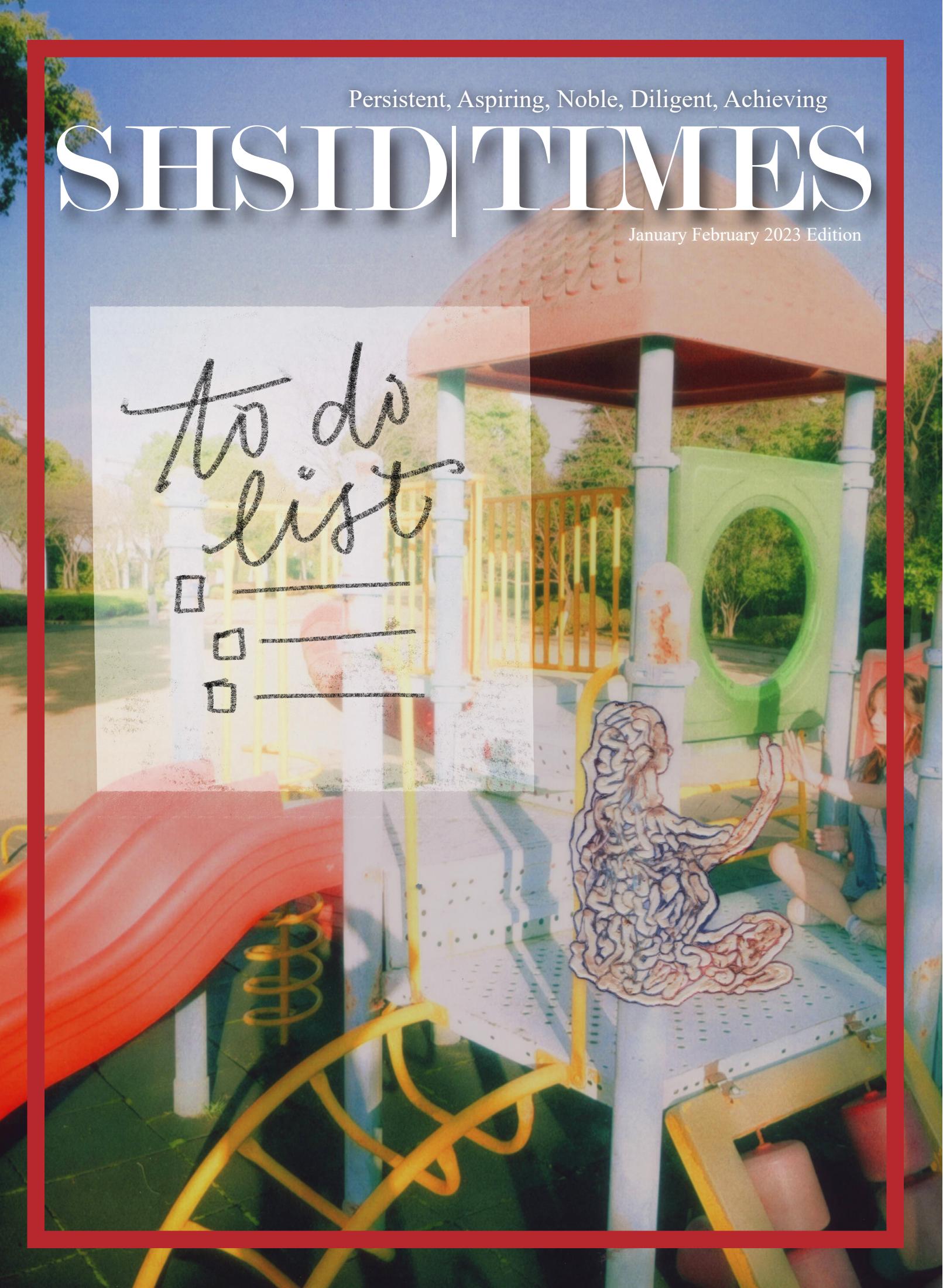


Persistent, Aspiring, Noble, Diligent, Achieving

SHSID|TIMES

January February 2023 Edition



A composite image featuring a playground in the background and a 'To do list' graphic in the foreground. The playground includes a red slide, a yellow climbing structure, and a green tunnel. The 'To do list' graphic is on a white piece of paper with a red border, showing the text 'To do list' and three empty checkboxes with horizontal lines for writing.

To do list



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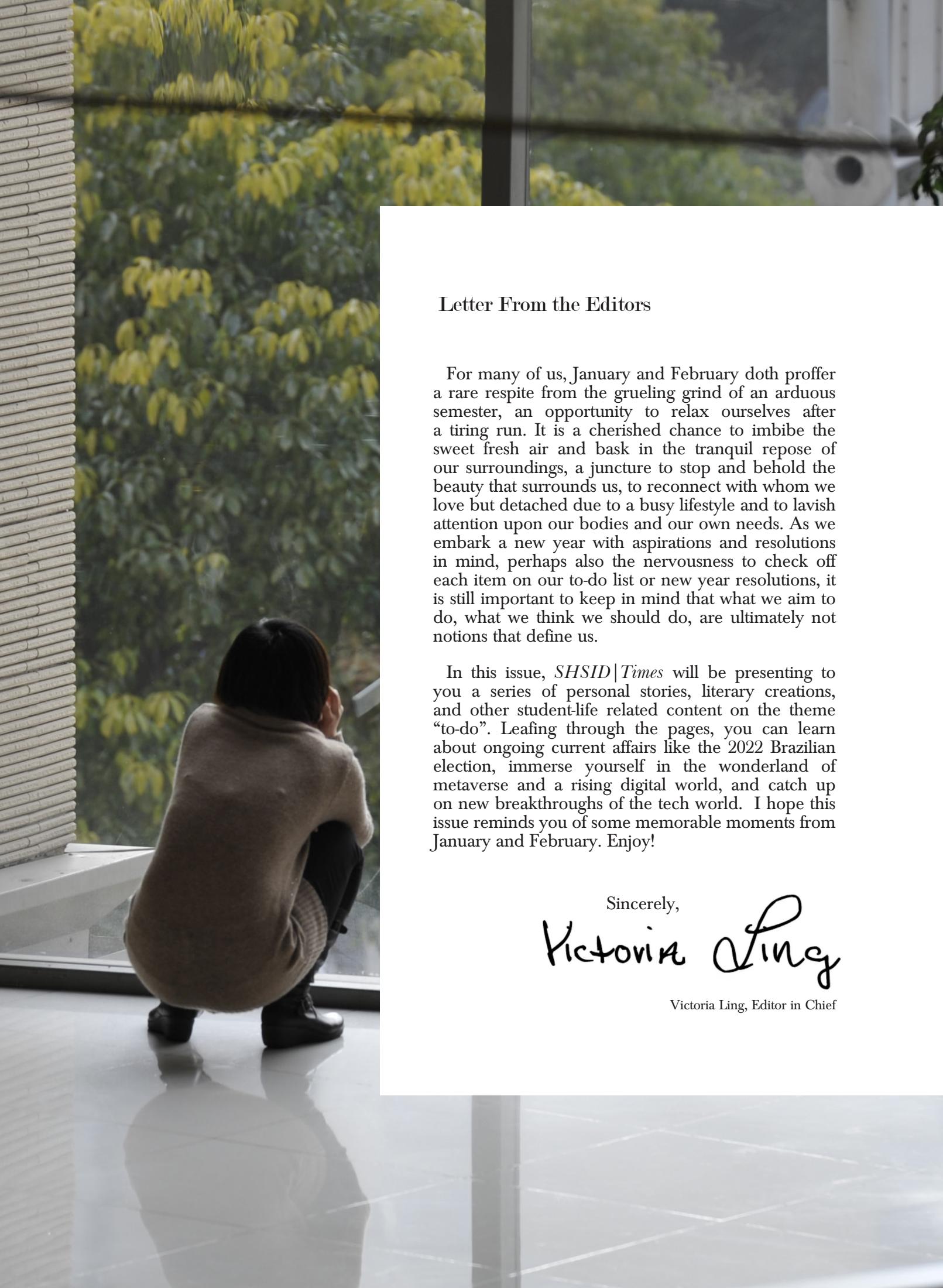
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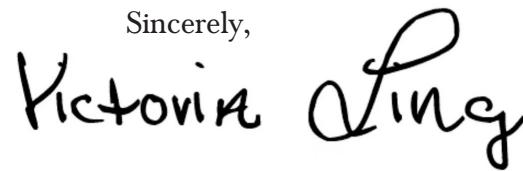


Letter From the Editors

For many of us, January and February doth proffer a rare respite from the grueling grind of an arduous semester, an opportunity to relax ourselves after a tiring run. It is a cherished chance to imbibe the sweet fresh air and bask in the tranquil repose of our surroundings, a juncture to stop and behold the beauty that surrounds us, to reconnect with whom we love but detached due to a busy lifestyle and to lavish attention upon our bodies and our own needs. As we embark a new year with aspirations and resolutions in mind, perhaps also the nervousness to check off each item on our to-do list or new year resolutions, it is still important to keep in mind that what we aim to do, what we think we should do, are ultimately not notions that define us.

In this issue, *SHSID|Times* will be presenting to you a series of personal stories, literary creations, and other student-life related content on the theme “to-do”. Leafing through the pages, you can learn about ongoing current affairs like the 2022 Brazilian election, immerse yourself in the wonderland of metaverse and a rising digital world, and catch up on new breakthroughs of the tech world. I hope this issue reminds you of some memorable moments from January and February. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

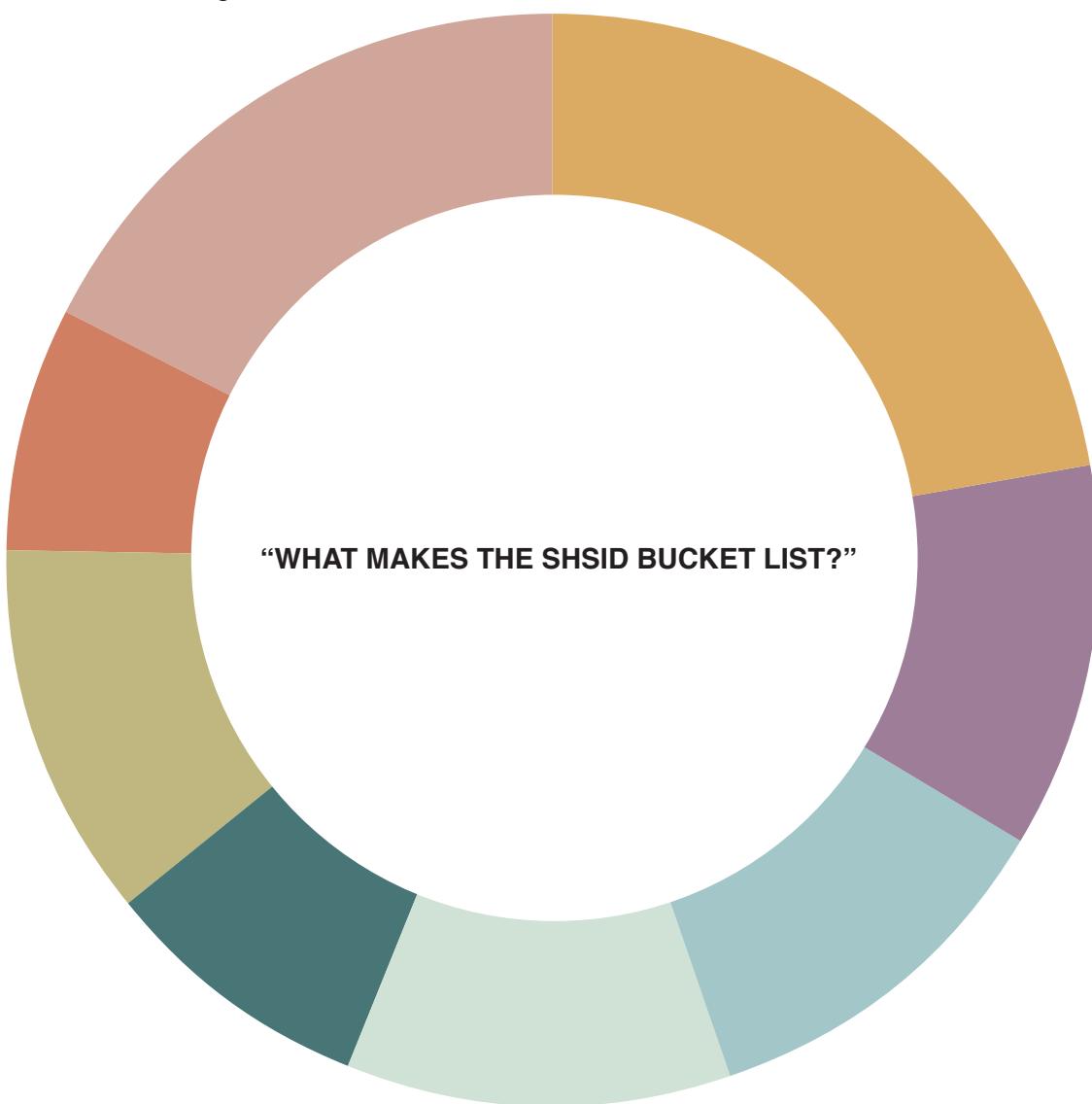
Victoria Ling

Victoria Ling, Editor in Chief

FORUM

The FORUM section is a space of discussion, reflection, and interaction for the readers and writers of *Times*. Whether it's comments, critiques, concerns, or other stories, this section seeks to highlight the importance of everyone's voices. To join FORUM, readers are welcome to submit either written or visual pieces or participate in the online polls on the *Times* official account. A collection of submissions and poll results will be featured in every printed edition to showcase the diverse ideas on campus.

Email your submissions to shsidtimes@hotmail.com and follow SHSID | Times on WeChat to participate in our online polls.



22% | Running to Lawson within 3 minutes

17% | Last-minute BB submission

11% | Dress up for Blackout

11% | White Valentine's

11% | Lunch meetings

11% | Step on Gingko fruits

8% | Perform at art festival

7% | December Delights

LETTERS

ON “BLACKOUT 2022 BEHINDS THE SCENES”: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022 ISSUE

Halloween has always been one of my favorite holidays, ever since I was a kid. I used to spend hours picking out the perfect costume and then venture out with my friends for some good old-fashioned trick-or-treating. As I grew older, I started attending Halloween parties and haunted houses, and these experiences have always been a highlight of the year for me.

After reading the article about the associated student body Halloween event, I now can't wait for next year's event, since I missed this year's due to a scheduling conflict. The article was really informative and provided a comprehensive overview of the event. I loved how it described all the activities planned for the day, especially the haunted house. It was also great to know that the organizers went to great lengths to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

I wish that SHSID | Times would feature more articles about traditional events that happen on-campus every year. As students, we are always busy with our studies and extracurriculars, and it can be challenging to find opportunities to come together and celebrate as a community. That's why I appreciate articles like this one - they help to preserve our memories and remind us of the fun times we've had together. By the way, the pictures that accompanied the article were fantastic and really brought the event to life.

- Anonymous

ON “A SEARCH FOR HOLIDAY SPIRITS IN SHANGHAI”: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022 ISSUE

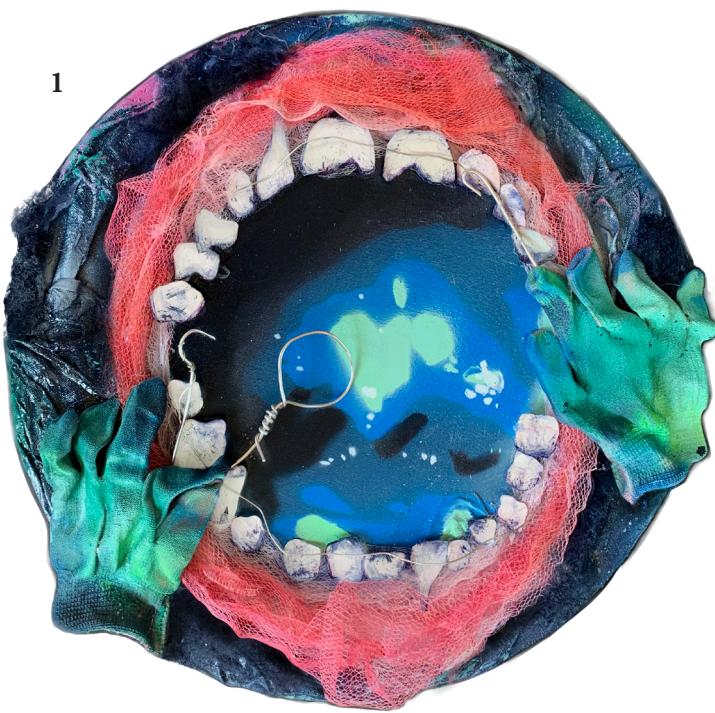
As a Shanghai resident, I was delighted to come across the lifestyle article about the top Christmas events in the city. The author provided a comprehensive guide to the best places to go and things to do during the festive season, and it was clear that a lot of research had been conducted to write such a thorough review of all the famous locations. One of the things I appreciated about the article was that it catered to different interests and preferences. Whether you're looking for a traditional Christmas market or a quirky themed event, there was something for everyone.

While the article covers many events, I would also personally recommend attending a carol service at the historic St. Ignatius Cathedral if you happen to be a Christian like me! It's a heart-warming experience that involves feasting together and singing Christmas carols, and a choir is usually present.

I also want to note for people who plan to visit some of these places that will be experiencing major gentrification starting in April. Many of the places mentioned in the article, such as cafes, may no longer be in their current location. This also means that if you want to visit some of the stores there, like the famous “In Dough We Trust” cafe, you should go before April.

- Anonymous

ART SUBMISSIONS



1

1 | Day at the Dentist
Annabel Demarino 12(6)

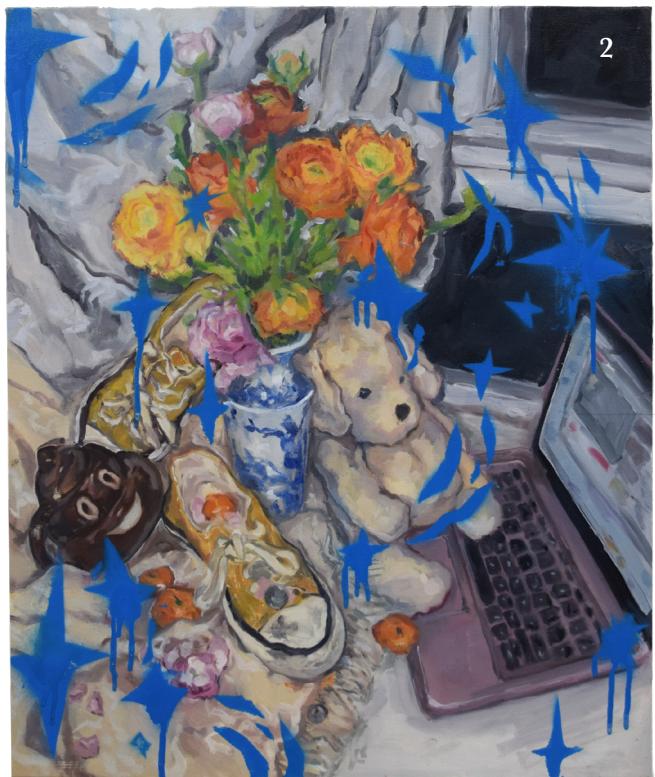
-In “Day at the Dentist”, I experiment with a variety of mediums such as spray paint and 3D collage, creating a messy composition that depicts hands at work on old damaged teeth. The repairing of these teeth, broken down from years of use, symbolize growth from a dark and battered past. The variety of collaged objects establish a sense of depth and interaction with the mouth, creating immersion as the viewer peers into mouth from view of the dentist.

2 | My Life in Still Life
by Rena Yan 12(2)

This piece summarizes the many different aspects of my life, whether it be friendship, social media, interests, or health, and how I must always keep them in mind in order to maintain a happy life.



2



3 | Lawson During Lunch
by Lynn Lee 12(10)

In the painting, the mundanity of a convenience store is transformed into a dreamlike realm of twisted reality. It was inspired by the chaotic energy of lawson at school during lunchtime. At the center of the painting stand three identical figures, all representing me. This choice reflects the idea that we all contain multitudes, with different aspects of our personalities vying for control.



4

4 | Untitled
by Ashlyn Ting 10(10)

During the brief lockdown last December, I read extensively about German Expressionism and its ties to World War 1. I was mainly drawn to the bold colors, distorted forms, and stark contrasts of light and dark of German Expressionism art because it related to how disoriented and surreal lockdown felt. I took inspiration from “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” and used a different color palette for the woman to contrast the disconnection between her and the background.

5 | bitter spring
by Erika Liao 11(10)

The first work of a two-part series based on greek mythology, “bitter spring” portrays Persephone weeping amid a field of tulips with rotten pomegranates scattered around her. This piece is meant to convey the impermanence of beauty and happiness in my life as well as a sense of anguish.



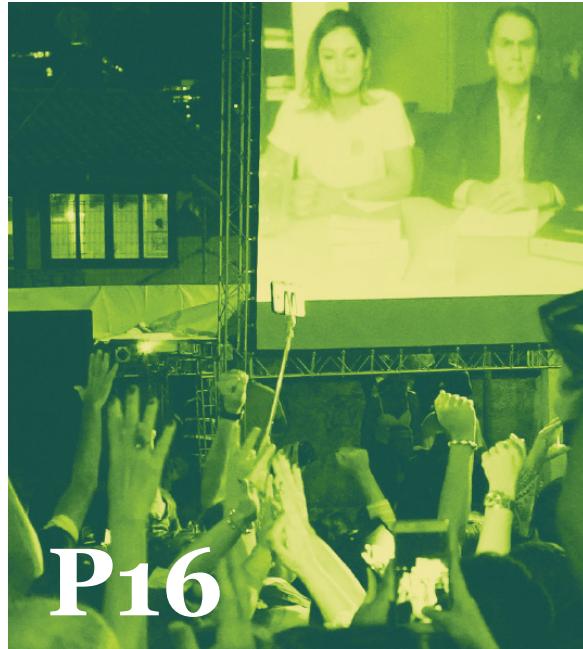
5

6 | Original Sin
by Mimi Yang 12(3)

You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.



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To Do



Written by: Zoe Tang, Mia Huang,

Renee Yan, Sophia Fang

Photos by: Feny Lyn Walter



Open, I think, but my eyes slam
shut at the blizzard of your touch.

Which is just another apology
on the cusp of a soundless winter.

Close? I ask, but the wick is aflame.
Wax eddies from lips I cannot see.

Within me, a second mouth that
pleads and bleeds. It cannot burn

for you. You're not the key to my
lock. No, we're more like two holes

trying to fill each other. And I'm
not talking about needing men either.

I'm talking about two jigsaw puzzles.
Incomplete. No matter how hard

we try melting into pieces we need.
We're just sitting, cross-legged, smiling

and smiling. On the floorboards
of this elephant's room. When walls

are starting to collapse. When quiet
is a tantrum thundering panes, shaking

glass. Now quiet, chest breaking in
tandem to this house. Make quiet so

loud I soundproof the ringing of your
voice. And silence a knife so dull

to hurt the drywall of my heart.
Enough to hush what poets say.

Your body is never my doorway.
I don't care what they will all say.

In my candlelit dreams,
I'm opening the front door.

Open?
OPEN?

COVER STORY

Car parked behind the Leyland Cypress,
I look up to see your silhouette through sheer
curtains.

Your shadows move back and forth, exiting the
window frame,
reappearing in the adjacent window,
shielded from my existence,
by the semi-transparent polyester.

The welcome mat that I used to walk pass
without noticing, now rests with its loose threads,
calling out my uninvited appearance.

The delivery guy rings your doorbell,
I push my cheeks towards the car window, silently
listening to the familiar ringtone,
unconsciously humming under my breath.

The second from the left window lights up,
the living room brightens.
I picture you, sitting on the Vinyl floor,
with all your weight pressed
against the ladder bookcase,
flipping through pages of a hardback,
while the train-ticket bookmark,
and the flaky sticky notes lay somewhere close by.

Ordinary memories mutate, leaving me
with these untamed imaginations, of
your fingers crawling its way into the sleeves of
your chunky sweater.
You echo every dialogue in the back of your mind,
as your greyhound stretches out its slender legs,
blocking the corner of a page,
Gently insisting to be cuddled, or fed.

Thoughts trail off, my fingers
lose their grip around the driving wheel.

In the same corner of the room,
you once drew suns in the
top corner of every page,
with an unsharpened yellow crayola.
Your spiky grass grew taller
than my stick figures with two pigtails.
The seagulls shaped like a McDonald's logo,
hovered over our undecipherable doodles.

My chin rests on the seat belt
crossed over my chest,
I faintly hear your careless laugh and
Adele's raspy riffs,
unsure if I've gone delusional.



The engines of the delivery man's motorcycle awakens me,
I take one last look at your parked car, its wheels crush against the soil
that once hosted our weekly picnics.

I glance up towards your living room window,
noticing your gaze resting on my red chevy,
my fingers hurry towards the engine, fleeing
from the masked emotions and unspoken words.

ROLLING DOWN THE WINDOW

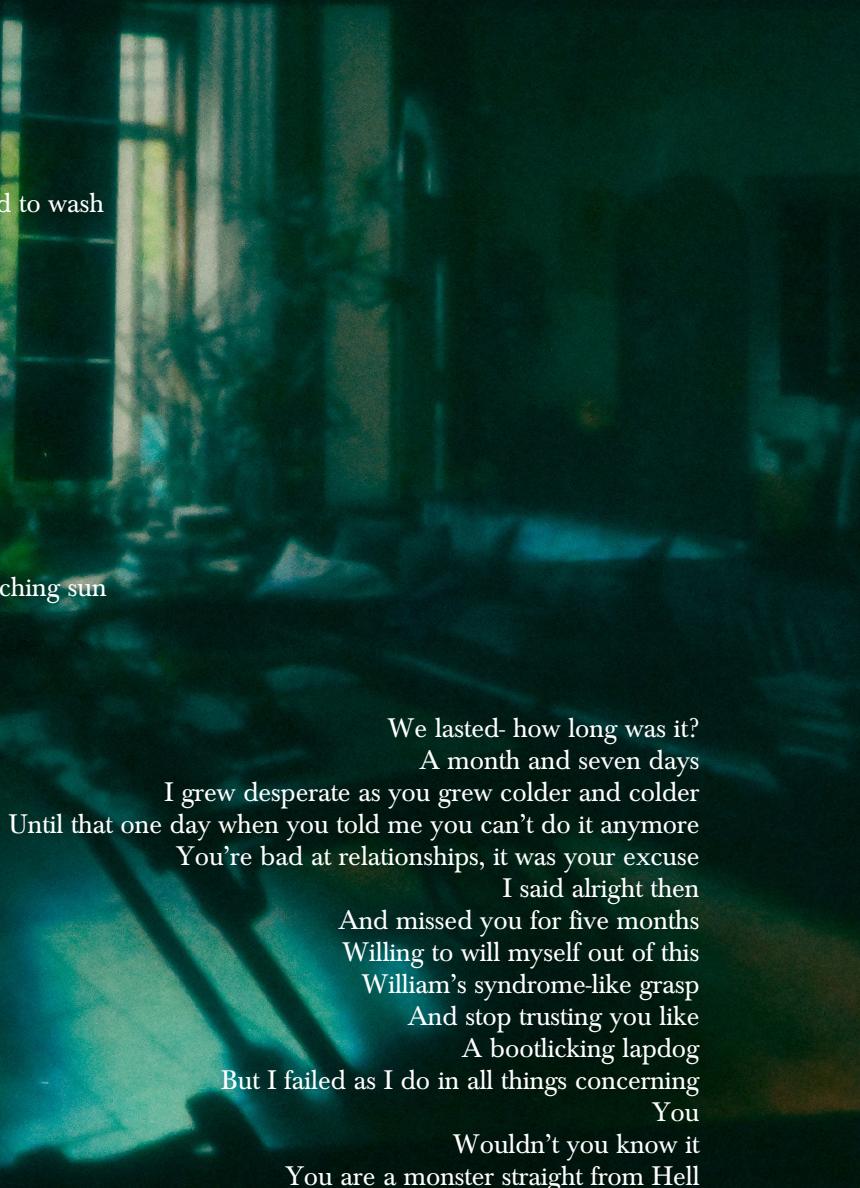
COVER STORY

Fall into your toxic trap I flail and bite and thrash
Inside pandora's Skinners box I'm nothing but a
Lab rat for your pleasure, you
Pick me up by the tail and swing me headfirst into your
Metformin cure-all, on and off and on again
Against the kitchen floor
I lick my wounds and crawl back to you each time
Because love shouldn't hurt this much
But it does

Well-true, I never knew you
Like you knew me
When we sat beneath sycamore trees listening to
Will Wood and the Tapeworms, Mitski, Ghost and Pals
And I never told you about how I used to hate you
Seventeen months ago
When my schizoaffective mind
Thought you stole all my newfound friends

summer days were a drag, really-
heat waves in coils around our wrists
I would bid you good morning and looked forward to your
One-word replies
Daydreaming about prettier girls in button-up shirts
Kaleidoscope eyes and short denim skirts
Plump lips, thick thighs, rainbow-colored nails
Realizing too late how much I liked your
Long lashes, green glasses
And your dirty blonde hair which you never learned to wash

You're ugly, in all honesty
Physically and a bit on the inside too
I still can't fathom why I ever fell for you
You don't even have the looks, let alone the heart
To care for me better than I could myself
But you didn't know
Because I never said what I thought when
I was scared half to death of your apathy
And the other half I guess I
Gave to you
On that summer night when we kissed under a scorching sun
Nineteen stories above the ground



We lasted- how long was it?
A month and seven days
I grew desperate as you grew colder and colder
Until that one day when you told me you can't do it anymore
You're bad at relationships, it was your excuse
I said alright then
And missed you for five months
Willing to will myself out of this
William's syndrome-like grasp
And stop trusting you like
A bootlicking lapdog
But I failed as I do in all things concerning
You
Wouldn't you know it
You are a monster straight from Hell

LIGHT SWITCH

I ran back into your open arms
 Which would have stayed open
 for any other hotter girl, prettier boy,
 gender-nonconforming gamer
 and you wouldn't be upset
 if they didn't fall in like I did
 or if I didn't fall in like I did
 But I did
 And I never said a thing when I
 Bought you flowers but you
 stuffed them in your locker
 Called you gorgeous daily
 when you never ever said it back
 Running down halls
 at the first sound of the bell
 Three floors down
 Just for you to wave me away
 I hated every single day
 But always hoped that you would change
 I was nothing to you, but to me you were
 everything
 And everything is a lot

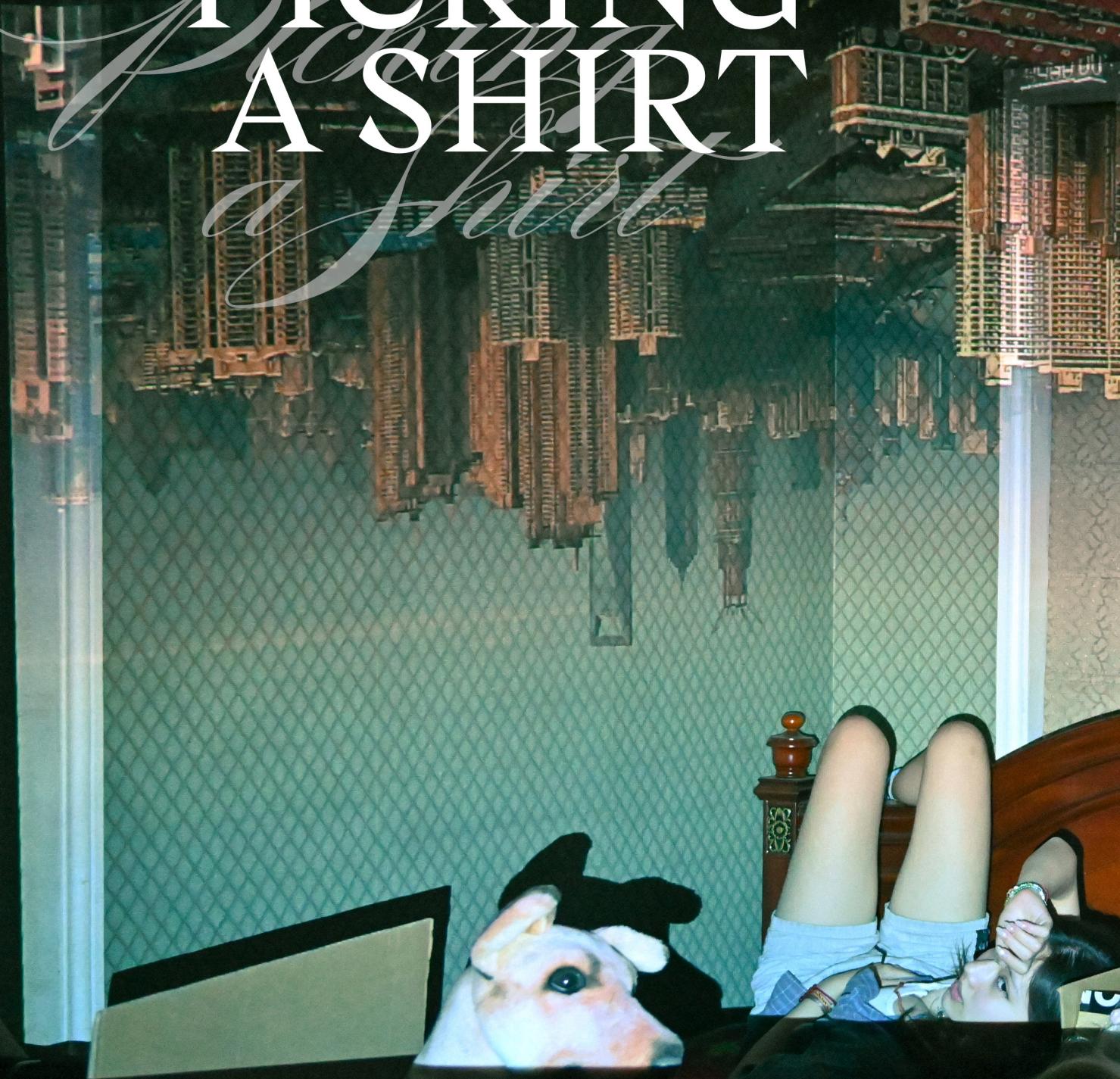
I'm over you now, it's been quite a while
 Since I texted you expecting more
 than one-word replies
 But I guess our time wasn't wasted
 If I learnt something new
 From loving and losing
 and loving and leaving you
 On and off and on again
 Like a light switch to my
 serotonin and dopamine receptors
 Flushing down the drain
 our promises and vowing
 Never to love you again

I left you, you didn't mind
 Or at least it seemed so
 It's not like I ever truly asked you when I
 knew silence was safer when I was afraid
 I tried to get over you using another
 But all I could think of was
 my hand in yours
 during our favorite movie scene
 I don't think that you understand
 what you meant to me
 But I did, and too well so
 For I was too weird to love normally
 And you were a freak

Because I can't choose where I fall
 But I can fill the hole
 that tripped me when I climb
 Back out

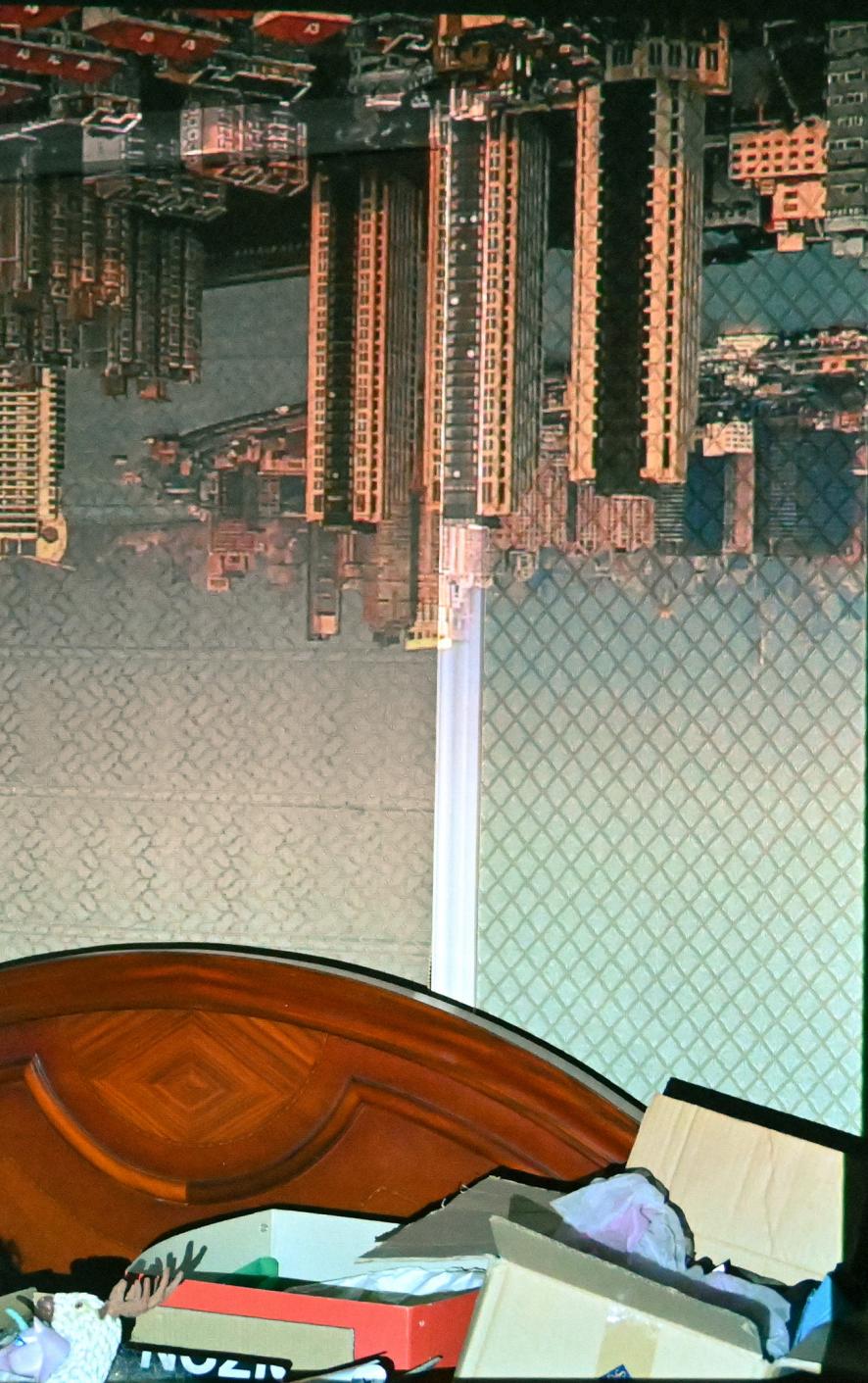
And look before I walk next time
 So long, it's been fun, I'm closing the
 door and I won't leave the light on
 Goodbye

PICKING A SHIRT



The soft fabric I clutch in my hands
Dust coverings, drawer bottom
Forgotten since my golden age, a relic before
The darkest of times
Ivory, pearly
Achromatic and cadaverous

My typical selection is on the bed
My battle armor, warrior helmet
Dark as dusk, beautiful and repulsive
Unwelcoming



In that black top I've
Built myself up, molded myself into the
venerable and ethereal mask of perfection
A façade, but one I do not regret
Or do I?

Food uneaten, dinner untouched
I am beautiful
Shirts cropped, comfort dropped
I am beautiful
Money squandered, makeup thickened
I am beautiful

My prime, my glory, my sweet sixteen
Golden age, darkest times

I was that duck in the water, but
Now I am that swan on the lake
I've built my stage from
blood, sweat, and tears
And it is mine to dance on
And dance I did

A waltz of conflicting desires
A tango of suppressed emotions
I spin spin spin
Misguided, uncontrolled
I go blind

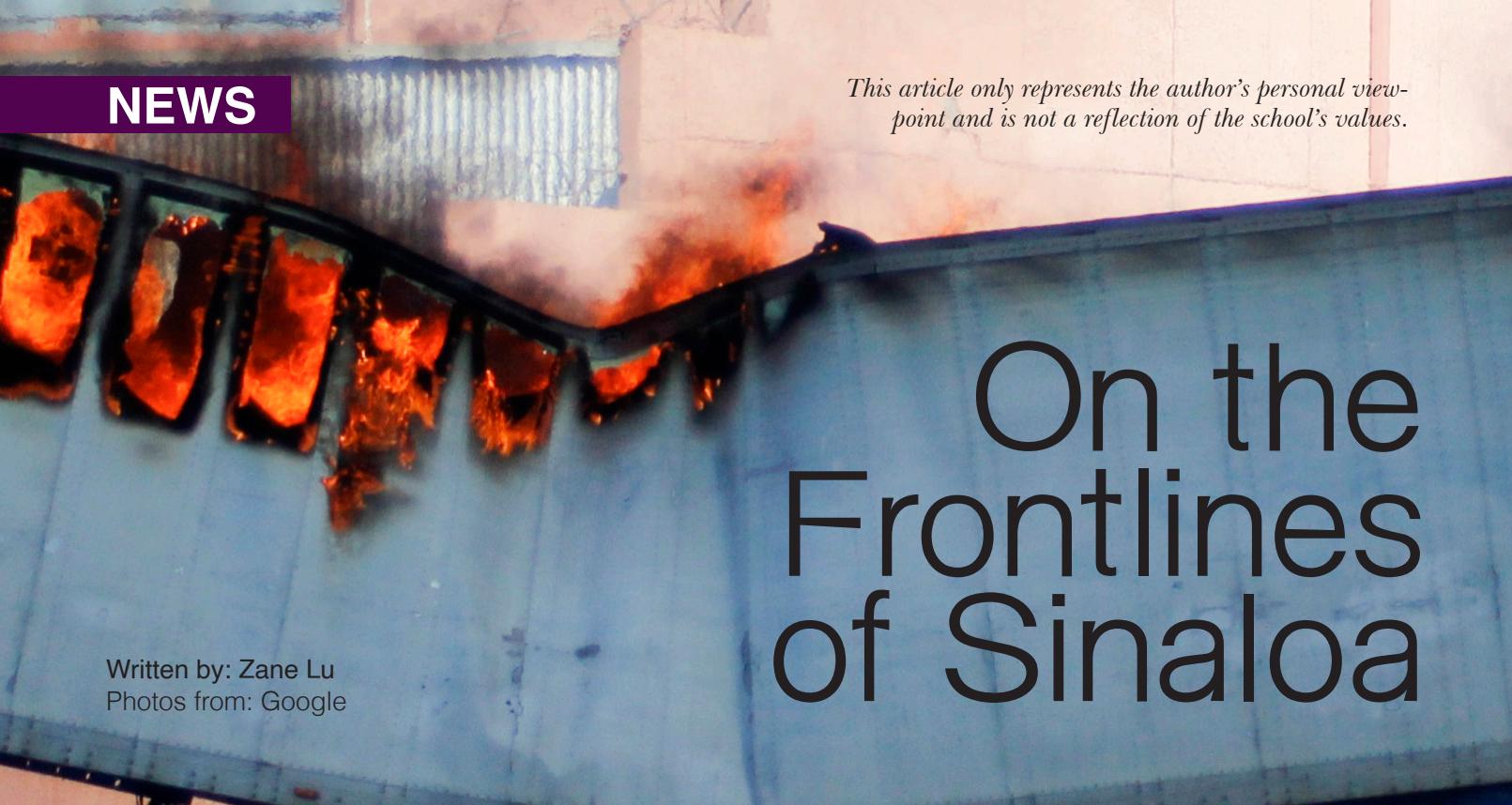
I grasp at the darkness
All-enveloping, embracing, withdrawing
I pull on air, desperately,
crazily, and I touch
A soft fabric
I open my eyes at the shirt in my hands

I see me before I became the golden statue
I see me before I became the swan
I see me without a stage to dance on

Chocolate eaten, body loved
I was happy
Desires satisfied, jests ignored
I was happy
Studies prioritized, goals achieved
I was happy
And I was beautiful

I look to my bed
So many regrets hidden
in the folds of my
Black top
I look to my hand
So many possibilities shrouded
in the silky material of my
White shirt

It was an easy choice. ■



Written by: Zane Lu
Photos from: Google

On the Frontlines of Sinaloa

Instead of starting the New Year fresh, the Mexican city of Culiacan was embraced with violent shootings and frenzied fires at the very beginning of January. With over 30 people killed, the unrest ranged from rampant road-blocks to burning cars filling the streets, and even a passenger airplane getting sprayed by bullets. The national military was eventually dispatched to intervene to fight against the perpetrators, spreading a wave of turmoil across the Mexican state of Sinaloa. So what caused this sudden burst of violence in the capital of Sinaloa? The answer almost always ties back to Mexico's infamous drug cartels.

On the morning of January 5, Ovidiό Guzman, the son of infamous cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, was apprehended by national Mexican security forces. The shootings began on January 5, 2023, following the arrest of Ovidio Guzmán, son of jailed drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. El Chapo, considered one of the most powerful drug traffickers in the world, was the former leader of the influential Sinaloa Cartel. In retaliation against Ovidiό Guzmán's arrest, members of the Sinaloa Cartel began attacking law enforcement and spreading terror across the city. A more specific report from CNN indicates that "cartel members set up 19 roadblocks including at Culiacan's airport and outside the local army base, as well as all points of access to the city of Culiacan." The fact that a single drug cartel alone was able to wreak such widespread havoc in public suggests the immense amount of influence the Sinaloa Cartel holds across the country and the government's lack of control the government over Mexico's security situation.

The Sinaloa cartel is a Mexican criminal organization considered as one of the most powerful and influential drug trafficking groups in the world. The cartel was founded in the late 1980s by a group of drug traffickers, including Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. Under El Chapo, the controlled at least

"90% of the world's heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana trade, exporting multi-ton shipments of narcotics to the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia per day."

The Sinaloa cartel began as a small operation, mainly focused on trafficking marijuana and opium from Mexico to the United States. However, as the organization grew in size and power, it began to expand its operations to include the trafficking of other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. During the late 1990s, the cartel began to diversify its activities, engaging in money laundering, extortion, and human trafficking.

With tens of thousands are missing and many more murdered, violence has become a way of life to in parts of Mexico's Sinaloa State. Often times the police are often the main targets of violence as there were over 500 officers were killed in Mexico last year. Many recent cases of brutality have elucidated the severity of cartel influence over the police and justified the urgency of unsolved cartel violence.

The former Police Chief of Northern Sinaloa, for instance, was ambushed and killed by cartel members during 2021 May. While driving to visit his family, cartel members showered over 200 bullets on police chief Joel Soto's car, killing him in the process. The attack comes two months after gunmen killed 13 police officers and agents from the state prosecutor's officer in Central Mexico. These are just one out of many cases of unhinged violence caused by the notorious Sinaloa Cartel.

Despite the protesting marches for government reform against cartel violence, the Mexican government has yet to prove their capability on handling the situation.

In 2006, The Mexican government launched a major crackdown on organized crime, known as the "War on Drugs." ▶



This campaign targeted the country's major drug trafficking organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel. Thousands of federal police and soldiers were deployed to the areas controlled by the cartel, and it made several high-profile arrests and seizures of drugs and money. In 2016, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, one of the co-founders of the Sinaloa Cartel, was arrested by Mexican authorities and subsequently extradited to the United States, where he was charged with multiple federal drug trafficking and organized crime-related offenses.

In spite of these efforts of the Mexican government, the Sinaloa Cartel has remained a powerful and resilient organization. Estimates of its annual revenue still range from \$3 billion to \$39 billion. Although the government has exhausted copious amounts of resources to battle the cartels, there have been numerous allegations of collusion between the Sinaloa cartel and many politicians. When Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán was trialed in court, he claimed that he had bribed high-ranking Mexican officials, including a former president, in order to operate his drug trafficking business. Such a bold claim is backed by later arrests in 2016 of one of Mexico's top security generals and several other high-ranking military officials, who were accused of protecting the Sinaloa cartel and providing them with weapons and intelligence. Similarly, the Mexican government arrested several police officers in 2019, including the chief of police of the city of Culiacán, for their alleged involvement in protecting the

Sinaloa cartel and providing them with information. While the corruption of the Mexican government still remains to be an equivocal concept, they greatly undermine the trust and the effectiveness of the government to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. ■

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THE LIZ TRUSS SAGA - *A Failed Thatcherism*

Written by: Matthew Li

Photos from: Google



September 2022 started with a dizzying roller-coaster of events which kept UK at the forefront of global media attention. On the 7th at Scotland's Balmoral Castle, a noticeably frail Elizabeth II accepted Boris Johnson's resignation and invited Liz Truss to form a new government. Two days later, the Queen, who just celebrated her Platinum Jubilee, passed away at the age of 96. Devastated by the loss of a national symbol, millions of people took to the streets to pay homage to the late Queen and London, the bustling international financial center, came to an abrupt standstill.▶

Meanwhile at Downing Street, the newly anointed prime minister, Liz Truss, was busy preparing for her debut policy – an ambitious growth plan set to reshape the British economy. On September 23rd, exactly four days after the Queen's funeral, Liz Truss's long-time confidant and ally, Chancellor of Exchequer (financial minister) Kwasi Kwarteng, announced the now infamous "Mini-Budget". Almost immediately, an unprecedented economic earthquake shook the nation. A political crisis ensued: From opposition backbenchers to the news media, the whole country was questioning her leadership. Four weeks later, the embattled Truss resigned – it was her 45th day in office. In a strange twist of fate, her archrival, Rishi Sunak, took up the baton only a month after losing the initial election bid. He might be lucky, but tough challenges lie ahead.

Truss's unusually transient stint as PM raised serious questions for her party: What exactly led the Conservatives to put an incompetent populist at the helm, what grave mistakes did Liz Truss make, and what are the likely sequels of last fall's plethora of policy whiplash, economic crises, and political turmoil?

From Brexit to Covid: Liz Truss Heraldng a New Era?

The Conservatives (Tories) have dominated British Politics for over a decade. Throughout the years, Brexit had figured centrally in the public agenda, to the extent that both David Cameron and Theresa May (former prime ministers) gambled their political career on this is-

sue and eventually costed their premiership – Cameron, a staunch EU advocate, misgauged the public opinion, while May failed to deliver her Brexit promise. In short, the majority of Brits believed that the EU's cumbersome supranational regulations were hurting UK's sovereignty and economy. Despite the occasional ups and downs, each successive Tory leader was able to maintain the upward economic trajectory and inch closer to the much-anticipated decoupling with the EU, which helped the party secure an unusually lengthy political shelf life.

Theresa May's successor, Boris Johnson, stood at the crossroads of modern British history. His first nine months at Downing Street was marked by phenomenal success. By swiftly securing the Brexit deal, he not only permanently ended the decades-long Euroscepticism debate, but also led the Tories to a landslide victory in the 2019 General Election. After years of hung parliament, the Conservatives won an outright majority and could finally set the legislative agenda. More importantly, the expectation was that the UK would take advantage of the regained economic freedoms post-Brexit and gradually adopt a neoliberal "Singapore-on-Thames" model, characterized by low taxes, more deregulation, and high economic growth.

Then Covid-19 Hit. The economy was battered and the skyrocketing death toll gradually exhausted people's patience. Over the course of two years, Johnson's approval rate steadily declined until ►



it finally reached a tipping point in 2022, at which many Conservatives decided to withdraw their endorsement and pick a more visionary leader. After a series of scandals and a mass cabinet member exodus, Johnson announced his resignation in July.

Following Johnson's ouster, at least eight Tory MPs (members of parliament) vied for UK's top office. Two front runners were Rishi Sunak, a young businessman-turned politician whose robust performance as the Chancellor of Exchequer earned him the title of "the heir to Blair", and Liz Truss, a trusted acolyte of Boris Johnson who quickly rose through the ranks in the past decade. Notably, the latter served as Johnson's Foreign Secretary and was known for her hardline policy towards Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak survived five rounds of MP ballot (which eliminated the other six candidates) and entered the final stage of leadership election – members' vote, where Conservative grassroots made the ultimate decision.

Unlike their predecessors, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak faced different realities. During the Johnson era, the Brexit debate was settled, and the Conservatives seemed to have reached a consensus on both immigration and foreign policies (namely, a tough stance on both issues). The main area of contention then segued to the economy. For Brits, 2022 was indeed one of the toughest years since the 2008 Global Recession. Besides stagnant growth, inflation was rapidly rising and a cost-of-living crisis was looming large. Disappointed with the sluggish economy, many conservative supporters believed the government wasn't "pro-growth" enough to reap

the benefits of Brexit. Indeed, Johnson's platform wasn't exactly a libertarian one, and the pandemic actually forced him to shift further to the left, which was characterized by a simultaneous increase of tax and spending.

In light of this sentiment, Truss offered a bold recipe to stimulate the economy – a massive libertarian bundle of tax-cuts and deregulation. Sunak, in contrast, was more of a supporter of "treasury orthodoxy". Citing inflation and budget-balancing concerns, Sunak cast serious doubts on Truss's plan, maintaining that inflation must be tackled first and that

certain corporate taxes should be retained, at least for the time being.

Albeit receiving more votes from Tory MPs, Sunak did not win over the hearts of grassroots members. Indeed, his wife's dubious tax returns, his involvement in the Partygate Scandal, and his betrayal of Boris Johnson tarnished his image. The fact that he's "filthy rich" certainly did not help. Admittedly, Truss depicted a more "exciting" future, and despite the apparent risk behind it, many Conservatives hoped Truss could bring back the glories of the Thatcherite days, namely, a "low tax, high growth economy". Hence, her victory.

What Lessons Can be Learned?

Truss's fiasco almost tanked UK's economy and costed Tories their next election. In retrospect, her failure could be mainly attributed to a sub-par understanding of the market. In a nutshell, her Mini-Budget was designed to turbocharge the economy and combat the "cost-of-living crisis" through a £45 billion tax cut and a staggering £60 billion "Energy Price Guarantee" (other measures included abolishing certain corporate and top-rate income taxes). But in reality, it was "fantasy economics", as opposition leader Keir Starmer aptly put it.

First, the Truss ministry failed to consider important market drivers such as inflation and interest rate. The backstory of the whole circus was the skyrocketing inflation caused by the pandemic and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. The Mini-Budget thus became a three-pronged disaster. Since tax cuts

generally encouraged more household spending and led to higher prices (inflation), the Bank of England had to raise interest rates to combat the already serious inflation. But higher interest rates actually made mortgage and loans more expensive, which discouraged investment and dimmed the prospect of a much-needed economic boost. Concerned investors then decided to sell their Pounds, which further weakened the currency and eroded consumers' purchasing power – another blow to the economy.

An equally fatal flaw is that the ambitious fiscal "great leap forward" was completely unfunded.

When asked about this potentially grave deficiency, Truss and Kwarteng appeared tin-eared and went on peddling the vague idea that the expected economic growth would eventually recoup the short-term





government deficit. Their spurious reasoning and far-fetched explanation also contributed to the loss of market confidence.

Still, the double whammy could have been avoided, given the multitude of course correction mechanisms in place. Unfortunately, the Truss ministry had ignored every one of them. For instance, it is prudent practice to confer with the Office for Budget Responsibility and the Bank of England before making important economic decisions, as the two institutions employ hundreds of technocrats and economists who presumably have a better understanding of the market. Oddly enough, Truss and Kwarteng decided to bypass them before unveiling the Mini-Budget, as if they knew their plan would encounter opposition or criticism but were resolved to press on it anyway. Perhaps they even viewed these agencies as hurdles on their path to glory. As a result, the Bank of England had no choice but to work against the Mini-Budget, which particularly undermined their credibility. Truss's ego and leadership style also played an important role in this grave miscalculation, as her ministry was widely viewed as packed with loyalists and yes-men.

As co-authors of *Britannia Unchained*, Truss and Kwarteng envisioned that the only way to unleash UK's economic potential is to fully embrace libertarianism. Apparently, the market situation in 2022 did not allow a seismic shift of that magnitude when more urgent, down-to-earth issues (such as the cost-of-living crisis) were to be addressed. In addition, the viability of such neoclassical economic policies in a modern setting is debatable. For example, many believe a bigger problem plaguing the UK is actually growing inequality rather than inadequate market liberalization. And it's worth noting that Johnson's most-recent 2019 mandate was to some extent based on center-left policies aiming to promote equality and strengthen the NHS (National Health Service). Therefore, it is rather startling to see Truss attempted to implement such a radical policy shift right after Johnson's departure. What's more is that the Conservative Party

as a whole decided to rally behind her credulity-stretched growth plan, just so they can create a façade of unity, with little regard to the reality or basic principles taught in Economics 101.

Three months after Truss's resignation, the market appears to have stabilized, and Sunak should be able to outlast a lettuce and oversee King Charles's coronation in May. His main obstacle to a reelection could be the party itself, as many voters are simply fed up with the Tory drama and want something new. No wonder Sir Keir Starmer, the opposition leader, is calling for "General election now!". Indeed, after years of lackluster performance, the Labor is on the rise and faring fantastically in polls. Under Starmer, the Labor Party has even started to strike an increasingly patriotic tone, which would surely attract more voters. For now, the only variable is time, as the next general election takes place in 2024. Will Sunak fulfil the tall order of winning back people's trust? Will Starmer sustain the current momentum and formulate an even more convincing platform? Tories should better watch out. ■

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Written by: Allen Woo
Photos from: Google

DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT: The 2022 Brazilian General Election

INTRODUCTION

In October of 2022, South America's largest economy held what might have been the most important election of the 20th century. The election was the closest race in Brazilian history, with former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the left-wing Worker's Party receiving the majority vote (50.9%) against the incumbent far-right president Jair Bolsonaro. Under the shadow of the US midterm elections and other global events, Brazil's general election received comparatively less media coverage in the rest of the world. Yet not only does this election directly affect the lives of more than 211 million Brazilians, but it also determines the fate of Brazil's democracy as well as political stability both domestically and in South America as a whole. More importantly, the largest and most diverse tropical rainforest and a home to millions of species and cultures, is on the chopping block. Brazil is home to the Amazon rainforest, which produces 20% of oxygen and absorbs 25% of the carbon dioxide in the world. With the climate catastrophe worsening every year, October 31st might have been the most important day for the fate of this planet and humanity.

LULA: "THE MOST POPULAR POLITICIAN ON EARTH" OR A CORRUPT PRESIDENT?

Despite being born into a family of impoverished farmers, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was able to be elected into the Chamber of Deputies, Brazil's federal legislative body and the lower house of the National Congress, and was eventually elected as the president in 2003. Lula is widely recognized as the most famous and popular Brazilian leader; at one point

in his presidency, his approval rating reached nearly 90%, and former US president Barack Obama called him "the most popular politician on Earth."

Lula's political career was rooted in his days as a factory worker and a union leader. Under Brazil's brutal military dictatorship Lula organized massive strikes and protests and by the 1980s, following the democratization of the country, he helped establish the Worker's Party, or PT, consisting of thousands of trade union supporters. His coalition mainly drew from Brazil's political left, including workers, low-income families, progressive Catholics, Afro-Brazilians, and the indigenous people. In 1989, Lula ran as the presidential candidate for PT and lost by only 4 million votes. He ran again in 1994 and 1998, losing three elections consecutively. During this time period, Brazil was experiencing an economic crisis: inflation was so high that the country had to change its currency five times in less than 7 years, and more than 1/5 of Brazilians were in poverty. The Brazilian center-right government eventually introduced a stable currency and brought down poverty, but millions of Brazilians were left behind during the recovery.

In 2002, Lula ran again for presidency and tried a novel tactic. He brought several prominent members of the Brazilian center-right and conservative parties into his campaign, including a wealthy businessman José Alencar as his running mate. Thus he expanded his coalition to include Brazil's moderate, center-right, and even conservative voters such as business owners and bankers.

Under Lula's first term, Brazil's economy grew at an unprecedented rate, mostly because of a booming trade partnership with China as well as his successful and popular economic policies. Using this new incoming wealth Lula financed a new social welfare program called Bolsa Família, which gave stipends to make sure Brazilian children were vaccinated and attending school. This along with reforms such as increasing minimum wage, attracted Brazil's

This article only represents the author's personal viewpoint and is not a reflection of the school's values.



mainstream moderate and liberal voting base to join his coalition. This immense popularity led to his reelection in 2006 and by the end of this second term, Brazil's GDP was at its highest as was his approval rating.

In 2010, Dilma Rousseff inherited Lula's coalition, easily winning the presidential race. However, her approach for managing the economy as well as accusations of corruption cost the coalition's support from the center-right and the moderates. Her administration's approval rating plummeted, and in 2014, after a massive corruption scandal with Petrobras, a state-owned oil company, involving PT members such as Rousseff and Lula was uncovered, the entire coalition collapsed. Now known as Operation Car Wash, the scandal eventually sent Lula to prison in 2017. Some denounced the scandal as a "political witch hunt" to target members of the PT while others characterized it as a justified investigation into the party members' corruption. Nevertheless, Lula's conviction was annulled in 2021 due to issues with court jurisdiction and was allowed to run for the presidency again.

In the 2022 election Lula centered his campaign around rebuilding the country from the disastrous COVID-19 and economic policies that the Bolsonaro administration had implemented. He plans to restore the Brazilian De-

velopment Bank as a development bank to invest in infrastructure projects in each Brazilian state and to use the Bank of Brazil to incentivize small and medium sized rural producers and companies. Furthermore, he promised to build millions of houses to guarantee housing to Brazilians and proposed to invest in education in order to re-industrialize Brazil especially in fields such as engineering and communication and make Brazil more industrially competitive on the world stage. He further proposed multiple plans to address sanitation, railroads, housing, welfare, crime, and the environment.

JAIR BOLSONARO: "THE TROPICAL TRUMP"

When allegations surrounding Operation Car Wash banned Lula from joining the presidential race, Jair Bolsonaro, a retired military officer and a fairly unknown member of the Congress, started to build his own unique coalition from the far-right. His most fervent supporters were evangelicals, businessmen, anti-abortion activists, but he also gained strong support from the center-right as well as some ➤

center-left and far-left voters who were disillusioned by the PT's corruption scandal. Meanwhile, Lula's coalition was split between several small and unpopular candidates, helping Bolsonaro to an easy victory in the 2018 election. This was a new political moment unlike what the country had experienced before in recent history, a new shift in Brazilian politics: the far-right replaced the moderate right at the center of the political arena.

In office, Bolsonaro was criticized for his extremist views and his irresponsible management of the country. He oversaw the further destruction of the Amazon, exacerbated extreme hunger, and Brazil being one of the worst impacted by COVID-19 with almost 700,000 deaths. Brazil's GDP dipped back down, and crashed when the pandemic ravaged the country. His anti-democratic tendencies, however, was the factor that made most Brazilians, as well as world leaders, uneasy about his administration. Bolsonaro continuously took a confrontational stance against Brazilian democracy, threatening democratic rule, trying to control the media by revoking their broadcasting license, and undermining the Supreme Court. Due to these factors, his popularity never exceeded 40%.

During the 2022 election, Bolsonaro outperformed every poll leading up to the first round of election, obtaining 43% of the votes. Moreover the far-right candidates aligned with Bolsonaro won the majority of the seats in the House and the Senate. During the second round of election, Brazil's Federal Highway Police set up illegal roadblocks and questioned drivers across Brazil, particularly in the Northeast, which is considered as Lula's stronghold. These anti-democratic sentiments within the Bolsonaro administration as well as among his ardent supporters eventually led to an event reminiscent of the January 6th attacked to the Capitol in the United States. In Jan 8th, while Lula was away and Bolsonaro was seeking refuge in Florida as legal threats against him mounted, thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed the Brazilian Presidential Palace, Supreme Court, and the Congress, calling for a military coup against the "stolen election." Lula's administration took a strong stance against Bolsonaro and his supporters, but the fate of the former president is yet to be determined.

HOPE FOR THE AMAZON

The Amazon rainforest was burning at a

record rate under the Bolsonaro administration, accelerating the destruction of the world's most diverse ecosystem. More than one-fifth of the world's freshwater is contained within the Amazon, and almost all of South America's farms are irrigated directly by the forest. Brazil's agriculture industry earned billions of dollars under Bolsonaro, as environmental regulations were largely eliminated and the rainforest was turned into farmland.

Brazil currently has an impressive satellite system that pings real-time alerts to authorities as trees are cut down. However, 98% of the alerts are not investigated because Bolsonaro nearly abolished the environmental agency that monitors deforestation in the Amazon. Not only that, Bolsonaro had planned to pass PL2633 if reelected, which is considered as the most planet-destroying bill in the world. It would have not only given the deforested lands to the corporations and people who stole it illegally, but also actively encourage more deforestation and criminal activities in the Amazon in the years to come.

Lula's administration on the other hand, levied billions of dollars as environmental fines, established gigantic conservation areas, and invented the novel satellite system that Bolsonaro had been ignoring. With his administration promising to continue their aggressive environmental protection policies of the early 2000s, there might still be hope for the rainforest. ■

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METAVERSE: ON THE HORIZ

As the future dawns closer, spontaneous inventions transform our world. At the forefront of all the inventions is the metaverse, a realm where, Mark Zuckerberg described, “you’ll be able to do almost anything you can imagine.” It provides an alternate reality for anyone to explore, create, and interact with other users. In the metaverse, users create their avatars to securely store and manage personal information; industrial businesses can simplify their operational management; and users can create smart contracts that allow them to create and manage digital transactions on the recording network, blockchain. 2023 will be an important year for developing the metaverse – advanced metaverse technologies and innovative real-life and virtual projects are on the horizon. This paper will introduce the major usage of metaverse technologies today and explore some of their prospects in the upcoming year.

1. INTO THE METAVERSE

Metaverse is a virtual reality platform that enables users to interact with each other and with digital content in a 3D environment. The concept of a metaverse—an immersive, 3D virtual world accessible via the internet—has been around since the early 2000s. The concept of a metaverse originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s with Neal

Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash*. It described a virtual 3D space

where people can communicate, exchange goods,

and interact with each other. Stephenson coined the term in the

novel, and it has since come to

represent a variety of virtual

world applications, from

online gaming to virtual

reality (VR). Since its incep-

tion, the metaverse has seen

a dramatic rise in develop-

ment and usage. Initially, most

metaverses were created for ga-

ming and entertainment, but the

technology has since been used to

create virtual or augmented rea-

lity (AR) applications, includ-

ing educational applica-

tions, professional



A NEW ON

Written by: Jennifer Suh
Photos from: Google

WORLD

networking and communication, and virtual shopping experiences. Today, the metaverse is a growing industry, with a variety of companies developing new technologies and applications to make the virtual world even more interactive and immersive. The potential of the metaverse is still being explored, but its current applications are already impacting how we live and interact with each other.

2. METAVERSE IN DAILY LIFE

AVATAR SYSTEM

In the metaverse, users can explore the virtual world as if it is another reality. One of the key features of the metaverse platform is its avatar system, the digital representations of users that can be used to interact with other users and digital contents. Each Avatar has a unique digital identity, allowing users to securely store, access, and manage their digital assets and personal information. The Avatar System is an integral part of the metaverse ecosystem, providing users with an accessible and secure platform for managing their digital assets and personal information.

In case of the US, the avatar system has enhanced access to sports, assisting in eliminating biases by fusing the real and virtual worlds. To provide players with mobility challenges access to physical activities, the iGYM

AR system for the inclusive play was developed. For instance, in the virtual gaming world, Roblox offers several games and experiences, such as Bloxburg and Brookhaven, where players may construct houses, carry out jobs, and act out situations. Additionally, Roblox and Nike announced a collabo-

ration in November 2021 to host "Nikeland," which is a collection of product showrooms and play zones on Roblox where users may dress their avatars with Nike items like the Air Force and Nike Blazer. Metaverse technologies are not just used for consumer usage; there are great potential for the technologies for industries as well.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICATIONS

Industrial businesses are implementing extended reality (XR) technologies to simplify customer relationship management, training, and prototyping procedures. For example, Siemens, a German manufacturer of industrial products, provides Teamcenter VR for product design and prototyping. The ability to modify the prototype's appearance and functionality in 3D has the potential to save a lot of time and capital as 3D iteration requires less time to produce and fewer raw materials. Moreover, VR applications have the potential to improve professional training as well. BMW, Peugeot, and Audi were among the first companies to adopt industrial VR training, which has been shown to lower training costs without compromising quality (Christensen).

SMART CONTRACTS

Metaverse also supports the development of smart contracts, self-executing contracts between buyers and sellers written directly into codes, and a decentralized blockchain network. Smart Contracts allow users to securely create and manage digital assets, digital identities, and other types of transactions on the blockchain. Smart Contracts are also used for creating and managing digital tokens, which are digital assets that can be used for a variety of purposes. Smart Contracts are an essential part of the metaverse ecosystem, providing users with an accessible and secure platform for creating, managing, and executing transactions on the blockchain.

The metaverse is an open-source system in which anyone can contribute to the development of the new world.

It provides an opportunity to connect with people from all over the world and explore new cultures and customs. As technology develops in the upcoming years, the lifestyle in the metaverse will continue to evolve and become even more immersive. ►

3. METAVERSE IN 2023

In 2023, offline AR, VR, and XR conferences will return, allowing people to welcome new metaverse technologies, projects, and products. Major metaverse conferences of 2023 will be held in Tokyo, Seoul, Berlin, Shanghai, and other international cities. At the conferences, innovative metaverse technologies will be presented. In terms of virtual reality (VR), metaverse technology is expected to be used to create highly realistic and immersive experiences – for example, a virtual office space or a virtual classroom.

VIRTUAL WORKPLACE

In 2023, virtual reality workplaces will provide employees with a safe and efficient way to work from anywhere. These workplaces will be customized with features such as meeting rooms, video conferencing, and task management, allowing employees to remain productive and efficient while working remotely. Some expectations from people for virtual reality workplaces in 2023 include the following:

- *A virtual office space that allows employees to work collaboratively, accessing shared documents and completing tasks together in a virtual environment*
- *A virtual meeting room that allows teams to hold remote meetings, with video conferencing, whiteboard tools, and discussion boards to facilitate collaboration*
- *A virtual training space that allows employees to learn new skills in a virtual environment, with interactive activities, simulations, and online courses*
- *A virtual factory floor that allows employees to monitor and manage production from anywhere, with real-time data and analytics*

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Virtual reality classrooms are expected to be more popular than ever in 2023. Virtual reality classrooms will provide an immersive learning experience for students, allowing them to explore topics in a virtual environment. These classrooms can be used for a variety of subjects,

from science and history to language and art. Some expectations from people for virtual reality classrooms in 2023 include:

- *A virtual classroom that allows students to explore ancient civilizations with virtual tours of archaeological sites, historical reenactments, and interactive quizzes*
- *A virtual classroom that provides students with a realistic hospital environment to practice medical procedures in a safe, simulated environment*
- *A virtual classroom that allows students to explore the solar system, virtually visiting planets and moons and learning about the latest discoveries in space exploration*
- *A virtual classroom that allows students to explore the human body with detailed anatomical models and interactive activities*

4. THE FUTURE OF THE METAVERSE

Like how people all around the world are looking forward to innovations in 2023, experts are also anticipating positive economic growth of the metaverse industry. Although the future of the metaverse is far-reaching and difficult to predict, many experts predict that the metaverse could lead to an increase in demand for digital goods and services as people become more accustomed to using virtual environments. This could lead to job growth in the technology sector, as well as an increase in the demand for digital products. ►





Moreover, experts anticipate that the metaverse could also lead to increased competition in the marketplace, as users have more options to choose from. This could create lower prices and more variety of choices for consumers. The metaverse could also lead to the emergence of entirely new markets as users explore new avenues for monetizing their virtual experiences.

One of the largest global economics consulting firms, Analysis Group, came up to the conclusion that in the tenth year following the adoption of metaverse technology, the metaverse can add 2.8% to the world's gross domestic product (GDP). If adoption started in 2022, it might boost the world economy to three trillion USD by the year 2031 (Christensen).

Evidently, the prospects of the metaverse are exciting, and the potential applications in industries are vast. It has the potential to revolutionize the way we communicate, collaborate, and interact with each other in a virtual environment. The metaverse could also lead to new forms of entertainment, education, and business, providing new monetization opportunities. It could be a platform for innovation, creativity, and exploration and could open up entirely new markets for users to explore. The metaverse, a new world on the horizon, is the future of digital interaction and a new way of interacting with the world around us. ■

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SELF-EXPLORATION

Written by: Chelsea Chen | Photos by: Coco Tan

By the end of the year, I always feel reflective. I feel like if I don't write reflections, I'm missing the opportunity to grow. The end of the year is also a time of depression, anxiety, and fear. I feel like a year has passed, and I still haven't achieved all my goals. I feel like it's not enough even though I've done a lot. Maybe I am never going to be satisfied. There is always the next goal waiting after an achievement. Sometimes goals motivate me, but other times they exhaust me.

What I want to do this time is to take a moment to cherish everything we have experienced in 2022. There are a few moments that I want to share.

A NEW TYPE OF SELF-WORTH

Driven by the pressure of attending competitions and getting awards, I joined a writing contest at the start of the year. The prompt came out in February, and it took me a month to decide on a topic. Until April, I was still doing "research" and have written no words. I knew deep down that I'm not going to get anything even if I try.

The turning point was when I was out with a friend of mine, and we were talking about what we were doing. She has been participating in various programming competitions and self-learning physics in her spare time. When she asked me what I am working on, I ended up saying that I am writing an essay.

That night, I walked to my computer, opened a new word file, gave it a name, opened it, and wrote down my topic. Then I stared at it for hours. "Would you at least try?" Yes. I gave myself a simple plan: I would spend all Saturday writing, and if I didn't get something done, I won't sleep. It was a rough start. It took me hours to convince myself to sit down and write. There were also times when I questioned whether it was worth it. Sometimes I stayed up until 5 am just to write a paragraph. After writing 11 drafts, I submitted it on June 30th.

I felt a sense of relief the moment I sent it. It's really not about getting a certification, an award, the next *honorable mention* or a *global finalist* on the list. Instead, my experience was about knowing that you did your best—the feeling that you can write something worth reading. ►



When someone asks, “*what have you done*” and you have something to answer, it is a comfort to say that you wrote an article recently. I never felt like I have tried so hard, despite knowing that I might get nothing deemed “meaningful” in return. What matters is that I felt a wave of self-appreciation, and this feeling will stay with me at a corner of my mind. So, when you have a vague feeling that you are not *getting anywhere*, put yourself into some kind of work and hopefully you’ll feel the same way that I did by the end of it.

OVERTHINKING

I like to do things that have certain directions. For example, I know that if I memorize everything a teacher says during class, my grades will not be too bad. But this year, I felt like I no longer have the right guideline for everything. This thing called *college applications!* I kept wondering why there is no set of just right steps that would get me into a certain school.

So, then I started to think a lot. I could sit and think all night. I am stressed out, but I can’t express my stress. *I have done nothing, and there is a test tomorrow. People have expectations for me. I fail at one thing and feel worthless.* I tell myself—2022 must be the year of overthinking.

But after many sleepless nights, I have come to some conclusions. There are so many things in life that has no right path. But this means that there are limitless possibilities of options for us to explore. Maybe a lack of guideline means that we have more control over our own decisions. Maybe things will be better with your own decisions than following someone else’s guidelines.

FRIEND

On the 31st of December 2022, Chloe came to my house 4 minutes before the end of 2022 and played Zheng Chenhe’s “Felicity” for me. I was about to go to sleep that night when she rang the doorbell. She walked in with a guitar and began to play.

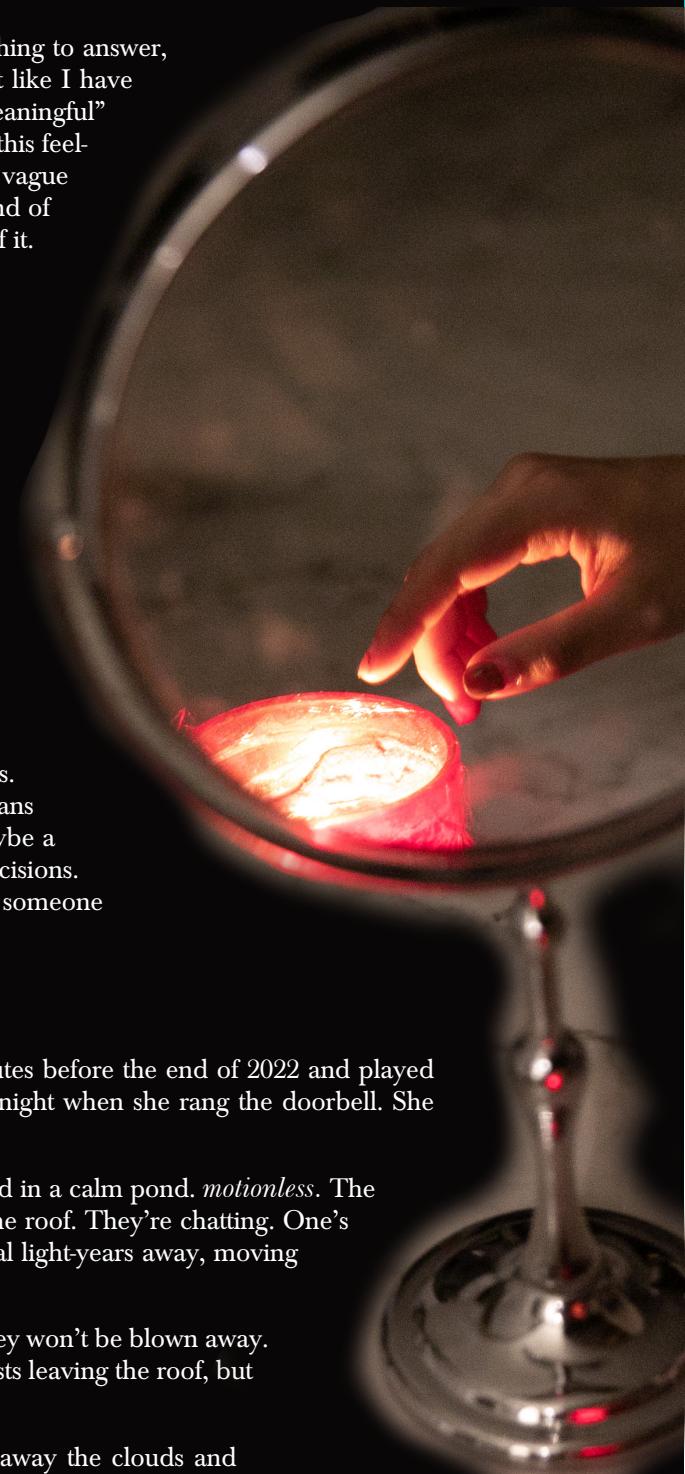
The intro begins with the camera focusing on a full moon reflected in a calm pond. *motionless*. The first verse starts, and the camera pans up, to the two teenagers on the roof. They’re chatting. One’s playing the guitar. They look up at the sky, watching the star several light-years away, moving slowly in their eyes as if being blown by the wind.

Suddenly the wind blows faster. They hold on to each other, so they won’t be blown away. The night is getting colder, and the sky is getting darker. One suggests leaving the roof, but the other insists they stay. “*It’s going to be fine.*”

The wind seems to soften and turns back to a breeze. It blows away the clouds and the night sky become clearer. This is the reward for their hardship. They are laughing and celebrating their victory over the wind. The ending brings the focus back to the pond. The breeze blows across it, waves dissecting the moon. Moonlight splashes onto the earth, promising that everything will be alright.

Tears were streaming down my face. The song ends 4 seconds before 2023. We saw that the clock turned 58,59,00. It is 2023. We hugged each other. I was still crying.

I told Chloe that I like the song “Felicity” a few days before new year. She kept it in mind and went to practice. I love this song because it feels like my 2022. There are hardships and companions. Bitter wind suggests hardships. I wanted to give up, but my friend insisted that I persist. I hope everyone’s 2022 will end with the soft strumming pattern, and that’s your reward for making it through 2022. At the end of the song, the camera returns to the pond just like how it started. 2023 is a year of new beginnings, and the moon promises that everything will be alright. ■



I am a water drop. I am not the pool of fresh water below me. I am the water drop as it travels down the stalactite. Day by day, the microminerals I carry elongate the stalactite over centuries. That is how I move and live: stealthily, invisibly, lonely. Drip. Drip. Drip. I'm moderation to an extreme.

I am a Ruby Red grapefruit. I appear yellow and happy and bright, but if you dig deep, past the thick white meat that hides my heart. Replaying past conversations in my head, planning future conversations in my head, instead of slices of grapefruit, I am a delicate bubble. If you pierce me, I will rain blood-red tears.

I am a wall. Don't mistake me; I'm not the beams in the wall, I'm the plaster on the outside. When you press on me, I will cave in. If you hurt me, I'll shatter, and my dust will cower at your feet. I'm only connected to others through a thin, superficial layer on top of the intricate network that exists between others. As the rooms ebb and flow with life, laughter, and love, I'm never a part of the scene, I watch from the side. No one knows that I could be their giving tree. I would grow, stand, exist for them.

I am an American-Born-Chinese who doesn't belong. I'm not American enough, I'm not Chinese enough. Some say I should be able to mix with people from all sides, but I'm not being pulled from either side. Instead, I'm a neutron amongst electrons and protons. Although constructed of one electron and one proton, I am attracted to neither. The irony of my dual composition.

I am a bunny. I can run fast, but I'm not a predator. I've never faced a situation where I had to stand and fight. Instead, my instinct is to hop away. Being small and common, passersby don't take notice of me. I would be delighted if you took a picture of me, but I know I'll never see you again. Or at least, you won't know that you'll ever see me again. We could be staring into each other's eyes, and as I recognize you, you say, "Nice to meet you. What's your name?"

I am not a cat. Although I am physically agile, my emotions are not, pushed and pulled by the people around me. I would never dare scratch you for fear of antagonizing you. No, in that sense, I'm more like a trained dog. I wouldn't dare disobey you. I rely on permission to give me power.

I am not an empty can. I'm more of an empty pitcher. I'm not disrespected. I have a use, but I'm not being used. Instead, I sit in the back of the kitchen cabinet, collecting dust. I occasionally see the bright fluorescent lights of the kitchen. When the rays hit me, I shine and glitter, reflecting rainbows. I forget what it's like to be useless. But within a few seconds, the door closes on me again. I cry to no one, I cry empty. For I have nothing to give but myself.

I'm not pensive enough to be blue. I'm not passionate enough to be red. I'm not bubbly enough to be yellow. I'm not jealous enough to be green. I'm not loving enough to be pink. I am the noncolor of white. I am the purest grain of white rice, unsullied by soy sauce or spice. I am a snowflake in a snow globe. My existence is protected in an eternal world where I can never melt away. I can see there's a bigger world out there. Lovelier, funnier, happier. Realer, nastier, sadder. Even though I'm curious, I don't know how to get out. I don't know if I want to leave. Yet, I sense that someday, someone will smash my globe to pieces. For better or worse?

I do not want to be jealous. I do not want to want things, to want friends, to want love. I heard if I let go of all wants, I'll be able to fly. What's tying me down? ■



Written by: Hannah Zhou
Illustrated by: Mimi Yang

PORTRAIT OF THE SELF AS HOPE

LITERATURE

Home Sweet Home



Written by: Cecilia Lien
Illustrated by: Wakana Yokoyama

In the dusky distance is a forest. In that forest somewhere is an old tree stump. On the tree stump stands a white cat. The white cat lifts its paw, licks it gingerly, and puts it down.

If you take the metro to the bus station by the seaside, then take the hour-long bus ride to the little signpost at the foot of the mountain, venture deep into the mountains and bring with you a decent amount of luck, you might just be able to find the castle.

The first thing you'd notice when you approach the castle would be the sturdy, metal door that lay ajar, revealing with an unswerving definitiveness that there was not a single sliver of life inside, save the dimly lit chandelier that hung from the ceiling that suggested, apologetically, otherwise. And what beautiful windows the castle had too—clear windows with glass that shimmered in the gold of the setting sun and patterned frames that stood boldly against the blinding light.

The castle was also, to say the least, large. In fact, it was large enough to house at least an entire bloodline of people, to fit all of the people you see on the little images stuck to those family trees with thin, twisting branches stretching into such lengths that the tree itself looked out of proportion. This was where the handsome landlord used to live with his tenants. The residents of the castle never had anything to worry about—they were self-sufficient. Or rather, the landlord provided the tenants with everything they needed to live satisfactory lives so that they would be self-sufficient. It was unnecessary for them to work, so they simply stayed inside the castle, some reading, some knitting, some playing the guitar, some doing all three consecutively, day after day, again and again, until they grew tired of doing them, looked around for something better to do, failed, then went back to doing the same things.

The tenants didn't live the most thrilling of lives, but they were content. They lived comfortably and soundly—albeit a little dully. But they were grateful, truly grateful, for what privileges they enjoyed.

Yet time after time, the tenants would be seen by the landlord to be peeking curiously from the heavy, perpetually open gates of the castle or gazing wistfully out of the clear windows that could be found in every room. The landlord would then walk up behind their backs, soundless, and tell them in a coldly quiet voice, fear trembling ever so slightly in his eyes, "If you go

out there, you'd likely never make it back alive." Putting on the tenants' shoulders gingerly, kindly, and so, so sorrowfully, he'd turn on his heels and leave.

Oh, what horrors must lie beyond the bounds of the castle! What if we trip on a piece of rock protruding from the ground, cutting our legs with it, waiting for it to infect and for the infections to seep upwards to our thighs, waists, arms, neck, and eventually the brain, clouding our senses and fogging our reasoning, leading us into the throbbing, dizzying sleep of eternity? Or what if, while we're wandering helplessly in the woods, we catch a disease of no cure by drinking the stream water out of desperation and lose our bodies and minds slowly, painfully, writhing and spluttering by the banks while hot blood gushes out of our mouths, nose, ears, tainting the crystal water with a guilty, sinful red? Or what if the terrors that truly lie hunching, waiting in ambush are far more mortifying than what our cowardly little brains can think of? Oh, what horrors we'd run into were we to leave the castle! What horrors our dear landlord is protecting us from!

And so the tenants were all fine and well. But there was always that one tenant—that silly little fool—who decides to succumb to their silly little peeks out of the gates and silly little glances out of the windows regardless of the landlord's genuine words of warning.

The tenant with silver hair shielded himself in the still shadows of the castle gates, watching the stiff pine branches hold themselves out clumsily to the gentle, welcoming arms of the mid-March breeze and into a slow waltz in front of the rising full moon. As they swayed to the soft rustles of the cool night, he ran—against the rhythm but never breaking it—into the woods of the mountains.

He came back around sunrise two days later. The glaring shards of sun wrestled above the horizon, striking the stiffly rooted pine trees that stood as if the waltz it performed a few nights prior had been nothing but a mirage created by the midnight breeze. The trees, shadows elongated unnaturally under the rising sun, traced the tenant whose silver hair shimmered under the blinding rays as he crept back towards the castle like a white cat shuffling through a noiselessly darkening meadow.

He lied. There are no horrors lying beyond our bounds. Fists balling. He lied. We can make it back alive. I am proof of that. Jaw clenching. He lied. His fear was nothing but an act. Pupils blazing. He lied. So was his sorrow. Blood boiling.

He lied.

He lied. ►

"I snuck into the mountains. He lied. He's only trying to shut us in here because all that lies beyond the bounds—"

But that was as far as our silly little tenant with silver hair could get as he stood panting by the doorway of the common room, where the other tenants sat around the hearth, for the handsome landlord, who loomed behind him silently, tapped on his shoulder with a kind smile that crinkled the corners of his eyes—

"It's best for you to come with me."

The landlord put a friendly arm around the silver-haired tenant, his kind smile never leaving his face. His well-groomed fingernails dug deeper into the tenant's shoulders with each step down the staircase. By the time they were hit face-first with the chilly wisps of wind of the dungeons, the tenant's white shirt was tainted with deep, accusing crescents of red around the upper seams.

The landlord pulled two chairs from the corner of the cold, damp room, sat down in one of them, and gestured for his tenant to sit in the other.

"People make mistakes, my dear boy, people make mistakes. You made the mistake of venturing into the mountains. You must be thinking, He lied. There are no horrors that await us in the mountains. He lied so he could keep everyone inside. That is another mistake you made. You've been lucky enough this time to be able to come back here, but luck won't be with you every time. But, my dear boy, do you know what the biggest mistake you made is?" He smiled in that mellow, crinkly way of his, eyes glimmering with jagged ice that pierced itself into the tenant's abdomen.

"You tried to deceive those around you into making the same mistakes that you did. You tried to put their lives in danger. That is just as bad as trying to kill them yourself."

A ball of dry cloth had been stuffed in his mouth, holding it open and preventing it from uttering a single cry. But there was no cloth in his mouth. His arms and legs had been roped to the back of the chair, making it impossible to run upstairs and out of the sneering iron gates of the castle. But there were no ropes tied to his arms and legs. A jug of iced water was being trickled slowly down his back, leaking from beneath his white shirt onto the ground with clear drips that echoed throughout the room. But there was no jug of water trickling down his back.

"My dear boy, people make mistakes. I forgive you wholeheartedly for your silly little mistakes, but you'd better stay down here for a few days to sort yourself out. I'll come back here during meals in case you grow lonely."

"Because loneliness is the worst feeling in the world."

With a final crinkle of the corners of his eyes, he exited the dungeon, locking the silver-haired tenant in the room that lingered stubbornly within the palms of winter while the rest of the world had already passed into the embrace of spring.

It was 37 days until the tenant with silver hair came back from the dungeon. The landlord had indeed, as a man of his word, visited him several times every day, which explains why the tenant was in such good spirits when he returned. He wore a reddish-brown shirt—unlike the boring white one that he had worn previously—and the same crinkly smile that the kind landlord always carried on his face.

And so all was fine and well.

Later that night, when everyone was sound asleep in their beds, the silver-haired tenant's room caught on fire.

It was that blood-curdling scream, gurgled and muffled but still ear-splitting enough to slice open the dull silence of the night, that woke the other tenants up, summoned them to the silver-haired tenant's room. When they arrived at the silver-haired tenant's door, all they found was the kind, sorrowful landowner, whose crinkles were jumbled sinisterly without his usual kindly smile, kneeling at the bolted door as the tongues of flames danced higher, higher, higher, engulfing the boy with silver hair, tearing his guilty skin, spilling his sinful blood from his mouth, nose, ears, as senselessness crept up to his thighs, waist, arms, neck, and eventually his brain, sending him spiraling into a throbbing, dizzying sleep of eternity.

"Our Lord has punished the silly little boy to save us... Only if we learn from his mistakes can we be saved... But oh, poor boy, poor silly little boy, if only we'd done something to stop him from making such a silly mistake..."

And so the wise landlord locked the castle gates that were once perpetually open, chained the intricately patterned windows through which the tenants once

gazed towards the mountains, as the stiff pine trees waltzed with the spring breeze in front of the half-illuminated moon, never going against the rhythm of the soft rustles of the night nor breaking it.

*In the dusky distance is a forest.
In that forest somewhere is an old tree stump.
The tree stump is bare. There are no white cats in the forest. ■*



To Run the Business Around the Corner

Written by: Evelyn Zhang | Illustrated by: Yiyi Zhou

STEP ONE: START WITH THE LIGHT

I was born with the knack of remembering exclusively the good. My world was made up of dandelions in April and fruit pops in June, the crunch of colored leaves in October and the soft scent of cashmere in December. I spent days sprawled on mats of green, weaving through patterns of clouds on blue skies or squinting for stars at night. My writer friend compared me to a cat once. *Logan*, she murmured in that soft, hazy way of writers, *you're just like my cat after she gets fed—all content and safe in her little beanbag*. She was talking about the wall of cards, puzzles, doodles, and pictures arranged about like confetti on a five-year-old's birthday. I hummed along and watched her trace her finger around my collection of Ghibli disks, lined up on the wall with double sided tape. The sky looks especially crisp today, I remember thinking.

I felt safe, tucked away in my little world—no, in reality. It was what I chose to believe, to always stay in the sun and never mind the shade. I ran my business of writing around the corner of reality, where constantly someone might burst in, get dazed by all the childish glamour and cheery giddiness, and decides to stay for a while. These people resided in voicemails, framed photos, handwritten letters and postal cards. Secretly, they hid in unfinished writings and scribbled inspirations here and there, tucked safely under my feather. Even more secretly, they took form in happy dreams and comforting thoughts after a particularly creepy episode of my favorite show. My business was going well, and I wished upon a candle on one birthday that it'll always stay open.

The first crack of the rose-colored lens, first ruffle of the feather came from this strange city, from a real business around a real corner. I fidgeted in the cranky chair of the publisher's office, half drank matcha in hand, the lingering taste stolen by the unexpected words I heard. *Your world is too kind. The image you've painted in this story too light. Pastel. Sickening sweet. We want a story with a real climax*, he added out of kindness. *Perhaps some trauma? Some kind of obstacle? To make the ending seem sweeter in contrast*. I went home and poured over pages of work published by the most popular, talented writers in this world. It was that day that I learned what this city wanted, what this city's people wanted, was a story different from my reality. *Stories here aren't like raspberry chocolate or cherry sundaes*. I made a mental note when the editor rambled on, they're not meant to stay sweet.

Words were not hard to hear when you were in an office of 15 people in total. So, it became clear that the *poor girl, idling in front of the window trying to figure out what trauma means* they snickered about was me. They meant well, though. Nobody in this city didn't have a dream of their own. *Dreams needed to be shaped a little*, said Claire from across the room. She didn't bother to tear her eyes away from her newly manicured nails. For my dream to be seen, it meant grabbing the cat and throwing it into the rain sometimes. Caught by my boiling pride to prove that I could achieve my ambition, to prove that this world, albeit different from my own, did not make me waver from my stance, I stepped into the shade. ➤



STEP TWO: INTO THE SHADE

I was born with the knack of remembering exclusively the good, but it didn't mean I was detached from the shade. 300 pages into one of the most popular books of the year I turned 16, I sent 4 long, angry voice messages to my friend for recommending this book. *You lied*, I lamented, *you told me it was a good book*. She good-naturedly explained to me why it was a good book—the language was perfect, the pace well measured, the character development mesmerizing, and the plot—the plot so realistic. I secretly agreed to the first three, and to the fourth, too. It was exactly why I hated the book. It wrote about a life so little it couldn't bear anything but pain. It talked 700 pages of childhood trauma, selfish attempts, and friendship and love that are unable to mend the scars. *Don't worry*, the same friend comforted me, *I don't think it could be real*. I had the most hypocritical urge to fire back that *it is real*. The shade burned me. Because behind the confetti, the pastel doodles, the cheery greetings and heartfelt laughter, I've always admitted that as colorful as my writing business here is, there exists a business, around another corner, dark enough to swallow up everything if I wanted it to. Ten years later, revisiting works that I banned my friends from reading, all best-sales of our teenage years, I wondered if truly the world embraced the shade more.

This city evolved around the shade. On a cozy afternoon, wrapped in my warmest scarf and holding my newest camera, I took a trip to the gallery my colleagues talked so highly about. *Gives you some inspiration*, Claire winked as she slipped the ticket into my hands, *you're too welcome*. The artist had lovely ringlets bouncing off her head. Her warm laughter bounced off the manicured frames as she walked me through her works. Arranged across the walls, reminiscent of my own little wall back home, were paintings of red paint splashed across dark sheets, of dead skin and rotting souls, repulsive grimaces and mouths agape with sorrow. She talked of them as if I talked of "Porco Rosso" ("The Crimson Pig", a flying pig that became my Ghibli favorite). I crafted my part of the conversation carefully as to not brush a wound, but she was a word away from peeling off her scabs in front of me—a stranger—and packing them into one of her plastic bags as a visiting gift. ►

The freedom of writing applies anywhere. I knew this, and it led me to the path I'm stepping along now. The purpose of writing, of any art, I remember my high school director repeating, is to express things that cannot come out of our mouths. Pain is one of them.

Yet dragging yourself through pain, or making up pain to write, is not one of my purposes. I woke up, disoriented, one morning over sheets of drafts from the night before. It was an edited version of one of my little romances before, only time had betrayed the lovers this time—because it's realistic. *Romance, of all things*, I remember Claire's red-lipped words, *if ended well makes you a high-school girl too cliché for them readers. If it ends badly, if nothing works out, it spares you another glance from your audience. Your choice.* The words resembled dead skin, but I published them anyway.

STEP THREE (FINAL): FIND THE LIGHT, AGAIN

I left my desk in front of the window that summer and booked a ticket back home. Mourning for my waning pride, I left the pages of love unrequited, family conflicts unresolved, dreams haunted and flesh rotten—they have taken residence across the sheets without my realization. *All we need is a touch of things going down the hill here and there*, the editor's words ricocheted. I have forgotten how to run my business around the corner of reality.

The flight back home was shorter than I remembered. Back behind my desk in the metropolis, home had felt so distant, like a worn-off polaroid in the back of my head. Now that the plane had dived impossibly close to the spacious fields below, the 2-storied houses drawing upon me, I felt strangely afraid. I watched the scenery with the same sense of guilt as someone who had forgotten their mother tongue after returning from college would. The flight was short, and the ride to our old house shorter. When had time started passing without me noticing? During my not-so-distant childhood, everything from biking to the ice-cream parlor six blocks away to a one-hour flight seemed like eternities. There were so many things to see, yet the time had always been just an ounce of patience too long. Now? There were so many things to see, yet the time barely allowed for “looking”, let alone “seeing”.

The house was just as I left it. The four-o-clock sunshine weaved its way through the French window of my bedroom, its light filtered rainbow as it shone through scattered stickers plastered around the corners. It didn't smoothen my fidgeting. I sat down on the bed in an attempt to fall asleep, only to have a wave of anxiety wash over me the next second—sitting back and relaxing was not an option, and my heart itched with the notion of needing to do something productive. Funny how after all the effort I had put into leaving the concrete city behind, my publisher's constant hastening had slipped into my luggage and rooted in the little room here. I was not here to write, in fact, I was here to do anything but to write. Yet as I marched my way out of the house towards the grass fields behind, I realized that somethings weren't meant to go as planned.

The mid-summer air was surprisingly cool, and the path that led to the top of the hill was drenched in pleasant breezes. I gazed at the inviting grass beneath my feet, and did the first thing that felt right since I set foot on this land—I plopped down underneath the shade of the tree, lying face towards the unrealistically blue sky between leaves and branches, and thought of nothing. The itch in my heart was still there, but was slowly pacified by the gentle lulling of the wind, of the sunshine, of the scent of freshly mowed grass, of a soft piece of memory that came to mind on its own. ►

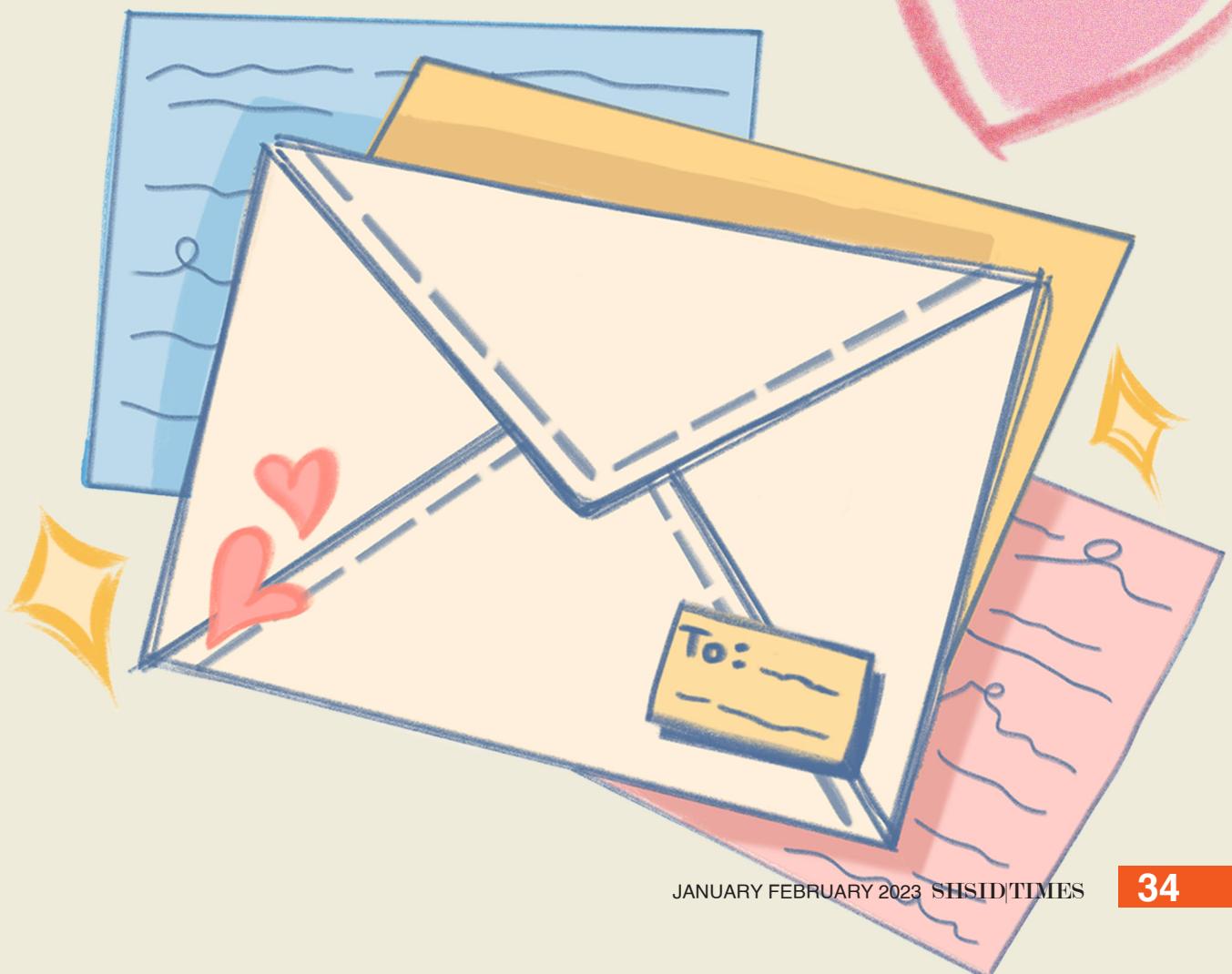
The ground had smelt like overbaked carrot cakes and lemongrass that day six summers ago. Or maybe it was us. We laid there, sprawled in a circle on top the grass hill, our noses buried between sheets of paper—“to be precise, to-do lists for spending the summer after we return as disciplined highfliers many years later” in one of my friends’ words. I had peeked at her page worth of slender handwriting and hmphed. Lists have never been my thing. I had snatched her paper and rolled away before her outstretched leg could hit my thigh. The four of us had broken into laughter so vibrant that even the wind, ever so spontaneous, couldn’t seem to resist dipping its tail in our metaphorical honey jar as it swept by.

I remember slipping our papers into an envelope smoothly, and taking care to fold at precisely the middle. I remember the secret vow we took after burying the envelope beneath the tree on this very hill. *Open only when you really don’t know what to do.*

The memory stopped as abruptly as it came. *Beneath the tree on this very hill.* Could it be? I shook with foreign excitement that hadn’t appeared in a long time. Could it still be here? The breeze came again and ruffled the branches above me. Without having to look, I knew what I had written all those summers ago.

Write. Write about dandelions in April and fruit pops in June, the crunch of colored leaves in October and the soft scent of cashmere in December. Spend days sprawled on mats of green, squint for the stars at dawn and sketch the patterns of clouds on blue skies. Write about Ghibli disks and lemongrass, swims down lakes during the noon and overheated picnics on the bank. Write.

Keep your writing business around the corner of reality open. ■







Written by: Tina Wang | Illustrated by: Erika Liao

若一个许下的愿望是
一只收获蚁，
那轻啮着我的心为食
又将觅来的填回缺口的，
便有千万。

四下无人的黑夜里
只有流星听到
这貌似完整下的
摇摇欲坠。

许下愿望
多半是本能——驱使人类
忍受
烈火焚尽肉身、
寒冰侵蚀筋骨。
忍受
无解的
抓挠不到的
千万只蚂蚁踩踏的
瘙痒。
若一个许下的愿望是
一只收获蚁，
那轻啮着我的心为食
又将觅来的填回缺口的，
便有千万。 ■

A New Year's Resolution

"Now, as we close one chapter, the pen is gradually inking up, preparing itself to write the next."

- Mie Hansson

As Denmark poet Mie Hansson said, another chapter of our life has ended, yet we have another chapter to begin. Making new year's resolutions became a custom to start the new chapter off to a positive start. Nonetheless, we often get discontented with our resolutions for being far-fetched or unrealistic. If we are unsure of which direction we should direct our efforts, we could easily fall back again into last year's deep quagmire. Despite the uncertainty of resolutions, though, making new year's resolutions has become a common routine in SHSID community. This article will explore some shared grounds in students' new year's resolutions and reflect on their insights.

STEP 1. REFLECTION

Taking note of what we have learned on our path up to the new year might provide us a chance to apply it to the future – to take with us what is beneficial and to leave behind what is not. Reflection is vital as it allows us to identify areas where we can improve and progress in the upcoming year. When asked about the value of reflections before making new year's resolutions, interviewed students presented meaningful insights. Junior Min Kim discussed the value of self-reflection and taking lessons from past failures. She views the start of a new year as an opportunity for a fresh start and wants it to mark the beginning of improvements. "Reflection is vital because it allows us to identify areas where we can make improvements and progress in

Written by: Jennifer Suh
Illustrated by: Brianna Sun

the upcoming year," she said, "since I struggled to manage my sleeping routine, I will try to improve that in the new year." Likewise, Junior student Sophie Xu also emphasized learning from self-reflection. Sophie preferably writes down reflections in her planner, which, she commented, "serves as a reminder of the mistakes [she] made last year and a goal for the next year." Whether reflection is written down or not, students seem to regard the essential part of it as becoming more aware of ourselves, understanding our weaknesses, and having a more fulfilling year.

STEP 2. SETTING GOALS

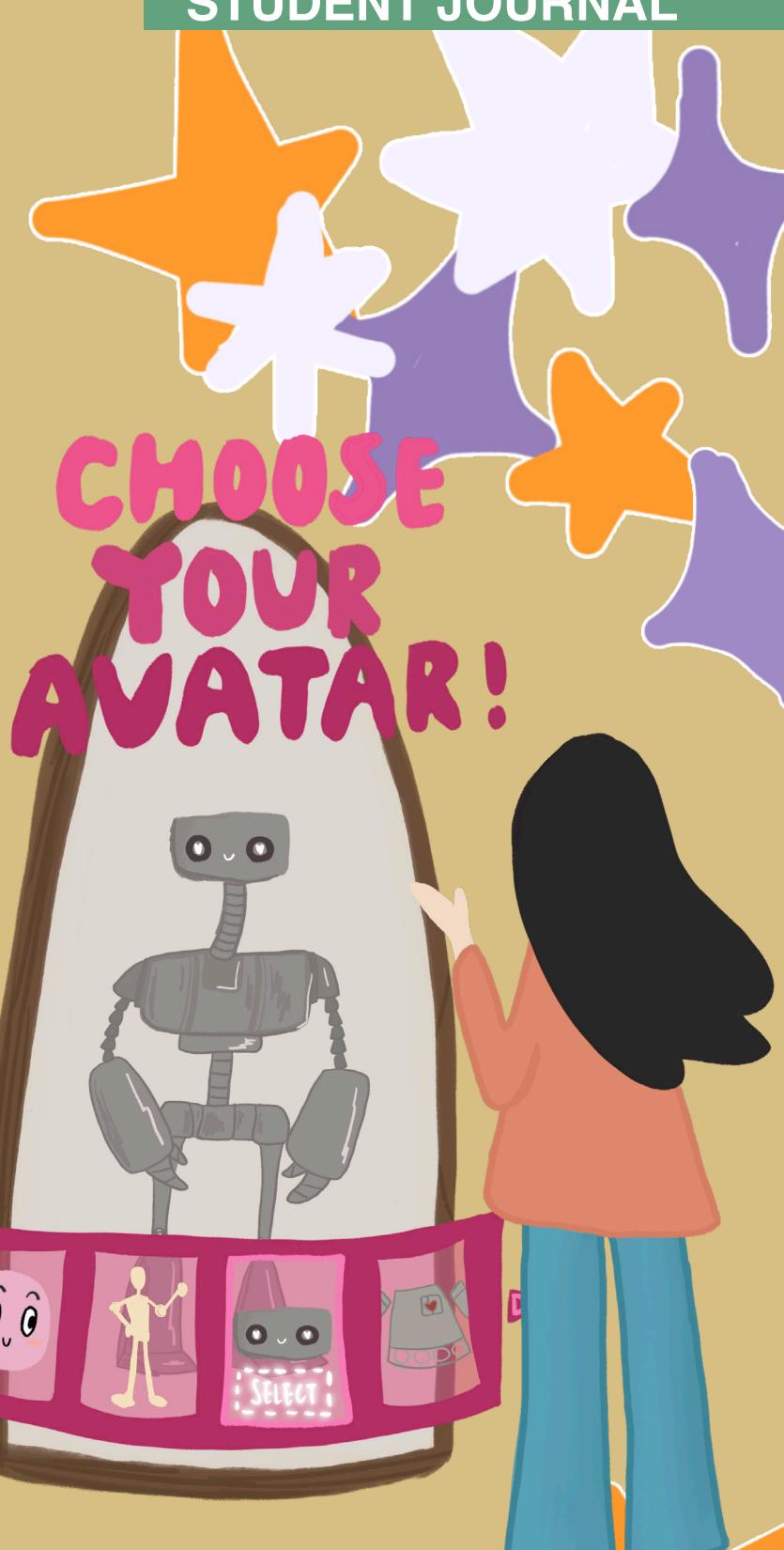
Reflecting on past adversities and failures, students continue with the next step: setting goals. Planning for either long-term goals or daily objectives is an indispensable step in making a new year's resolution. Without sturdy construction, a new building ➡



will easily breach. Sophie introduced the way she plans, “once I decide what I need to change, I force myself to make ‘specific plans.’ I first write down every single objective I have, then [I] sort them based on my priority, which allows me to allocate time more effectively.” Then, she continued with the value of doing so, “I’m not usually motivated to start something, like when I face to join a course, but since I plan exclusive goals, I feel confident that I can make it to the end.” Like Sophie reflected, setting goals can help us to stay accountable and keep us motivated to continue working towards our goals. This is because goals, especially when specified, can track our progress and measure success. Whether our goals are to have a healthier lifestyle, improve a relationship, or become more committed to standardized tests, we can feel the triumph when we see the status proceed. However, when Min was asked about specific goals, she gave a rather lukewarm response. Min mentioned, “sometimes, plans don’t go as you had initially, and you would have to abandon your goals, [...] can leave you feeling hopeless and useless, so I would be careful when I’m planning unrealistic goals.” She pointed out that goals need to be ‘realistic’ since we are not ‘principled’ machines.

STEP 3. EXECUTION

Although setting goals is a source of navigation and motivation, as Min has previously mentioned, intense and unrealistic goals are a hindrance to success. Then, how can we persistently manage and execute our goals in the new year? As a suggestion, Min listed some books that helped her execute plans last year. She recommended *The New Year Resolution Book: Change Your Life Now* by James W. Vaupell. She said, “The author suggests specific strategies for setting goals and offers tips on how to stay motivated. He also explores the psychological and emotional aspects of resolutions and examines how to sustain commitment over time.” Correspondingly, Sophie also recommended a book called *The Slight Edge* by Jeff Olson. She said that Olson provides his insights into how small daily actions can lead to big accomplishments over time, not to mention some advices on how to identify and overcome obstacles. Sophie said, “this book is a great guide for anyone who wants to learn insights about how to set and execute goals.” At last, Sophie brought up the difficult subject of her depression last year. When people got locked down last year, she got depressed and tried to drop out from school; however, she found herself continuing her repetitive life further after taking rest and reading various books. She said that she found this book last year when she fell into a deep quagmire, which drove her to endure. Sophie ended her interview with a positive remark that the triumph of executing goals is a rewarding experience, so it is worthwhile to strive to overcome procrastination, depression, or any other adversaries. To see the results of her hard work, she said she will continue to find the best way for her to execute goals and resolutions in the fresh new year – to be the best version of herself in 2023.



Whether or not 2022 was a year of regret, we will all find new ways to improve ourselves over the course of 2023. May you find success in all of your endeavors, and your relationships be filled with respect and understanding. Hope this year brings you the energy and courage to make positive improvements in your life and reach your goals. Wishing you a wonderful and prosperous New Year! ■

The first month of 2023, the year of the rabbit has already come to an end. Wishing for a better year than the last one, many people come up with their new year's resolutions, promising themselves to become better people. If you are one of them, how is it going for you? Did you end up abandoning them and spending the same old day as the same old you? If you did—you're not alone. On New Year's Eve of 2022, my family decided to play a game to spice up our new year's resolutions and achieve the goals we set for ourselves. We set up a prize for anyone who carries through everything that is written on their resolution list. ►



Written by: Sabrina Lee
Photos by: Fanya Lyn Walter

New Year's Resolutions: *Why Do We Keep Failing?*

Unsurprisingly, when we looked back at the resolutions we wrote at the end of 2022, we realized that none of us got even close to the goals we set.

From the similar stories I hear from my peers, I know that I'm not the only living example of “作心三日”. This is a term often used in Korea to describe people who make new year's resolutions—meaning that the mindset you create only lasts for three days. Why is it so hard for us to keep up with new year's resolutions? Is the universe just being gluckschmerz? The essence of good new year's resolutions is actually not too hard to find out; sometimes the key is just right under our noses.

The history of new year's resolutions dates back to ancient times. The ancient Babylonians made promises to the gods at the beginning of March, believing that keeping their words would guarantee the prosperity of the year. Similarly, ancient Romans made promises of piousness to one of the gods, Janus, in January; They believed that this two-faced god could look into their future and their past at the same time. For centuries, new year's eve and new year's day have been a time for people to reflect on the past year and to think about ways to resolve and improve in the future. Although new year's resolutions have their roots in religious customs, people today make new year's resolutions for no others but themselves. The motivation behind this ritual is the optimism it gives to us; making a new year's resolution symbolizes a fresh start, a hope that makes us believe that we can move on from past mistakes and build a new perfect version of ourselves.

The thing about such optimism is that it might work as an obstacle when it is alone. The excitement and hopefulness of the new year festivity often blind us to thinking too big and thinking too broadly. We would overestimate ourselves, setting a big change as our new year's goal. Some things such as “getting more sleep”, “learning a new language”, and “eating healthier” are some of the most common goals that appear on people's new year's resolutions. They are also the ones that are most easily abandoned, as we are not built to enjoy the sufferings of having to take giant steps at a time. The more specific and attainable your goal is, the easier it is for you to reach the final goal without getting overwhelmed. Your new year's resolution might be something easy such as watching one episode of a TV show in a foreign language for each day or learning a foreign phrase daily. By setting up a real assignment for yourself, you will be able to get closer and closer to your goal of learning a new language without being lazy. The optimism of the new year becomes a motivation when you actually start doing something that allows you to keep track of your progress.

If you look at the “Stages of Change” model, you will see five different stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Most of us often jump right into the action stage or contemplation stage of the model—where we think about the change and start planning to make a difference. The key stage that we often miss is the pre-contemplation part, where you need to start asking yourself why. Before putting your new year's resolution into action, ask yourself what motivates you to do this. Make sure that you have a clear reason for the change

pre-contemplation

contemplation

preparation

maintenance

action

you are planning—some sort of reward or meaning. If your goal is “eat more vegetables and work out every day”, you might end up skipping the exercises because they make you feel tired and sweaty. If you tell yourself that you “should” do something without a particular reason, it is easier for you to give up. If you keep reminding yourself about the thing you want for yourself—for example, your ultimate happiness by making a healthier body—you will be more prepared to face the change you are about to make. Remember, a new year's resolution does not only involve promises; it also involves reflections.

At the beginning of 2023, my family wrote down our new year's resolutions together again. This time, we did not set up any prizes; we took a look at our old resolutions and corrected each of them into more realistic baby steps toward our ultimate goal. We shared the reasons behind our goals—the motivation that will make us go on with the resolutions throughout the year. Wishing all of you the best. I hope more of us can finally stick with our new year's resolutions in 2023—at least for more than a month. Good luck! ■

+ New chat

I'm sure most of you have heard of or even tried out ChatGPT, a revolutionary AI chatbot that can interact with humans in a surprisingly sophisticated and natural way. Developed by OpenAI, an artificial intelligence research laboratory co-founded and funded partly by Elon Musk, ChatGPT became an internet sensation immediately after its release. It set the record for the fastest-growing consumer application in history, garnering 1 million active users in just 5 days. For comparison, Instagram, the second-fastest application to hit 1 million users, took about 2.5 months, and Twitter took over 2 years. Just last month, ChatGPT hit over 100 million users. The popularity of this amazing AI is unquestionable, but how exactly does it work, and what are the implications for mankind?

ChatGPT itself is a large language model that can be used for natural language processing tasks such as text generation and language translation. It is able to generate human-like text responses to all sorts of prompts, from simply providing clear and concise information to performing creative writing such as composing poems or movie scripts.

Clear conversations

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NEW

Light mode

Updates & FAQ

ChatGPT: The AI Chatbot Taking the World by Storm

Written by: Kevin Wang

Photos from: Google

It is based on GPT-3.5 (hence the name), which stands for “generative pretrained transformer 3.5.” The GPT-3.5 architecture is a type of transformer model that uses advanced attention mechanisms to process and generate text. This neural network is composed of multiple layers of interconnected nodes, with each node in the network being able to process a specific aspect of the prompt, such as the overall meaning, the syntactic structure, or the contextual information. As the input text is passed along and processed through the network, the nodes work together to generate a coherent and grammatically correct response.

One of the key features of GPT-3.5 is its ability to learn from vast amounts of data. Data is one of the most important factors that come into training any machine learning model, and GPT-3.5 is no exception. It has been trained on massive amounts of text data, including a variety of topics and styles. Because the GPT-3.5 model is able to learn from such a large and diverse dataset, it is able to generate responses that are highly relevant to the prompt and exhibit a high level of knowledge and understanding of the context.

Another crucial advantage of the GPT-3.5 architecture is its ability to handle long-range dependencies in the prompt, meaning that it is able to understand and process a

highly complex and closely-interrelated text. This is crucial to the effectiveness of ChatGPT because many natural language tasks, such as language translation or text summarization, require the model to understand the overall meaning and context of the text in order to generate a relevant response. The self-attention mechanisms in the GPT-3 architecture allow the model to capture these long-range dependencies and generate an accurate and articulate response.

ChatGPT is undoubtedly an advanced piece of technology. The closest alternatives we might have experienced may be voice assistants such as Siri or Google Assistant, but they are extremely awkward and primitive in comparison to ChatGPT. Such an impressive AI certainly comes with many business opportunities and real-world implications. For example, one of the largest technology industries, search, currently dominated by Google, could be completely disrupted with ChatGPT-enabled advantages and consumer benefits. Just recently, Microsoft announced a new multiyear, multibillion-dollar investment and partnership with OpenAI that will allow OpenAI's software, including ChatGPT and many other AIs, to be integrated into Microsoft's products such as Bing and Office, opening the door for exciting features. From simplifying search to providing essay ide-

Examples

Capabilities

Limitations

"Explain quantum computing in simple terms" →

Remembers what user said earlier in the conversation

May occasionally generate incorrect information

"Got any creative ideas for a 10 year old's birthday?" →

Allows user to provide follow-up corrections

May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content

"How do I make an HTTP request in Javascript?" →

Trained to decline inappropriate requests

Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

as in Word, the possibilities are simply endless. Understandably, Google, who had for years been the industry leader for state-of-the-art AI, faces stiff competition that can challenge the company's dominance in many consumer tech services, such as their \$149 billion search business. Google has recently responded with Bard, another AI chatbot aimed to rival ChatGPT, and we can expect more AI-enabled smart services from other tech companies as well.

However, the rise of ChatGPT has not come without controversy. For instance, because ChatGPT provides information, there have been discussions over it potentially serving misinformation that may have unwarranted consequences. During the announcement of Google's Bard AI, it made an embarrassing factual error in response to a question about the James Webb Space Telescope. Even though this specific inquiry is mundane, the possibility of AI spreading misinformation on a wide scale, especially for sensitive matters such as politics or natural disasters, is a real concern. Additionally, even if the AI itself doesn't provide misinformation, biases in its response (and creators) could be equally detrimental. Already, people like Elon Musk have pointed out what seemed to be a left-wing political bias in some of ChatGPT's responses – such as refusing

to praise right-wing figures but will do so for their left-wing counterparts. If such instances are true, then there requires a serious effort to make the AI more neutral (as its policy states).

There has also been concern over ChatGPT being used in unethical ways. For instance, ChatGPT may be engineered to provide biased answers in order to sway public opinion on certain subjects or issues. Another major concern is using ChatGPT for cheating activities, especially for academic work. Already, professors have caught students cheating on homework assignments using answers provided by ChatGPT. Thus, it is a grave concern over what AI chatbots like ChatGPT will do to academic integrity and whether or not there is actually a way to prevent dishonest behavior.

In conclusion, ChatGPT is a very impressive chatbot that is able to provide accurate and sophisticated answers to complex prompts. The possibilities of this technology are limitless, but it comes along with real concerns over the quality of the responses and how it may be used in unethical ways. Ultimately, ChatGPT is still in its infancy, and it is the first, but certainly not the last, of these increasingly capable AI to be brought to market. How-

ever, there are many concerns that will need to be addressed, but if we are able to do that, then AI like ChatGPT will provide amazing benefits to our digital lives that we can't even imagine. ■

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