contempt as it could draw from a bottomless well filled with this emotion.

How should one pronounce those words? Try saying out loud those three ‘*grrr-*’ words I attributed to *this* voice. Then say them in your deepest voice! No! Go deeper still!

Now, roll those ‘R’s like a contented cat would purr out its appreciation after polishing a bowl of cream. Now, try to sound like an irate tigress warning off someone foolishly approaching her cub: *Grrrr-rrrowled!* That is probably almost as close as you will get to the tone this voice normally uses when bashing up someone ... or education.

Did this voice belong to a very wary, world-weary person? You would not be wrong in thinking so. This would be particularly so if you heard it over the telephone or if its owner was not immediately visible.

This voice contained equal parts of miff, mischief and melancholy – with a colossal dollop of *menace* on top. It sounded like, let us say, a younger, slightly less masculine version of the voice of ‘Don Corleone’ in *The Godfather*. Sadly, this youngster’s voice lacked even the hint of compassion the fictional gang-lord had displayed on the silver screen. Some would even hesitate in calling it as definitely ‘feminine’. In fact, to them, a more appropriate term would be: ‘that menacing growl’.

It indicated an eagerness, even a bias, towards rebellion and instant retribution. Its owner seemed to be ready for

any activity that involved violent, vengeful action at that moment and at every moment thereafter.

However, this voice had its positive qualities. It also pointed to a very strong person whose character had been forged in extraordinary fires. These were the fires of experiences that lie well beyond the reach of any normal pre-adolescent youngster. This was a person who would be formidable on reaching maturity. Sadly, it depended on this inner strength being aptly used. More importantly, it depended on whether this person did reach maturity at all.

In fact, though gravelly and experience-laden, the voice belonged to a short, slender girl. *Please use these size-related terms with caution around her, if you ever do so!* Some acknowledged her as Aura Baaz. Most, on seeing her, screamed in Hindi: ‘Aayee re! Bhaago!’ (आयी रे! भागो!) * This was uttered in tones dripping with raw alarm.

This cry was generally delivered in a rising shriek that served as the ‘wake’ of a hasty flight to ‘flee-dom’ (sic).

=====

(*) Surely, at some point in your life, you will have watched a nature show involving a predator and its prey. Surely therein, you will have seen panicked animals fleeing helter-skelter in all directions. Surely, you will have then heard the pitiful, plaintive cries of those who were predated upon and who would soon be ‘post-dated’.

‘Aayee re! Bhaago!’ is just such a pitiful, plaintive cry, uttered in advance. It is a pre-dated warning; an alarm the hunted scream out to each other when they are aware that a hunter is on the prowl. It is an acknowledgement that pain will not be far behind.

Translated loosely, the ‘Aayee re!’ part of this cry means: ‘She has arrived!’ The remainder is more visceral. It screams: ‘FLEE or be eaten, beaten or at least browbeaten’. This cry can be translated to all that AND MORE, when it is about our Vindictive One.

Depending on the outcome, two meanings of the noun ‘wake’ are likely. It could be the ‘wake’ of a fast-fleeing ship. Or the ‘wake’ held after someone passes away.

Sooner or later, the hunt – or the beating – would be over. That was when those pitiful specimens who could, would mourn after Aura had left. They would cry out softly, softly, and sobbingly: “Ow! Ra!” We will call her Aura. When she is not within hearing distance, you *could* use a few other names, but remember ... *softly, very softly*.

She has sharp hearing. She can hear a whispered insult from a distance of *paanch gilli, paanch danda*! * While we ought not to give in to that all-conquering fear, most do give in often! We all just cannot help but do so!

As you see, most ran away from Aura. Some could not. If so, they ensured they kept a minimum safe distance of at least *paanch gilli, paanch danda* between them and her. This was carefully and accurately measured, to the inch.

=====

(*) *This paanch gilli, paanch danda (पांच गिल्ली, पांच डंडा) is an ad hoc rule in the rural team sport of gilli-danda. In this sport, a stick at least one foot in length, is the ‘bat’ or the danda. A smaller stick, about three to five inches long with tapered conical ends, is the gilli or the ‘ball’. During the game, a ‘batter’ strikes down on the gilli to loft it. He then hits the mid-air gilli towards the defenders. In the version of game I played, at some time while the game was in progress, defenders stood about ‘five gilli and five danda’ away from the batter.*

This distance was arbitrary as there were no specific lengths for either equipment. We just used sticks that fell off trees. In Aura’s case, a prudent person would set this ‘safe’ distance at least a handful of inches beyond her reach, however long it may be. Let us just put it at six feet, eight inches (about two metres), given that the normal reach of Aura’s whirling attack is just over six feet. For more details on the sport itself, you can visit <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilli-danda>.

Many people tended to judge Aura on the basis of her stature. They mistakenly assumed she would be mostly harmless because of her doll-sized physique. They discovered, to their shame that she was ‘Mostly Harmful!’

Those who made assumptions about Aura based on her size have learnt not to pass any kind of remark about her when she is in earshot ... or even otherwise. To their everlasting shame, it would surely have been a hard, and definitely hurtful, lesson.

They might then have allowed themselves to forget the shame drilled into them. However, Aura – our begrudging, vindictive Aura – never failed to remind them of what had taken place and what a repeat performance could be like.

This embarrassment was amply, clearly and visibly evident. Everyone could see the various scars she left behind on those who had made such ill-advised comments.

The visible shame of a black eye or two and bones that hurt for weeks afterwards served as grim and lasting reminders to the careless. These also reminded others: snide remarks were not the best weapons to be used by the defenceless against Aura.

Also, very few *could* defend themselves against her when she really got going.

Our Aura claimed to be a full thirteen years of age. This was an age she wanted to have in common with two of her fellow adventurers. She would rather she did not have *anything* in common with her third fellow adventurer. These, three, incidentally, were the owners of the other voices we heard emerging from the clubhouse earlier.

She was twelve years and eight months old on that crisp December evening.

However, let us not be foolhardy enough to make an issue of it. Let us not discuss this when Aura is near, shall we? She wanted to be thirteen, very, very badly. So let us let her be that, okay?

Aura would rather not give even an inch of an advantage to *that* third fellow adventurer, if she could help it. She could have helped it – by using her charms and, mostly, her arms – if she were allowed, which she was not.

You *could* ask: ‘What charms?’ She *would* reply with a charming, warming armload.

On receiving it, you *would* stutter through cracked, chattering teeth: “I’m ch... ch... charmed, I’m sh... sh... sure!” She would reply with: “You are harmed, *I’m* sure!”

“Am I not correct in assuming you know what magnets are?” The same infuriatingly logical and instructive voice droned, as if not really seeking an answer.

“That is what you call a question with no answer, is it not, you ‘groan acharya’?” * snarled Aura. She did not realise that she too had posed a rhetorical question.

=====

(*) *This is the first true ‘Auracle’ of this book. What is an Auracle? This will be explained in the next chapter! What could this fabricated term ‘groan acharya’ mean? Well, an Auracle from Aura is likely an insult. In fact, it is probably one. Given that this one is being used to address Sensei-bo in relation to studies, it most definitely is an insult. She quite obviously was not referring to the venerable guru Dronacharya (द्रोणाचार्य). What she actually meant could be more like: ‘You (censored) teacher who makes me groan’.*

In the process, she gave us one of her ‘*Auracles*’. That is what her infamous made-up words are called. She was surely hoping to prevent any addition to what *she* saw as an already impossible load of schoolwork and homework.

Then she went ahead and offered a reply to Sensei-bo anyway! “Yes, we do know what magnets are! But what does that have to do with us? It had *better* not lead to another of your research assignments!” her *grrr*-owl said. It emerged more as a precaution and less as a threat. Also, there was a large amount of hope hitching a ride on it.

In her angry fit, she then did harmful things to various subjects, getting terms and facts woefully wrong. These would evoke moans and groans from all of us; and jubilant corrections from one of us.

She burst out: “School is already onerous, ‘*woe-nerous*, *moan-erous* and *groan-erous*’. * Our History teacher wants an essay on India’s impact on history. Also, our Maths teacher tries to direct my ever-failing attention to ‘*scared roots*’, ‘*Khali-kyu-lus*’ and ‘*All-gibber-Ah!*’ * Then, our Science teacher wants me to memorise the names of some of the *four hundred or so* bones in the human body.”

Obviously, she did not know, yet, how many bones a human body contained. She would, soon! “Why do I have to bone up on all these ‘boney bones’? All I need to know is which one is a funny bone and which one is a grim one.

=====

(*) *Do you really need an explanation for ‘woe-nerous, moan-erous and groan-erous’ or for ‘square roots’, ‘calculus’ and ‘algebra’?*

Her Auracles appeared to have contorted the two venerable Maths disciplines of Calculus and Algebra into: ‘Why, oh why, calculus?!’ and ‘Everyone, chatter unintelligently ‘Ah!’!’

“I would rather know perfectly which bone, when hit, disables someone. Why do I have to know about the *radius* and *circumference* and *ulna* and ‘*metabarbell*’?”

She then mused: “*How do scared roots help Maths?*” In doing so, she proved the depth of her ignorance. Obviously, she had not been tutored on that issue yet.

“Yuck!” she concluded. ‘*Auracular*’ rhetoric – the one that nobody questioned, or *understood* – reigned briefly in the clubhouse, reining in all other activity.

Silence stirred. It sighed to itself, silently. It then sang a soulful serenade to itself, silently. Everybody in the clubhouse, except for one person, went quiet as each tried to make sense of the lengthy and error-filled monologue from their *smallest* teammate. *She*, as we all can see, was someone most prone to violence and least prone to study.

That one person who did not try too hard to digest this drivel was busy. He was rapidly scribbling in a fat, purple pocket book. He was surely also thinking of how to answer our Violent One’s queries with the most amount of teasing.

Oops! ... Did I just use ‘smallest’? More importantly, did *she* see it? *Ow! Ow!* Yes, she did! *Ow! That hurt!* Is it any wonder her name is often pronounced, softly, as ‘*Ow! Ra!*’? Now is the right time to offer another warning!

Never ever use *that* size-defining word or any similar term in her presence when talking about her.

Remember, do not – I will repeat, DO NOT – use that word or similar ones in *her* hearing. That is unless you

want to receive the ‘Fist of Aura’, which is also known as the ‘*AU-RA-KA-DHO-SA*’. * I just did!

This is the infamous set of five syllables many dread hearing. It is used by Aura in her martial-arts bouts – or wherever else she can do so. It is a focusing chant used whenever she is about to deliver the finishing touch or the *coup de grâce*. Some choose to call it the ‘fatality’.

Nowadays, most of Aura’s fans have learnt to egg her on during her bouts. They do so by shouting out this chant. There are numerous other chants, too. + Their usage depends on the blow she is aiming at her hapless opponent.

In fact, her fans have created a whole series of couplets and taunts to whip Aura into an uncontrollable frenzy ... As if *she* needed any further whipping up to get into one. Frankly, she literally personified that ‘frenzy’ word.

These were also meant to discourage her rivals ... As if *they* needed any further discouraging! By the end of it all, they ended up receiving all the frenzied whipping.

See *Appendices D* and *E* for some aspects related to this facet of our Violent One.

=====

(*) *Aura’s signature move is the Au-Ra-Ka-Dho-Sa (औ-रा-का-दो-सा) or ‘Ow!-Ra-Ka-Dho-Sa’. The latter is used by whichever intelligent being can croak out that mouthful after being on the receiving end of The Fist. This move is similar to the Ka-me-ha-me-ha, Goku’s signature chant and attack in the Dragonball anime series. The difference is Aura uses her fists; albeit to an equally demoralising effect.*

(†) *Some other moves-cum-chants: Sar-De-Tak-kar, Kar-Ghan-chak-kar (Butt of Head, Butt of Lead); Khu-la-Haath, Chhu-pi-Laath (Sleight of Hand, Smite of Foot); Dho, Aur Dho, Smash (Bash, S’More Bash, Smash) and Doom Dha-da-ka! (Fest of Doom!). Also see Appendix D.*

It includes some of the more common and effective chants, taunts and couplets used by her or by her fans. Next, there is a list of *beat-'em-up* and *shoot-'em-up* games said to be in the making, inspired by her.

There is a blank page at the end of this book. You can create your own chants and taunts and send them to us so Aura – and you – can use them in her next fight.

She will be pleased; extremely so, let me tell you. Try not to mention her age and her height. If you do, definitely do not do so in a negative manner. Otherwise, you might receive an unwanted visit from ‘You Know Who’!

‘*She Who Must Not Be Misnamed*’ is particularly touchy about that aspect of her physique. This is equally true about a few other aspects, such as her age, voice, temper, temperament ... Umm ... She is tetchy about just about *any* facet of her life being discussed in a negative manner.

Did you get the message about not passing any snide comments about her?

Just in case you did not, here it is: Do not present a remark about any aspect of Aura’s physical, mental or spiritual presence in her presence.

That way, you will not receive any unwanted presents from this *Shanti Khallas*! (This term, शांती खल्लास, can be loosely translated as ‘Peace Ender!’ or ‘Strife Bringer!’ It has nothing in common with the legendary Santa Claus, the ‘Gift Bringer’.)

I hope this was loud and clear enough to all our readers. Please obey the aphorisms stated below. *She* calls them

‘*abhorisms*’ because she hates them. They warn new victims to stay out of her wrath’s path! Here they are (The italicised parts are to be read in Hindi. Also see Appendix E for the Hindi versions.):

Aura *nazdeek*? Keep ‘tongue in cheek’!
(Is Aura near? Watch your mouth, dear!)

Jab Baaz *naaraaz*, *tab* watch out boss!
(When Baaz is cross, then watch out boss!)

Some who have strayed inside the *paanch gilli, paanch danda* zone have tried to use these as a *mantra* (chant).

They were probably hoping this might ward off an ‘*Aura*’ frenzy!

They have been unsuccessful, let me tell you.

Nothing beats – and I use this term metaphorically – that mournful alarm of ‘*Aayee re! Bhaago!*’

This should be followed by the aptly appropriate fleeing action in every direction but one. This might just prevent any violent advances from *her*.

Better still, obey the *paanch gilli, paanch danda* rule. That ought to keep you safe, normally.

Can you now imagine how ‘*woe-nerous-ly*’ painful it is for me to be constantly within *paanch gilli, paanch danda* of our Onerous One? ‘*Moan-erous*’ and ‘*groan-erous*’!





You might suffer the same fate as these goons if you choose to be snide within '*paanch gilli, paanch danda*' of Aura.

THE BANE AND THE TWAIN

Where we meet motor-mouth and know-it-all Ayelan and understand why he, though very logical, cannot be a perfect Mr Spock; where we learn about how much Aura loves to hate him; where appear instigator Aman Shoor and his serene, yet supremely assertive, twin sister Amanat; where we learn that our four youths (Yes, Aura as well!) study at the TakshaShaala; where magnets are still being discussed – very, very rarely; where homework and schoolwork are still being attacked – very, very vehemently; where we encounter blunder-bunder and chimp-ek-chello; where we learn of Aura's vengetarian diet; and where some 'Auracles' that ought not to be aired in polite society are uttered!



ura's 'Yuck!' was followed by a lengthy moment of silence. That was when we offered our condolences and held a wake to bid a sad farewell to home-study tasks.

That momentary silence was soon broken as a differing view from an expected source came right on cue. This source *always* had a different opinion whenever Aura insulted education and gave her take about its ill-effects. *

This piping voice declared confidently and, above all, triumphantly: "As always, Aura, you are wrong!"

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(*) *These rebuttals were delivered as if this person wanted to say: 'How could you possibly not like education and all the joys it brings? It is like denying that light, water, air and an absence of Aura are needed to survive!' This lucky person has immunity from harm.*

“The skeleton of modern-day man has never had, and, hopefully, will never have ‘*four hundred or so*’ bones. That is, unless you regress back to the Dinosaur Age.” He extended a website he had accessed: “Here, see, BBC’s website states fully grown humans have two hundred and six bones, while babies have about three hundred parts.”

This infuriatingly all-knowing voice then declared: “Further, you evidently have failed to study geometry and human anatomy.

“Had you done so, you would have known that the ‘circumference’ is not a bone in the human body ... or any other body with bones in it, as a matter of fact.

“That word is used in connection with circles. You know, those *round* things we draw in geometry class? Sadly, those, like the *rotis* you make, are almost square when you draw them,” this voice added snidely, while alluding to Indian unleavened bread (रोटी).

“Also, please remember: It is ‘*square roots*’, not ‘*scared roots*’!” It continued unabatedly, treading very deeply into a ‘Do Not Enter’ zone. To others, this would be a disaster zone, if not actually the dreaded Twilight Zone.

“Finally, the word ‘*metabarbell*’ does not exist, neither in English nor in any other language I know ... and, as you know, I do happen to know a few.”

This was a voice full of Reason (the ‘logical’ kind), Statistics and ‘Knowing’.

The capital letters certified how much of each of these this voice’s owner knew. It was a voice filled to the brim

with Knowledge ... Too much knowledge, a person would say, especially if that person happened to be Aura.

It was a voice that crowed about the delight one would feel by knowing a lot about a lot of things.

It *crowed*, just like a circus barker would crow about the wonderful sights and experiences the carnival had in store for its customers. Yet, it contained a fair share of logic. One would even call it rational.

It was a voice that would revere, obviously rationally, someone like the famous *Mr Spock* of the fictional *Star Trek* universe. This voice could be seen as boastful. In fact, it used to be considered as *exactly* that by the students of the TakshaShaala. This is the school our quartet attend. *

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(*) *TakshaShaala* (तक्षशाळा) seems to be named after 'Takshashila' (तक्षशिला). 'Shaala' is Sanskrit for 'school', while 'taksh', as a Sanskrit verb, variously means 'cut', 'chisel', 'form' or 'create'. The school is situated at 5, Rakshya Bundhan Garden Road, quite close to the mansion. It has very strict admission criteria. It largely selects the crème de la crème in terms of scholastic and/or sporting achievements. This is not based on previous results but on tests conducted by the school itself.

I hear you ask: 'Umm ... Then how is Aura in this school?' I ask you back: 'Why not?' She is superbly talented. Also, just try to deny her a rightful place alongside the other AdvenChaar and you will not like the consequences. Finally, she manages to cope with the demanding syllabus with intense coaching from her nemesis (whose voice you just heard), our Solicitous One and their android guru.

Aura hates homework and is the Destroyer of Words but that does not stop her from doing all right in her studies. Further, in her case, she was also given admission because of her sporting abilities. It helps that she is famous as part of the AdvenChaar and a sportsperson par excellence. The school absolutely adores the publicity she brings in.

In fact, when that all-knowing voice was first heard in this school, the general consensus among the classmates had been quite unflattering. They changed their negative view soon afterwards. That was when they realised the owner of this voice was actually a helpful youngster.

That change did not apply to Aura. “That will never happen,” she had declared vehemently. This had happened when she was asked whether she would tone down her criticism of our Knowledge Hound. The asker – it was me – had nearly come to pass! I did pass out, though.

There was some saving grace in it all, though. The obvious hint of affection this erudite voice showed for our Violent One contradicted this arrogance. Further, unlike the impassive delivery of the above-mentioned *Mr. Spock*, this voice had a flaw. It displayed a hint of suppressed mischief that became obvious whenever Aura was around. This prevented it from being perfectly unemotional.

It was a character trait some would call illogical. It was a voice that would not hesitate in gently needling our Irksome One whenever the opportunity arose. Such opportunities tended to arise very often around Aura. This teasing was encouraged by the fact that the owner of this voice had total immunity from the *AU-RA-KA-DHO-SA*.

The mischievous bent of this voice was enhanced by a tiny uplifting at the border of the right lower lip. It hinted at a caring smile that also teased a little. It was joined by an upraised right eyebrow and enlarged pupils.

This was a well-choreographed set of vocal and facial clues indicating the character of this member. Meet our

helpful little soul, Ayelan Jaanazad. He was to turn thirteen in two months' time. Sooner than Aura wanted; sadly.

Go on! You can call *him* 'little'! *She* calls him *that*, along with several other snide and unmentionable terms.

There *are* times when this 'Auracular' tide of scorn recedes a bit. That is when she needs help with studies and when only he can, but will not, help. The former happens often, unsurprisingly; the latter, almost never, surprisingly.

"And do you know what I would like to do with each of your three hundred bones, you *chela a-kela* of Sensei-bo?" Aura growled. It is possible this Auracle (चेला अ-केला; sole disciple?) was also an insult, with the 'banana' thrown in for spite. '*Kela*' (केला) is the Hindi word for banana.

"Do not credit me with more bones than I actually have!" said Ayelan. He added, somewhat unwisely: "Unlike you, I am not an immature child!" *Oops!* Ayelan... That was very close to the bone, *your bone!*

However, that sentence was drowned out by Sensei-bo. The guru, wanting to end these unwanted disruptions, raised his voice. He said: "Wait! I am explaining what I want ..." That was when the android guru's explanation was interrupted again. Aura called it a '*hinderruption*'!

Why are so many English scholars sighing with me?

A third voice added itself to the conversation. It said: "It feels more like you are being very snobbish every time you speak in that tone, Sensei-bo." Hmmm! This voice quite openly voiced out in support of Aura's distaste of all issues

related to education. Surely, its owner disliked extra home-study assignments to some extent.

This voice too was an expected participant in the vocal give-and-take in this particular clubhouse. It was a deep, nearly adult voice. It belonged to a natural-born leader.

It could be termed as self-possessed and authoritative. It was a voice that could and did carry influence. Its owner possessed very strong qualities. These became evident in tense and adventure-filled moments. Umm! We *are* talking about the AdvenChaar, after all. They *do* tend to have quite a few of these ‘tense and adventure-filled’ moments.

However, at that moment, this voice’s owner took on the guise of a co-conspirator – siding with Aura, obviously. He was conspiring against what could well be an unwelcome assignment. Also, he seemed totally uninterested in doing more homework than what was absolutely necessary.

This is Aman Shoor, the leader of the AdvenChaar.

A calm and collected fourth voice, clear as the tone emanating from the finest crystal when struck. It tinkled: “Could the three of you please be quiet? Let us first hear what Sensei-bo has to say.”

This was our quartet’s fourth member. The owner of this voice was, obviously, the most sensible amongst them all. It was the same voice that had earlier asked after their android guru’s welfare. It was a voice that soothed and calmed. It had a slow, lilting quality to it that could be relaxing. It was like gentle water gurgling over a shallow, pebble-covered river bed.

However, despite all its gentleness, it was a voice that, unsurprisingly, received or tolerated no objection. There *were* rare *unvoiced* demurrals, sometimes, though. When this voice chose to assert itself, it had not steel but adamant in it. It was a voice that was instantly obeyed, even by Ayelan and Aura.

Let me repeat that: This voice was instantly obeyed, *even by Aura. (I like repeating that!)*

In that guise, it could belong to a tamer of beasts. If it chose, it could voice out and subdue a lion, a hurricane even. Then, it would make either come to rest, becalmed, in the palm of its owner's hand, in a manner of speaking.

This conversation dealing with magnets and Sensei-bo, however, was not one of the occasions that required an assertive position. So this voice played the role of a peace-maker. It became a voice that could soothe storms and quieten the seas of rising or roused emotions.

You have the honour of meeting Amanat, the elder Shoor twin. She was often the one to unruffle ruffled feathers and calm stormy tempers. Once in a blue moon, her attempts were just that *teensy-weensy* bit insufficient. *That* was when she had to let *that* voice emerge.

Aura said: "Amanat, you are always the voice of reason. 'Sunset-bo' may have logic for brains." Then she returned to her pet peeve. Poking Ayelan in the ribs, she said: "However, that does not mean that ... *this* ... *this* 'blunder *bunder*' and even you have to ape him. Any more from this 'chimp-ek-chello' and I will 'go-rilli' ape on him to stop all this monkey business!" Groans of disgust climbed up the walls as the simian Auracles leapt from neuronics

branch to neurotic branch of the benumbed Tree of Knowledge. *

These are *Auracles!* They foretell doom for a language. They are words, phrases, clauses and sentences created and let loose by Aura. There are too many of these, as you will discover in this tale and the following ones. Ayelan named them as such. I am sure all of you can guess why. +

The reference by Aura to ‘sunset’ was obviously a sarcastic reference to Sensei-bo’s apparently advanced age. She added insult to *insult* by stating that Ayelan was his ‘lone disciple’! She could not add insult to *injury*, could she? She was not allowed to *injure him*, was she, she asked.

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(*) *Blunder-बंदर: Error-prone monkey? Blunder Harbour? Chimp-एक-चेल्लो: Lone disciple who is a chimp? ‘Go-rilli’ (गो-रिल्ली): Did she mean ‘go really’ or did she coin a Hindi Auracle for a female gorilla?*

(+) *By now, you will have noticed that Aura has a habit of creating words of her own whenever she is in full flow or in an emotionally charged state. Initially, Ayelan (at every opportunity) and Amanat (whenever she wanted to correct a gross misconception on Aura’s part) would step in to make their word-mangling friend aware of such a disaster. However, after the hundredth or so such word, in the very first week of trying to help her, Amanat stopped bothering, largely.*

There was only so much you could do to improve a person’s language abilities, was there not? If that person still insisted on – and Aura was really, really insistent about – creating new words rather than correcting her mistakes, then it was better to give up than to struggle uselessly. After a while, everyone but Ayelan felt the same.

Ayelan, though, would never agree to stop needling Aura. Also, since he began keeping the little purple book he carried around with him, these Auracles provided him and almost every other non-Aura in the mansion with hours of jollity at the end of the day.

I can only presume that there are deep, malevolent word-mangling forges inside Aura's brain. Here, words are fired and made so malleable that they can be hammered into unions with unloved and unwanted partners. They then mutate into unrecognised versions of their original selves.

So, what is the origin of '*chimp-ek-chello*'? Does it have '*chammak-challo*' (छम्मक-छल्लो; coquettish girl), '*ek*' (one), '*chimp*' and '*chela*' (disciple) as donors? Does it mean Ayelan is the 'lone disciple who is a chimp'? Bingo!

Our Calming One reasoned: "Let us not insult Sensei-bo by calling him names, shall we, Aura? Also, I am not aping him. I am just asking you to listen to what Sensei-bo has to say, rather than interrupting him at every opportunity."

Our Aura, though, was a '*vengeterian*' through and through. Nothing could satisfy her as well as a vengeful act would. She could gorge on revenge all day! Grudgingly, she told Amanat: "It is only because *you* are asking me ..."

Then she turned on Sensei-bo and became really – I mean really, really – creative. Slaughtering English and several other subjects in the process, she growled: "Go on! You '*cry-lobite*', you homework hound, you '*ribbit-ed*' robot, you *research rhesus*, you '*slow-dium shell-pate*'! You ... grumble (*censored*)! You ... grumble (*censored*)!"

With each set of words, her gruff voice rose by a pitch. The tirade ended in a hoarse scream of frustration on '*shell-pate*' (Her take on a 'metallic android skull'?) After that, it soared into inaudible rumbles. I have censored out *some* bits. This is to prevent your young and sensitive minds from being corrupted by such strong language.

You will have guessed by now that Aura does not really take to homework. Homework does not take to her, either. It tries to stay at least *paanch gilli, paanch danda* from her to prevent being ‘homed in’ or ‘worked upon’.

“*Aura*, your Auracles are becoming too daring,” Amanat cautioned. This stemmed the tide of the scathing, colourful and, above all, creative, use of English.

‘English’ thanked Amanat. Other hapless subjects, such as Geology and Chemistry – which had just come under Aura’s knife – also breathed huge sighs of relief. They would not be dissected any more that day. They rued meeting Aura. She might have met them – or they, her – at school, in a library or on TV. *They would likely remember meeting her for the rest of their days. She might remember them in passing ... Their ‘passing away’, that is.* *

How else could she have known of trilobites or sodium sulphate? ‘*Ribbit*’ is a frog’s call, but did she mean to say ‘riveted’? Additionally, ‘*research*’ might be what only a ‘*rhesus*’ monkey, such as one named ‘Ayelan’, would do.

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(*) *Some Auracles contain strong language which is NOT meant to be used around the faint-hearted. So do not go screaming these words at other people. She is allowed to do a lot of things that you or I can never do! And who, besides Amanat, will try to stop her? Not Ayelan, because he loves to get her into a frenzy. Neither will Aman. It is okay to do that ‘Grumble! Grumble!’ bit, though. I too need to do it around one of the quartet (No, I am not naming her – I do not want to get beaten up, again!) ... I was, was I not? Because I did allude to her, did I not? I used the pronoun ‘her’, did I not? She deduced that only one ‘her’ does the beating from among them.*



OF AURACLES AND AMANAT'S VOICE

*Where more about Auracles is known; where 'Haura' strikes; where our Near-Perfect One makes a rare error; where we learn about the weird synergy between Aura and Ayelan; where a 'research-ectomy' is proposed for a case of 'research-itis'; where a Nay-pology (not an Ayerony, not yet) is aired, followed by an apology when a 'lite' version of **THAT** voice is unleashed; where we finally come to know Sunset- (oops!) Sensei-bo's reason for harping on magnets; where the cheer 'Hypo! Hypo! Hai rel' is aired; where, under extreme provocation – the likelihood of a research assignment being forced on Aura – the dam holding back the ire against Ayelan finally shows a crack; and where she gets the last 'Grrr!' in.*



ur Auracle Maker saw a word from every angle, mostly from the reverse, often the nonsensical side. Sometimes, she even did this from the naughtier side.

Then she amended the word in the manner *she* wanted to, so that it conveyed the meaning *she* wanted it to. What the simple-minded and single-minded word itself might have wanted to say, or imply, was unimportant!

Aura did not look at words head-on. She did take them on in that manner, though! She would hit a word just as she would hit every other rival: on the head. Even words cowered around her, those cowards! In fact, a word as a rival would likely be 'heels-over-head' hastily. This would happen were it to head for a heady head-on head-to-head with the *Haura*. *Oops!* I meant to say 'Aura'! I really did!

She heard that, didn't she? No! NO! Aura, I did not say 'Horror'! It was just the repetitive sound of too many 'aitches'! Can you not see that the spelling is different? She asked me to tell her truthfully if I 'head' ... had not meant it. Still trying to get my head around that Auracle, I could not answer immediately. That was enough of a head-start for her. She did not 'head' ... heed me!

Ow! Ow! OW! In the 'head' ... heat of the moment, she delivered the *Sar-De-Tak-Kar, Kar-Ghan-Chak-Kar* (सर दे टक्कर, कर घन-चक्कर; Butt of Head, Butt of Lead). This headbutt ensured I had a butt of lead. I fell down with a thud soon after she butted my forehead with her head.

I got butted down onto my butt. No ifs, ands or buts about that! I had to either button up or butt out. Just like words have to. Words and I are led by our noses, exclaiming: 'But...! But...! But...!'

Ow! My head! Do I still have it? Can you see if it is in the place where a head should be? Is it on the head of the body, I mean, up above and facing ahead? You have got to hand it to Aura. She can handily hand out punishment with both hands and her head, when she puts her head and heart into it. Does your heart not go out to me? No? *No!* You heartless souls! Here's hoping your heady hopes hover like headless harpies in Hades! Hoops! *Oops!*

Heads up! It appears that Amanat is heading for *that* voice of hers ... I take it all back and head her off at the pass! My head offers you all a bow of heartfelt apology!

Sensei-bo started showing signs that he would like to speak again. Just then, Amanat decided that it was time to

put Ayelan in his place for needling Aura so much. “Just a minute, *Senset-bo* ... *Oh no!* Now you have got me doing it as well, Aura! Sorry, *Sensei-bo!* Ayelan, please tone down your criticism of Aura, will you?” Amanat said with a weary sigh. This was followed soon after by an expected hangdog expression from Ayelan.

She did cast a chastising glance at me for that alliterative bit with those ‘heads’ and ‘butts’. Maybe, that and the Auracles were the cause of that very rare slip on her part. So many Auracles can addle any brain – even that of our Near-Perfect One. Otherwise, she is *always* right.

Why are so many fans of Amanat staring daggers at me? Turning back, Amanat cast another meaningful, chastising glance at the duo. *So, why is nobody among you fans looking daggers at them?*

There was just that weird unstoppable synergy between Aura and Ayelan. It made the clubhouse echo with their vocal give-and-take almost every day. Aura would ask a rhetorical question: ‘Can you show me another person, besides you, who loves homework?’ To this, Ayelan would reply with one of his own: ‘Can you show me a *sensible* youngster who does not?’ ... And so on and so forth.

While *Sensei-bo* was still attempting to explain, two of the quartet assumed the worst. To this duo, all the signs pointed to the android *guru* doing one of two things. One option could involve an unwanted research assignment. The other could be a long lecture on their grades.

Good grades never seemed to please *Sensei-bo* for long, strangely. He always demanded better. If neither option

was the case, then a third one (however *welcome* it would surely be to one person) would have to be considered. It could be that the guru-droid was finally coming unhinged. Maybe, that was why he kept harping on ‘magnets’.

“This had better not lead to research!” Aman remarked.

Sensei-bo said: “It would be nice if you two were more like Ayelan and Amanat. Actually, I am trying to answer a question that Ayelan put to you and me yesterday, Aman.”

“Ayelan asked a lot of questions yesterday. He does so every day! Which exact question of his are you referring to?” Aman asked. He added a mock ‘dagger-loaded’ glance at the one who did all that querying. “I hope, for Ayelan’s sake, it is not his question about why we do not get more research assignments from you.”

This provoked a hoarse, gurgling scream – and a few Auracles – from Aura: “*Nooooo!* Did he really ask that of ‘Rusty-bo’? He must be suffering from the withdrawal symptoms of ‘*research-itis*’.” To her, this Auracle might have meant an ailment that made the stricken one launch into unending research.

“Let us do a ‘*research-ectomy*’ on Ayelan’s brain.” That, to our Auracular One, could mean surgically removing the part of the brain that insisted on conducting research. “Aman, I shall let you be the *un-aesthete-ist*,” she added. I am quite confident she meant ‘anaesthetist’.

Her rumbling voice, in intent, if not in content, sounded just like an avalanche advancing down a rocky mountain. This, incidentally, was what her body was doing.

She was ready to visit bodily harm – the more harm the better – on all critics in her vicinity. Her team-mates were the exception. She would gladly make a further exception for Ayelan, though. She would not mind doing so, however much it might pain her (*ha!*) and him (*definitely!*).

“Aura!” two human voices rang out in an exasperated chorus. Ayelan’s, obviously, was not one of those. He was in giggling communion with his fat little purple book.

The lack of any element of shock and the absence of any severity in these voices would have surprised any unconnected observer. In fact, there were two of them in the clubhouse. They had been delivered just days ago. This dual lack-and-absence was proof that *this* manner of calling Aura’s name; the tone in which it was spoken; and the choral effect were regular occurrences here.

Amanat realised that Ayelan’s remarks about Aura’s age and lack of knowledge might have hurt. They might have crossed a certain invisible boundary of tolerance in our Irate One. “Please apologise to Aura!” she told him.

Now, our Ayelan has his quirks too. One of these involves twisting and turning words to make them mean something quite different from what they should mean. So, reluctant to apologise, he said: “Aura, I am sorry ...” He paused briefly. Then he said, all in one breath: “... that you are so sensitive as to be hurt by what I might have said.”

Aura nodded her head, accepting what the first four words were made to say. She obviously was ignorant or failed to understand the actual intent of the full statement. Those belonging to ‘*sub*-species Aura’ do not really heed

such long sentences. They believe that the first few words would have conveyed the total contents of the message.

So, she heard the ‘Aura, I am sorry ...’ bit and accepted it as an apology. *Did you get the real meaning of this apology?* Later, Aura termed it as a ‘Nay-pology’. Let me state here that it is not the same as an ‘Ayerony’ (read it as ‘eye-runny’). What is that, you ask? It is a scathing reply to an Auracle. You likely met a few earlier. You will be officially introduced to one quite soon.

An Ayerony often trumps an Auracle.

Our Shrewd One was more perceptive than Aura, though. She cautioned our Unapologetic One: “Ayelan! That is as far from an apology as you are from knowing Swahili, or Aura is from practising non-violence.”

Our Polyglot demurred: “I do not think she knows ‘non-violence’. I know some Swahili though. *Jambo Rafiki* is ‘Hello brother!’, *Hakuna Matata* is ‘No problem!’ ...

“Do not change the topic, Ayelan. **APOLOGISE, AND DO IT NOW!**” she demanded in a likeness of *that* adamant tone which permitted neither resistance nor demurral.

Amanat used a less severe version of *that* tone in the clubhouse. She would have preferred that she did not have to use it at all. However, she was forced to do so. This happened mostly on those occasions when Aura and Ayelan debated – or clashed – on any aspect of education. Rarely, it happened when her patience was wearing thin.

Ayelan realised he could not avoid the issue any longer. Also, nobody – I mean, *nobody* – could deny Amanat

when she used *that* tone, even this less severe one. He said, without pause or dramatic effect: “Aura, I am sorry!”

Aura said with a snide giggle: “Apology accepted! Do not worry! I will not hurt a hair on your head, Ayelan. My hands like you too much for that. I just cannot promise not wanting to hurt your bones, though, *heh heh*.”

“*Heh, heh,*” Ayelan echoed her smirk with a sickly one.

“Your hunt for knowledge can be so *ag-grr-avating!*” Aura growled. On the way, she created another Auracle. She went to her perennial bugbear and mock-punched him on the arm nearest to her. This was followed by a series of fake gestures from Ayelan. He rolled his eyes up and clutched his *other* arm as if in unbearable pain. He stumbled hither and thither imitating a ‘mortally wounded’ Bollywood hero preparing to meet his ‘Maker’ on screen.

“You mean ‘aggravating’, do you not?” Ayelan could not resist asking, through his mock pain and purple book.

“In your case, I add the ‘*Grrr*’!” she replied. Aura *does* try to have the last word, be it just a grumble or a ‘*grrr*’!

Finally, Sensei-bo managed to get a few words in edgewise. He said: “I was referring to Ayelan’s question about why you all get into so much trouble.”

Ayelan said: “You mean my question as to why so many troublesome adventures are attracted to us? Oh well, it was just a hypothesis, you know, Sensei-bo! There really may not be any definite answer to that.”

That was when something from *way* off-stage hit us all squarely on our chins. “‘Hi!’ back to you. But why did

you not complete your question? Why did you say ‘this is...’? And since when are you calling Sensei-bo ‘*Paw*’?” our Clueless One asked! She had likely heard ‘hypothesis’ as ‘*Hi Paw, this is ...!*’

This was received by a wry, shapely and beatific near-smile from one of our adventurers. “Huh?” asked another. A third knowledgeable one slapped his own forehead in frustration. An explosive denial followed. “No, you ‘*hypo-critter*’! Hypotheses have nothing to do with ‘Hi!’ or any of that hype!” he blurted out. Was that ‘*hypo-critter*’ an *Ayerony* for ‘hypocrite’? No! It was too angry to be one.

A gruff voice called out: “Three jeers for Ayelan! ‘*Hype, Hype, Hai re!*’ * It was meant to be *sotto voce*. It failed! It was nowhere near a soft whisper, deliberately.

Some of you might be wondering by now: ‘Is there really a shrewd mind hidden behind all these inane questions and Auracles?’ That snide ‘three jeers’ may make it seem so. You may feel that some kind of genius is churning out all those Auracles ... *Nah!* Do not go reading too much into a coincidental Auracle and a fitting repartee. It is a trap! I have been down that rabbithole. It leads to the fabled *Graveyard of Words!* I will talk about it in a future book. It is a gory sight! It makes the wordsmith in me wail.

Ever-ready-to-flee Calm cautiously tiptoed back into the clubhouse on flighty toes, ever ready to flee again. Taking advantage of that lull, Sensei-bo said: “There is a logical answer. If I may say so ...”

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(*) This is not ‘*Hip! Hip! Hurray!*’ Read that last bit as the plaint: हाय रे!

“You always do say so ...” chimed in Aura, gruffly. She presumed that this was *sotto voce* as well. Sadly, it was the exact opposite of the low whisper it was supposed to be.

“That is telling him, Aura,” whispered a mischievous Aman in Aura’s ear. This was truly a *sotto voce* whisper.

Ayelan, meanwhile, went into his usual trance-like state, entering a more profound zone of Knowledge. “Come to think of it, that question would be an interesting exercise in cause and effect. It should make for an instructive research assignment,” he said.

Let us assume that he said it naively. * He was actually unaware of the glaring looks that shot out at him from one pair of hot-tempered eyes. I do not think there is any need to tell you *whose* orbs those were.

A second set of exasperated eyes pondered upon the amount of mischief loaded in that statement. Those eyes then shook from side to side the head that housed them.

Meanwhile, below upraised and extremely shapely eyebrows, a third set of eyes looked skywards. *That* look indicated a smidgen of annoyance alloyed with affection. It seemed to marvel at our wisdom-seeker’s detachment from the day-to-day aspects of life when pursuing knowledge. There was a large hint of tolerance involved therein, too.

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(*) *I think Ayelan said it naively, though he has been known to goad Aura at times by making a seemingly harmless, but leading, remark. This tended to have the same effect on Aura as a deliberately waved red cloak presumably has on an enraged bull. It also tended to bring out the same kind of bullish, bull-headed charge from her in response.*

However, there was worse in store for Ayelan. “What is it with you and research assignments? Why do you keep demanding more of them? Do you not think of us when you do so?” *grr-owed* our Uncontainable One.

Her patience, quite obviously, seemed to have reached the end of its tether.

Having vented that out, our Menacing One advanced menacingly towards Ayelan. Fortunately, he had instinctively moved out of her reach just prior to making that inconsiderate remark.

A little while later, the skittish caravan of Peace was coaxed to once again take a temporary, but well-deserved, rest-halt in the clubhouse. For that to happen, Aman and Amanat had to catch Aura at the right moment during her menacing advance and hold her down.

She was told she would be released only if she promised to control her temper. On her part, Aura promised to try to attempt to endeavour to calm down.

It would have been too much to get her to actually promise to ‘keep quiet’. She might well have asked: ‘Where should I keep it?’ Moreover, such an oath would have been broken by Aura seconds after it had been given or with the first pause in the conversation, whichever happened to come within *paanch galli, paanch danda*.

“Hush now! You promised to listen!” Amanat reminded Aura as she attempted to say something.



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Join our four AdvenChaar in their hunt for tunnels and ancient hidden treasure. See our 'trouble magnets' or 'woe-chumbaks' hike into tunnels, adventure ... and your hearts! Laugh, or cry, at Aura's Auracles! Stay a carefully measured *paanch gilli, paanch danda* away (often a distance of 6'8") from her *Fist of Aura* – the dreaded *Aura-Ka-Dhosa*! Run screaming 'She's here! Flee!' or 'Aayee re! Bhaago!' See our 'Vengetarian' mangle Japanese and any other language she comes in contact with or vice versa. Help Ayelan patent his one-handed keyboard, the *Finguter*. Solve creepy-tic clues with him in English, French, Hindi and Marathi. Giggle as 'Ayeronies' trump 'bad' Auracles. See Aman lead and practise kendo. Obey ethereal, enigmatic and intuitive Amanat. Just don't provoke her to use **THAT** voice! Meet Sensei-bo, Ooki-bo and Kirei-bo. To your eternal regret, meet Dattu, mostly at *Cocktail Mary's*, less often at the *Shoor Mansion*! Meet the Achaar Yaar; become one if you wish. See a visit to Morya kaka's *Chanderi Wada* bring much-desired adventure. Meet villainous Vikathor and his moll, Nilajja. See the latter laid low by our violent, violent, violent Aura. Did I state that 'she' is violent? Hike to Shivapur to meet Pir Uncle. Sing Aura's song: *A hawk a-wing, a scorpion's sting* in English or '*Shikre ke pankh, bichwe ka dank*' in Hindi. Take a peek at the Goonda Gardi's '*Goondom Code*'. Finally, once again, please remember to scream *Aayee re! Bhaago!* in dire alarm if *Our Irked One* is near.

Wait for the Bad-bos and the treasure to appear.

And Parts Two and Three? *Thoda sabar, mere magar!* Patience! Amanat has augured: It will all be revealed in due time. So, *Thoda sabar, mere lambe hamsafar!* To repeat, Patience, my long-term fellow-traveller!

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