



the spyglass



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table of contents

WHAT AUTUMN ACTIVITY ARE YOU?	2
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE NOT IMMORTAL?	3
THE ANALOG ARTIST	4
WHO NEEDS THERAPY WHEN YOU HAVE DRAGONS?	6
THE QUESTION OF COMPETITION	7
I FIND COMFORT IN THE (HYPOTHETICAL) DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE	8
PALE BLUE DOT	10
WORKING HARD OR HARDLY WORKING?	12
LET ME PAINT YOU A PICTURE	13
FUNDING THE FUTURE	14
THE COTTAGE	16
EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BEING CHINESE	18
WHAT YOUR MONOPOLY PIECE SAYS ABOUT YOU	19
THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING TO FIGH LITERAL CHILDREN	20

WHAT AUTUMN ACTIVITY are you?

// ELAINE WANG
DESIGN//LYNN HE
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ON A SLOW SATURDAY AFTERNOON, WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO COMFORT DESSERT?

- a. Apple Pie
- b. Pumpkin Bread
- c. Cinnamon Roll
- d. Maple Butter Blondies



STARBUCKS' FALL MENU IS OUT! WHAT ARE YOU GETTING?

- a. Iced Apple Crisp Oat Shaken Espresso
- b. PSL (pumpkin spiced latte)
- c. Pumpkin Cream Chai Tea Latte
- d. Fox Sugar Cookie (no caffeine for me!)



IT'S FLU-SEASON, AND YOU GOT SICK :(WHICH SERIES ARE YOU BINGING IN BED?

- a. Anne with an E
- b. Gilmore Girls
- c. Gossip Girl
- d. Harry Potter



WHAT WEIRD PUMPKIN-THEMED FOOD WOULD YOU TRY?

- a. Candy Corn Marshmallows
- b. Pumpkin Spice Spam
- c. Pumpkin Pie Dessert Hummus
- d. Pumpkin Spice Cup Noodles



WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE TIME OF DAY?

- a. Dawn
- b. Early afternoon
- c. Midnight
- d. Sunset



UPON THE POSSIBILITY OF A SCARECROW APOCALYPSE, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR WEAPON OF CHOICE?

- a. A nest of crows to unleash
- b. Just straight up pumpkins
- c. Pitchfork
- d. Haystacks



If you picked mostly A's...

Go apple picking, come home, and bake a pie!

The only thing better than apple pies? Picking the apples that you make into pies! Head to a local apple orchard and bring home way more apples than you could ever eat. But it's worth it, because you get to watch your friend spill flour all over themselves during your baking sesh.

If you picked mostly B's...

Take IG worthy photos at a pumpkin patch!

If you like pumpkin spiced lattes, you probably already post photos of yourself hugging pumpkins on your Instagram feed. So go all in and join the classic Fall tradition - spend a day at the pumpkin patch! Not only will you get some gains from lifting those pumpkins, you can also take home a scary jack-o-lantern for your front porch!

If you picked mostly C's...

Watch scary movies!

The only thing scarier than clowns in horror movies are people who would willingly try pumpkin pie-flavoured hummus. (But we try not to judge here...) Curl up in bed with some close friends for yet another Halloween rewatch of "Saw". Just try not to scream too loud...

If you picked mostly D's...

Embark on a hike - take in the warm toned palette of nature!

Snack on Pumpkin Spice-flavoured noodles as you experience one of the greatest, most stunning sights of all time: Canada during the Autumn season. Head to your favourite hiking trail to witness a palette of beautiful reds, oranges, and yellows unfold beneath your feet and before your eyes.

What do You Mean You're Not Immortal?

I curve my Ts like how my grade 2 teacher crossed hers when she wrote notes on my writings.

I finished a book series recently that I started because a friend introduced me to it.

I haven't seen or spoken to her in seven years.

I adjust my glasses with my index finger just the same way my grade 4 classmate did because I thought it looked cool.

I write some of my letters in cursive because a girl I liked when I was eight wrote in cursive.

I read historical texts and journals because my dad recalled his high school teacher's lessons on Egyptology when I was two. He told me what a mummy was and I dove into Egyptology and never looked back.

I don't cut my noodles with my teeth when I eat them because my grandmother told me it would cut my life short. She believes that because her grandmother told her about it.

She died over sixty years ago.

//ARWYN WONG
PHOTOGRAPHY //MIA LIU
DESIGN // WENDY LI
GRAPHICS // CANVA

I have a bracelet I take out and look at every year on my birthday. I got it from a classmate in grade 3 because I mentioned not getting anything for my birthday.

He left my school afterwards and I never spoke to him again.

People throughout history have been obsessed with immortality—with living forever. And yet, how can we not? We alter and change the minutiae, from the way we walk to our laugh and smile. Isn't it a beautiful thought? That we are puzzles of others – reflections of everyone who we have ever met. The pieces of puzzles taken and adapted from generations upon generations of teachers, parents, friends, and strangers. We carry parts of those we have known and loved, and those they have known, into the future.

Even if we forget who they were.

Even if we do not know where they are.

We are a constellation of those who have ever loved in centuries long past. We are made from the memories of those who even the Earth cannot recall.

Is that not immortality?

Is that not everlasting life?

The Analog Artist



Growing up, all I had was time. In elementary school, the lack of academic responsibility paired with minimal Internet access meant that, for a few years, I was free. Rocking my light-up sneakers and Hello Kitty sweater, I absorbed the world around me with an Impressionist's eyes, my memories painted in thick, blurry strokes. Vibrant and abstract, the present stretched before me like a rolling field, where Time and I played side by side. Rather than exams and band practice, my most pressing concerns were the number of people available to play at lunch, how many Beanie Boos I owned, and maintaining my top position on the classroom behaviour chart.

To me, school was a playground. To my parents, it was the age of experimentation, fertile soil for reaping my maximum potential. Math class? Definitely. Skating lessons? Sure, why not. Soon, I found my weekends and afternoons spent travelling from one extracurricular to another; lines and shapes rearranged and configured upon the canvas as Time began to imitate Cubism.

From the opportunities my parents planted, I soon found my creative outlet: art. By no means was I a child prodigy, but I loved being able to experiment with different shapes, values, and hues until I created a product I could call my own. My creative endeavours have expanded over the years, and as I amassed piles of brushes and half-finished sketchbooks, art became not just a hobby, but the lens through which I perceived the world. I'd admire the jagged edges of tree branches, the gleam of hair in the sunlight, the curve of a petal, and the deep blue of the night sky; moments in Time were captured in graphite sketches scribbled onto anything within my reach.

Years later, high school arrived, with new expectations and responsibilities. Gone are the days of frolicking and leisure—there's work to be done. With the future a diploma away, afternoons are soon spent polishing up the latest paper or refining the upcoming presentation. Free time, now drastically diminished, is largely spent on social media or sleep. My eyes, which once took in the colours around me, now searched for the newest resume-toppers, the latest selling point to the admissions officers. Hobbies, many of which are now considered trivial exploits, are either abandoned or monetized. It's at this stage that Time takes on a modernist look, no longer abstract but angular and monochromatic, divided and itemised to produce the maximum academic yield.

Seasons change, and soon enough, it's become days, weeks, months since I picked up a brush.

It's okay, I'll make time next week. It's just that I had two quizzes already, and I need to finish this lab, study for this test, go to two meetings, and don't even get me started on—

One day, I absentmindedly picked up a pencil. It was during fall, I think. When did that happen? Time had been monotone and grayscale for some time now, and I wasn't sure which assignment I was supposed to be working on. Mind blank, I let my hand wander across the page, hesitant. When the lead touched paper, a shy trail of gray followed. My strokes grew bigger, bolder, a hint of colour flitted out, purples and reds and, and —oh.

Did the leaves always look so

BRIGHT?

Time marches at a constant pace, yet the more years that pass, the more it appears to chase us. As we grow older, we begin to reminisce on the “good old days” when the days were longer, laughter was lighter, and our lives seemed easier. The seasons are changing, and as the world prepares for its slumber, colour becomes scarce amidst the monotony and pressure of student life. It is in these moments, when the days blur in a spiral of charcoal and graphite, that our hobbies—new or long-lost—offer moments of calm amidst the storm. Whether it is the books gathering dust on the shelves, the rackets tucked away in the depths of the closet, or the old console lying patiently in wait, there are always sources of colour. All there is left to do is look.

It's okay,
you have all the time in the world.

//AMRITA DUDAKA
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Who Needs Therapy When You Have **DRAGONS?**



I have always been enamoured with fantasy. I still feel the same giddy jubilance I did as a kid from tales of magic, castles and dragons. I still dream of adventuring through the worlds of Sanctuary, Narnia, Erlichea and the Underlands. I still am left slack-jawed by the world building and passion found in Azeroth, Arda, Roshar and Tamriel. At night, I still look up at the cosmos and imagine exploring the limitless unknowns of the Koprulu sector or the distant planet of Gallifrey (first person that can name me the media property of all those worlds gets a cookie). Yet, in the “real world”, fantasy is quick to be dismissed. Folks claim elves and dwarves to be childish fictions meant to be outgrown. Nothing more than kitschy escapism – a braindead media meant to divert the mind from the “real world”. There is nothing productive that can be had from discussions of space battles or wizardry. It is an immature distraction from the problems of “real life”. I say that they’re dead wrong. In fact, fantasy can help one navigate the most mature journey anyone can face-- life itself.

Fantasy and real “serious” topics don’t have to be mutually exclusive. On the surface, Brandon Sanderson’s Stormlight Archive series is about a group of heroes trying to save the world from an apocalyptic war. But the story packages within the story real conversations of life. What is the right thing to do in a post-colonial society when the oppressed try to “take back” what was once theirs? Is wealth inequality fundamentally unjust? What is the role of hypocrisy in one’s interpersonal journey? How much of our outward identity represents who we truly are? Fantasy can be a powerful tool to make these heavy issues more palatable. Like a ring of power, helping to strengthen our ability to tackle these topics we otherwise might not have the strength to deal with.

For instance, the first method I use to process my troubles is through embodying that darkness within the characters of my own fantasy world. I am racked with fear that all the activities, commitments and plans I have are just distractions from the meaningless of it all. Normally I wouldn’t have the strength to even approach this part of me; I would’ve repressed it deep down. Instead I created Duomundis. This leader of an ecstatic wandering clockwork circus, who, like me, indulges in eccentricities. This clockwork man spends their days performing zany hijinks, all to fill the emptiness within. Yet even with this weight, day by day they still trudge on. And so will I. Through this simple fiction, I have made a safe space in which no issue is too big for me to overcome.

Now that's meaningful.

Magic is real, and it is found in fantasy. Within this simple concept holds the greatest magic of all : the ability to bring colour to a grey world. No one can deny that there isn’t an inherent charm in the fantastical. There is a timeless appeal to mystical lands of magic and heroes, of worlds where brave heroes can change the world, if only they have the heart.

Maybe if more people choose not to overlook Fantasy, we can all bring that magic into our own reality.

THE QUESTION OF

COMPETITION

For as long as I've been old enough to understand the concepts of winning and losing, I've always relished the idea of being "the best" at something, whatever that "something" is. As I've grown older and met more people, I've come to realize that I'm not the only one who's been down this line of thinking. I've discovered things that I truly wish to refine and claim I'm "good" at, but more pertinently, I've come to a set of new questions, all led by the same word - why? Why do we wish to improve at things? Why does everyone share my (can I even call it mine?) dream of being the best at something? Why are we predisposed to such competitiveness?

When it comes to something as universal among humans as the desire to win, I believe the first step is to think about the question from a biological perspective. Looking at these questions through this lens, we can quickly find a one-size-fits-all answer - to procreate. Indeed, mating among humans is an inherently competitive activity, and from a biological perspective, having any advantage over your competition is indispensable. However, taking this as our answer outright is to ignore that

humans are impressionable, and that society has an immense impact on every human at every stage in their lives.

In today's society, humans (at least, those of the driven variety) often have far loftier and impactful dreams to reach for than to simply rear their spawn. These dreams, of course, vary greatly based upon the individual, but commonly include some sort of discipline that the individual wishes to improve upon, often not out of competitiveness but the desire to self-improve - in an ideal scenario, that is. The world, unfortunately, is far from ideal, and given the structure of society, we find instead the most common dreams to be those that offer a safe - and much more importantly, lucrative - future. Doctors and computer scientists are obviously the first careers that come to mind when thinking along those lines, but in reality, *anyone* with aspirations of higher education has those dreams at least in part to guarantee their survival in a sink-or-swim society.

And that's a goal that so many students dedicate themselves to, often unhealthily. I myself am a survivor of

the infamously competitive gifted program, one known for producing pretentious students; the kind that ascribe their mental well-being to the numbers that appear on TeachAssist, all while taking every extracurricular imaginable. While I once took extracurriculars (Spirit of Math, anyone?), and worried about every assessment, it was in 8th grade where I came to my most important realization: I didn't know what I wanted to be. The aspirations I had of being at the very top with every path available to me - they weren't my own. All my classmates and I had fallen into the typical pitfalls you'd expect of any grades-obsessed student.

Because what it all boils down to is something we've all heard before, and probably dismissed as some sort of half-hearted affirmation; we are more than what we can or can't do. We're more than what we wish to be, more than our grades, and most importantly, we are all individuals. We are not defined by our limitations, especially in relation to others. We are people, flaws, strengths, and all.

And that's perfectly fine.





I Find *Comfort* in the *(Hypothetical)*

DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE

Here, atoms float inanimate in this barren tundra of a universe, all energy dissipated into heat with nothing left to use. Throughout the infinite expanse of this void, not a single reserve of consolidated energy remains. This is it. The end of times. But how exactly did we get here?

Okay, let's rewind a smidge—a hundred thousand trillion years, give or take.

Here we are, present-day, present-time, or at least the best approximation we could hope for in the grand tapestry of time.

Where are you now? You're in high school. You're stressing about your applications.

Your future. A heartbreak. And, like all people, you've had your occasional bouts of existentialism, the type that comes about exclusively between the hazy hours of 10 PM and 3 AM. These periods are often spent pondering relationships, indulging in self-reflection, and, if you're me, re-constructing the entire timeline of Five Nights at Freddy's in excruciating detail.

But inevitably, we all stumble across some variation of the exact same question: what is our significance in the universe, and what lies beyond after our time inevitably ends? We may all have our own theories and speculations, but one thing is for sure: none of us can be truly certain. And perhaps some experience it more intensely than others, but that doubt is something which plagues us all.

//AMANDA XI
PHOTOGRAPHY//EMILY MENG
DESIGN//ELINA LAI

It is said that you experience two deaths: the first when your physical body shuts down, and the second when your name is uttered for the last time. But I propose a third death. One where every conceivable mark of our collective worldly impact, be it direct or indirect, has been expunged from existence: the death of the universe.

It'll probably happen one way or another—sorry if you weren't aware. The concept is difficult to visualise, but the logic is simple. The universe tends towards randomness, towards uniformity. It's why ice cubes melt to match room temperature, why sugar dissolves in tea, and why perpetual motion machines never work. It's not rocket science, but a basic, indisputable matter of probability—like how a pair of dice add up most often to a handful of median values, an atomic configuration with distributed energy is most likely simply because it has more combinations. Consolidated energy will thereby spread itself apart, dispersing into heat. Extrapolate this for another trillion years, and you get the heat death of the universe.

Don't panic, though: you won't be there to see it. It's so far away we can't even be sure it'll happen. But maybe that's the problem: that everything is so big and far that it makes you feel, well, tiny and inconsequential.

I, however, feel at peace with the possibility that we're all insignificant in the rat race of humanity. A sense of schadenfreude, even, knowing that those immortalized in legendary renown—a status I couldn't dare to dream of—will suffer the exact same fate. I could push myself, sell my happiness to accomplish something historical, sell my soul to delay, perhaps eliminate, the second death. But the third death spares no one. It's capricious, immune to reason. Entropy, creation's leech of a twin, will indiscriminately erase all records of our known universe.

Well, at least that's the theory. There may very well be a god that will rescue us boiling frogs from this doomed crockpot. Maybe one day, someone up there will pull the plug on this simulation. Attempting to predict the fate of our species, let alone the entire universe, can only be described as a fool's errand. Nonetheless, the future in which our universe becomes diluted into nothingness, where our existence proves completely incidental and where life has no greater meaning, is widely considered the bleakest outcome.

Regardless of such, we still feel, don't we? We still experience triumph and love and devastation. Regardless of the source or the outcome, our lives have meaning simply because we, the ones experiencing it, care. We decide for ourselves where our purpose lies, and, heck, if we want to, we can let others decide. So what if the universe is massive, if you and your loved ones are but glorified specks of dust, if you are but a blink of an eye in the universe's boundless existence?

It all matters to you, doesn't it?

Here is where I must make a confession. The heat death of the universe is, in fact, not the only way the universe could go. There exists another theory, one that I believe aligns better with the nature of life: the Big Bounce. It asserts that the universe will collapse back in on itself under the sheer force of its own gravity, into a state not dissimilar to that which preceded the Big Bang. In other words, it returns exactly to where it began.

And you are the same. You may think of existence as all you've ever known and find the notion of eternal unconsciousness utterly incomprehensible. But is that truly so? Think to yourself: where were you before you were born, for the billions of years before your atoms took the shape of you?

You were nothingness. And once your borrowed time is up, to that nothingness you may very well return.

And thus repeats the cycle of the universe.



Pale Blue Dot.

A photograph taken of Earth on February 14, 1990, by the Voyager 1 space probe. While I can't tell you the history of this photo, or how it was taken, or even who it was taken by, I can present to you the story of the impact it's had on my life. From a childish 11 year old to an admittedly even more childish and sleep deprived 17 year old, the first ever photograph of the earth taken by NASA's 722 kg spacecraft, remains a vital part of my life and will remain so for years to come.

The year is 2017.

I am 11, bright-eyed, and younger than I will ever be. I go on walks and anthropomorphize the clouds and eat cherries and spit out the seeds. I walk through the halls of a home I no longer live in and read books 17 year-old me cannot remember the titles of. It is 2017, and I dig through my attic in search of something to pass the time. I rake through piles of clothes and furniture, stopping at nothing to fulfil a never-ending curiosity. In my thirst for adventure, I stumble upon a dust-covered, tattered yearbook belonging to my eldest brother. Finally finding something worthwhile, I sit cross-legged on the creaky wooden floors, lean back, and begin letting the hours go by. Flipping through pages of "Fall Sports Day" and "Meet the Staff" of a time years before, I search and search until I find what's really of interest to 11 year-old me: The juicy, always exciting section of Graduation Quotes. I turn through pages and pages, laughing at catchy anecdotes and cringing at others, successfully putting an end to my incessant childhood boredom.

Finally, towards the end of the book, I find the grinning face of my own brother staring back at me. A quick look at his terrible haircut was enough to snap me back to reality, but not before allowing myself a glance at his own quote, one I recall him spending hours and hours carefully perfecting. Below his name read the words "Pale Blue Dot", followed by a lengthy anecdote by a man called Carl Sagan. I read this anecdote in its entirety, and soon become enthralled. I grab my alarmingly large TOSHIBA laptop, and amass myself in a different universe, literally. I write down words like "appulse" and "molecules" that I don't know the meaning of, and continue to feed my thirst for knowledge with the never ending mass of space. Finally, something exciting! Any thoughts of boredom disappeared at the thought of the universe,

and 11 year-old me found her first and potentially only passion in life; the unceasing, blissful expanse of the Cosmos. Space exploration spoke to me like a soothing lullaby to a sleeping infant, and I recall spending the next few months telling anybody who would listen to my eagerness to go to space and see the stars with my own eyes. "I'm gonna be an astronaut! No, an Aerospace Engineer! No, no, I'm going to become NASA's first Astrochemical Researcher!" In the present, it is only when I hear the loud call of my mom reminding me to clean my room, that I irritably snap back into reality and return the dust-covered yearbook to its spot on the shelf too high for me, promising to come back to it soon. But of course, 11 year-old me was known for making statements and promises she couldn't quite keep.

The year is now 2020.

I have just begun my first semester of high school. I am no longer as bright eyed and feel older than I've ever been. Time seems to pass by too quickly, and I can no longer remember what it felt like wishing to have something to spend hours doing. While the child in me wanted nothing more than to read space comics and doodle stars, I had grown, and now had more important things to worry about. Stressful conversations with guidance counsellors reminding me to "challenge myself academically" and burdening discussions with parents telling me my career options of becoming a doctor or engineer wash away any sense of passion for myself. I have long forgotten my promise to explore space and have instead embarked on a different journey, although this time, one that my 11 year old self would undoubtedly question. As did time, my priorities changed, and I could no longer stare at the sky or google asteroids while sitting in my attic. I needed to be successful, even though I had no idea what that really meant.

The days passed by and melted into weeks and later months and years. In the blink of an eye, I'm halfway through my first semester of 11th grade and am on my way to becoming the ideal self those around me desire

and my 11 year-old self would no longer recognize the person I have become. I have enrolled in advanced classes and studied things I had no interest in studying. I wrote notes like I breathed oxygen, and hid from sleep as often as I could. I haven't looked at the sky in years, but I don't have time for that anyways. I had goals for myself now, and while 15 year-old me was tired, anxious, and maybe, just possibly extremely overwhelmed, I had a duty to fulfil. I no longer went in my attic, not that I lived in the same house anyways, and haven't spoken to my brother in months. I eat lunch while taking notes and still feel hungry anyways. I come home everyday and discuss plans for medical school or dental school or the next

best thing with my mom and nod while I pretend I have any interest in anything I'm doing. I go to school and come home and the day repeats and I begin longing for the attic I grew up in. I'm no longer the person I used to be, and I can't help but feel a dreadful sense about the fact.

The year is now 2023.

It is the beginning of the year, and I am almost done my first semester of 11th grade, something I am eagerly anticipating. It is the last day of the term, days before dreadful exams, and I somehow resist the urge to skip classes and find myself in fifth period biology. I sit down on an

uncomfortable stool and await instruction, excited to discover the class plans that day consisted of nothing and more nothing. I relish the fact that I can spend the next 75 minutes gossiping with my best friends, paying no attention to any of my responsibilities. Rudely, my plans get interrupted by a conversation about the future, and sooner than later the entire fifth period class crowds around the teacher's desk as we eagerly share our goals for ourselves. It is only when I share mine, with a sense of enthusiasm far less than others, that I realise how unhappy I've become. While those

around me are excited and driven to be lawyers or dentists, I can't recall the last time I've found passion in anything I've been studying.

As I patiently recall the last time I found a great big something in my life, the forgotten memory of a warm day from 2016, sitting cross-legged in my attic researching everything and anything to do with a terrible quality photo of a Pale Blue Dot creeps up on me and I suddenly have a great deal of difficulty remembering why I would ever do anything else than what I desire. My neglected dreams of the Cosmos and the expansion of the universe come back to me, and I know the decision I must make.

And so began my metamorphosis back into 11 year-old me.

Now, as a 17 year-old soon-to-be graduate of highschool, I can confidently say my 11 year-old self would be proud of who I am. While the pressure of university applications and midterm averages keeps me lying awake at night, it is during long, sleepless hours filled with dread and anxiety, that I crawl into the attic of a new home, walk amidst a dust-covered hallway to find a tattered, now almost decade old yearbook. I sit cross legged on the creaky wood floor, flip to page 97, and begin reading from start to finish the story of one particular Pale Blue Dot.

Some things never change, but some things do, for better or for worse. Memories fade, and people change and so do you and me, and soon we can't remember anything but this morning's breakfast. But through it all, the one memory I will never forget lies in the small section of the universe in which an 11 year-old girl sits in an attic reading articles about space and the cosmos and everything in between. Celestial bodies illuminate above me as I put on an imaginary helmet and unlock my front and try to chase the stars. My mom calls me inside to clean my room, but this time, I do so happily and with the sure promise that I will soon come back.

After all, there is a whole universe waiting to be explored.

Working Hard or Hardly Working?

We're all trying to race to a finish line that isn't really there.

We dig into narrow crevices of life to be a part of the world. We race to catch up with footsteps that always seem to be ahead, our hands reaching for a shoulder that we may never touch. We are always trying to participate in a world much too overwhelmingly vast for us to take in.

Hustle Culture.

We often engulf ourselves in the never-ending chase to success. The word "hustle" implies that nothing gets in our way—not illness, burnout, toxic competition, nor any other inevitable consequence that comes with the counterproductivity of Hustle Culture. Yet even with its many impositions, we indulge anyway. Despite the sleep deprivation many of you readers are likely experiencing at this very moment, we still willingly participate in this marathon with no explicit finish line.

I often find myself feeling guilty as I spend time with family, hang out with friends, or simply, well, touch grass. Hobbies and downtime are plagued by intrusive thoughts of "I should be working right now, I should be studying right now." I worry that I may "fail" in life if I do not dedicate every hour of every day doing something that society deems productive. But such a mindset is the furthest from productive as can be, since it has only ever ended in burnout.

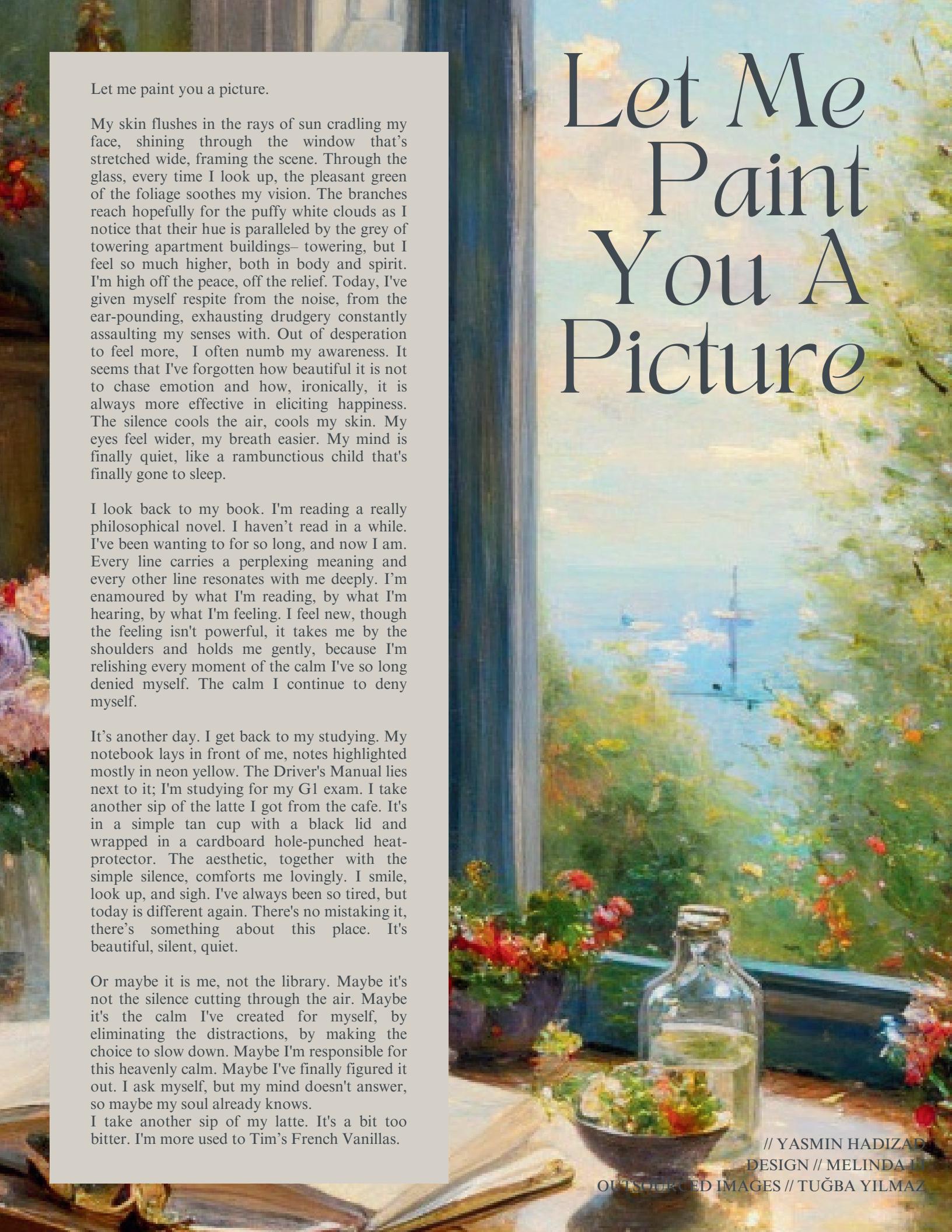
To explain the phenomenon of this mindset (and to get me to sleep more), a friend once utilized the example of a movie theatre with rows of seats placed at equal height. Each time someone climbs up to reach a better view, others do the same. Then, their line of sight becomes blocked again. A few people once again climb upward, are joined by everyone else, cannot see again, and so on so forth. In the end, no one achieves the goal they had been chasing: sight. And so when each one of us so adamantly strives to reach the top, we eventually realize that there is no such thing.

Instead, we are so swallowed by the abyss of achievement that we overlook the smaller moments in life. The simple and unproductive, yet energizing parts of our day that propels us forward.

Much too often, I bypass trivial, yet meaningful moments, like the food I shared with my grandmother yesterday and the smile I exchanged with a stranger this morning. I seem to be forgetting the stories I lived at 15 while I inch closer to 18, and I can no longer recall the memories that once made my heart swell in ecstasy. We keep forgetting ourselves while chasing 'life', when in fact we've been living it all along.

I'm going to be honest with you—I did not sleep over five hours the entire week during which I wrote this article. And to be perfectly transparent, I was internally proud of it too. "Wow, I'm so sleep deprived, that must mean I was really productive," I told myself. Yet the reality was that as the week went on, 3's started to look like 2's, and somehow, 12 divided by 3 began to equal 6. While I, too, am struggling to define the boundaries of such an all-consuming mentality, I am learning to breathe a little more. I allow myself moments of the day where I can laugh with friends, go for a coffee run, and just take life a little lighter.

I'm still learning to curate my personal definition of productivity amidst the overbearing forces of Hustle Culture. The quality of the work I complete far exceeds the any insane amount of sleepless nights monotonously droning over math equations. And because I see all my goals as attempts to live, I'm working diligently to savour all the extremities of life, appreciating the little bits of it I get on the way as well.



Let me paint you a picture.

My skin flushes in the rays of sun cradling my face, shining through the window that's stretched wide, framing the scene. Through the glass, every time I look up, the pleasant green of the foliage soothes my vision. The branches reach hopefully for the puffy white clouds as I notice that their hue is paralleled by the grey of towering apartment buildings—towering, but I feel so much higher, both in body and spirit. I'm high off the peace, off the relief. Today, I've given myself respite from the noise, from the ear-pounding, exhausting drudgery constantly assaulting my senses with. Out of desperation to feel more, I often numb my awareness. It seems that I've forgotten how beautiful it is not to chase emotion and how, ironically, it is always more effective in eliciting happiness. The silence cools the air, cools my skin. My eyes feel wider, my breath easier. My mind is finally quiet, like a rambunctious child that's finally gone to sleep.

I look back to my book. I'm reading a really philosophical novel. I haven't read in a while. I've been wanting to for so long, and now I am. Every line carries a perplexing meaning and every other line resonates with me deeply. I'm enamoured by what I'm reading, by what I'm hearing, by what I'm feeling. I feel new, though the feeling isn't powerful, it takes me by the shoulders and holds me gently, because I'm relishing every moment of the calm I've so long denied myself. The calm I continue to deny myself.

It's another day. I get back to my studying. My notebook lays in front of me, notes highlighted mostly in neon yellow. The Driver's Manual lies next to it; I'm studying for my G1 exam. I take another sip of the latte I got from the cafe. It's in a simple tan cup with a black lid and wrapped in a cardboard hole-punched heat-protector. The aesthetic, together with the simple silence, comforts me lovingly. I smile, look up, and sigh. I've always been so tired, but today is different again. There's no mistaking it, there's something about this place. It's beautiful, silent, quiet.

Or maybe it is me, not the library. Maybe it's not the silence cutting through the air. Maybe it's the calm I've created for myself, by eliminating the distractions, by making the choice to slow down. Maybe I'm responsible for this heavenly calm. Maybe I've finally figured it out. I ask myself, but my mind doesn't answer, so maybe my soul already knows.
I take another sip of my latte. It's a bit too bitter. I'm more used to Tim's French Vanillas.

Let Me Paint You A Picture

FUNDING THE FUTURE

As students in the 21st Century, we are well-informed of the happenings around the world. From natural disasters to international sports, to wars half a world away, there is no doubt that our generation has the highest access to information in the history of humanity. Yet with this can come a feeling of being dwarfed. We are young. What can one person do in a population of 8.1 billion people? In today's society, much of initiative is curbed through a lack of monetary support. While it is true that an individual alone may not possess the monetary means to change the world, many organisations have dedicated a portion of their wealth towards sponsoring the future.

Having been awarded over 15,000 grants since their founding, National Geographic Explorers (as the recipients are called) are from all walks of life. From the tops of the mountains to the bottom of the seas, from labs to classrooms all over the world, the aim of these funding opportunities is to support projects in science, conservation, education, and technology. Working with National Geographic, beyond the prestige of having a famous name on your resume, also allows for networking opportunities with other individuals devoted to the continued education of the world.





There are two types of monetary grants awarded to younger people (18+) less established in their careers. Level 1 Grants are aimed at individuals with limited job experience seeking mentorships and opportunities to explore. Monetary-wise, Level 1 grants are typically around \$20,000 USD and must be planned for use in conservation, education, research, storytelling or technology in exploratory and transformative efforts.

The National Geographic Young Explorer Grant awards grants from \$2000- \$5000 USD through its Committee for Research and Exploration. Aimed at ages 18-25, applicants are not required to have advanced degrees; however, a record of prior experience in research, conservation, or exploration should be submitted as relates to the proposed project.

Naturally, being high school students, it is difficult (if not impossible) to obtain highly competitive scholarships. Although we are slowly establishing ourselves, we do not necessarily have the self-regulation and credibility to apply. But as we graduate and head wherever life takes us, money should not be the barrier which hampers us from sharing our discoveries with the world. We aim high. We wish to go into business, into law, into the trades. We seek to become doctors and engineers, scientists and scholars. Who is to say we cannot change the world? Who is to say we cannot change how others see or learn?

We are the future.

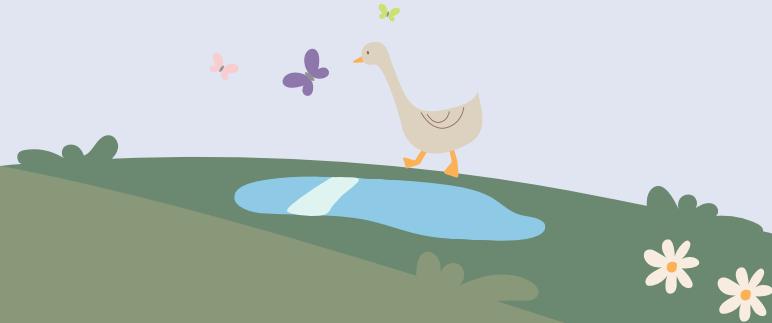
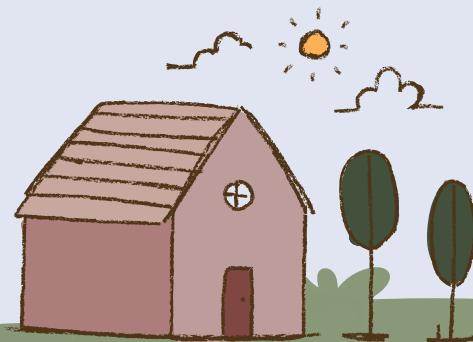
// ARWYN WONG
PHOTOGRAPHY // DANIEL YANG
DESIGN // VIVIAN WU

The Cottage

All my favourite memories have taken place in one location: my grandparents' cottage. Ever since I can recall, I have gone to my family's cottage during summer and winter breaks. The estate itself embodies everything that city life does not. It is serene and tranquil, with gorgeous gardens in the middle of the court and vines hanging over the windows. There is a large terrace that connects to the main building, where detailed and hand-made Persian rugs are laid on the ground and a beautifully decorated dinner table sits. Inside, it exudes warmth and coziness, with a perpetually lit fireplace no matter the time of day or the weather. Ambrosial and savoury smells always seem to make their way from the kitchen to the living room, filling the house with happiness and appreciation. From the popcorn ceiling to the thick blankets that cover the couches, the cottage is everything I associate with joy.

Without fail, my parents and grandparents always bake fresh bread in the morning. I am awakened by

sounds of laughter and the aroma of honey and jam wafting through the air. I sit down at the table on the terrace, engaging in my family's morning pleasantries. My grandparents ask me if I slept well, and I give them breakdowns of my dreams that I had the night before. After this, we each go about our daily tasks. I help my grandma cook lunch sometimes, and my grandpa contemplates how to improve the state of our garden. We play old Disney cartoons on the TV while we partake in all these activities, adding to the toasty and mellow atmosphere inside the house. We then eat lunch, which tends to be a grand feast of different Persian dishes, whether it be Persian-style spaghetti or celery stew with rice. After lunch, we break off again, as everyone usually takes a long nap. I nap outside on our inflatable mattress, lulled to sleep by the chirping of the birds and the nice breeze always helps me snooze off. When I wake up again, we drink tea and eat dinner, maybe even watch a late-night movie when it is all over. The day then ends and repeats again.



When I am at the cottage, I do not go on outdoor adventures as described in the books. I do not really leave the estate but rather savour the time that I have there. Everything that I do at the cottage is something that I can easily do at home. Drinking tea or having conversations with my family occur at least once a day. The cottage itself, though, is what makes those events incredible. When I was younger, my family used to go to the cottage on a weekly basis. No matter how hard or annoying my week was, I always looked forward to the hour-long drive to the cottage with my parents. We stopped at different restaurants on the way, and the drives always started and ended with me asking when we would get there. One time, it snowed so much that we got stuck on the way there and actually arrived at midnight. Despite the challenges we faced, my parents and I always persevered, knowing that the cottage was waiting to embrace us with its comforting presence when we arrived.



Every single person who lives in the cottage and every single object in the cottage holds a different memory for me. I have been running through the sprinkler ever since I was a toddler. I have been playing card games with my family since I was five. On the outside, sure, the cottage just seems like another cottage. A family lives in it and takes care of it when needed, with guests visiting it occasionally too. But the cottage represents something completely different to me. It embodies the love I have for my family and the nostalgic memories I associate with my childhood. Even though our schedules have become so busy that we visit the cottage less often, the cottage will always be the place I love most.

EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT BEING CHINESE

Let me introduce myself: My name is Rianna and I am half Asian, but not in the mixed race way. I've never been racially profiled or hate-crimed. The only slurs I've been called were by my friends (also Chinese). I'm Chinese when I want to be, and that's the way it's always been.

I relish in the luxury of being selectively Asian when it's convenient for me. Like writing for Spyglass, it's a low-commitment high-interest trait of mine, to be pulled out and flaunted at times I want to seem more interesting. Where did you learn how to make that? Someone would ask. My grandma taught me, I'd reply, alluding to a deep realm of cultural connection that, in truth, eludes me. I'd talk as though learning from my grandma is a regular occurrence, when, in reality, I can't speak Mandarin to save my life.

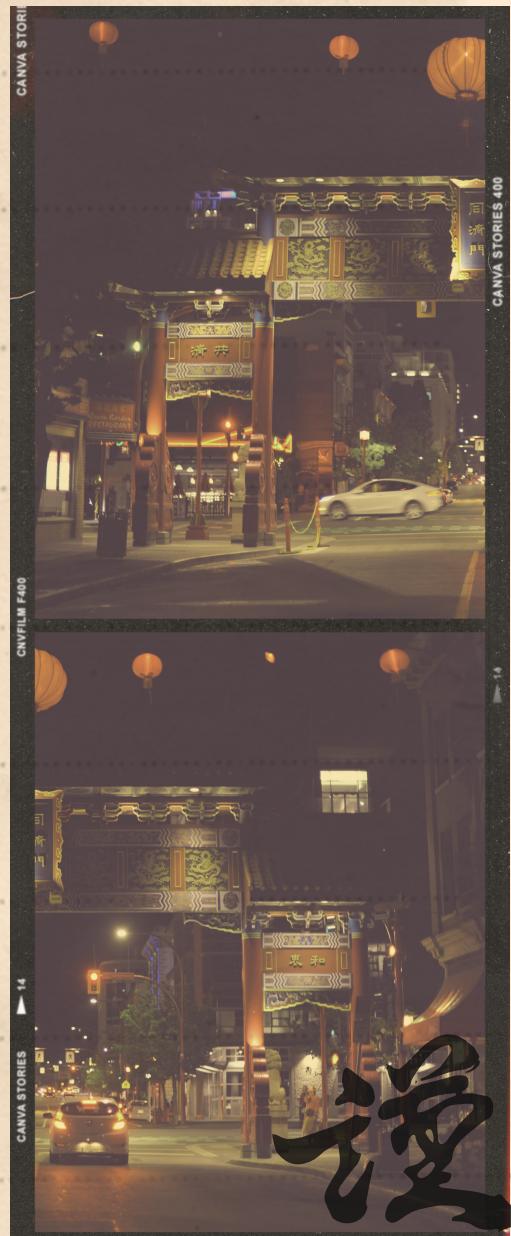
Last year, I downloaded all the pictures from summer vacation at my grandparent's apartment, each image carefully chosen to bolster my façade. The pictures served as proof of the Chinese values I longed to embody. For the most selfish reasons, they offered me the opportunity to point to something, anything, and say, look, I'm an interesting person. I hungrily gathered memories, experiences, and anecdotes of summer vacation to store in my mental Rolodex of proof, to be flipped through and regurgitated at my leisure. In reality, however, I spent that summer beating jet lag: sleeping all day and staying up reading all night.

I parade around my ethnicity, but all that confidence crumbles when I call my family on Friday nights and can only smile and nod when they ask about my school life. In those moments, I feel like a foreigner on vacation confident only in their ability to ask if you speak English or not.

Perhaps it wasn't only the language I refused to learn, but also the time I spent being careless and throwing my memories away. Despite sharing a house with my grandparents for the first couple years of my life, I knew nothing about my grandpa. I knew he was a court judge and believed in the spiritual power of An Mo, but other than that, I doubt our connection was one he remembered in the late stages of his life. When he passed, the guilt of not feeling the crushing sorrow I believed I should have nearly ate me alive.

During those moments, "Chinese" would sound like a dirty word to me: a reminder of my willingness to throw my culture away for pure convenience. I hated Chinese school, so I dropped out. Mandarin was difficult to learn – without the added benefit of being melodic like the Romance languages – so I stopped learning it entirely. And most devastating of all, I couldn't begin to fathom what I was missing out on, living 6770 miles away from my closest extended family. Just like how I couldn't grieve for the person I didn't truly know, I couldn't realize the gravity of my generational culture loss because I'd never immersed myself in it.

I don't know anything about being Chinese, but I know what it feels like to be 16 and still in the process of unearthing the depths of my cultural heritage. While I may have used it as a prop at times, I now yearn to explore it with sincerity, for, in the end, it's not about the convenience of being selectively interesting, but about embracing the richness of a culture that is, undeniably a part of **who I am.**





WHAT YOUR MONOPOLY

PIECE SAYS ABOUT YOU

THE SHOE

You are a hard worker with the ability to stay on task (something that I desperately need). Your self-expectations are as tall as your list of accomplishments—you can certainly walk the walk. You know what you want and you can plan out all the steps you need to get there. As a message to all the shoes out there: remember to give yourself a break once in a while! Commit to doing something for yourself instead of for your AP classes and your never-ending list of extracurriculars. We're all human, and we all need to walk before we can run.

THE THIMBLE

There's more to you than what meets the eye. At least, that's the simplest way to put it. On the outside, you may appear sweet and quiet but you're definitely planning some sort of capitalist scheme on the inside—the others better watch out. A piece of advice for you: as the thimble, you hold the element of surprise. Others underestimate you for no good reason and you should let them, because that's your opportunity to prove yourself, your chance to show them that you're more than what they think you are. That's when you strike.

THE TOPHAT

You want to win and you want to do it with style. You're honest, you're organized, you're fair, and you're fashionable. Could it get any better? As bearers of the top hat, you play an important role in our society. You are leaders, businessmen, advocates that promote change. You know exactly what you want in both Monopoly and in your own life, and that's something to be admired about you. Keep your head in the game, and you're going to do great things one day.

THE RACECAR

You are a very fast-paced person who plays to win (in other words, you're the embodiment of Turbo—the snail). You crave the taste of victory, and you would never let anything get in the way between you and the business empire of your dreams. Often, others may assume that you simply enjoy showing off but what they will never understand is that you do it for the rush—for the flare of adrenaline in your veins you can't seem to get doing anything else. As someone who used to live off the same mindset, my advice for you would be to slow down and live in the moment. Just because you want to triumph doesn't mean you can't take your time and enjoy that same feeling along the way. Besides—slow and steady wins the race anyway.

THE "GRAB WHATEVER YOU CAN"

If you're the type of person to grab whatever is in your reach and use that in place of a monopoly piece—I respect that. People like you know how to have fun no matter what sort of situation you've gotten yourself into. With the ability to improvise and think on your feet, you are the true personification of a party animal. You're wild, insane at times, and topped with a side of never-ending enthusiasm. You don't care what others think of you and sure, maybe you might be a bit of a trouble magnet, but at the end of the day, it's your life. Live it the way you want!

//JILLIAN OUYANG
PHOTOGRAPHY//SAM ABDI
DESIGN//ELINA LAI



THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING TO FIGHT

Literal Children



He was sitting on the edge of a cliff again. He didn't even like cliffs. The rocks dug into his legs and the cold, cold wind sliced right through his villainous-looking outfit. Sure, it looked cool, but it did nothing to protect him against—well, anything, really. Least of all the weather.

Honestly, he'd rather be arrested by one of those heavens-damned heroes at this point. At most, he'd have to sit in a cell for a few days before breaking out. Again. Those heroes couldn't contain a lab rat.

Then again, that was hardly their fault, was it? Not when—

"There you are!"

Ah. Speak of the devil.

He probably should have stood up in slow motion or something, but he was too cold to care. Why was it so cold? It was only autumn—

"We've got you now, Deicide!"

He snorted at the sound of his own villain name. Deicide. God-killer. It was all very dramatic and certainly over-the-top, but then again, the heroes had names like 'Helio' or 'Athena' or something. So really, he fit right in.

"Hey! Are you even paying attention to us?"

No, not really.

Was that rude? Probably, right?

He finally hauled himself to his feet, whirling around so that his long hair fluttered dramatically in the wind. Thank the heavens it wasn't blown right back in his face. He should really braid it some time, but that would take so much work—

"You have one chance to surrender!"

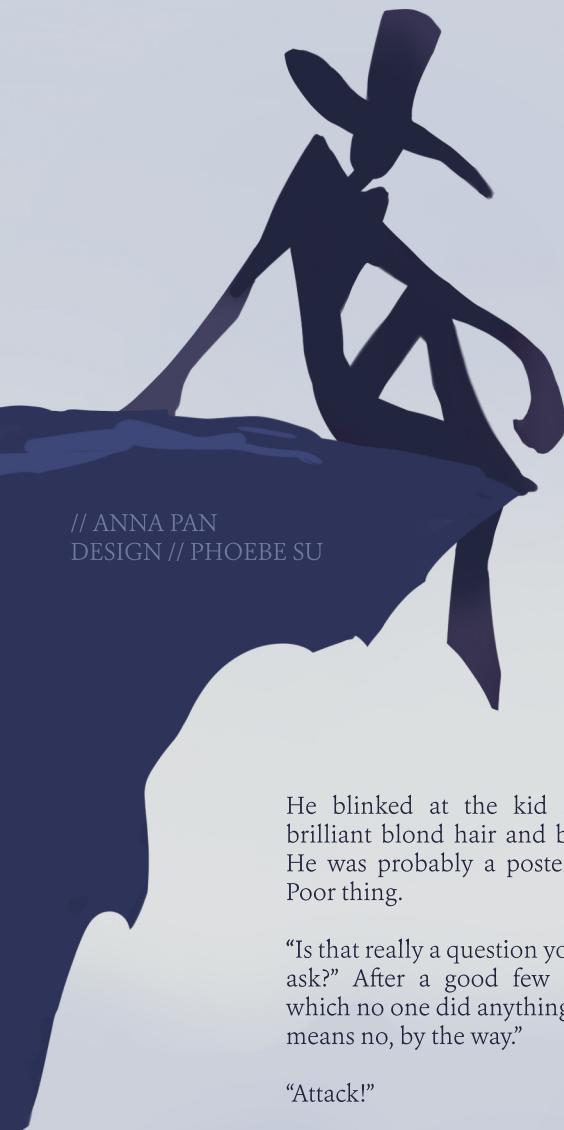
Right, right. The heroes.

No, not heroes. The kids.

Because that was the fighting force the government relied on—tiny children, barely in their teens, with supernatural powers and little to no training on how to control them.

He sighed, brushing his hair back with a gloved hand. No, the gloves didn't protect against the cold either. His hair was getting in his face, damn it, he should have known—

"Will you surrender?"



// ANNA PAN
DESIGN // PHOEBE SU

He blinked at the kid in the front, all brilliant blond hair and blazing blue eyes. He was probably a poster child, that one. Poor thing.

"Is that really a question you feel the need to ask?" After a good few moments during which no one did anything, he added, "That means no, by the way."

"Attack!"

Pretty direct, he'd give them that.

But that was all they had going for them. Their inexperience bled into their attacks, so hesitant and unsure that even an untrained eye could tell that something was off. They had no teamwork; they attacked one at a time, like a relay race instead of a battle.

For all the trouble they gave him, it might as well have been a relay race. He didn't even have to bother dodging the flames, or the claws, or the sunflowers.

He simply called upon the wind.

To control air itself— it was a useless ability, right up until it wasn't. Because it was everywhere.

A bit hard to move when the very air felt heavy as molasses, wasn't it?

The little heroes were soon rendered motionless. He clapped his hands in mock-delight, his gloves ensuring that the sound carried.

"We'll never stop persecuting evil!"

Translation: *We can't go home because the villains love making a scene on Samhain, and the government only knows how to make children solve their problems.*

They were still glaring at him, all watery eyes and glowers that looked more like pouts than anything. Heavens above. They were just kids.

"Well, maybe you shouldn't have to."

Of course, they couldn't stop. They would keep hurling themselves into fights because what else could they do, really? It wasn't like the government would ever let go of those with abilities. There was a reason there were so many supposed villains. It was with them or against them.

"You guys get a break every time you catch a villain, yeah? Maybe even a year or two for a major villain?"

Suspicious looks. A few of the more gullible ones even tried to nod before remembering that he was the one still restraining them.

He walked up to the nearest one, plucked the handcuffs out of their utility belt, restrained himself, and let go of the wind. They were free.

"Come on, then." He waved his now-cuffed hands. "Unless you like standing out here in the cold?"

Sure, it would be embarrassing to be 'caught' by literal children, but it was whatever. He'd free himself in a few days— no, that probably wasn't long enough for them to earn credit for his capture.

A few weeks, then.

Whatever.



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