



*the*  
spyglass



winter issue  
twenty twenty-five





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# *The Magic* *of the* Holidays

// ISABEL YE  
PHOTOGRAPHY // DANIEL YANG  
DESIGN // KATRINA LAM  
GRAPHICS // CANVA

The snowflakes are falling, and soon I'll be curled up by the couch  
A mug of hot chocolate in my hand while my cat sleepily meows  
I'll sleep under ten blankets, only a book in my hand  
Inside is warm, and outside is a winter wonderland  
The picture is perfect, so perfect, so *right* in my heart  
I just can't wait for everything to start  
Taken by the lights, by Christmas cheer  
I will be full of ecstasy, of love so clear.

And I think of this picture, and I smile wide  
But something is off in the depths of my mind  
A chord struck wrong, my bliss undermined  
Something is missing, something's not right  
That easy smile dissolves from my face, gone  
As my Christmas playlist goes on and on  
Mariah and Michael croon about love and bliss  
Singing about the things I won't feel this Christmas.

Crushes are fleeting, but love is burning like stars  
Crushing the contentment in my chest, leaving it charred  
Every Christmas I'm alone, completely withdrawn  
Every Christmas, the other half of my heart is gone  
But everyone else is complete, and whole, and pure  
Building snowmen with each other, their company assured  
Souls in the dark find each other in the cold  
In the wrath of winter, their love is bright and bold.



The mall is filled with matching pyjamas, “his” and “hers” scents,  
*Gifts for your significant other* and presents well-meant  
Even the radio can’t stop playing holiday love songs,  
And going on about Christmas love all season long,  
And I’m caught in the midst of it all, buying my own bouquet,  
Who is the missing flame in my chest, and where in the world are they?  
I’m sick and tired of spending Christmas alone, texting only my best friends  
When will this pressure in my chest mend?

But I am happy, ensconced in love for my friends, for my family  
And why can’t that be enough to let me live happily?  
Why can’t that be enough to fill the gaps, what is missing?  
I’m unsure, misunderstanding, why can’t I have this one thing?  
And angered, too, with myself and with the world,  
Why this semi-dream of love is unreachable, unlearnable  
And I can only hope, maybe only when I find them, I’ll truly see  
The magic of the holidays is you right here beside me.

Christmas rolls around like always, and the snow falls in lush piles  
The inside of my house warm, a safe space filled with smiles  
School’s out, and all I do is read all day and laugh  
My family gathers under the tree and we belt Mariah and Michael  
We play board games and the cheaters will win  
We chatter at the dinner table and go to bed with grins  
And the warm feeling in my chest grows, scales up  
To me, this is magic enough.



# COULD YOU BE SPIDERMAN?

People have been trying to imitate Spider-Man since the dawn of time. I've seen people create brilliant mechanical web-shooters and design their own distinctive suits, all from the confines of their homes. Impressive, for sure, but imitative nonetheless.

It's not the costume that's the issue, nor the design. Across all the comic books, live-actions, animated films, games, television shows, there have been numerous iterations of Spider-Men. Costume redesigns are nothing new. Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse is where it really gets big. It inspired a generation of creative minds to develop their own versions of Spider-Man when the doors to the multiverse opened their eyes. The possibility of becoming Spider-Man rose three thousand percent. I did the math.

With that being said, here's my guide to becoming Spider-Man:

1

HOLD A STRONG  
MORAL CODE

If nothing else, Spider-Man is known for his deeply rooted values. His no-kill rule is a cornerstone of his character that occasionally bars the easy way out, yet is essential to his character nonetheless. It's about doing it right. After all, "with great power comes great responsibility." Grow a spine. Kick some butt. Try to be a decent person along the way.

2  
EXPERIENCE A  
LIFE-CHANGING  
CANON EVENT

The average Spider-Man is a two-time orphan and occasionally a witness to their lover's death. That one I don't recommend. Really, the function of this step mainly serves to start the hero's journey and build character; I'd like to think any incident would suffice provided it has an irreversible impact on one's character.

3  
GET A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER TO BITE  
YOU AND HOPE THAT IT GIVES YOU  
THE ABILITY TO CLIMB WALLS AND  
SUPERHUMAN REFLEXES INSTEAD  
OF AN INCURABLE DISEASE

This one is a little harder.



So the short answer is: no. No? Not literally, at least. Sorry. Maybe as a cameo in the next Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse. Three thousand percent of zero is still zero.

But when I tell my friends, "I'm literally Spider-Man," I'm not saying I'm literally Spider-Man. It's all about embodying Spider-Man's beliefs, about becoming the person you want to be.

Superheroes have been a part of the average person's life since birth, and serve as a role model in morality and power-restraint. Spider-Man is cool, iconic, quippy. But above all, he's relatable. In the most mainstream versions of Spider-Man, he is just a kid with a guy to beat up at night and a physics test to study for at noon. The 2018 Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse Miles Morales only further bridges the gap between their teenage audience and Spider-Man. With the exception of his being able to scale walls and occasionally wield bio-electrokinesis and turn invisible, he's not all that different from the average high schooler. Emotionally.

He's just a high school kid with big dreams who experiences obstacle after obstacle. Is that not also ninety percent of the student population?

He has to deal with getting beat up by another version of himself; I have to deal with getting beat up by the voices in my head when application season rolls around. Potato, potato.

So whenever life hits you hard, just get back up and tell yourself. "I'm literally Spider-Man."

// CLAIRE CHEN  
DESIGN // ANGIE XU

# THE COSMIC Pull



"What's your sign?" "It's Libra season."  
"Mercury's in retrograde right now."

These are phrases that we've all heard hundreds of times before, and they represent the wondrous world of astrology. Whether it's when we're trying to figure out our fortune for the day or determine whether we should take that leap in the workplace, astrology always seems to find its way back into our lives at the most unexpected times. But why are we so interested in how the stars align, and what do they tell us about ourselves?

To understand the psychology behind astrology, we must first grasp the concept itself. Put simply, astrology is the study of how the positions of stars and planets affect humans. People are assigned a "zodiac" sign based on the date of their birth that is said to determine their personality traits, life goals, and destinies. Astrology first emerged in the 3rd millennium BCE during the Babylonian Empire, but it has since turned into a full-on cultural phenomenon that has hundreds of Instagram and Pinterest posts to show for itself.

Perhaps the primary reason why astrology is loved by so many is because of how it answers the age-old question humans have always been fascinated with: how does the world around us work? If personality traits and fates and futures are all determined by the day on which we are born, the world seems a lot simpler and easier to understand. You can't control your anger? Oh, it's just because you're an Aries. You find yourself shutting out people you love? It's just a Scorpio thing. As humans, we are curious creatures by nature and are programmed to ask questions. Astrology seems to have all the answers, and that is something we cannot resist.

The community that astrology gives us is undeniable as well; humans are social creatures, always looking for ways to connect with others and create friendships that can last for a lifetime. Astrology is an idea that is universal; everyone has a birthday, meaning that everyone has a zodiac sign and can relate to the ambiguous descriptions of personality that astrology provides us with. As a result, people find a sense of identity within their signs and use



// KATE SHAHIDI  
PHOTOGRAPHY // EMILY MENG  
DESIGN // DORA DUAN

that to bond with others who have the same one as them. The zodiac sign is an integral part of many people's character. Not only that, astrology also clearly states which signs are compatible with each other. Now, instead of sitting and thinking about who to be friends with, we are provided with the ultimate guide that tells us who to interact with and what to do in all situations.

At the end of the day, astrology isn't only about how the stars and planets align. When considered in moderation, it provides us with the opportunity to make sense of the world around us and even allows us to come up with some fun excuses for our quirks. It symbolizes individuality and community, fuelling human curiosity and our search for the bigger answers.

# A Reflection Upon the Practical Consequences

## of the Existence of Chosen Ones

When the cloak is placed upon my shoulders, nothing happens. That is the day my life ends. The crowd stares, awaiting a sign that would never come.

I am not the Chosen.

The actual Chosen is a boy with hair that glows like spun gold under the sun. He is radiant all over, and I must admit, he looks the part.

That makes everything worse; I could not rail against the unfairness of fate, for I had to admit that he was superior to me in every way. Destiny was cruel, yes, but it was also fair.

What am I to do now? Being the Chosen was my entire existence, so what else is left?

I soon find my answer; if fate wants the best—and I'm sure it does—then I shall just be better.

The first time I seize the cloak, I catch everyone by surprise. It settles on my shoulders for merely a second before it tightens against my throat, and I barely remove it in time.

I am a villain now, no longer the darling of the heavens. Ironic that this is all for the title of the one to vanquish the god of evil.

There is a routine to this, I find. I attack, I seize the cloak, it rejects me, I am defeated. The Chosen pleads with me to turn away from my wicked path while his friends counsel him to give up on me. I run. Rinse and repeat.

Then I have the Chosen on his knees, knife to his throat, and he looks at me with terror in his eyes. I let him go.

I see now why I am not the Chosen. I would not have made a good hero.

The god of evil makes his return, and the Chosen is called upon to fulfill his duty. That is when we both find out that his duty is to become a vessel for the god, trap him and render him mortal enough for death.

The Chosen battles for control as he kneels down at my feet. I grip my knife. We both know what needs to be done.

“Do it,” he says, and for the first time, I see him. Not the radiant demigod who stole my destiny, but a terrified boy of about my age, resigned to death because that is his duty, no matter how unfair. He is selfless beyond all reason, and he deserves a chance to live. I seize the cursed cloak, and this time, it doesn't resist as it settles upon my shoulders. My knife flashes before the god of evil can seize control. I never realized my blood was so warm, or the summer so cold.

I suppose I was the Chosen, in the end. Though I wonder who I could have been instead.

# A Reflection Upon the Practical Consequences

When the cloak is placed upon my shoulders, it shimmers like amethysts under the candlelight. That  
is the day my life ends.

The priests breathe a sigh of relief. In the shadows, the not-Chosen glares.  
I am the Chosen.

The boy who was meant to be the Chosen avoids me, his white-gold hair disappearing behind corners  
whenever I approach. I cannot blame him, for I have stolen his life.

But I don't want it—not the training that lasts from dawn to dusk, not the attendants who never  
leave my side, nor the fact that Chosen is all everyone sees anymore. I don't want all the  
comparisons, the whispered judgements, the knowledge that he is superior, yet I am the one fate  
chose.

My release comes, unexpectedly, soon enough.

The not-Chosen lunges for my cloak, tearing it from me before the stunned audience can react. He  
sweeps it across his shoulders, triumph glinting in his eyes. Then, the cloak tightens against his  
throat, and he is forced to wrestle it off.

Damn.

He is a villain now, evil beyond remedy for daring to be so arrogant as to challenge heavens'  
judgement.

Is it worth it, I want to ask him. Is it worth it for the promise of a grand destiny?  
We fall into a strange routine. I fight him some days, attendants turned almost-friends by my side, I  
prepare for my destiny others. I get used to being the Chosen, he perfects the art of villainy.  
Everything grows so mundane that I can almost forget that one day, the blows exchanged might  
grow lethal. I don't want that. I'm not sure he knows.

Then he has me on my knees, knife to my throat, and understanding dawns in his eyes.

He lets me go.

The attacks stop after that.

The god of evil makes his return, and I am called upon to fulfill my duty.

I battle for control, the god of evil thrashing inside me, as I kneel  
down at the not-Chosen's feet. He grips his knife. We both  
know what needs to be done.

I don't want to, but—

“Do it,” I say, because I am the Chosen, and this is my destiny.  
He lunges, I prepare for the end, but instead, he rips the cloak off my  
shoulders again; the final time. His knife flashes before the god  
of evil can seize control.

His blood burns my hands.

He was the Chosen, in the end; the love and admiration he once  
chased was, after all, his to keep.

I wonder who he could have been instead.

## of the Existence of Chosen Ones

# WITH ALL THE DEPTH OF A PUDDLE

The private rooms, large though they may have been, were never large enough. The crowd of distant relatives almost appeared to be holding court, seated at a massive table and paying their respects to whichever elderly man sat at the head of the table. All would be dressed in their finest traditional garb, most insisting their clothing wasn't fine at all, not compared to him or her or them.

Back then, my childish innocence served as a halo. Back then I was adorable, even more so when stuffed into a fancy little dress and forced to smile.

I soon learned that as long as I sat and nodded and smiled, they would heap food onto my plate and heap presents into my lap. I received plenty of praise for being so sensible and well-behaved.

Healthy, not greedy. Mature, not asocial. Quiet, not ignorant.

A paper princess propped up at their own little court, ever so lovable with my mouth firmly shut and my smile fixed in place.

It was as shallow as that.

It's a bit harder now that I understand enough to describe the scene. Nowadays, when my family returns to China, and I am inevitably swept into another such gathering, I nod in agreement and retreat as soon as I can. I nod some more when other parents ask for me to help their children with their English, as if I have any intention of doing so when we all know we only see each other once every four or so years, when I haven't a clue who their children are, when I lack the Mandarin skills to speak like a grade schooler.

The scene is the same. I still receive their praise, I'm still fed delicious food, and I'm still heaped with the same kinds of presents I received back when I was less than a decade old. And now, I don't even have to smile.

It used to be easier to like my distant relatives, the ones who visited maybe once in as many years.

It would be Lunar New Year every time, with everyone gathered in a venue as luxurious as the proud old host could afford— always a private room in a shiny restaurant, always with half an hour of unbearably cluttered traffic to precede it.

//ANNA PAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY // CYNTHIA MU  
DESIGN // PHOEBE SU

They still get to feel generous and loving. I still receive my food and my gifts. When it's over, we'll forget all about each other until the next meeting.

It's as shallow as ever.

# What Your McDonald's Order Says About You



// JILLIAN OUYANG  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ANDREA TSUI  
DESIGN // ALLYSON MACK  
OUTSOURCED IMAGES // CANVA

## What's the first thing on the menu that catches your eye?

1. Burger or nuggets, depending on how I feel.
2. The only right answer is the Happy Meal, obviously!
3. Whatever's new! Currently I have my eyes on the Grinch Meal...
4. Anything, as long as I haven't tried it before.

## You need a drink to quench your thirst. What'll it be?

1. Nothing's better than a traditional coke!
2. Orange juice. Apple juice. Whatever juice they have!
3. Hot chocolate. Of course, now I'm also craving marshmallows. And candy canes. And—
4. A concoction of orange Fanta and a strawberry milkshake, garnished with fries on top.

## You stumble into a McDonald's restaurant, ready to EAT.

## What's a meal without its sides? Just make sure to pick the right one!

1. The fries are too good to pass up.
2. Does a toy count as a side?
3. Apple slices—but only if they're coated in cinnamon!
4. Mayonnaise.

## Don't forget the dessert. There's always room for dessert.

1. My heart calls for the classic apple pie.
2. A vanilla cone! Delicious!
3. Cookies. Even better if there's frosting!
4. Can't go wrong with a sundae—am I allowed to choose toppings?



## Mostly A's - The Old School

You are incredibly devoted to what you believe is the golden age of dining; you stay true to your beliefs and continue to stick with the classics. As a nostalgic and somewhat sentimental person, nothing makes you happier than the simple things in life. But be careful in limiting yourself—sometimes, change can be good, and you might begin to enjoy the new more than the old; the whole world is yours to explore.

## Mostly B's - The Inner Child

The youthful spark of your inner child has always lived on inside of you, and it shows on your plate! You're a lighthearted person who has big dreams for the future, yet you often wish to go back to the times when life felt a lot more simple. Sometimes, you regret not enjoying your childhood to its full extent—but don't let yourself get caught up in the past; there's no better time to live than right now!

## Mostly C's - The Seasonal Shifter

Unlike many, you embrace change with open arms—in fact, your taste in food remains a constant reflection of the ever-changing world around you. You're an exciting personality who is able to quickly adapt to any new challenge you're faced with. Amidst your adventurous journey of life, be careful not to get swept up by all the change; remember that sometimes, stability is needed before greater things can happen.

## Mostly D's - The Try-Everything

You're an adventurous and bold spirit who sees each meal as an opportunity to learn something new. You're a risk-taker at the core and a jack-of-all-trades; you often find yourself afraid of missing out, so you try to make up for it by taking part in as many unique experiences as possible. Remember that life moves fast and that it's okay not to try everything in the current moment—that's what the future's for!





Frost has just begun lacing the corners of the windowsill when you slump into the sofa at day's end. Outside, the wind whispers against the growing twilight, bringing with it sparkling snowflakes and the promise of a chilling snowstorm through the night. In the warmth of your blanket, however, you couldn't be more comfortable. With the fireplace smouldering and a playlist of holiday tunes on repeat, you're primed for a perfect cozy evening. All you need now, of course, is the perfect book to top off the festive night! Take a walk through your ideal day during the winter break in order to see which book is fit for you!

**A's**  
Mostly As: *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott  
To you, the winter holidays are best spent with others. You treasure the time you spend with loved ones, and you truly see the value of living in every moment. You're a kindred spirit to others and can't wait to make some lasting memories this snowy season! *Little Women*, the magnum opus of Louisa May Alcott's work, may speak to you. This unforgettable novel spins the complex web between family, independence, and understanding through the four March sisters. Though they are as distinct as the four cardinal directions, they form a compassionate sisterhood that evolves throughout their childhood. As you laugh and cry over the course of this book, you are left with a sense of warmth that shields you against the growing cold.

**C's**  
Mostly Cs: *Atomic Habits* by James Clear  
To you, the holidays are not only a time for relaxation, but also an opportunity to keep on trekking up your mountain. You are not only ambitious, but you have the routines and systems in place to hit the ground running in the new year! In his novel, *Atomic Habits*, James Clear outlines concrete and actionable systems, along with unique success stories, in order to help you achieve your greatest goals. Feel free to use this book to your advantage, but don't forget to take a moment to enjoy the journey every now and then.

**B's**  
Mostly Bs: *White Nights* by Fyodor Dostoevsky  
To you, winter holidays are an opportunity to indulge into your creative endeavours. This hiatus offers you the chance to challenge yourself in your creative pursuits, find comfort in your passions, and simply take a break amidst the hustle of everyday life. *White Nights*, by Fyodor Dostoevsky, serves as a marriage between artistic prose and the fleeting nature of love. Through a simple romance, you are challenged to read between the lines and explore the deeper meanings beneath the characters' intentions. In doing so, you are introduced to a new way of thinking, experiencing, and loving the simple things in life. Happy reading!

**D's**  
Mostly Ds: *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn  
To you, the winter holidays are the perfect time to get out and make the most of the time you have in the present. Whether it's going outside to enjoy the snow, stepping outside of your comfort zone, or simply giving it your 100% each day, you always approach challenges with a smile. *Gone Girl*, by Gillian Flynn, offers the perfect combination between suspense, drama, and utter chaos. A seemingly simple domestic tale takes a turn for the worse as hidden secrets and double motives spill onto the page. This book reads like a fever dream, as you find yourself up late at night trying to comb through the plot and discover once and for all who is telling the truth.

**On the first morning of winter break, you draw back the curtains and are met with a solid 30 centimetres of snow on the ground. What now?**

- a) Bold of you to assume I'm up before noon.
- b) Pull up a comfort read and stay in bed; I'm not planning on moving any time soon.
- c) Pass me the shovel, there's not going to be snow on *my* driveway.
- d) I'm already out the door, it's skiing season!

**Any goals for the new year?**

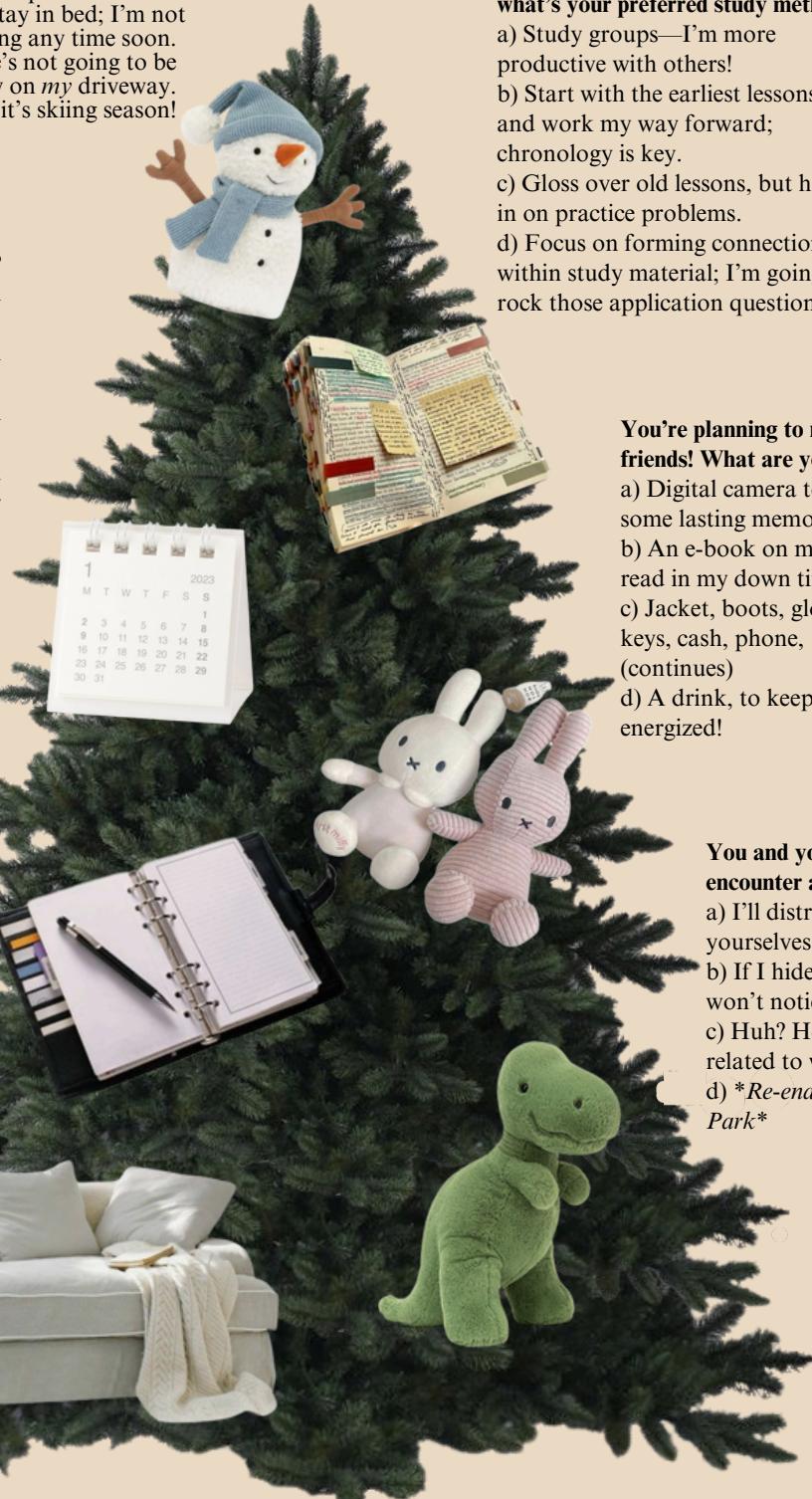
- a) Socializing more, traveling, and just living in the moment.
- b) Exploring my interests, and fixing my sleep schedule.
- c) Putting myself first, and respecting my boundaries.
- d) Stepping out of my comfort zone; maybe trying out a new wardrobe!

**What's first on the list today?**

- a) Maybe a self-care day, maybe meet up with friends...we'll roll with it!
- b) Catching up on the thousands of hobbies I put on hold, see you never.
- c) Hold on, let me pull up the itinerary...
- d) Trying something new, for sure!

**How are you winding down at the end of the day?**

- a) Movie night with the family!
- b) Indulging in my current hyperfixation.
- c) Finishing up some light tasks, then getting to bed early!
- d) Doing the daily Wordle, and every other game on the New York Times!



**Exams are slowly approaching, what's your preferred study method?**

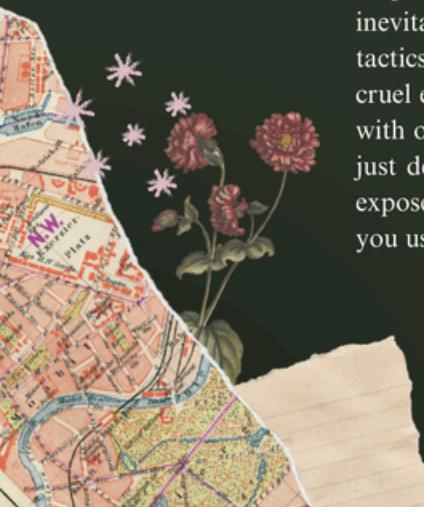
- a) Study groups—I'm more productive with others!
- b) Start with the earliest lessons and work my way forward; chronology is key.
- c) Gloss over old lessons, but hone in on practice problems.
- d) Focus on forming connections within study material; I'm going to rock those application questions!

**You're planning to meet with friends! What are you bringing?**

- a) Digital camera to capture some lasting memories.
- b) An e-book on my phone, to read in my down time!
- c) Jacket, boots, gloves, scarf, keys, cash, phone, ...  
(continues)
- d) A drink, to keep me energized!

**You and your friends encounter a dinosaur.**

- a) I'll distract it, save yourselves!
- b) If I hide and sit still, it won't notice me.
- c) Huh? How is this related to winter?
- d) \*Re-enacts Jurassic Park\*



# The Absurd Art of Winning Wars by Weirding Out *your* Enemy

War is serious business—at least, that’s the general consensus. But historically, this hasn’t always been the case, with generals swapping strategies for absurd shenanigans, turning battlefields into bizarre stages featuring flaming pigs, bagpipes, and venomous snake bombs. If you think winning a war is all about brute force, think again—it’s about weirding out your enemy until they don’t know what hit them (or why it’s hissing). Let me give you the highlights of some of my favourite war strategies that sound like they were dreamt up by someone who had a little too much to drink.

## 1. Scorched Earth: Winning by Losing (Everything)

Step one: light all of your stuff on fire. Step two: run away. When Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia in 1812, he expected to march triumphantly to Moscow, resupply his troops, and secure his victory. Instead, he found a city in flames, with the winter closing in fast. The Russians, knowing they would be defeated if they faced Napoleon head-on, employed a scorched-earth policy and destroyed everything of value (ie: food, shelter, etc) as they retreated, leaving Napoleon’s Grande Armée cold, hungry, and far from home. When Napoleon and his troops inevitably began their long walk of shame back to France, the Russians used guerrilla warfare tactics on the fringes of the retreating army, slowly chipping at their numbers. Thanks to the cruel efficiency of this strategy, Napoleon entered Russia with 600,000 men and returned home with only 40,000. The logic here is grim: if I can’t have it, neither can you. This strategy doesn’t just deprive the enemy of resources; it saps their morale, forces overexertion, and leaves them exposed to local conditions (like, say, a punishing Russian winter). It’s not the kind of strategy you use if you’re worried about your Yelp reviews, but it’s undeniably effective.

## 2. War Pigs

Now that we've talked about lighting your own homes and belongings on fire, how about lighting pigs on fire? No, I'm not joking. Sometimes, the battlefield calls for a little animal ingenuity—or insanity. In ancient times, squealing war pigs were used to counter enemy war elephants. Elephants, though massive and intimidating, were apparently terrified of them. Armies would set pigs on fire (yes, it's as horrifying as it sounds) and send them squealing into the elephant ranks, causing chaos.

## 3. Music as a Weapon

Sometimes, being really, really annoying is the only weapon you need. During the Anglo-Irish War in the 1970s, the Irish Republican Army once “sieged” a police barrack by surrounding it and playing bagpipes nonstop for an entire week. The psychological pressure of relentless bagpipe music proved too much for the police, who eventually surrendered. The power of annoyance should not be underestimated. Sometimes war isn't about physical force, but mental endurance. In an equally tense situation (laying on the couch at home), I have used similar tactics (obnoxiously singing Last Christmas over and over again for 45 minutes) to convince my stepdad to help me with an extremely dangerous task (bringing the laundry up from the basement).

## 4. Hannibal's Snakes

Sometimes, being really, really annoying is the only weapon you need. During the Anglo-Irish War in the 1970s, the Irish Republican Army once “sieged” a police barrack by surrounding it and playing bagpipes nonstop for an entire week. The psychological pressure of relentless bagpipe music proved too much for the police, who eventually surrendered. The power of annoyance should not be underestimated. Sometimes war isn't about physical force, but mental endurance. In an equally tense situation (laying on the couch at home), I have used similar tactics (obnoxiously singing Last Christmas over and over again for 45 minutes) to convince my stepdad to help me with an extremely dangerous task (bringing the laundry up from the basement).

// ANTONIA ZUBIRI  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ETHAN OH  
DESIGN // VIVIAN WU  
GRAPHICS // CANVA

# I SPENT A MILLION BUCKS AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LAME LOGO

---

// MAX SKIDELSKY

DESIGN // KATRINA LAM

IMAGES // PRINGLES, GAP INC, SMUCKER'S, MADEFORMED, JAGUAR, CHURCH'S TEXAS CHICKEN, JOHNSON&JOHNSON

Do you remember the old design of the man on the Pringles can? The design was simplified in 2020, and while I know that anything before the pandemic feels like prehistory, I'm almost 100% sure you do (and if you don't, the picture's right here on the article.) See that beautifully detailed mustache? The delightful curves of his luscious locks? The classic bowtie? THAT'S the Pringles man we all love.



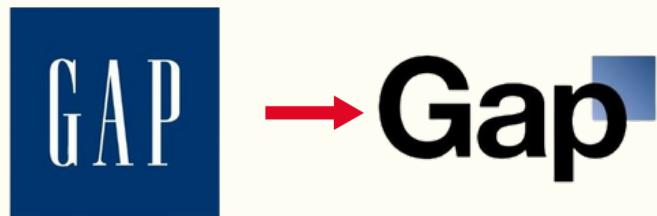
And look at what they've done to him now. The light has literally left his eyes, his once-glorious mustache replaced by a soulless silhouette, and his hair exchanged for what appear to be dismembered eyebrows. That's not all, either; even the Pringles font wasn't safe from the condemnation to simplicity, having been changed from yellow and bouncy (the dot of the i is a Pringle!) to a cold, white, overall joyless state. Kudos to the background of the text being an homage to the bowtie, but getting ten cents back from a ten dollar lottery ticket hurts more than getting nothing at all.



I'm not only going to ramble on about bad redesigns (though that will be the majority of the article, sorry). If you're curious as to why so many designs are changing despite the overall backlash, the best guess that we consumers have is that they're meant to be more easily displayed, vectorized, and worked with overall. It's a lot easier to miniaturize a logo for display on a small device (mainly smartphones) without losing detail if that logo isn't very intricate. By simplifying logos—stripping them of any modicum of detail—it becomes a lot easier to shrink down and remain recognizable.

Think back to the Pringles man; his old design was actually quite detailed, made for an era of TV and print advertising where that sort of detail was needed to be eye-catching. Nowadays, pretty much all logos need to work on smaller scales because we're mostly being advertised to digitally, and typically on a tiny screen. Adding onto all that is the fact that simpler logos are, unsurprisingly, easier to work with; companies don't need as much experience from their workers to put out new products. It all combines into yet another exceedingly boring sacrifice made to the promise of efficiency.

Now, for that promised rambling, here's a rapid-fire of bad designs I think could brighten your day (or ruin it, if you care too much like I do).



Gap; this one's an all-timer. The original logo wasn't anything special, don't get me wrong, but the new logo is the perfect microcosm of what's going wrong. Way back in 2010, Gap made the bold decision of going from the most unremarkable logo of all time to the most unremarkable logo of all time, in a move that cost the company 100 million dollars (I'm not kidding). Thankfully, they reverted the logo a week later, and now it remains as a haunting reminder of what could have been.



Smuckers; come on. Seriously, come on. I have no words to describe my opinion on this logo change. Look at it yourself. It's impossible to even articulate how I feel about this.



Church's Chicken; they took all the soul out of the logo. I really like the black and gold colour scheme (it's my all time favourite, I'd say), but it's as boring as it gets. The old logo had so much flair and pizazz, and yet in the relentless pursuit of simplicity, it lost it all in a flash.



MadeForMed; company based on connecting patients to doctors. Hilarious bit with the doctor's handwriting stereotype, but it's an utterly incomprehensible logo. You'd have to already be in the know to have the faintest idea of what this is. It also seems completely illogical; by shrinking the new logo, it'd only become more illegible. It's a good advertising move, though. I'm sure that more people know about the company now, solely because of the logo.

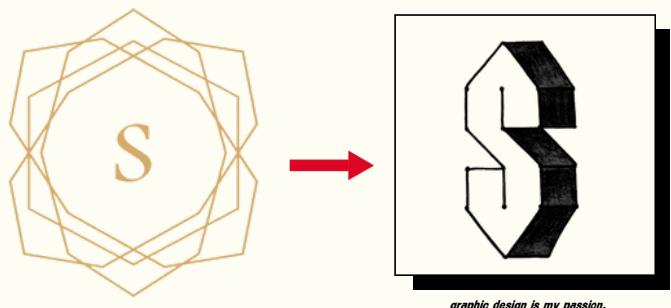


Jaguar; a recent example. Changed from a wide, unique font featuring the namesake of the brand to... letters. Just letters. This looks like the sort of font you'd find in a 4th grader's slideshow.



Johnson & Johnson; utterly bemusing. Why? You could ask that question for any of these changes, but seriously, why? Their cursive logo served them well for 137 years. Their rationale was that the logo was "beginning to look dated in a world with texting and emojis." I suppose nothing is sacred anymore.

As a parting gift, I would like to present to you our designer's take on a new Spyglass logo.



IT'S THE  
THOUGHT  
*that counts*

In the Christmas craze, the phrase “it’s the thought that counts” is thrown around as a sorry consolation prize. It’s used to soothe gift-givers that’ve missed the Hallmark in one way or another: whether their presents were unoriginal, poorly executed, or both. I won’t lie and say I’ve never given a subpar gift. I’ve fallen victim to the curse from time to time too—not because my gifts themselves are lacking—but because of my absolute inability to wrap presents.

Now, it’s not like I don’t try to make them presentable (pun intended). No: without fail, each and every December, I arm myself with tape, leftover wrapping paper, and a dream. It gets so serious my sisters and I join forces. We stare down the section of festive rolls, restocking resources at our local Dollarama. To my annoyance, my sisters easily churn out gifts that look like they belong on Santa’s sleigh—but even with the encouragement of Michael Bublé himself, I still spend hours meticulously wrapping messy gifts. After years of less than satisfactory wrappings, you would think that I’ve learnt my lesson. Given up the ghost. You’d be wrong.

Of course, I’ve entertained the idea of handing gifts out unwrapped. Who hasn’t? After all, when you fail to wrap a box for the third time in a row, you’re willing to take drastic measures (definitely not speaking from experience). But wrapping paper is to gifts like ornaments are to Christmas trees. You can’t have one without the other, because half the fun of gift-giving is seeing friends and family happily unravel your carefully, or in my case, haphazardly masked surprises. So I swallow my pride and tell myself I can’t be the only one handing out misshapen lumps on Christmas. That it’s the thought that counts.

And isn’t that true? We fervently make sure that our gifts are picturesque for the friends and family we care for. We sacrifice our time, our money, our patience, and often our sanity, searching high and low for the perfect gift. But why do we choose to wrap presents anyway, if we know they’ll be ripped apart on the fated Christmas Day? Why do we exchange them in the first place? We get so wrapped up in the holiday season that we forget what it’s all about. Santa’s fully-stocked sleigh was never meant to steal the spotlight (though the tangible gifts are a nice bonus). No, Christmas has always been about giving and receiving the arguably more precious gifts of warmth and joy. Why do we do any of it, if not for love?

So no matter how bad we are at wrapping gifts, us amateur wrappers will frustratingly try to figure out how to untangle our ribbons and retape our boxes. Our patience will run paper thin until finally, the last present has been packaged. After all is said and done, remember: we do it out of love.

Sure, our presents might not look the prettiest. They might even be the last gifts left under the tree. The corners will come out crinkled and the ribbons won’t quite ruffle, but it’s the thought that counts.



## THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS



# Becoming a CHAMPION:

The Life Lessons of Pokémon

// JOY KIM

DESIGN // MAGGIE LI

From the moment Professor Oak first welcomed a generation to the world of Pokémon to the ending notes of Ed Sheeran's Celestial—the ending song of the most recent game—Game Freak's most iconic series has found its way into the hearts of countless. As a curious six year-old playing Pokémon Black on my uncle's Nintendo DS, I was no stranger to the phenomenon.

Ten years later, I've played five of the mainline Pokémon games. In addition to offering loads of collectable critters, I've found that the franchise's clever storytelling and well-thought out game features communicate the life advice we all need to be the very best (that no one ever was).

Every recent Pokémon game has featured a mechanic involving caring for yourself and your companions. Whether it be washing your Pokémon or stirring curry in Sword and Shield, these mechanics all revolve around a singular principle: we all need to practice self-care in order to improve, whether it be through eating a hearty meal or participating in regular exercise. The same holds true for real life. In order to reach our full potential, we need to follow a balanced diet and maintain our hygiene. While we all might brush off eating a proper dinner once in a while in favour of quick bites so that we can

study more, in the end, we're likely to end up hungry and unable to concentrate. On that note, the number of stories I've heard about people cramming all night for a test only to do poorly due to lack of sleep is a lot higher than I'd like. Through in-universe Home Economics classes and the main story, games like Pokémon Scarlet and Violet stress the revitalizing power of food and self-care—a message that remains true even without the aid of special berries or mythical Herba Mystica.

As I've travelled through different regions and watched various seasons of the anime, I've found that the Pokémon journey is not limited by age. In each and every game, people from all over the lifespan are willing to engage in battles with you, whether it be Youngsters along the street or elderly grandmas. The same trend occurs with the assortment of different special characters. Major trainer positions are occupied by older individuals like Wattson and Kabu, as well as younger trainers like the nine year-old Steel type Elite Four, Poppy. In a society that often leads us to believe that in order to be good at something, we have to start when we're young or that younger people can't be good at certain skills, Pokémon offers a refreshing outlook. You're never too old or young to try something new and excel at it.

Anyone who's watched at least a few episodes of the anime knows about the astounding battling techniques it features. Using different elemental moves to propel and bounce off walls is an incredibly imaginative—yet televised series-exclusive—technique.



While the real gameplay lacks the fantastical strategies of the animated show, Pokémon is a game that challenges players to employ creative solutions for their problems. In battle, players are presented with a variety of different moves that can lower the opponent's HP, alter stats, or inflict status conditions. It's then that countless decisions like "should I hit my opponent with a Thunderbolt first or set up Stealth Rock for the chip damage?" arise. Despite not being able to land immediate damage, delayed techniques like inflicting paralysis or sharply raising stats often pay off much better than brute-forcing every battle. Real life presents us with challenges too, even though they look a little less like turn-based encounters and more like difficult questions and puzzling social situations. In these cases, it's important to remind ourselves that sometimes the hardest battles are solved with unorthodox strategies. Aside from imparting wisdom hidden in gameplay mechanics and in-universe lore, Pokémon has provided even more for me by its sheer entertainment value and renown. While having conversations with a variety of different people all on equally differing journeys, I've often struggled to understand them or find similarities. However, I've found that a simple mention of Pokémon can easily nudge the most awkward interactions into something fun. The iconicness of the series is able to bridge social gaps that originally seemed as great as Vast Poni Canyon. Whether you play the TCG, a mobile app, the mainline games, or something entirely different, Pokémon reminds us all that we have a lot more in common than imagined.

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