



*the*  
**spyglass**



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# WALKING

Picture your perfect path.

// KAREN ZHOU  
DESIGN // ELLIE LIANG  
PHOTOS // CANVA

Paths outline our lives. We move through life, following those laid out for us by those who design our world, and by extension, our days. Life can feel like a connect-the-dots puzzle; all of us are children, destinations are numbered, and we try to draw the right line to make a recognizable picture our parents would be proud of.

*Is it dirt, or nicely paved?*

I've seen many paths. I've walked paved roads that wind through the wood, paths of dusty gravel—the stones digging into the soles of my shoes, and boulders to cross a brook. While on walks, one is bound to encounter many small paths branched off the main few. I would go on hikes with my parents. Whenever we reached a small side-path, I would get an overwhelming urge to abandon whatever trail we were following, ignore the green line on the map at the trailhead, and walk in that new direction.

*Does it run through a forest, or maybe your local park?*

My parents would not be so quick to follow. They would try to convince me to stay on the main trail, reiterating that paved roads are less dangerous and easier to follow than small dirt paths, and that safety should be my number one priority. Sometimes I would walk ahead anyways—and sometimes they would give in and follow—reluctantly.

*Does it lead you on a great adventure—or does it take you home?*

There is just something about those paths, something that calls to me. There is something about nonconformity that calls to us as young people. We want to be unique—to walk a new path. But that's all been done before. It's a cycle that repeats itself over generations.

Robert Frost took the road less travelled of his famous poem, the reader is grateful, or regretful.

by, but it was still a road. He walked a paved path. At the end unsure as to whether he

The majority of us will only walk roads laid out by others before us, but that doesn't make them any less exciting, or any less new to us. Do take the small roads, and appreciate their curves and bends. Appreciate those people you share your paths with, and appreciate those who made them in the first place. So that when you look back, and tell your story with a sigh, it will be one of gratitude.

I must not break.

At the dinner table, I suffer the silence between people's expectations and my dreams. I say hello to all the aunties and uncles, I laugh to ease the awkwardness, and I thank them—for what I do not know, only that I must do so. At the dinner table, I am deafening, yet silent.

The dining room is a vibrant place—full of giddy laughter, savory smells, and clacky furniture. As a child, it was my favourite place. I was overjoyed by the presence of many others conjoining in our home. The bustle brought life, but now, it seems to suck mine away. Sitting at the dinner table, I have become a mere pretender—a fraud.

*The dining room is not the joyous place I once believed it to be; rather, it is a stage.*

I am an artwork layered with colours and altered throughout the course of my upbringing. My mother holds the paintbrush. I am her blueprint. A draft of the perfect masterpiece she can create. Across the dinner table, I smile at my little brother. Maybe I exist to outline his future. But he is only a child. Will he be allowed to be a song to be heard and not a painting to be displayed?

At the dinner table, I relent to the praises of the other mothers, who wish their own was like me. How lucky my mother was to have a daughter like me, they would say. As I listen to their empty praises, the air in the room gets a little heavier. My chest tightens as I smile and nod along. I swallow the burning aspirations that oppose the vision of the artist. I succumb to the palette.

The world is an interesting place when you face a fork in the road. In this case, a fork on the table. In my fantasies, I live in a perfect world where my place at the dinner table does not exist, and neither does this fork. My painting is abstract, not realistic. My song is harmonic, not monochromatic.

*One of the fundamental human desires is to be heard—to be understood.*

At the dinner table, I answer a multitude of double-edged questions - my schools, my skills, my goals. Yet I suppose goals are different from dreams. My goal is to not break. My dream is to break free. But then I glance over at my younger brother, and then at my mother. My brother, who is yet to have such dreams that I wish not to impose on. My mother, who really just saw me as a chance to make things right.



Dreams are like family recipes. Sometimes, they remain unchanged for generations—every sprinkle of sugar, every splash of soy sauce, even the specific brand of rice. Other times, they change. They are passed down as stories, altered as they are told, and one day you find an outlier. A radical who cooks up fusion cuisine with the same ingredients. To the people who have eaten the same recipe for their entire lives, the taste of this new dish is foreign and hard to stomach. Yet for the cook, it is so eager to be devoured. Dreams, like food, are meant to be desired, savoured, and fulfilled. My goals are not my dreams.

*I am a collective of all the things I dream, of all the versions of myself I wish to be.*

At the dinner table, I have no appetite. I chew and swallow what tastes like gruel idling in the pit of my stomach. The piercing laughter and booming conversations are white noise to me. My brother was engrossed in whatever video games entertain 9-year-olds nowadays. I smile sadly thinking of him, knowing that I am leaving soon.

I am breaking free from the paint strokes. But what of him? The questions, stares, and visions will be shone on him after I proved to be a failed experiment. He would be the last chance.

*Am I doing the right thing?*

Eventually I am permitted to retire to my bedroom. I stare at my reflection in the bathroom; the fake smile I plastered on all night is practically a reflex now. A second reaction to the endlessly insipid questions about my future and the unrelenting insistence for me to ‘succeed’. The house once again falls into a tranquil silence. My mind is a little clearer, my breathing a little lighter.

I’m sorry to my mother and my brother. I’m sorry for wanting to be a spoken word rather than a painting. I’m sorry for leaving my place. But if there’s anything I learned from being at the dinner table, it’s that the perfect version of me others envision is not my responsibility.

*You can’t expect a flower to bloom if it’s not in the sun.*

As the eldest daughter, I must not break. But I will break free.

// ELAINE WANG  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ANSON LAI  
DESIGN // FIONA XU

Sea-blue eyes, sunshine hair, pearly tail. Brighter than any distant star. Never a ruler, but beloved by all.

Even the sea witch, hidden in her lair, had heard of the youngest mermaid princess.

The sea witch, who was known for her illicit dealings, whose infamy had spread far and wide. Her story was told as a warning and a cautionary tale, but the truly desperate would seek her out nonetheless.

She hadn't expected the golden girl to be amongst the desperate.

Naturally, a guest as important as this should be greeted in person. The sea witch took on the form she had stolen from the cephalopoda, all barbed tentacles and ink-covered skin. The mermaid cowered, but did not run.

Tales of a human prince spilled from her lips and royal treasures from a sack in her hands, but the sea witch didn't care for either. She focused entirely on those beautiful eyes; shining with fear, but shining all the same.

She wanted to see them suffused with other emotions. She wanted to see them sparkling with joy, alight with fire, brimming with sadness—

She wanted.

She wanted those eyes.

She wanted those eyes, and it took all her self-control not to rip them out right there and then.

They wouldn't be nearly so pretty anymore. They would be dead and dull and worthless.

For those eyes to remain beautiful, the mermaid would have to live.

If she wanted those eyes to herself, she would first have to claim the person.

The mermaid spoke of love? Well, it was as useful a tool as any.

The sea witch granted the mermaid human legs for half a year, and waited. Waited until the mermaid and the prince had developed their feelings, waited until there was talk of marriage.

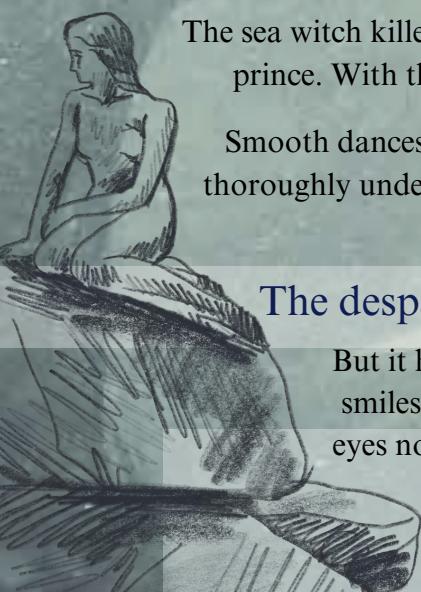
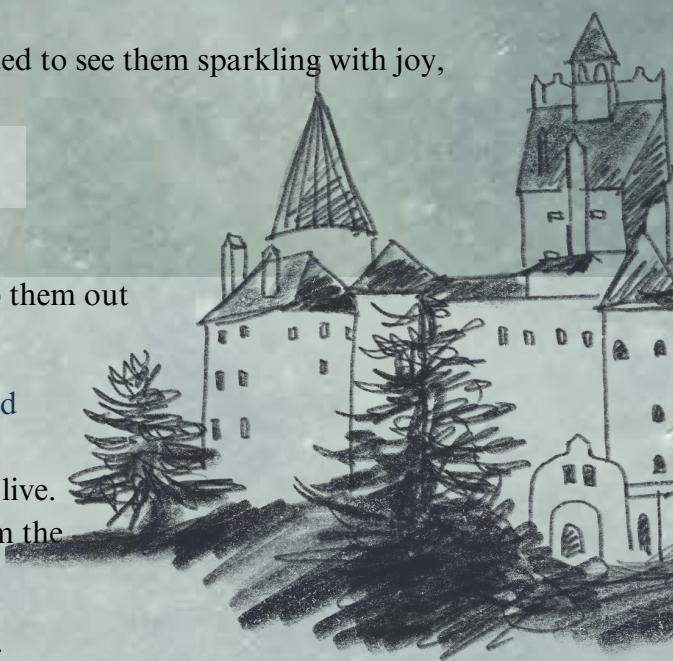
Truthfully, there was no love in sight. Only the giddy intoxication of an infatuation, the novelty of a blossoming relationship, the universal appreciation for beauty. They barely even knew each other.

The sea witch killed a neighbouring kingdom's princess, took her place and set about conquering the prince. With the support of a kingdom behind her, the powerless little mermaid stood no chance.

Smooth dances instead of silly stumbles, searing kisses rather than shy blushes. The prince was so thoroughly under her control that, when she demanded for the little mermaid to be her servant, the prince agreed without hesitation.

The despair in those deep blue eyes . . . That was beautiful too.

But it had no reason to last. She treated the mermaid better than the prince ever had; soft smiles, fond expressions, constant kindness and eternal patience won her over. Soon, her eyes no longer lit up for the prince—only for the princess. Reserved for the princess, too, were her shy blushes and her sunshine smiles.





She had fallen in love with the princess.  
The sea witch.

Foolish girl . . .

When the time came for the prince and the princess to be wed, the mermaid panicked.

On the night of the wedding, exactly half a year since she made her wish, the little mermaid stabbed the prince to death with her own two hands. And then, covered in blood, she kissed her beloved princess.

She did not die.

Her tail returned; the ship crumbled around her; she sank to the sea floor. As she watched her princess transform into the sea witch, what she felt was not horror but joy.

Joy that they could spend the rest of their lives together. They wandered the whole of the human world, never apart.

Until centuries had passed, until the oceans were so full of toxins that even the sea witch could not bear. Their last moments, just like the endings to those mortal fairytales, were spent in each other's arms.

*If a lie lasts for a lifetime, is it still a lie?*

//ANNA PAN  
DESIGN//LYNN HE  
GRAPHICS//CANVAS//UNSPLASH

Black and white. Good and evil. Right and wrong. But what about gray? What about the in-between? Does black-and-white thinking truly give us the answers that we need, or does it just further confuse us into believing that everything is just as simple as it seems at first glance?

When we're younger, the world is black-and-white. The answers are clear and lucid, and our only dilemmas involve deciding between true right and wrong. When we look around, we understand that there is a balance between the two, but no actual connectivity. Black-and-white thinking is promoted by our teachers, parents, and mentors to ensure that we have the morals to become contributing members of society. It helps guide us in the right direction in our young lives. There's no need to consider all the different variables that can change our perspectives when the answer is right in front of us. As we grow up and meet new people, we realize that there are more shades of gray than there are black and white. Our interactions with others become more complicated and making decisions is no longer just a matter of common sense anymore. As time goes on, the black and white blurs into a dismal gray, creating a shaded and highlighted sketch of everything we once knew. While the gray is initially hard to adjust to, the cloudy colour soon becomes the favourite of many because of its ambiguity and its potential to be whatever we want it to be.

Most people adjust to the gray state of the world as the years begin to fly by and the days become loops of one another. However, some people carry black-and-white thinking into adulthood and use it when making decisions, as well as interacting with others. As their environment becomes noisier and it gets harder to see clearly, they refuse to accept the beauty of the gray for what it truly is.

So, why is black-and-white thinking suboptimal? Well, black-and-white thinking prevents us from being able to find solutions to our problems. When we only think of choices as being extreme, we can't maneuver our way around obstacles that block our paths. Making our options as distinct and definite as possible doesn't necessarily make those options the only constructive ones available. Black-and-white thinking also stops us from fully being able

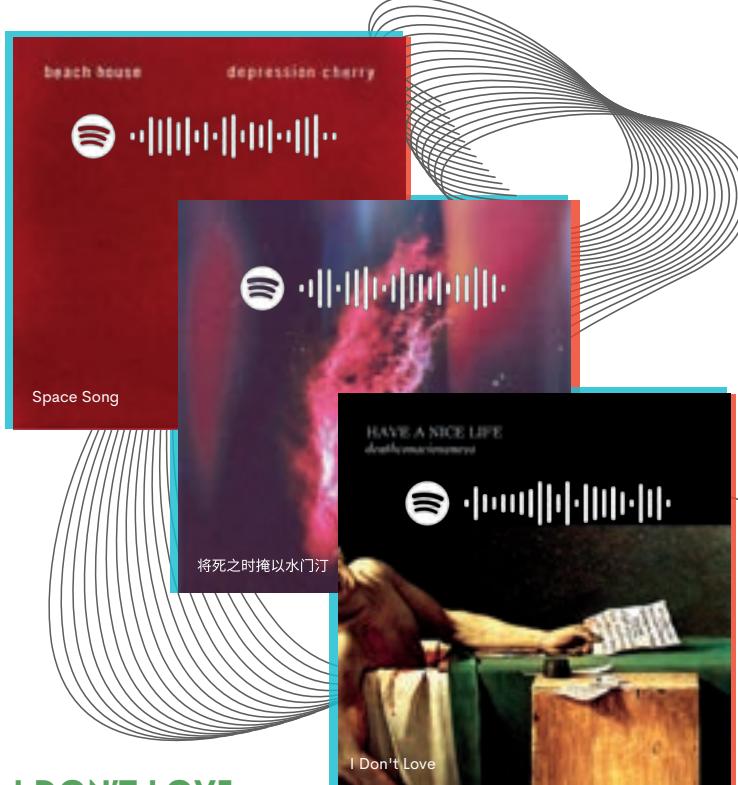
choices as being extreme, we can't maneuver our way around obstacles that block our paths. Making our options as distinct and definite as possible doesn't necessarily make those options the only constructive ones available. Black-and-white thinking also stops us from fully being able to understand the people around us. Humans and their thoughts and actions can't be grouped into categories that define them as a whole. Parts of our identities can be classified and arranged to fit into the scales and boxes, but none of us are textbook examples of anything. People are kaleidoscopes that are shaped by their experiences, cultures, histories, opinions, and relationships; even so, we're not always aware of what other people think and believe based on our interactions with them. Every person decides to reveal a different part of themselves to certain people, just like how kaleidoscopes display various patterns when twisted and turned; therefore, we can never actually be sure who a person is to someone else in their life. Categorizing people as just being "mean" or "nice" will never represent who they actually are because of how they act differently with different people. By recognizing and appreciating the gray, we are,

in turn, appreciating the complexity and uniqueness of the ideas and peers around us.

Gray thinking might disguise itself as being futile and ineffective, while it is actually what keeps our societies running and our relationships thriving. Thinking in black-and-white simply does not work in a gray society, as considering the gray in any situation allows us to be creative when solving problems and also empathize with others when communicating with them. Gray is what makes black and white flow together, and it is also what makes our world do the same.

// KATE SHAHIDI  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ANNIE CHEN  
DESIGN // GRACE FAN

Imagine songs composed of ethereal waves of distorted guitar and obscured vocals at overwhelming volumes. Songs packed with endless layers, so impossibly complex that new elements emerge with every listen. That is the essence of shoegaze, and why I love this subgenre of alt-rock so much. It's the only thing that kept me (somewhat) sane on the TTC, so I'd like to share some of my favorite songs to listen to as I dissociate from reality while unknowingly staring into some poor stranger's soul.



## I DON'T LOVE //DEATHCONSCIOUSNESS <HAVE A NICE LIFE>

Oh God. This song. This song has been here for me in my lowest lows and, well, not much else. I Don't Love remains one of the most intense, visceral tracks I've ever experienced. This is something meant to be played when the world loses all color and meaning. This was made for terrible days. An ocean of sound drowns out the world, allowing for you to wallow in despair for its runtime. It begins with a somber introduction composed of a steady drum accompanied by a weary vocalist. He wails, not due to pain, but apathy. His inability to love tears eats away at him. Then, the song erupts with a cacophony of sound. It's nearly unbearable at first, but a beautifully crafted rhythm lies beyond the barrage of noise, barely recognizable but ever present. In the background the vocalist continues to sob, adorning the track with agonizing "oohs" and "ahhs" amidst the dissonance in a mesmerizing manner. However, Deathconsciousness isn't a sad album. No, that couldn't be further from the truth. No matter how hopeless or monotonous life can get, the struggler within each of us remains adamant. Such is the theme of Deathconsciousness. To live is to struggle. To live is to hurt. To live is to persevere, unafraid in spite of this cryptic paradox of which we are cursed.

# (SHOE)GAZING AT STRANGERS ON THE TTC

## SPACE SONG //DEPRESSION CHERRY <BEACH HOUSE>

Space Song serves as a great transition into shoegaze, as some of these songs tend to be a little overwhelming. The vocalist tells a story of a relationship that abruptly ended, a story of a bitter conclusion to an era of the couple's lives. The couple searches for some semblance of the people they fell for in each other's eyes, only to realize they are grasping at straws, and the relationship inevitably falls apart. The obscure lyrics accompanied by the smooth, yet hard hitting orchestra of synthesizers in the background never fails to evoke feelings of regret from within me. Some things were always meant to fall apart.

将死之时掩以水门汀

## //CALIFORNIA NEBULA <缺省>

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We are but specks of stardust, born of the ceaseless cosmos and fated to return in death. The ethereal guitars and an angelic duet of voices illustrate the vastness of the astral plane, only accentuated by the beautiful crimson nebula on the album cover. It verifies the insignificance of our lives in comparison to the infinite universe. Although daunting, I find this fact rather comforting. We might be alone. But we are definitely alive, and that's good enough for me.



// ANDREW YANG  
PHOTOGRAPHY // VIKTOR OSTAPCHUK  
DESIGN // ELINA LAI  
IMAGES // SPOTIFY

# RHHS Coffeehouse

// ELAINE WANG  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ANSON LAI  
DESIGN // FIONA XU

A night to remember. A night of all nights. In the lull between winter flurries and spring blossoms, when it's too cold to wear just a hoodie, but not cold enough to wear a winter jacket, we all need something to warm our hearts. A warm drink, some friends, lovely music.

On March 9, I helped bring to life RHHS Music's annual Coffeehouse. Coffeehouse is RHHS' annual talent show, encapsulating the vibrance and atmosphere of, well, a coffee house. From backstage, I saw the spectacular talents of RHHS students—from magic tricks to music—after labouring for hours to transform the school cafeteria into a cozy setting lit by tabletop candles and fairy lights. With a sold out show—(happy) tears were shed, laughter was shared, and core memories were made.



From singers and dancers, to instrumentalists, to even comedians and magicians, Coffeehouse showcases the unique talents of the RHHS student body. Being its second year back in action after the pandemic, the excited murmurs and whispers echoed through the crowd. As Music Council, we were busy setting up, finding performers, and settling everyone down.

Emma Bian, a grade 9 student who is both part of tech crew and Music Council, was backstage all night, making sure each performance ran smoothly. Beyond the pretty lights and yummy treats, there were hours of planning and labouring to make this event come alive. And all those hours were worth it to see the results.

The show opened with gasps echoing through the crowd. Magician Peter Gao shocked the audience with his card tricks. Merging cards together? Transforming cards into other cards? He did it all. Next, embodying the very essence of a coffee house, Trombone Ensemble filled the room with a jazz classic: Autumn Leaves. The rich tone playing off the swing eighth truly brought about a homey ambiance. As Vanessa Wang performed "Until I Found You", she captured the audience with her beautiful voice and instrumentals. Love was definitely in the air as Wind Quintet - a new RHHS small ensemble, elevated a lively and familiar tune: Love is an Open Door (yes, from Frozen).

The charming girls of the dance team lit up the stage with their performance of viral k-pop hits Antifragile and OMG by New Jeans. Our emcee hype boys backstage were definitely having a great time dancing along. My own performance, a duet with Ryan Li, closed off the first half with an instrumental rendition of drunk by Keshi. I felt a wave of gratitude and warmth as the crowd lit their flashlights and sang along to the well known r&b hit—I hope they shared that same feeling of comfort.



"Organizing an event by yourself...I never really realized how hard it was...Really being in the process of planning and seeing the results of everyone's hard work being put together...it was really fulfilling." - Emma Bian

During intermission, I was finally able to catch a break. The cafeteria was bustling with students collecting the baked goods and warm drinks prepared. Murmurs of "that was so good!" and "I liked that one a lot" resonated through the crowd, warming my heart. Audience member Rachel Wu describes her experience:

"Our student body is so talented...I was super shocked and it was also super engaging. It was cool seeing how many people in our school came together because of this one event and how big something like music is among the students."

Once everyone had settled down with food on plates and bright smiles on faces, the show was back on. RHHS' very own teen rock band performed "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Yellow". Their unique presence livened up the atmosphere. Jason Sun then took it away with his soprano saxophone, performing "Versace on the Floor" and "That's What I Like" by Bruno Mars. His enrapturing solo quickly turned into a cafeteria-wide karaoke.



Jason soon rejoined his fellow emcee's: Nathan and Manny. This trio of grade 12 music students were certainly capturing the crowd's amusement with their witty remarks and somewhat questionable attempts at insulting one another. From performer to emcee, Emmanuel Feng has had his fair share of the spotlight. He describes his idea of what Coffeehouse is.

"It should ignore excellency...it should be to have fun, show something you don't usually show people."

Soon it came time for his own performance. The Backstreet Boys of RHHS: Rin, Manny, and Nathan. They performed a trio of beside you by Keshi and Baby by Justin Bieber, making the audience laugh with their comically planned mess-ups as well as their endearing vocals.

"I felt [the energy] for sure but.... I hope [the audience] felt it too"



Tony and Elina took it away with a stunning euphonium and trumpet duet of "The Place Where Love was Found" from anime Sound! Euphonium. The rich depth of the euphonium really enlivened the bright tone of the trumpet melody. Next, Cindy Kofman once again brought the stage to the audience, as everyone sang along to "The One That Got Away". Finally, the show was coming to an end. Gold Fever, RHHS' jazz band, literally shook the stage. "I Want You Back" brought everyone to smiles through the familiar upbeat tune. Then, "Feeling Good" left jaws dropped and throats hoarse from cheering as Lia Dogadin truly exemplified her incredibly powerful vocals and stage presence.

Each and every performer brought the stage to life with their incredible talent; however, there are only so many words that can fit on two pages. To whomever may be reading this article, this is a sign for you to experience our student body's innate talent and character firsthand. Coffeehouse is not just a talent show—it is a place for students to gather regardless of what courses they're taking, what test they have the next day, or what their midterms are looking like. Coffeehouse builds the essence of why the arts are a language and beacon of connection in and of itself. So, I hope, dear reader, you may experience the warmth I did during this lull between the seasons.

# SITCOMS

// JASON WU  
DESIGN // RACHEL LIU  
GRAPHIC // GETTY IMAGES // NICEPNG

I started taking melatonin this year because I had a lot of trouble falling asleep, but I'm thinking of stopping soon. Partly because I don't necessarily have to worry about marks anymore, but mainly because I miss rewatching scenes of sitcoms before [drifting to sleep](#).

[The Office](#) and [Community](#), the latter being my favourite sitcom of all time (with very little debate), are two shows I binged within a week during the pandemic. Every waking hour, from when I was studying for a test, memorizing a presentation, or pretending to pay attention in online school, was occupied by an episode from a seemingly infinite source of content. That is, until I heard the closing credits play and an option for the next episode didn't appear.

But it's inevitable to feel [sad](#). How could I not, when I witnessed a decade fly by in a matter of days? It wasn't until I replayed the pilot episodes that I noticed the youth disappear from the incipient cast and the seasons shifting from Summer to Winter. I wondered where I was the day the episode aired. Christmas is my favourite holiday, so you'd think I'd be happy viewing two Christmas specials on the same night, but strangely, I felt empty. I must have wanted to watch three.

Several years of my life, the school years, can be summarized through the [algorithm of a sitcom](#): I go to school, I sit with the same people, we laugh at the same jokes, we share the same dread at the same tests before awaiting the day to repeat itself. I don't say this to make life sound monotonous or unappealing. In fact, if my experience counted as a sitcom, it would be [my favourite by far](#). What bothers me, however, is that these last months have felt nostalgic, similar to a finale.

I realized, as my friends started to decide on their university acceptances and I rewatch clips that have already been ingrained into my memory, I had somehow let another part of my life outgrow me. The seasons changed before my eyes, the youth stripped from them and I was there for every single moment, but as I reminisce, I somehow wish I was [more present](#).

I'm a little worried about what happens after my high school finale, but I'm prepared this time, vicariously experiencing the ending of many sitcoms and getting used to the [silence after the closing credits](#). Progression is a poison to comfortability and sitcoms, but what are you going to do in the face of inevitability? Behind the scenes, the actors must eventually find new work—expand their horizons. The cast of [characters in my life is changing soon](#), and I think it's a good sign that I only wish I could experience the same thing all over again.



# PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWCASE

JOLLY YAN

DESIGN // ELLIE LIANG



ANNIE CHEN



ANSON LAI



ANSON LAI



ANNE CHEN



VIKTOR OSTAPCHUK



# passion upon your finger tips

// SAMANTHA LEE  
PHOTOGRAPHY // JOLLY YAN  
DESIGN // SAMANTHA LEE

There is a girl who sits on her stool, old but sturdy, surrounded by walls painted black and white for hours on end. She lives among piles of books and photocopied sheets, each holding a period in her life frozen in time – in muscle memory. Piano is all she's ever known. She isn't one to admit it, but she's special. I've never met anyone whose eyes sparkle like crystals greeting the morning sun. When she sits down on that stool, she takes three careful breaths, and her fingertips meet with those glistening keys as if she's reuniting with a dearest lifelong friend.

And I, with my pen in hand in a world of white, hesitate.

Behind every stroke is months of tedious planning and thorough studies from life. What ever happened to the ideas that seemed to come so naturally like ink flowing from the flexible steel nib of a fountain pen? Inspiration hidden in every corner of the room. Every bead of steaming shower water dribbling down my spine, painting a vivid scene in my head. I sit here in front of a vast blank canvas, waiting for a splash of colour or a hint of my emotions. I sit here in front of a vast blank canvas with an equally blank stare.

Is this my limit?

She says, her voice barely audible against the dissonant notes filled with frustration. She brings her right hand to her face, wiggling her trembling fingers and examining every crevice as if it belonged to someone else. Her fingers aren't moving the way she wants them to. Never light enough or fast enough. Never good enough. She pours every emotion from every intimate corner of her heart, but she's talking to a stranger. A stranger who only responds when provoked – its lid snapped open and keys unsheathed from behind the red cloth. She caresses white keys, gently pressing down.

It hurts.

My wrist stings as I press down on the paper. It's weak. It's so numb. I can't feel anything, but I need to finish the piece. Every small movement sends a stream of pins and needles to my thumb, index and middle finger. My pen falls onto the floor with a sudden clack. My heartbeat replays the sound, resonating through my entire body. The pain pulses from the tips of my fingers to my knuckles. I bring my aching hands to my ears, and I whisper to myself.

Is this the end?

There is a girl who sits on her stool as if all time has stopped. A phantom of pain looms over her vulnerable arms. How did I let it come to this? She hums a melody, tapping her fingers against the edge of the chair. She cannot bear to open the lid of the piano she used to greet like a dear old friend.

I have not picked up the pen from the floor. I sit in my room like a vacant doll, as if every drop of my humanity was soaked up by the countless artworks I produced in only a few months. One piece for every intimate secret I held captive in my memory until I simply ran out. I'm tired of it all. What else do I have left to say – to desperately scream out to the world? Ha, maybe... don't push yourself until you're hanging off the edge of a cliff, clinging on by a measly strand of grass.

I wish I'd stopped to gaze at the unpaved path.

Side by side, we lay on the carpeted floor within walls of black and white. I ask the girl what she'd do if she could go back in time.

"I'd give myself a little more..." she looked down at her fingers, "more time to breathe – like I am now."

I look over at the girl I deemed special: her chest is rising up and down ever so slightly. Our breaths sing a silent rhythm in unison.



*Elina Lai*

Elina started playing volleyball in the 5th grade, but really got into it the summer before 8th grade at camp. She started playing because of Haikyuu! and during her first year playing club, she blocked a girl on a really good team. She initially chose jersey number 92 because one of the members from her favourite boy band at the time (BTS) was born in 1992.



*Evan Rhee*

As someone who made the senior team as a freshman, Evan has been playing basketball since the 5th grade and once broke someone's ankles the year after that. His favourite athlete is Evan Rhee, and one of his least favourite is Lebron James because he puts weird things on his Instagram. The most embarrassing song he'll admit to listening to while working out is "august" by Taylor Swift. According to him, he has an older sister who

he has outperformed in every aspect.



*Alissa Xu*

As a member of Dartmouth's class of 2027, Alissa is on Team Canada for golf. Her favourite thing about her sport is the community – she met her best friend through golf. She looks up to Brooke Henderson because she's Canadian and most professional golfers come from warmer regions. Alissa would like to be sponsored by Lululemon, as they're known for their staple mini skirts. The most embarrassing song she'll admit to listening to is "POP/STARS" from League of Legends.



*Viona Abbasian*

Viona is a 10th grade student who plays every sport known to humankind except water polo. Her preferred sport is soccer, which she started playing in the first grade after moving here from Iran and seeing some kids play at school. Her magnum opus moment was being accepted into the Barça Academy, a renowned soccer camp that Messi himself attended. Viona wishes Ronaldo was fictional and is quoted saying things like "I don't like to discriminate, but this one's personal" and "it's between me and him."



*Lernuel Ann*

Lernuel is a 10th grade student who has played badminton for 7 years, even making it to nationals with the school team last year. He developed his skills by playing with his grandfather, father, and older brother Nathaniel who was also really good at the sport. In the summer, he plays frisbee with his friends. Although badminton doesn't have jersey numbers, it is worth noting that he does not harbour a distaste for all numbers.



*Marina Huang*

Marina, president of AthCo, has been involved in rhythmic gymnastics since she was 8 years old and currently coaches the sport. She has found a close-knit community at her family-oriented club. She has competed at the provincial level for her sport, travelling to places like Vancouver for competitions. Marina still has the email that notified her of her eligibility for the provincial team stashed in her inbox. The most embarrassing song she'll admit to listening to while working out is "Baby" by Justin Bieber.



*Leo Chen*

Leo is a senior who won the national championships in Canadian fencing and placed 3rd at the pan-American championships. He got into his sport in the 7th grade and appreciates the people he's met through it; at his level, it's the same circuit of people who compete at each tournament. He is familiar with some European fencers at his level who have been sponsored by Mercedes. Prior to competitions, Leo listens to the Death Race for Love album by Juice WRLD, citing it as a method of classical conditioning.

# ATHLETE Hall of Fame

// RIANNA ZHU  
PHOTOGRAPHY // ATHLETES  
DESIGN // MELANIE ONG

# Man's Best Friend



// YASMIN HADIZAD  
PHOTOGRAPHY // SAM ABDI  
DESIGN // HANNAH TRUONG

**From the very beginning, our flaws are put on full display.**

As people, others hold us to a certain standard—justifiably, of course, because we're conscious and aware of our actions, so we all have the responsibility to take criticism when we do something wrong. It makes sense that people see our mistakes and might not want to stay with us anymore, because sometimes, unintentionally, we hurt people. So it's understandable. We all get it. But isn't it burdening, being flawed, knowing how people might see you if they knew about all of your mistakes, knowing that no love can be truly unconditional? No matter what, if our friends knew about the worst parts of our personalities, their opinions of us would change, at the very least.

## **Well, our human friends, anyway.**

For centuries, human beings have found undying companionship in pets, in animals that have limited to non-existent understandings of morality. In general, pets are forgiving. As long as you don't hurt them, they don't care how flawed you are. It's a bit dumb, if you think about it—the only reason they don't care is because they have no concept of good or bad. How can something stop loving you if it doesn't know what it could possibly stop loving you for? As far as we know, they see us through rose-coloured glasses—to them, we're the caregivers, so we're perfect (or, to most cats, good enough). I guess, really, we're kidding ourselves, expressing so much love for creatures who probably just see us as survival. Maybe it's all in our heads. Maybe.

Maybe we are just survival to them, or maybe their instincts motivate them to stay close to us, so maybe it's not as amazing as we make it out to be. But maybe our hearts are right. Maybe in our pets, we really have found the truest form of friendship, love that loyally remains, despite our obvious imperfections.

But as their fragile bodies rise and fall against our stomachs when we hold them in our laps, as fur tickles our arms when they nuzzle up to greet us, and eyes look up at our faces, full of innocent endearment and trust—trust we know can never in a million years be broken—we're overcome with a feeling none of us think we deserve. When something needs you—, really needs you—, and depends on you, regarding you with such powerful love, it's an overwhelming and uplifting relief. In something so pure and doting, you've finally found an unconditional friend.

Almost a year ago, I found this connection with a kitten, who, as we later found out, had been separated from his mother too early, so that's probably why he was so attached to me. I'd named him Cheeto, because of his bright orange fuzz (it didn't really count as fur), and he and his brother were half-Persian rescues. I remember, with a heart heavy with tenderness, the way he would look up at me every time I came home from school and ran upstairs to pet him. I would lift him onto my lap with barely any effort and he would already be purring, settling himself into the warmth of my skin, before I would place him on my lap. I would sit there for an hour as he lay there, on the fabric of my tinted jeans, safe and happy, and I'd run my hand over his silky fleece over and over again. I would scratch behind his ears and under his chin and he would roll over cheekily, smiling at me with his tiny little eyes closed in content. I would gently stroke his back and he would purr louder, sinking into my leg and nestling into my stomach.

**Ever so faintly, I could hear his heart beating against my thigh.**

# How Do You Keep it Together?

## *Verse 1*

How do you keep it together  
When they are berating you?  
How do you trust in yourself  
When all they do is doubt you?

How do you deal with the hatred  
And the words “you won’t make it”?  
How do you bear truth that’s spoken  
Walk from a past that’s so broken?

Well I’ve not wings to soar  
But I’ve got feet to climb,  
And while these critics sleep  
I’ll toil in the night.

## *Chorus*

Cause yes I can  
dream and can  
master

All of my thoughts  
to my aim.

I can meet  
triumph, disaster

And I can treat  
them the same.

Mine are the  
heights I have  
conquered,

Mine are the lows  
I have bridled,

CAUSE I AM  
EVERYTHING THAT

THEY SAY  
THAT I AM  
NOT.

## *Verse 2*

How do you fight with this sinew  
You have for blaming yourself?  
How do you keep moving forward  
And on the past, never dwell?

How do you hold on to virtue  
Don’t let their censure it hurt you?  
Why do you know you will achieve  
Everything they can’t be?

Well I’ve not wings to soar,  
But I’ve got feet to climb.  
And while these critics sleep,  
I’ll toil in the night.

## *Chorus*

Cause yes I can dream  
and can master

All of my thoughts to my  
aim.

I can meet triumph,  
disaster

And I can treat them the  
same.

Mine are the heights I  
have conquered,

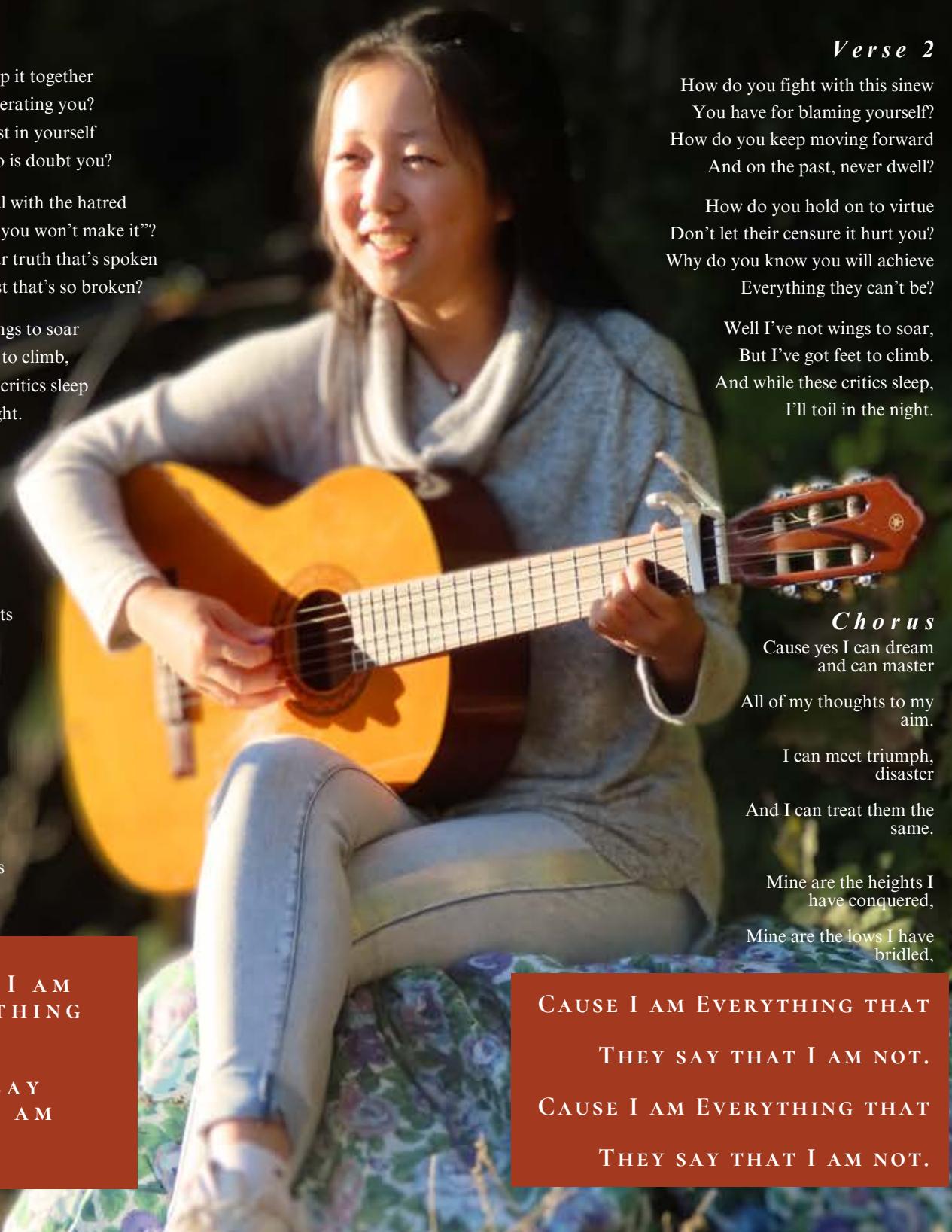
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CAUSE I AM EVERYTHING THAT

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