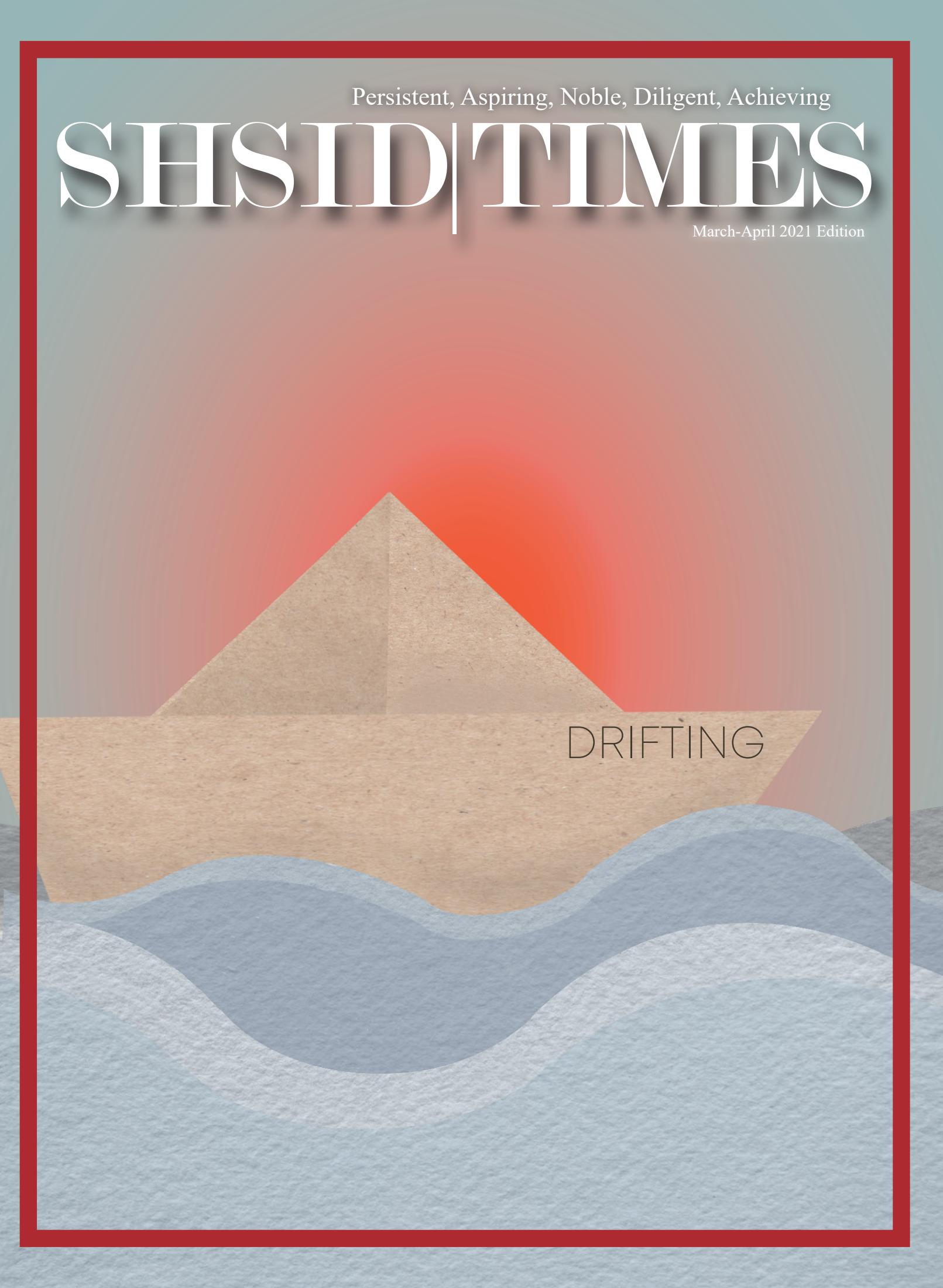


Persistent, Aspiring, Noble, Diligent, Achieving

SHSID|TIMES

March-April 2021 Edition



DRIFTING

The background of the cover features a stylized graphic. At the top, there is a large, light brown pyramid with a textured surface. Below the pyramid is a horizontal band of a similar light brown color with a fine, horizontal-grained texture. In the foreground, there are large, light blue-grey waves with a slightly darker, textured surface. The overall composition is minimalist and abstract, using a palette of earthy tones and blues.

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Readers,

In a world where endless possibilities exist, we are often confined to our own pathways. We are told that the decisions we make are pieces to a jigsaw puzzle that eventually fill up to the life we get. As life goes on and we discover more of ourselves, the pieces to our puzzle change bit by bit. We may drift apart from the people we've met, the hobbies we've liked, or even the places we've lived. Confronted with these changes, we might feel lost about our direction. We might even blindly place the wrong pieces together until we figure out that the picture is incomplete. Yet sometimes it is necessary for us to leave our old selves in order to find the best pieces that will hold our puzzle together.

For that reason, I am thrilled to introduce the theme of this March-April issue—Drifting. We hope that this issue can serve as an opportunity for you to reflect on the things you have drifted apart from and perhaps the journey you have embarked on in finding yourself.

Sincerely,

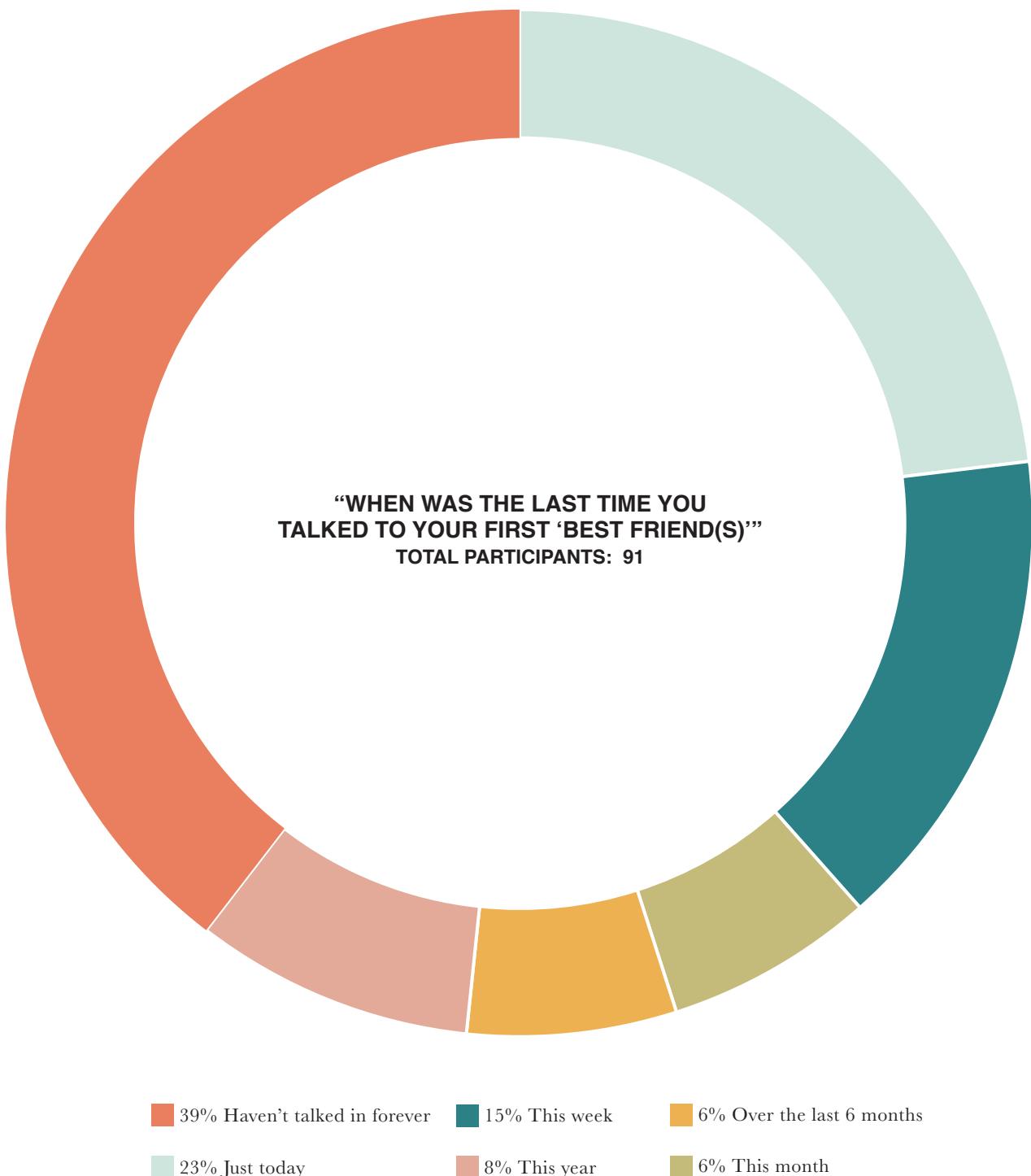
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yuyi Tzeng".

Yuyi Tzeng, Creative Director

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 shsdtimes@hotmail.com and follow SHSID | *Times* on WeChat to participate in our online polls.



LETTERS

ON “NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT”: JAN-FEB 2021

The majority of the terrestrial disputes in the modern world is somewhat associated with imperialism in the 20th century. The terrestrial dispute of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, specifically, may be considered an inevitable result of the Soviet Union's imperialism. Looking back at history, the Caucasus region of West Asia was included in the Russian sphere of influence since the 19th century. During the late 19th and 20th century, the Soviet Union extended its political influence through the expansion of SSR. Then, the Soviet Union central government “dictated Karabakh to join Azerbaijan SSR,” without thorough understanding on the possible cultural and social differences that may be rather apparent between the nations in the Caucasus region.

However, with the collapse of Soviet Union, the Nagorno-Karabakh region soon became a disputed territory between Armenia and Azerbaijan, reflecting the negative influence of the Soviet Union's previous interference in the region.

The article further analyzed the subsequent military conflicts that occurred and their significance to the two nations involved. Due to persistent armed conflict, many civilians were directly placed under threat. The past genocides and ongoing conflicts contribute to the growing hostility and antipathy among nations. Moreover, nearby nations such as Israel, Turkey, and Iran are becoming involved in this conflict as well, and in doing so, warn the world about the dangerous possibility of increasing violence that the conflict poses for in the future.

I would like to express my sincere sympathies to everyone involved in this war, and I wish the conflict can be resolved in a peaceful manner.

-Judy Kim 10(3)

OLD LOMBARDY

i

I came close to him,
Our skin almost touching,
Most nights I've dreamt of him,
And in a dream,
It was so peaceful,
So loving.
Pink Hawaiian skies,
Separated in the middle by purple and orange. He came close,
Biting his lips and holding my hand.
I can't love him-
Can I?

OLD LOMBARDY (CONTINUED)

ii

Old Lombardy put down his pipe and looked at me, The room was covered with a screen of thin smoke. His eyes pierced through.
“The hell you here for?”
He asked me,
His face battered and bruised.
Through the smoked pierced the light. The light shone softly.
“Bored.”
“Bored my ass.”
He chuckled softly.
The smoke crescendoed,
It hung midair,
A curtain that separated us.
Yet I feel closer to him than I've ever had.

iii

“Where in the hell have you been?”
“Up at Old Lombardy’s, dad.”
He looked at me with a mix of surprise and anger. “Didn’t I tell’ya not ter go up there?”
“Yes dad.”
“For the love of God,”
I looked at him.
He looked back.
“Go up to your room son.”
“Yes dad.”

iv

If you think you’ve felt pain before,
You haven’t.
When the one who says they love you the most, When the one-
The angel in white,
The one whose always there,
When you cry,
Why you feel like you can die,
When you doubt if your existence,
Is merely to bring pain amongst yourself, The one whose there,
And will hold you when you cry.
Damned hypocrites.
Where’s the unconditional love now? What was it when you said
‘We just want you to be happy.’
Well look at me,
Happy now,
Aren’t you?
Say you’ll love me forever,
No matter what I choose to do. Was that a lie too?

v

“Still haven’t explained,”
Old Lombardy used his sleeve to clean the cup on the table. “I just wanted to be here.”
“Ha! As if.”
He picked up the bottle of cheap liquor,
And poured some.
“Fancy a bevy?”
“No thanks.”
He took a deep swig,
A few drops slid out of his mouth,

Reflecting the sunlight,
Like little drops of pearls.
“I don’t have anyone else, Lombardy.”
He looked at me.
“You don’t need anyone else.”

vi

In a dream, it was all perfect. In a dream...
We’d sit on our balcony, Sitting on the couches, Sippin’ on whatever.
Or,
Maybe cuddle up on a rainy day,
And watch something...
It all sounds so perfect.
Love’s so sweet when done simple. Giving him a new nickname everyday, Or just, holding on to the belief that,
One day he’ll love me back.
But he can’t-
Can he?

vii

The thin screen of smoke drifted off, As if broken free
From the constraints of the room, And drifted away
As a should would when exiting the body. Fly free, fly free.
“In a dream,
Everything would be perfect.”
Old Lombardy sat down again. “In a dream,
We’d chase the sunset,
Past the pine trees,
Through the desert.”
He poured the last shot. “In a dream,
We would love.”

viii

I just can’t pretend anymore, I can’t.
The pain, anger, whatever more there is.
I just can’t.
Love or no love?
Light or no light?
A tinge of hope shimmers on the horizon.
Is it real?
Or an illusion,
A trick of the mind?
A desperate calling for my deepest, darkest needs.

xi

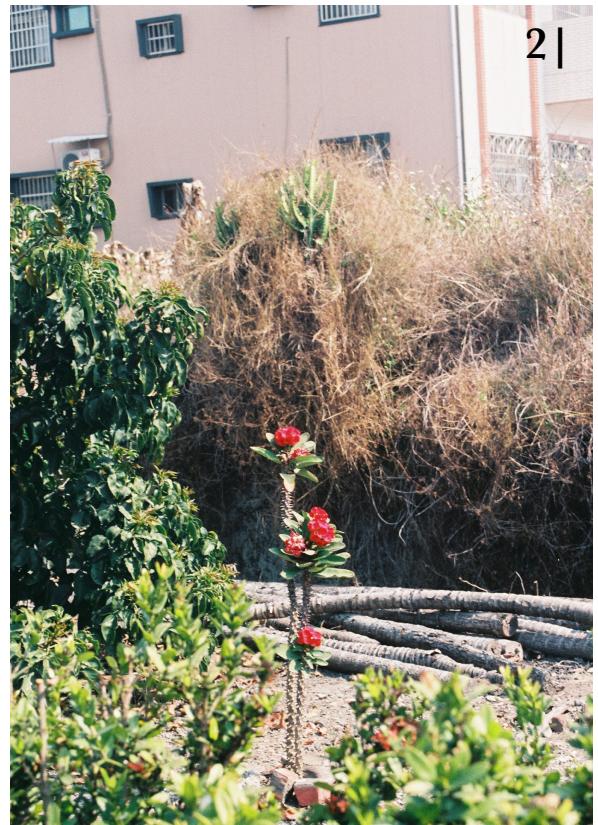
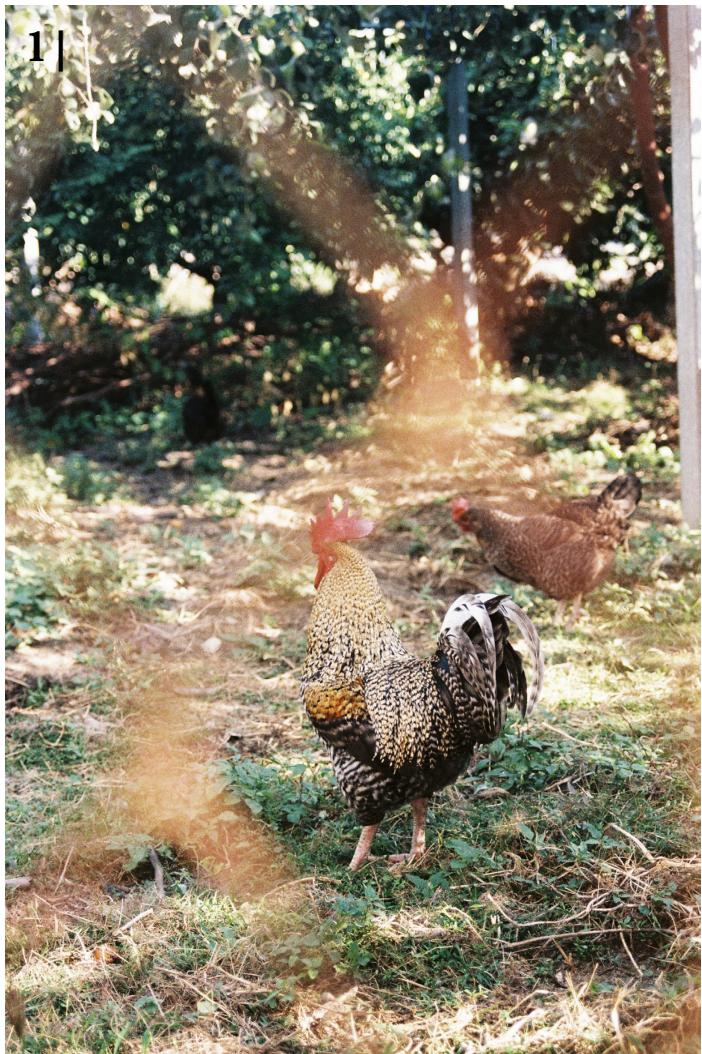
“I know more than you know.” He whispered calmly,
Slowly swerving the cup of liquor. He closed in on me,
Eyes sunken,
Lips dry.
“I know more than you know.” He closed his eyes,
And the pipe burnt out.

x

In a dream,
I was chasing after the sunset with him, Chasing the love and the light.
I kissed his cheeks.
And on and on,
We’ll chase the light.

-Anonymous

ART SUBMISSIONS

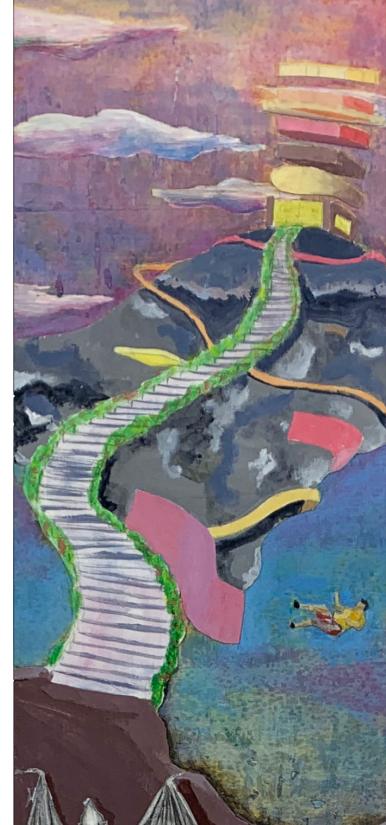


1-4 | Untitled
by Sammi Wei 12(4)

邻居枣子的照片
邻居鸡的照片
舅舅和害怕青蛙的照片
红花的照片

乡

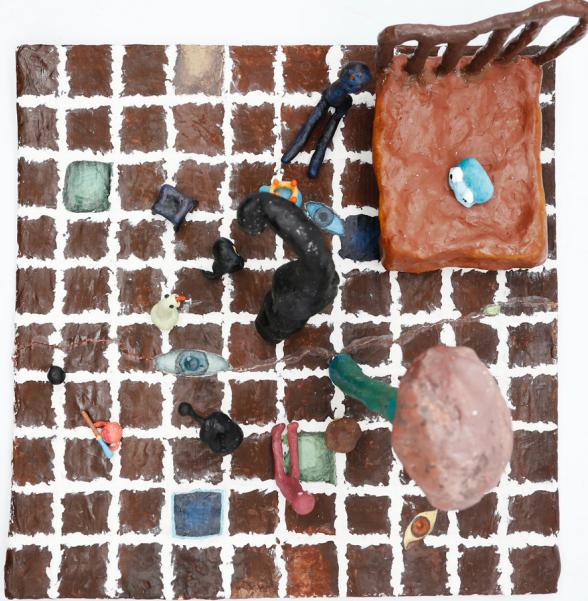
4 |



5 | Untitled
by Ian Huang 12(9)

Me falling from my dream to the broken reality which the dragon, representing my past, has destroyed

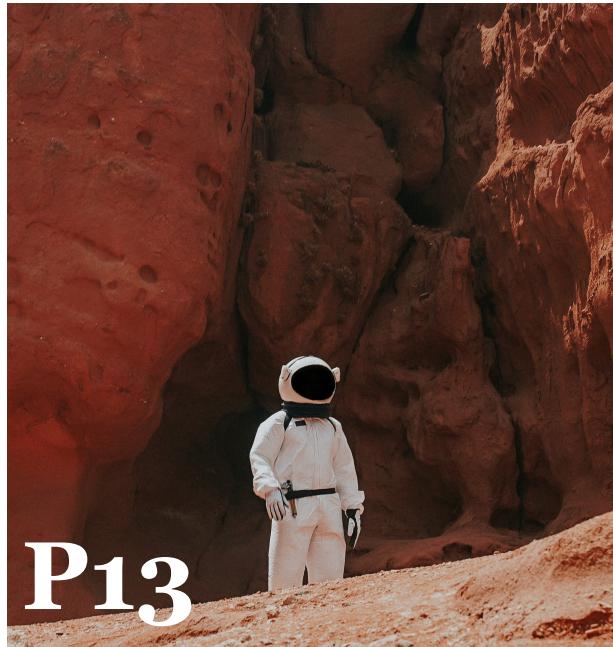
6 |



6 | Untitled
by Ian Huang 12(9)

The clay-built structure presents my imagination of my chess world. The figures on the board all possess different personalities and energy, which stayed by me and completed my childhood.

5 |



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P2

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23



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ALL THINGS GO

ALL THINGS GO

Written By: Alicia Chen, Chloe Ng, Mimi Yang, Sophie Yu | Design By: Yuyi Tzeng

AUGUST 20th

DEAR LUCE



I'm writing this on a trans-Pacific flight, destination Shanghai, China, on a flimsy, speckled-plastic folding table that digs into my stomach when it's all unfolded. It's four in the morning for you right now, and I know you'll be fast asleep in that unicorn comforter we picked together when we were children.

Maybe you'll have fallen asleep facing north, the side of your room with the window that overlooks our neighborhood. You'll look at all those stately little brick houses in neat rows, and you'll find the one that belonged to me, empty and bearing a SOLD sign stabbed into the front lawn. Further north you'll see the Brookline Park in all its half-constructed glory, sparsely adorned with litter and a few dangerously creaky wooden swing sets. Remember how much we loved that park as children?

We used to fish for tadpoles in the pond in the park, I think. It was a muddy, man-made circle of a pond, all murky water and moss bordered by multicolored pebbles. In summer there were so many tadpoles that you could scoop up a paper cup of pond water and get dozens upon dozens of the creatures, writhing together for lack of space. I remember the shores of that pond were stained permanently dark and gunky from the corpses of tadpoles the smaller kids would pour onto the sunbaked pebbles. Remember how you told me so seriously about the cruelty of children? Towards the end of August there would be toads, and in the shade of the trees we'd find them slain and turned on their backs, flashing white bellies. Remember the toad you took home and named Arnold, after the author of that children's series Frog and Toad? What happened to him?

God, we spent hours in that park. We'd always get ice cream afterwards, Rocky Road for you and chocolate for me, and walk down the street not talking, trying to get ahead of the melting cones. I'd try and make them last; you never finished before me.

Maybe there'll be a park with a pond and an ice-cream place where I'm going; maybe it will even be near my new apartment. That way, we can eat ice cream in a park on opposite ends of the globe next summer and know we'll still be doing it at the same time. Together. There's something poetic about that idea. Maybe when we turn eighteen we can go to the same college or share an apartment. Then we can eat ice cream and talk about the years we spent apart. I'm thinking about it now and I can't wait.

In the meantime, it's good to know that you'll always be here while I test out the waters out here in the great People's Republic. I'll mail this as soon as I find a mailbox and a stamp; before then, we'll just have to rely on our sixth sense to talk to each other.



LOVE ZOEY

P.S. New address enclosed. Apartment number is 1501.

PPS. Say hi to Hans Schnitzel, Klaus, and Sandwich for me. You know I will always love those cats. ►

SEPTEMBER 4th

DEAR ZO

Ah, the cruelty of children. I'm currently suffering from the wrath of my sister who insisted on peppering the paper I'm using to write this letter with doodles of purple stars. I guess you could say I'm one of the survivors of this cruelty (save me, Zoey!)

About Arnold—he died. Don't you remember? You were there when we buried him in December—we lay his corpse on the snow-hardened soil of that park because you said his home was where the tadpoles were at the start of that summer. I'm not sure, though, you might've said something else.

You're right about your old house—the SOLD sign was a more glaring reminder of your absence than it needs to be. It's only been a few weeks since you left, and the memory of you waving to me at the airport is still fresh in my mind. I miss you already.

I'm lying in bed right now and I can't stop thinking about the biweekly sleepovers we'd have almost religiously—those Wednesdays were the highlight of all of my weeks. Do you remember the first time we stayed up all night for that Harry Potter movie marathon? I could barely keep my eyes open the next day but we agreed that the sleep deprivation was so worth it. Having you by my side always is.

Eating ice cream at the same time sounds like a great idea—time difference may be a problem, though. I'll have to sit at the bench at ungodly hours to match up with your time zone so: maybe not. We'd always be together though, as you said. I promise I'll visit when I have time! We'll go see the tadpoles at the pond near where you live in China and if there isn't a pond, well, it's fine because we'd get to see each other again and that would be enough.

I hope you do well in this new environment, and I wish you the best. ►

SINCERELY LUCY

DEAR LUCY

It feels like summer can't come soon enough. When it does come I'll be all settled in here, and when you visit I can show you all the places I've discovered. Writing letters doesn't feel like enough, and I always worry that by the time we're eighteen we'll have written too many letters to count, or store.

We moved in four days ago, to our new apartment on the fifteenth floor. It's so high up but doesn't feel like it, because the steel-and-concrete buildings all around at eye level and higher don't look like they belong among the clouds. Our balcony is white marble and rusty iron, the only one in the building that doesn't have floral sheets and bright clothing drying above it like fluttering tropical birds. I use it to scout out the area, because I don't think I'm brave enough yet to venture out into the streets. I can't see a park or an ice cream place, but there are patches of vibrant green peeking out from behind one of the further apartment buildings. Maybe that's a park, or maybe it will be one soon.

I remember our sleepovers. When you come visit every day will be a sleepover, because you'll be living with us. How long? Two weeks? Three weeks?

Today I saw a man running a street food stall and thought of you. Remember our vacation to New York, when we bought hot dogs from the vendors on the streets? Hot dogs with mustard, ketchup, and relish, and you always said you preferred them Chicago-style. Where you'd tried Chicago-style hot dogs I had no idea, because we didn't live in Chicago. Chicago-style is better, you kept saying. I said we should move to Chicago together when we grew up. We should, still; we'll move to Chicago from different sides of an ocean.

I always thought ours is the kind of bond that can't be broken by an ocean in between. I realized while writing this that I'll have to make friends here, which I know will be hard. I've had no experience with cultural barriers my entire life, and now I've been plucked out of our familiar square-and-rectangle neighborhood into a country where I'm scared I'll lose myself in the sea of Asians, all dark hair and solemn faces focused on getting where they have to. I keep reminding myself that I belong here, that I have Chinese blood. I haven't taken the subway yet, but I know I'll have to before school starts. I'll have to take the subway, and I'll have to leave the house. Maybe I shouldn't be so terrified. There are billions of people in the world, and most of them are bound to be new ones. Making friends is a life skill, my mother told me. Even if that's true, I still wish you were here to learn it with me.

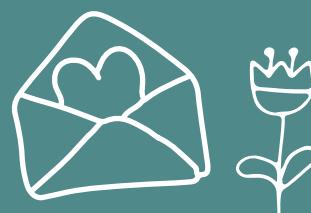


LOVE ZOEY

P.S. Do you like these envelopes? I thought purple would stand out and keep the people at the post office from losing it in the great journey overseas. I know you'd prefer pink, but purple is all I could find.

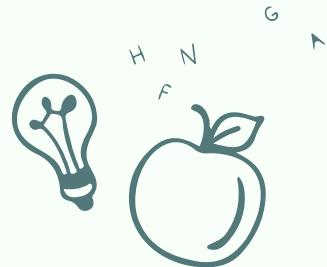
P.P.S. Tell the cats Zoey says hi. ►

SEPTEMBER 14th



DECEMBER 18th

DEAR ZOEY



I'm sorry it's taking me so long to write back. I joined some new clubs and the studying from school is keeping me busy. Who would've thought I was a natural at chess?

I've made a lot of new friends at the chess club—it feels so surreal. I never thought I'd be one to hang out with the chess people since we were in completely different social circles just last year. Tip for making friends: bonding over shared interest is a great way to get to know someone.

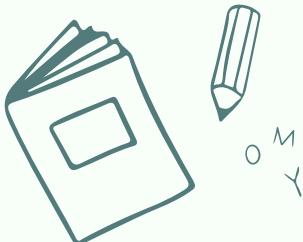
Your new apartment sounds interesting. It's definitely different from the house you had back here! The park near our neighborhood isn't faring nearly as well, though. The pond has frozen over, but the ice isn't thick enough for ice-skating yet so now the park is too cold for anyone to want to visit. I wonder how the tadpoles are faring.

Ah—that trip to New York. Huh. I don't remember buying the hot dogs, but I do remember going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I guess we enjoy and remember different things; but what can I say? Opposites attract. I'm sure we had a great time then though; we always do when we're hanging out together. And I'm holding you to promise of us moving to Chicago together.

I'm looking forward to those two-week sleepovers. Maybe we'll start doing movie marathons again, just like old times.

I have so much more I want to tell you, but I've been so busy with homework that I won't have the time to finish writing about everything if I want to mail this to you soon. I'll talk more in the next letter!

Ah, my parents are telling me to go to dinner. I'll talk to you soon. ►



SINCERELY LUCY

DEAR LUCY



I still can't believe I just passed New Year's Eve without you. It's been a few months already since I moved to Shanghai, but sometimes it still feels as though I'm in America with you. Just yesterday while I was getting ready to bake cookies, and I wanted to call and ask if you wanted to come over. I barely stopped myself just in time, but it really made me reflect about our move to China.

A weird thing about baking cookies in China is that their flour is named drastically different from the American kind. It took me so long to find the correct type, but that wasn't before I accidentally used cake flour. They ended up looking like giant, brown pancakes. It reminded me of all the mud and sand cakes we used to make on the beach. Remember how we'd meticulously shape massive dollops of sand into cakes? And how we'd sprinkle dry sand over them, to pretend it was cinnamon sugar? Sometimes, I can still faintly hear our shrieks of fury ring in my ears when the waves would come and sweep them away. We tried so hard to protect them, yet in the end they always melted away.

I decorated my room together with my mom last weekend, and while we were unpacking the boxes, I stumbled upon the photo we took together at the carnival when we were six. Remember? We both got our faces painted, but only because we begged our parents for what seemed to be hours. I still remember how I ended up getting a rash on my eye because of a chemical they used in the paint. Even though it's been practically a decade past, Mom still won't let me touch face paints. I now have that photo of us sitting on my desk, so I can see it and reminisce. Maybe you still have that photo on your nightstand, too. But maybe you've shoved it into a box, where it'll sit there, catching dust until one day, you rummage under your bed to find that tube of mascara you lost. Or maybe, you'll find it when you're cleaning your room, and you'll smile at the volley of memories rushing back to you.

Although this new letter-writing thing is kind of inconvenient, it's super cool to think of how maybe when we're old, we can look back at all the letters we exchanged. We promised to grow old together, and I'm still counting on that. ►

Write me back.



LOVE ZOEY

P.S.: Found a shimmery pink envelope this time, my Chinese teacher from school gave it to me. The moment I saw it I knew you'd love it.

JANUARY 23rd

APRIL 15th

DEAR ZOEY



I also can't believe it's only been a few months since you moved away! Sometimes, I look around and see traces of you everywhere. It's like you never left.

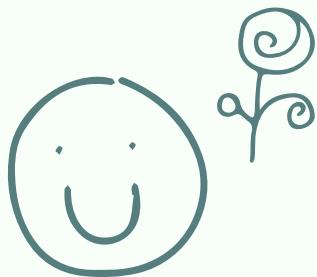
Your old house was sold to another family, the Hawthornes. They also have a daughter our age, named Zara.

Zara's super cool, and I know you would've absolutely loved her. She's fearless, and we've already agreed to go bungee-jumping together some day. We're so similar. That makes it so easy for me to imagine Zara and I bungee-jumping out of an airplane when we're sixty. I very vaguely remember the rash-on-eye situation, but I honestly do not remember where I put my photo. If you could, could you send me a photocopied version of that photo?

I can't believe we were ever so immature to make those sand/mud cakes, I only recall dressing up in our mother's dresses when we were young. I absolutely loved that part of our childhood.

School is pretty good. Jill, Zara, Ada and I are planning to go to the park together next weekend, to have a picnic. Oh and also—Jill got another dog! She named him Vogue, after the magazine. We all love the name. You probably would've loved it too.

P.S.: I do love the pink envelope, but by the time it got here it was already smothered in dirt and dust. I could only see the remnants of how beautiful it once must've been. ►



SINCERELY LUCY

DEAR LUCY



I feel like this bears repeating, but I miss you. And I'm sorry it took me a month to reply. School just started, and it's been taking up so much of my time. In Brookline when we finished school and training there'd always be time to wander around the neighborhood. Remember that one time we ran all the way back to Ward Elementary and spent three hours sitting on the lowest swings and talking? And how Mrs. Fabrizio saw us and forced us to leave? I don't have time for that anymore. I don't have time for anything I really love anymore (like read for leisure or scrapbook) because I think the city's eating me alive. At least I still have you to talk to.

I'm so happy that my new replacement (just kidding), Zara, is a good person. Please tell me more about her, and tell Jill and Ada I said hi. Please emphasize to Jill that I miss her dog more than I miss her.

Recently, I had a dream that we both went to a high school reunion twenty years later. It was held at this large dance hall with ombre orange tinted windows and this soft, warm smell of cinnamon and JP Lick's Butterscotch ice cream. You were there, sitting and laughing with a group of strangers I didn't know, and you were wearing a long navy dress with these patterns of thin purple wolf's bane flowers printed at the bottom. You didn't look like yourself. You were slimmer, and you held an air of self-assurance and almost coldness I had never seen on you before. You were drinking a peach daiquiri with a lemon slice and the rim dipped in salt. I kept thinking, "the Lucy I know would call that drink disgusting."

I had approached you, but I couldn't pull you away from the person you were talking to. She was blonde with these striking blue eyes. I kept thinking I wanted to talk to her, too. Eventually, as everyone gets ready to leave, I catch you at the door and I offer to leave my address so we can stay in touch. You're unresponsive. So, I emphasize that this could be the last time we would ever see each other.

You purse your lips, pause for a slight moment, and then you reach out to squeeze my shoulder. "I think I'm okay with that," you say, and you leave, your hand lifting off my shoulder. I wake up shaking afterwards. I don't mean to tell you this to scare you or force you into staying by my side, I just don't know what to see of this. Obviously, this could never happen. Our bond is genuinely too strong to be broken by something as trivial as distance. I think my brain's just trying to tell me that I miss you being my side and I don't know how to put all that complexity into words.

I'm sorry it got so dark towards the end here. To lighten the mood, I have attached a photo of the eye-rash (Jesus Christ, why do we look so ugly?) so that maybe you can look at it and start crying from embarrassment whenever you like. I also attached a part of my journal entry from last week that my cat decided to step on with her dirty paws. Consider that a personal letter from Lola, as well. ♡



LOVE YOU ZOEY

P.S.: Found a wax stamp with aconite floral designs. I thought the shimmery purple would fit the theme of the letter, so enjoy the art that is my color-coordination.

JUNE 2nd

SEPTEMBER 24th

HEY LUCY

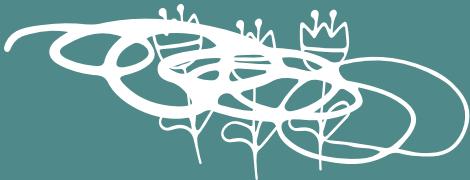
Did my last ultra-depressing letter scare you away?? In that case, you literally remember nothing about what I wrote. I was emo back then, and since then I've stopped overanalyzing the dream. A dream is a dream. There's nothing more to it. School just started again, and I think you'll be happy to know that I have been doing a lot better than expected. I mean, sure, I started crying in the middle of physics class because I couldn't understand anything and everyone stared at me until I ran into the bathroom, and sure, my Chinese is not nearly good enough to respond well to any of my classmates and teachers, but I'm okay.

I don't have many friends here, but I think that might be because I'm looking for too much of you, too much of America, in the people I meet here. As much as I hate how difficult it has been adjusting, I keep wondering if a part of it is because I never tried harder to actually be Chinese when I was in Brookline. I'm sorry, I don't know why I'm telling you this. It's not that you'd be able to understand. I'm getting better, and that's all that should matter right now.

I've been trying to take more walks around the neighborhood. The city isn't that bad, you know. It's crowded, sometimes a bit stuffy, the streets smell softly of smoke and cement that hasn't yet dried, and the noise can be unbearable. Oh my god, the noise. It's nothing like the quiet chirping of the sparrows, the rustling of the maple leaves through the wind and the occasional shouting sounds of some spoiled child in Brookline. There's this sort of unrelenting movement in the city that the noise just captures – the cars always driving by, the people biking to wherever they need to be. The city has a way of sounding like it's always changing around me, and I still can't get used to that.

But that's beside the point. Near my compound, there's this Catholic church right next to a small park with a plot of land just filled with these bright orange tulips. The moment I saw them, I was reminded of Arnold Arboretum, and the small field of tulips we planted near the big oak tree we named Carl. On one of our picnics, we had used tulip petals to mark our way back to our bikes from the pond we went to explore. Everywhere I go, I am reminded of home, and of you. There are some parts of you that just don't leave, I think.

Okay, enough about myself. How are you doing? How's school? How are Jill and Ada? I'm sure you're very busy, and that's why it's been so long I've heard from you. I heard about the local grassroots movement you've been organizing from Delia. I know you've always wanted to bring environmental conservation into our school communities, so I'm so happy that you were finally able to. For a while during these three months or so I thought you didn't want to talk to me anymore, but eventually I realized that's not possible. As annoying as I am, you still love me. I hope you're doing okay, and that you're not too busy. I look forward to hearing about it when you write back. I love you. I hope I can visit home soon. ►



AWAITING YOUR LETTER
ZOEY

P.S.: Ran out of good envelopes, so you'll have to stick with my mom's brown ones. Sorry :/

To Lucy,

Hi. It's been quite a long time. As the new year is more than halfway over already, I've gotten ready to let go. I think you should know that I'm doing better in my new school, and that I finally joined the orchestra. I've met a new friend, her name is Michelle, and she's an even bigger florist than you are. I tried out a new coffee store called The Geographer and halfway through my second cup I decided that the food of Shanghai can easily defeat that of Brookline. And yes, even the ice cream is better. I take walks on a daily basis now, and I take back what I said about the noise. The sounds of movement are good. It reminds me to keep going without you.

In case I haven't said this enough, I still miss you. I always will. For a while, I think I was mad at you for not being there when I needed you. A year is a lot longer than it feels, it's even longer when there's this unsettling reminder that you're waiting for something to come to an end. They say nothing in high school lasts forever. Maybe they're right.

I feel like I predicted that this would happen. I kept telling myself, a dream is just a dream, but the more days and weeks went by, the more I realized how little I'd know you in 20 years. Even if we sent a letter every day for the rest of our lives we'd never really be by each other's sides, would we? And even if you were actually able to remember everything about who we used to be you wouldn't be able to remember every new thing that happened to me. Nothing lasts forever and I should have realized that sooner.

They never tell you how much it hurts to not know. I don't know if you still want to stay in contact. I don't know how you're doing and that terrifies me – I used to know what you had for breakfast, the name of all three of your cats, what you'd be doing at most times of the day, and I even treated your home like my second home. I helped you decorate your entire bedroom. We were inexorably part of each other's lives and I don't know anything about you now. You could be an entirely different person and I wouldn't know. I miss you so much I can't put it into words. I don't know what to do, not knowing who you are now.

I still can't stop thinking about Arnold Arboretum, and all the tadpoles swimming around in our cups, the water sloshing out as we ran back to our bikes. The first time we ever went to catch them I saw one languid, whitened, and lifeless tadpole resting on the shore and I burst out into tears. I was always the easiest crier. You immediately helped me scoop up some tadpoles that were still alive and swimming around in the center of the pond, tapped my shoulder, and handed the cup to me. You didn't say anything, but I stopped crying almost as immediately as I started. At every moment, you've always known what to do or so without me having to tell you, and I don't know what to do now that you aren't there.

A few months ago, as I was walking around the city, I saw that the tulips by the cathedral had been replaced with newer (and in my opinion, uglier) daffodils, and I started crying. As much as I say I'm getting used to changes I still can't bear to be reminded of how little control I have over what does change in my life. I had no control over any of this. I keep thinking about what I could have done better to make you stay, but it comes up empty. The tulips were moved away because they had to, because tulips wither, and I'm starting to think the same applies here. You know that feeling when you look up and you realize spring is here, but you don't even remember winter had ended? That's what it feels like to lose you, which is just like losing a part of myself. Maybe it was inevitable. Maybe spring is here and I need to enjoy it.

I've been waiting for a response for so long. I thought maybe you were just busy, so I stopped waiting for letters and started waiting for signals that you would write as soon as you had time, but I got nothing – literally just radio silence. I guess I'm just tired of waiting. I still love you, and I think I still need you, but if you want to let go, I understand that. I guess this is goodbye. You've moved on and I guess I need to get ready to do the same. Nothing lasts forever, huh? I'll see in the next lifetime. I love you. ■

AUGUST 15th

Bye, Zoey.



EXPLOITATION AND MUTUAL BENEFITS

Written by: Angela Zhang | Photos from: Google

Recently, people have realized that foreign aid for African nations during the COVID-19 pandemic has been failing to achieve its purpose due to local corruption. In fact, foreign aid for African nations has a history of turning the situation worse, increasing poverty and unemployment above the level of when the aid was originally sent. In contrast, Chinese methods of offering assistance for African nations, such as conducting infrastructure construction while giving thirty percent of the projects to local corporations and workers, have proven to be much more beneficial for both African nations and Chinese corporations. These methods of giving jobs to provide aid, however, are often criticized on the basis of exploitation, especially since aid towards Africa is part of China's road towards global dominance. For example, exploitation that occurred in the sweatshops established by the West in less developed countries years ago are continuously criticized, although they did largely benefit the economies of developing nations. In fact, exploitation is far from uncommon. This practice has often occurred naturally when nations try to achieve economic growth and global prominence. However, while exploitation can be vicious, it is also natural in international relationships and should not discourage the

path to achieve mutual gain.

When nations in the past were rising to power, exploitation also came with that rise. When the Ancient Roman Empire was being established, Roman generals conquered vast areas of land. These conquests were often accompanied by slavery, brutality, and theft. When European countries were rising to power, they too exploited many lands. European colonizers went from Africa to Asia to the Americas, enslaving local people and stealing their natural resources. When the United States rose to dominance in the world, it had sweatshops that also caused exploitation in other nations. Many nations that have risen to global dominance did so through exploitation. However, after rising to prominence, these nations often benefited other nations as well. They advanced technology and brought forth innovations that spread to other countries and helped revolutionize many fields. They improved the global economy by creating trade organizations and connecting local economies. These advancements all helped bring the world global economic and political growth.

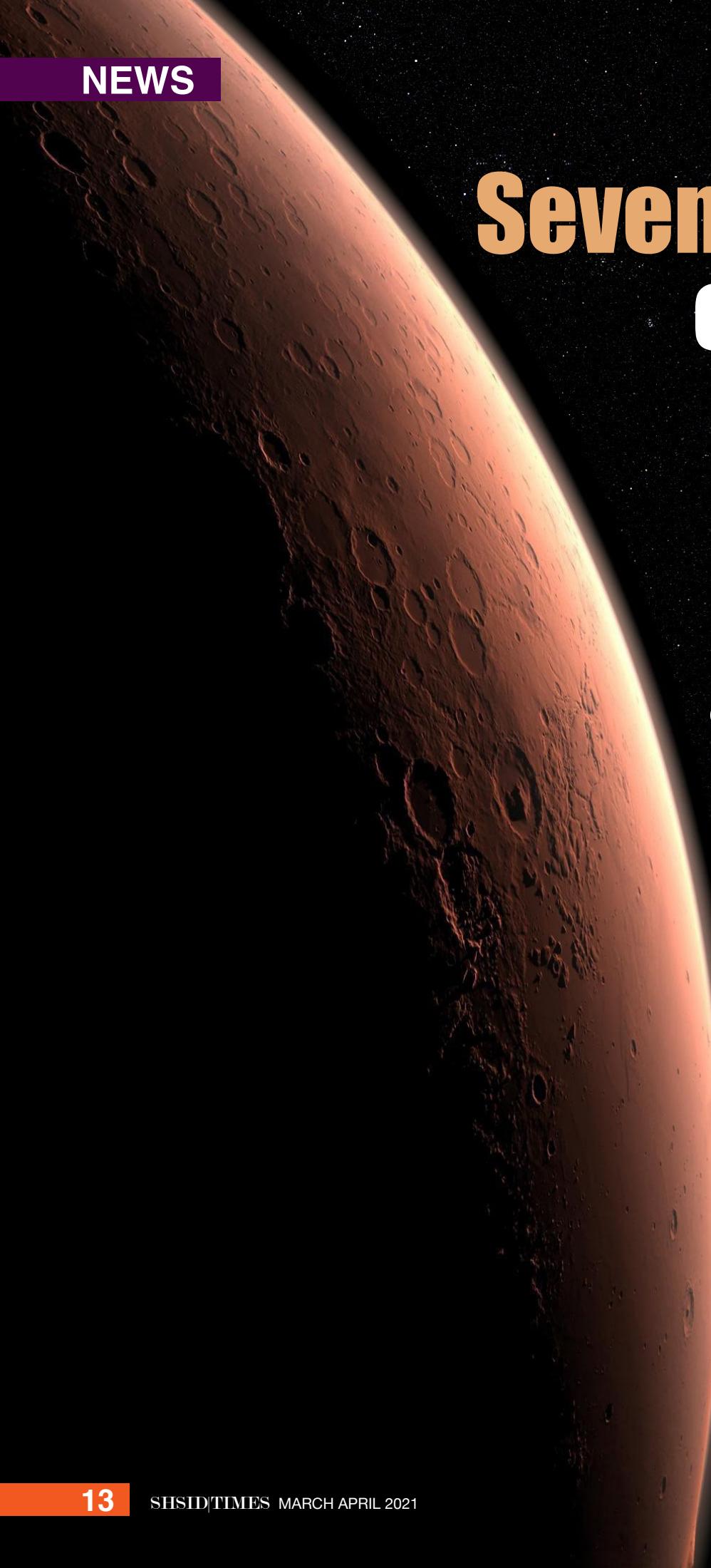
Considering the plethora of benefits aiding developing countries can deliver, the possibility of exploitation should not immediately bar this aid. With the help of de-►

veloped countries, developing nations often experience large increases in economic growth, like in a lot of Asian nations that had sweatshops. In China alone, the extreme poverty rate dropped by 72% in 29 years, facilitated by these sweatshops. Economic growth generally benefits everyone in the country, because even the poorest person in a country now is most likely still better off than they would've been a few decades ago. Even more, the alternative in a lot of these countries is far worse. If the workers can not work in sweatshop jobs provided by developed nations, they would most likely face unemployment or jobs in the informal market. A study by Northeastern University states that the sweatshops jobs tend to pay better and offer more stability than any other options, which is especially crucial in countries without much unemployment benefit and other forms of welfare. Thus, even if these systems could result in certain degrees of inequality (i.e., the workers in developing nations being paid less than what the corporations can afford), they actually benefit both the developed country and the developing country's economy. In addition, the smartest course of action for a developed country to take is to invest in infrastructure and build up the markets of developing nations. New markets are very beneficial in a capitalist society and can act as places where developed nations can sell their products, something they can only do if the local economy is powerful enough to afford these products. As markets and local consumers are incredibly important, exploitation becomes a less appealing course of action for developed countries. In addition, as nations become more powerful, some, such as most Western democracies, tend to care more about human rights. These international pressures also eliminate a lot of the worst cases of human rights abuses.

It's important to note, though, that all inhumane behaviors that occur because of colonialism are unjustifiable. There are certainly ways in which corporations and other forces can protect human rights while also gaining roughly the same amount of profit. However, the huge amount of benefit the current system offers should not be forgotten. Most of the cooperation between nations, such as the relationship between countries in Africa and China, are mutually beneficial, especially with international pressure from powerful forces like the United Nations maintaining balance. Many media sources like to paint all international relationships with clear good and bad sides. Developed nations seem to have no other incentive to reach out to developing nations than exploiting them. This often leads people to protest against agreements that are mutually beneficial without seeing the wholistic image of the situation. Many people are afraid of repeating the exploitation that happened during the colonial age, but the world is simply much different from what it was then. There are a lot more forces in the world today that would prevent the level of exploitation that occurred then. Countries are on a much more equal ground to negotiate. Nations are not looking to exploit each other when they can both benefit; they are simply trying to work towards their own best interests. Under globalization, the best interest for each nation is, often, to work together with comparative advantage in order to reach mutual gains. Developing nations should not be afraid to cooperate with developed nations out of fear of exploitation and should instead take into consideration the benefits they can reap. Stopping all forms of cooperation is not the solution for a better world; it is instead having more diplomacy and collaboration.

The capitalist system and the exploitation it results in can be horrible, but it is usually just the natural result of nations seeking mutual benefits from agreements. While people fight for more human rights and less exploitation, it is important to not just try to abandon the current system, but to also look for a better alternative. Cooperation is necessary for the world to improve as a whole, and people should not criticize any collaborative efforts without looking at the wholistic image. ■





Seven Minutes of Beauty and Terror

Written by: Nick Lin
Images from: Pinterest

“Beauty is terror” — this famous Greek tragedy line has characterized what seems to be the fate of space exploration in the twenty-first century. A series of attempts to capture a picturesque view of the solar system with the risk of achieving nothing more than videos of craters are all too common. Uncertainty, skepticism, and distrust encompass every one of NASA’s expeditions. It was only until recently that they hit a new milestone, one that could potentially reward them for decades of research. On February 18th, the NASA Perseverance rover successfully landed on Mars, becoming the first to send back high-resolution captures of the Martian soil. Ensuing her “seven minutes of terror,” referring to the entry, descent, and landing phase of the rover, Perseverance is expected to seek signs of ancient life and collect samples of rock and soil for a possible return to Earth. The special year of 2021 has engaged millions to participate in the 2020 Mars Perseverance Rover mission, and as of March 14th, there have been 15 million reservations for personal boarding passes. Free of cost in the reservation process, NASA has brought into the public view, for the first time, what it means to sign up for a flight to Mars. ►

Beyond flight reservations, NASA approached the mission with a publicly displayed interactive map that tracks the progress and location of the rover to reflect completion of her main objectives. The map is composed of two layers: a grayscale map showing the Jezero Crater, which the rover is expected to cover, and a true-color base map. Rocky terrains are covered by the colored images to provide critical information for the rover drivers, but more importantly, engineers designed the software for better experience and representation of the mission. Dots on the map are the end points of each drive, and are labeled with the day, or sol, on Mars that the rover stopped. The first landing is particularly notable, named after the science fiction author Octavia E. Butler. Her famous series *Dawn* was published almost 40 years ago, but it continues to be relevant in the context of reviving Earth from an apocalypse and journeying to a different planet. She was the first African American woman to win both the Hugo Award and Nebula Award, and this landing site embodies the same traits that Butler's protagonists embodied: determination and inventiveness. Searching for ancient life in the Jezero Crater is no simple task — it demands not only advanced machinery and software attached to the rover, but also its ability to endure the harsh climate on a long-term basis.

Upon arrival, Perseverance took her chance to “kick the tires” and performed a 150-degree turn during its landing checkups. Her flawless movement has made her a paragon for systematically controlled instruments. Seeing her flex her muscles and stretch her 7-foot-long robotic arm to zoom in on intriguing rocks, scientists became certain that Perseverance could offer insight on the past climate of Mars. The particular landing of Perseverance poses the question of whether nearby rocks are volcanic or sedimentary. By its return in 2031, scientists would be able to reach a conclusion regarding the habitability of the red planet.

In the meantime, Perseverance carries a set of tools for experimentation purposes, in which their applicational or functional abilities can only be determined in exotic geographical landscapes. Notably, the Mars Oxygen In-Situ Resource Utilization Experiment (MOXIE) will help NASA prepare for human exploration of Mars. The 17.1-kilogram instrument can

immediately produce oxygen from the Martian carbon-dioxide atmosphere, and it demonstrates a possible way that future explorers might get oxygen for propellant and for breathing. If it works out successfully on the rover in the following decade, it may be useful for other explorations and eventually human arrival on other planets in the solar system. Another example of how versatile the setup for Perseverance can be is its Planetary Instrument for X-ray Lithochemistry (PIXL), an instrument that includes a tool called an X-ray spectrometer. PIXL will allow for Perseverance to not only collect samples but measure the chemical makeup of rocks at a fine scale. Given the task to acquire detailed information on present chemical elements in the soil, PIXL can allow scientists to examine signs of ancient life in a meticulous manner. Only the size of a lunch box, PIXL can detect over 20 chemical “fingerprints,” even when the amount is only a few parts per million. Other tools like the Raman spectrometer and a special microphone have been used for the first-time outside Earth. With the help of a microphone on the rover that can capture sounds in remarkable quality, it is truly incredible that NASA will be doing science with the first sounds ever recorded on the surface of Mars. And as associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate Thomas Zurbuchen states, “[Recordings] will be essential when determining which samples to cache and ultimately return to Earth through our groundbreaking Mars Sample Return Campaign, which will be one of the most ambitious feats ever undertaken by humanity.”

Although NASA's Perseverance Rover Mission started off strong, people should consider what it means to continue funding for the expected one-year planning of the Perseverance Rover Mission that could potentially cost millions and millions of dollars. It would be revolutionary for Space X to collaborate and fund NASA programs on Mars exploration, but as of currently, only a joint agreement on the mutual interests of data sharing has been established. Without supplemental investments and funding for NASA, its future plans will likely be delayed due to the recent strains on the U.S. commercial space sector. Despite a probable end to the broadcasting of Mars exploration programs, improved global awareness on space activity has demonstrated what seems to be the first peaceful gathering of the international community on extraterrestrial expeditions. ■



GameStop

THINKGEEK



M14A
M14D

Lower East Side
Lower East Side
E 14 St & University Pl



Bus Stop



GAMESTOP #GME THE WAR AGAINST WALL STREET

Written by: CJ | Photos from: The New York Times



I. Introduction

Reddit's rebellion against Wall Street, though causing instability within the stock market, has become one of the greatest stories of David and Goliath that kickstarted 2021. The stock market has always had a sense of disconnect among the general populous, and the inclusion

of market-prediction AI and technology replacing humans pushes it further in that direction. The situation with GameStop represents a cultural shift where the rising influence of millennials and meme culture has trumped Wall Street and traditional financial intuitions and practices.

II. GameStop and the Stock Market

GameStop is an American video game and electronics retailer with stores across the world. Founded in 1984, GameStop thrived with a growing market for gaming and prided itself with its easy in-store exchange system. However, the landscape of gaming had been changing as well. Game developers slowly moved their games to be downloadable online and the introduction of DLCs¹ and microtransactions made hardcopies obsolete. Furthermore, the physical costs of opening a store and the inability to offer a competitive price point for smaller indie games

or new releases started to contribute to GameStop's downfall. GameStop not only began to drown in irrelevance, but it also started to lose money. As the number of stores dwindled, so did its stocks. At the end of 2019, the price of a share of GME (GameStop's stock) was at around 3 dollars, whereas a decade ago, it had never dropped below 20 dollars. When COVID-19 hit, GameStop's situation was magnified and it continued to close down stores, with its stocks continuing on a gradual decline.

III. The Redditors and Wall Street

In June 3, 2019, GameStop had a change in leadership, appointing a new group that had operational expertise and proven records of successful leadership. This created an increase in company confidence that slightly drove up the price of its stocks. However, hedge fund investors believed this change was insignificant to the overall downward trend and thus stock prices were overvalued. Many of these investors engaged in a short sale, betting that the stock would decrease in price. A short sale is essentially the borrowing of a stock from a broker to sell at the "overpriced" price and rebuying when prices decrease, creating profit while keeping the stock. These hedge fund investors are confident that the decrease in price of the stock is enough to earn profit on top of the interest they have to pay to brokers for the stock loan. During the GameStop price surge, many hedge fund investors

borrowed the stock from brokers and sold it at its current price, believing the price would decrease.

In January of 2020, a user on the subreddit r/WallStreetBets posted his hypothesis of how collectivized action on the platform could drive GameStop's stock prices up and create massive losses in hedge fund investors. By buying the stock together, the redditors would artificially inflate the price of GME and therefore prevent short sellers from buying back the stock as it would incur a loss. The post went under the radar at the time but in January of 2021, a combination of posts by Bloomberg and The Verge as well as reputable investor Michael Burry's commitment to GME brought attention to the post and initialized the plan. In the span of two weeks, the price of GME grew by 1750%, peaking at 347.51 dollars per share on January 27, 2021. ►

¹"Ju" t rugi ghrk'i ut zkt z'.k~zg"i ut zkt z"zngz'v { hrlynkoy" kirkgyk" glzx" g"ngs kQ" o zgr"tg{ t i n/



IV. Response and Censorship

Though the inflated price had already ruined the short sell profits of a large group of hedge fund investors, short sell activity continued as these investors were more inclined to believe that stock prices would drop. The sudden inflation meant that anyone who bought the stock to inflate the price could sell at any moment to make a large profit, dropping the stock prices back down and returning money to the hedge fund investors. This gave rise to a wave of hashtags, internet memes and chants, all repeating the same phrase: Hold the Line. Bonded by hatred for Wall Street and institutionalized investing as well as for the simple fun of uprooting the economic system, Redditors held on to their stocks and continued to push stock prices upwards.

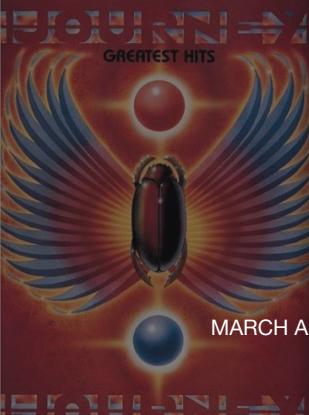
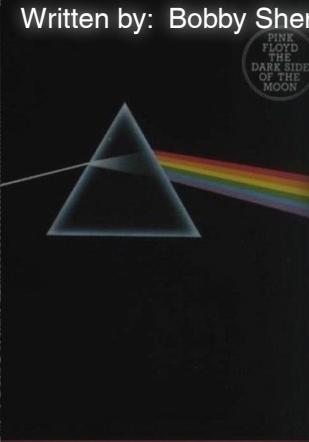
Soon after the stock prices skyrocketed, news outlets fought to report on it and the situation garnered national attention. The Biden administration released a statement that they were “monitoring the situation.” Elon Musk, who was long well involved in the internet and meme subculture, publicly invested in GameStop and called upon others to do the same. Robinhood, one of the largest apps for the exchange of stocks, completely closed the purchase of GME shares, guaranteeing the decrease in stock prices. r/WallStreetBets was also shutdown to prevent communication and dismantle the unit of artificial price inflation. Stock prices fell back to around 50 dollars per share through February due to this censorship but as restrictions loosened, GME continues to rise.

V. Conclusion

The GME stock continues to fluctuate and the longevity of its high stock prices will depend heavily on the hype around its hashtag and the resilience of its internet community. The high prices demonstrate the public’s ability to interfere with the financial investment agencies and larger institutions in general. United through a shared value of distaste towards traditional investment institutions, the internet community went above all economic incentives to push up GME’s stock, showing that—in a world seemingly driven by money—people still prioritize certain values over financial gains. ■

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Written by: **Bobby Sheng** | Images from: Google



For as long as entertainment and art have existed, criticism has been present in one way or another. And with it, naturally comes ratings and comparisons. Many prominent sites, like Pitchfork, Rate Your Music, Rotten Tomatoes, and Douban, all provide ratings of music, films, books, performances, and more. Some platforms have a board of writers dedicated to critiquing while others allow users to provide their own rating and generate an overall score as an average of all users. Although this article will mostly discuss music ratings, the general principle outlined below can be applied to other forms of entertainment and art as well.



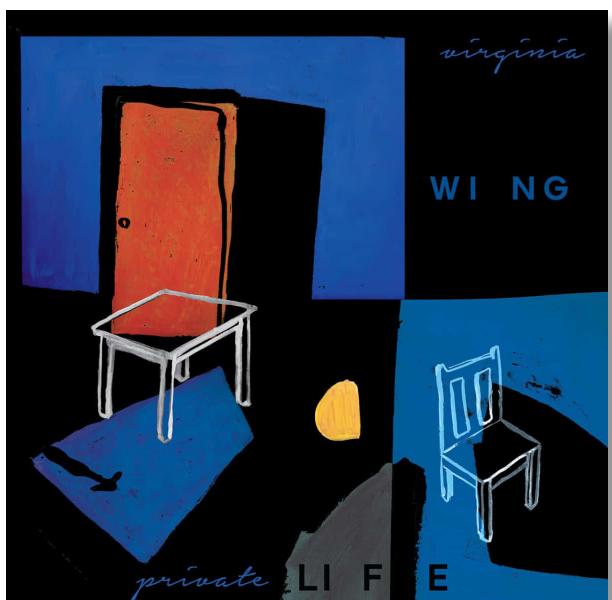
A notorious example of this would be Pitchfork's review of the album *Kid A* by Radiohead, in which the writer of the article, Brent Di Crescenzo, describes the album in utter gibberish. Since the review is not a valuable source of judgement for the album, the only thing a Pitchfork viewer can judge this album on is its 10/10 score. Thus, if one was made aware of *Kid A* through the Pitchfork review, they would understand that it is very good, but they would not be able to grasp what the album sounds like. In this example, the score can be indicative of the album's quality, but not in a way that is valuable. ►



Firstly, it must be understood that ratings are only one numerical number. Many aspects of the rated subject cannot be covered by a single numerical rating—the technique used to create the work, the background behind its formation, etc. Oftentimes, rating platforms provide introductory articles, videos, or short reviews about the rated work, in which the creator would either introduce the piece of work in general or create an argument for the rating they give. If given the time, users of the rating platform should read the article or watch the video before jumping to a conclusion about the work based solely on the rating. However, in some scenarios where the article is not directly related to the rating, the rating becomes the sole source of judgement for users on the rating platform.



A score can only be valuable if the users who rate the work have previous knowledge of it, either because they have been familiarized with the piece beforehand or were informed of the piece via other forms of media such as other review articles. Only then would it be reasonable to make judgements about or decisions to consume the work based on its rating. It is less reasonable to randomly consume a work that the person has no previous knowledge of just because it has a high rating.



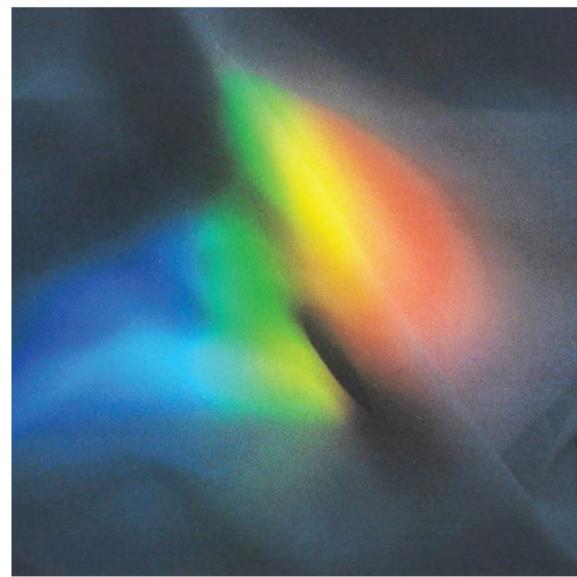
business connections, so their ratings are generally non-controversial (at least for albums with large recognition) because otherwise they may lose their site viewers. As a person who regularly visits Rate Your Music, it is actually quite refreshing whenever I take a short detour to Douban Music (a Chinese version of Rate Your Music comprised of a comparatively more mainstream audience), where I can see another perspective. The amount of satisfaction I felt when I learned that *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea*, the twenty-first highest rated album of all time on Rate Your Music—which I personally dislike—was rated at a mediocre score on Douban Music is on another level.

In the end, ratings can be indicative of the value of music, films, books, or other forms of entertainment if one has a general idea of what the piece is like and is aware of the critic's background and the intended audience of the rating. Otherwise, blindly consuming a piece of art or entertainment just because it has a high score will more or less result in disappointment. ■



Another aspect that must be taken into consideration is the critic and the intended audience of the rating. For example, Rate Your Music is a music browsing site mostly visited by people more interested in independent, obscure, or eclectic music made in the last seventy years. The ratings, which are an average of the users' scores, would reflect that. If a radio pop fan went onto the site, they would likely be disappointed, because most pop music is given medium-level or mediocre scores on Rate Your Music due to the general lack of interest in such music by most Rate Your Music users. On the other hand, Pitchfork is a professional music reviewing site with a large audience and various

Winston C.W.

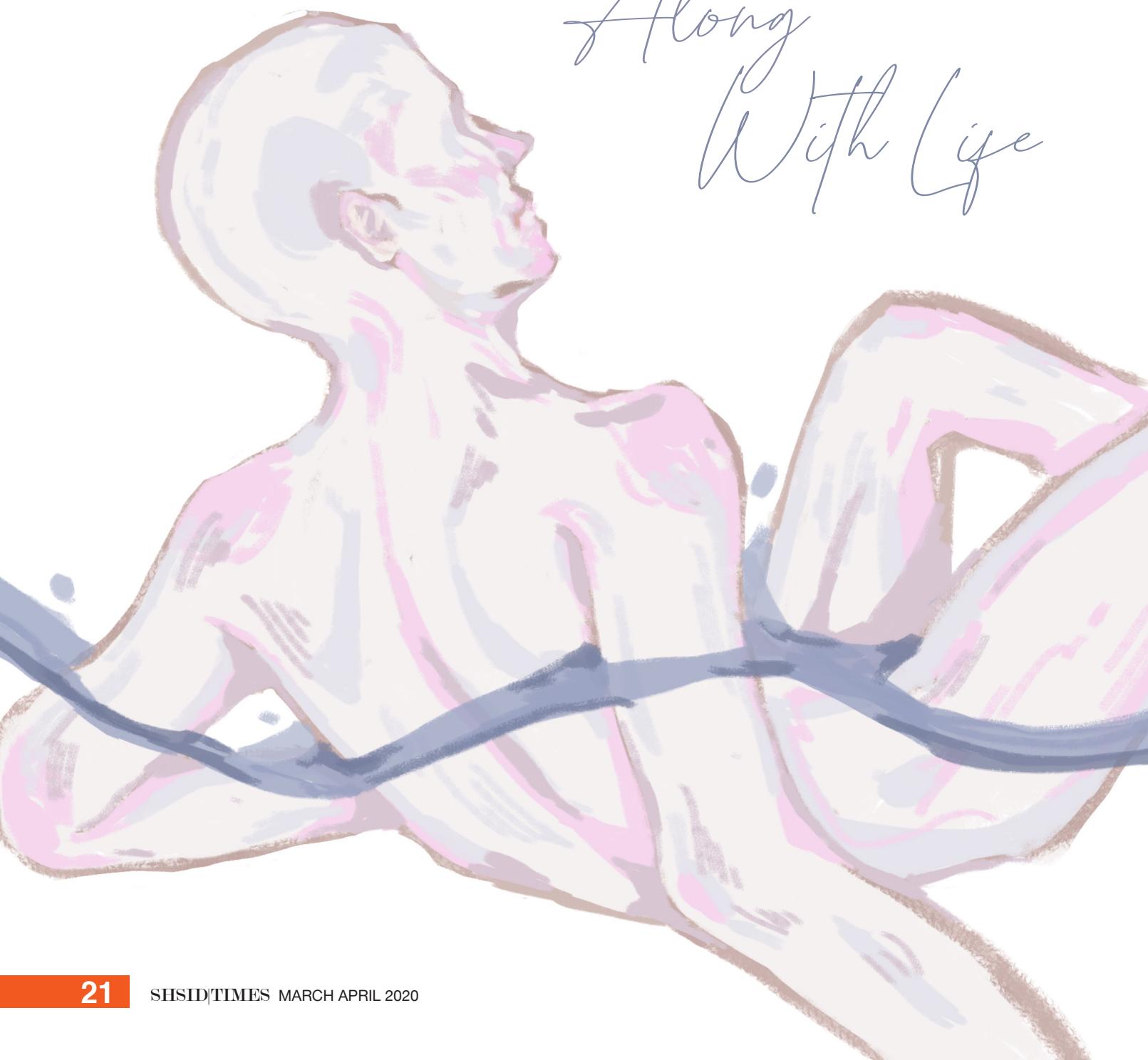


Good Guess

DRIFTING

Written By: Catie Doran | Illustrated By: Rena Yan

*Along
With Life*



I. Drifting Away

Life is about going along with the flow and, at times, bidding farewells when necessary. Only through drifting can one learn to navigate on their own.

My brother graduated from high school in June 2020. As a family, we were very emotional since he had been living with us for 18 years—to suddenly see him become an actual adult was unbelievable. For me, becoming the only child all of a sudden also felt strange. My brother's graduation was the hardest on my mom, and she kept on telling him to video call us every day when he goes off to college. Yet, just when our family was prepared to see him leave, due to Covid-19, he wasn't able to go to his campus in LA since the virus was spreading rapidly there. So, adapting to the new situation, he took online classes in Shanghai for his freshman year of college. In a way, this was very fortunate since our family was able to spend another year with him together. My mom almost cried tears of joy knowing that she could be with her child for a longer amount of time. Every night I slept, I enjoyed overhearing my brother and dad chat in the living room since his online classes were taken after midnight due to the time difference between Shanghai and LA.

With the arrival of Covid-19 vaccines this year, society is slowly recovering from the pandemic, meaning US college students are likely to return to their actual campuses to enjoy a more authentic college life. Soon, our family lost track of the fact that for my brother's second year of college, which starts in August 2021, he will probably go to his campus. Deep down, nobody wanted my brother to leave, and we cherished immensely his time with us. But we were also ready to accept the fact that lingering wouldn't help, and he will be leaving sooner or later to mature and welcome a new phase in his life. My mom will eventually have to learn that letting go of her child is the best way to teach him how to fly, and I will also be at peace seeing him in the place where he belongs. Although he will be physically drifting apart from us, we will always be spiritually attached.

II. Drifting Along

Meanwhile, life is also about cherishing every part of the journey, so we can always carry our good memories as we drift from place to place—maybe "now" is the best time of our lives.

People have always told me that high school would be a part of the "good old times" when I grow up and start reflecting on my life, so I should cherish it. Before worrying about college, maybe I should see the joys of still being a teenager instead. It seems that the day I first came to SHSID six years ago was just yesterday, and now, graduation—what I once viewed as the distant future upon my arrival—isn't too far away. Time does have wings. Maybe, only when we are finally reaching adulthood will we realize how life gives us such limited time to be a kid. In high school, it's easy to forget how to slow down and realize what a wonderful stage of life we are in. Before the day we have to drift apart, let's live in the moment and make things count.

High school is about the little things. It's about waking up under the subtle touch of sunrise every morning. Listening and grooving to music on the school bus. Climbing those annoying (yet rewarding when you reach the top) flights of stairs. Rushing from room to room in between classes. Having lunch while cringing at that one joke your friend always makes. Waiting for the clock to hit 3:50 p.m. during the last period every day. Fantasizing about your ridiculous crush while feeling like you're on top of the world. Having randomly philosophical conversations with teachers while running late for the school bus. These are the times that, even when we are absolutely exhausted, we feel like we can float on top of the clouds. Basking in our final days of naivete before we are thrown into the jungle of society, this is the time when we don't need any excuses to be weird. When we can enjoy life without having to worry about finding work. When we still have our families and friends there to catch us when we fall. When we always have someone to share our hopes and dreams with. When we can still make mistakes and be forgiven. ■



THE

Written by: Cher Yan | Image from: Unsplash

It's a 15-degree kind of night, where all you need is a warm sweater to shelter your kidneys. No wind, no rain, just the hollow air. My mother always said that the night conceals itself behind an unlit cloak and requires effort to unravel the true beauty underneath. Today, I stand in the cool crisp air in the middle of a busy street to unravel this black tranquility. I crawl down on my stomach and suddenly I am small, like a little, otherwise unnoticeable critter. Suddenly, I am *vulnerable*.

Breathing the dusty edge of the sidewalk, the concrete beneath me is jeweled with pebbles, reflecting the sparkling lights of the moving cars. My nose tingles. The mouth-watering smell of a fish and chip shop nearby draws me in until it is masked by the strong odor of a trash-filled alley. Thumping music can be heard from the nightclubs where young people have just begun their night out.

Cars are lined up, front lights beaming. The lights, most of them red, they have created an atmosphere of orange that complements the dark air around me. Taxis move silently as their rubber tires grip the ground. Some are rushing through the street; others are dropping off visitors and picking up new ones. Patiently they line up, moving inch by inch until they pass the intersection.

The reflective road mirrors the delicate ochreous glow of the streetlamps. Leaves lay quietly in front of me, insisting that autumn has come and went. Fallen and un-swept, these leaves remind me of the Plane tree's existence above. I look up expecting my eyes to be burnt by the bright streetlights, but instead the lights are weak, yellowish. I look up and wonder why I cannot see the stars. Technology ensures that landscapes are mapped, recorded and classified almost out of existence. But there are no stars. I shut my eyes and try my best to feel close to nature, to find that freeing of free. *I don't*.

Over the centuries, the beauty of these dappled trees has not been lost. Beside the Plane tree closest to me, a red pole stands tall and proud, holding a round white sign with red circles. It looks like a beer cap with lines in the center that say: *Bus Tour*. What a winsome welcome note to foreigners who arrive in Shanghai on-edge, excited to explore this dynamic, fashion-forward, riveting city.

Visitors and shoppers come and go, but these Plane trees are permanent residents of this street. They are here to witness and to guard the crumbling of the three-story old buildings. With arched windows as ceilings, shops display their newest items. One of them has a red neon light that reads: H & M. In the front window, the store shows off its

elegant models. The girls are gorgeous, with voluptuous curls in their hair, long-legged, and wearing designer fashions. They seem like the type of people who have every privilege in the world: Overseas travel. A beautiful home. Everything. In front of H & M are some dark shadows, figures of young shoppers whose wrists are looped with dozens of shopping bags. I can imagine the smile on their faces, their lips a garish red as they advance one step closer to the wondrous world of fashion and beauty. The world looks different from below; promising, grander, *unreachable*.

Something about being alone, without no parents or curfew, the naughtiness of it, and the unexpectedness of the unknown, makes me feel euphoric. Walking with the dark sky is almost a public declaration of protest, but also a gently recalcitrant act against the confines of the daily grind. Still, there is a certain softness to it that calls the body and brain to rest and lets the heart stumble into its steady rhythm. Night, the restfulness above, hugs my innocent inborn spark.

The edge of the rough concrete sidewalk scrunches itself into an ugly drip, and under the beam of light of an upcoming car, I can see layers of damp paint coated heavily on its pores. The coverage, I could tell, was heavy, like a weight it had to carry, *constantly*. The weight of footsteps, and the weight of being *vulnerable*. Perhaps.

There are dark shadowed buildings in the distance. I imagine that in those apartments, a young child is snoozing quietly, unaware of all this life in a city that never sleeps. I can imagine those happy young couples walking hand in hand, swaying down the street on their way home from the pub. That in those narrow alleys, an unseen cat feasts on leftovers from an overturned dustbin. That outside a supermarket, a guard sighs with relief that his shift is over.

I crawl back up into a long stretch, realizing that the night has more intimate and exclusive qualities than I would have ever thought. It is acquainted with ambiguity yet it resembles something like *life*.

I smile, feeling a sealed bond of intimacy in the air. To venture into the thickness of the night is to experience the liminal habitat that awaits us in the nocturnal city. The night expands its black angel wings, protecting the earth as she dreams. Beneath the noble starry black a huge flash of a bright white headlight suddenly shines over my features and I am reminded that the night has a misty glow that makes the world shine in a way that the sun fails to achieve. ■

NIGHT

LITERATURE



GILGAMESH

Written by: Emily Cheah | Illustrated by: Annabel Demarino

once
when you were young and
foreign to the concept of loss
you travelled to the end
of the world with
your most precious friend.

when they crumbled in your arms
you made the journey once more
and you cared not if you would die
for you wanted to find your fear
from where you lost it at
the edge of the sky.

but when you find it
a snake swallows it
and you laugh and laugh and
lau g h. for what is death
to a king? a creature that sheds
its skin? nothing has changed because
you are alive and they are not and
there are no victors here -
not even the gods.

but first and foremost you are a king
with duties to fulfil
so when the sun rises
you return to your kingdom
and to your people.

in your chambers you run your
fingers over the animal skins
on the bed, wondering
if they have aged in your absence

but what would make them too old?
they are already dead, and
you have found no way to
bring anything back with you,
even from the end of the world. ■





Written By: Joyce Hao
Photos By: Sophia Wen, Ana Mao, Grace Lo

(角落 - 1)

近几日，因要去外地办公，他大早上的就赶到火车站，随便找了个靠柱子的座位坐下休息片刻。城里的火车站对他而言总带有一种别样的感觉。这里挤着的形形色色的人总能让他看见许多东西，而墙上时常飘着的城里的味道，总令他感到格格不入却又心神向往。

他出生于小农村，是家中唯一的男丁，父母都是当地的教师。他打小便明白，只有自己努力学习，以后才能过上好日子，于是他便将童年的每一天都奉献给了学业，因而成绩优异。后来，他考了个好大学，家里人举全家之力把他送去了城里读大学。他明白，家中姐妹也大多成绩优异却无缘大学，因此他身上承载着全家人的希望。他珍惜这机会，于是更加拼命地学习，早早便戴上了一副厚厚的黑框眼镜。

后来大学毕业，他顺应着家里人的意求回到老家考公务员。他从不惧任何考试，以省第三的成绩顺利当上了家里人引以为荣的公务员。之后的三年，他本本分分地工作，从没要求过什么，也从没追求过什么，只是老老实实地拿着属于他的那一份工资，直至今日。

火车站的座位上，他想发一会儿呆，但嘈杂的声音却毫无保留地往他耳朵里钻，在耳道里横冲直撞。这感觉实在让他静不下心来。于是，他很快便敏锐地注意到，自己身边坐下来了一个人。

他微微侧头，眼一瞥，看到一个有些微胖的身影，见模样似是个女生，却剪着短发。这不仅让他惊异起来，又悄悄打量了几眼。女生似乎是注意到了他的目光，那张过分年轻的脸转了过来，随后笑道：“我看只有这个角落有位置，你不介意我坐这儿吧？”

她的语气不像在询问，反而像是在宣告。

“啊，啊，”他受宠若惊，下意识地扶了扶眼镜，“不，我不介意的……”

“好，”女生眯起眼来，不再说话。

他松了口气，头靠在椅背上，双目无神地浸在那片嘈杂中。

过了不知许久，那女生突然道：“话说，你是学生吗？”

他起初没有意识到她是在对自己讲话，只觉她的声音像是跟所有嘈杂混在了一起，尽管在他耳边，却又像是在另一个世界。他没有作出任何答复，只是继续头靠着椅背。

女生似乎是转了一下头，随后说道：“我叫林音，你呢？”

这个确切的发问引起了他的注意，他微微转过头，心想，原来她叫林音。待到他接触到她的眼神，他才发现，她似乎是在跟他说话。

“我……”他张了张嘴，突然发现自己的名字难以说出口。他艰难地逼出了几个字音，“……我叫杨建。”他想了想，随后补充道，“已经工作了。”

“喔，”女生兴致盎然地打量了他一会儿，“你看起来很年轻。”

他对这个回答并不意外；经常有人说他长得年轻。“谢谢，”他说，随后陷入了沉默。

女生笑了几声，随后自来熟地道，“你是去哪里？”

“上海。”

“那可真是不凑巧。”

“哦……”

“你今年多大啦？”

“二十五。”

“巧了，我二十二。”

“啊，是吗……”

“是在夸我看着年轻吗哈哈哈哈。”

“是……”

他不知道自己和她聊了多久，大概是二十多分钟吧。她总是喜欢莫名其妙地笑起来，也总喜欢挑起新的话题。他们很聊得来，也越聊越起劲，以至于周边嘈杂的声音都被隔绝了，两个并在一起的座位像是形成了一个小世界般，就只剩下他和她。直到谈话末尾，他才惊异地发觉，自己竟能与一个素未谋面的女生聊得如此火热。

他明白自己得走了，不太情愿地站起身，说道：“我得走了。”

“以后保持联系。”她笑着说。

“好。”

他拎着行李，迈着步子便离去了，是在她的目光中离去的。▶

(中央 - 1)

那天早上，他早早地来到了火车站等候发车。嘈杂的人声混杂着一股城里的味道，使他感到格格不入却又心神向往。他下意识地坐到了等候区靠中间的座位上，人比较多的地方。

一个女生从他身边走过，他被她那独特的短发吸引住了一会儿，但这注意力很快就随着她远去的身影一同消散了。随后，两边都挤着满满当当的人和行李，他闭目养神起来。

心中估摸着半小时大约过去了，他睁开眼，周围的人依旧很多。他拎着行李走向了入口处，一个人来，一个人去，就跟以往外地办公时一样。他很快就进了那绿皮铁箱，随后继续闭目养神起来。

里面和外面一样吵闹，跟以往一样毫无变化的吵闹。

(角落 - 2)

距离他坐到了角落的那个座位上，已经过去四小时了。

他在火车里，念着还在火车外的她。他不是小孩了，自然能感受到那股不明不白的情绪究竟是什么。

他耳朵里进来的是各种人的声音，大脑接收到的却是她的声音。

火车很快到了站。他拎着行李走着，每一步都轻快得像是享受，连天上荡漾着的也是她那弯着的眼角。自此他便明白了，这个才和他认识不到半小时的女孩，已经住进了他的心里。一见钟情，他恍然间想到，这大概就是一见钟情吧。

之后的几天，她都有和他主动联系，这不禁使他的生命变得多姿多彩起来，或许也是他在上海这个陌生城市的唯一依靠。随后，他坐火车离开了上海，回到了那个很小很小的地方，听着那个女生给他讲世界各地的故事。

于是他继续过着原本的生活，只是，生命中又多了一个人。

他们很快便确定了关系，就这样又过去了几个月。直到有一天，他们会面的时候，女生对他说，“你就只想一直留在这个小地方吗？”

(中央 - 2)

“我……”他听着自己的声音，随后说道，“我不想。”

距离他坐到了中央的那个座位上，已经过去四小时了。

待他睁开眼睛，火车就已经到站了。他拎着沉重的行李走出站台。

在上海的这几日，它的繁华每天都震撼着他，但也令他惧怕。或许是真正来到这里后，他才后知后觉，向往不代表着能融入。

在上海办了几天公后，他便离开了这个和他再也没有接触的繁华城市，回到了老家，继续过着原本的生活；生活没有什么改变，情感方面也没什么进展，而家里人偶尔的关怀也像往常一样让他心中一暖。唯一在变的，大概就是那随着物价一同增长的工资了吧。

时常想起上海的时候，他也只是笑一笑，想着那个地方有多繁华，有多高不可及。

他向往着，但他从未想过要脱离现在这样的生活的。▶

(角落 - 3)

他坐在咖啡厅的小角落，如坐针毡。

这次会面，女生提出，让他出国读书的想法。

他呆了一会儿，脑中思考了一阵女生是什么意思。

女生说，“字面意思。”

他心中茫然，但也不禁思考起了这个想法的可行性。他在大学时期得过不少奖学金，当公务员的这几年又攒了不少钱，若真要论钱财的话，他是付得起学费的。只是，其一，他对出国留学一无所知，其二，家里人是绝对不会容许他走这条路的。

“怎么了，”她问道，“你不愿意吗？”

这个问题直击他的要害。他颤抖着，想到自己若是回答“不愿意”后女生究竟会如何看待他，不由得心中踌躇。但一想到这个疯狂的举动背后所可能承担的一切，他是真的害怕了。

“我……”

女生轻声道：“你可以不答应，你不需要事事都听我的。”

他咬了咬牙，说道：“你继续说。”

于是女生继续高谈着她的计划；她说她想让他出国读工商管理硕士。她描述着学成归来后的情景，谈到了上海那座繁华的都市。她说，他要是继续待在这里，是再也没机会去上海了。

他其实对上海什么的没什么感觉；那里繁华得像是另一个世界，反而失了一些真实的味道。但是，对于读书，他心动了。

女生让他回去再想想，于是他便回去了。那个夜晚，他想了很多事。他想到了自己现在的安稳生活，想到了父母，不禁为自己的心动而感到罪恶。他又想到自己的灵魂已经离不开这座小城市了，想到自己的年岁已经不小，又想到了被无数前人所佐证过的冲动的代价，他心中几乎已经确信，他终究不会走上这条未知的路。

然而他又想到了她的目光，她的眼神，那双厌倦了庸庸碌碌生活的眼睛，好似在渴望着他做出什么举动。这使他心头一抽。她的那张脸屡屡浮现在他脑海中，让他不禁又为自己的退缩而再次感到罪恶。随后，他想到了在大学读书时的美好时光，又想到了如今每天毫无变化的生活，他再一次动摇了。

怀揣着满脑的思绪，满腔的不安，他于深夜沉沉昏睡去。

说起来，真正做出决定也就在一秒间。待到早上睡起，再一想这件事，一种不知名的冲动让他瞬间下定了决心。他找到了女生，然后说：“我去。”▶

(中央 - 3)

距离他坐到了中央的那个座位上，已经过去好几年了。

在此期间，他相了几次亲，最终与一个比他小几岁的女性结了婚，之后的日子便也平平淡淡的。在父母的催促下，他们要了一个孩子，一家三口就生活在那座小城里，平淡之中，倒也挺美满的。

只是，就像在学校的那些年一样，父亲总是对他有一种极高的期望。即便无论怎样拿得都是差不多的工资，父亲也期望他能成为优秀标兵。他记着父亲对他的好，对他的期望，也记着那是自己的父亲。他听着父亲的话，在父亲的要求下，逼迫着自己努力工作。

单位里的同事见他用功，便也干脆一并将活儿都推给他干。

他便也干了。于是，加班熬夜成了日常。

就这样又过去了几年，他逐渐感到身体乏力，力不从心，时常头晕目眩，以至于走路都有些不稳。与此同时，他的头发也变得稀疏。他往四周一看，周围的同事似乎都是差不多的状况，他便也没太放在心上。

直至在一次体检的时候，他方才发觉，自己的身体健康状况似乎出了些问题。

他没选择住院，尽管医院强烈建议他这么做；住院太费钱了。

于是他再度回到了原先的生活中。

“这份计划书，杨建你帮我改一下呗。”那一天，同事对他说。

他犹豫了一下，想到自己已经接手的无数个活儿，又想到自己的身体状况，不禁想要拒绝。同事的脸突然严肃起来，“你不会连这小忙都不愿意帮吧？”

他心头一跳，连忙答应。同事笑着拍了拍他，离开了。

他打开计划书，里面什么也没有写。

他总是这样，总是无法拒绝别人，但这没办法，就像他人生中无数次的厌恶与逃避一样，他总是无法拒绝这样的自己。

情况没有因为他努力工作而好转，他的身体状况反而恶化了。没过多久，他再一次去了趟医院。闻到那消毒水的味道的那一刻，一份强烈的心慌自他的身体内迸出，他终是选择了住院；像人生中无数次的无可奈何一样，他无法抛下自己的身体不管。▶



(角落 - 4)

距离那次发生在咖啡厅角落的会面，已经过去十几年了。

他选择了出国读工商管理硕士。为此，他还和家人大吵了一架，而吵架这种事之前从未在他身上发生过。在恐惧与不安的同时，他感受到了一种从未有过的新鲜与解脱。

随后，带着多年攒下来的积蓄，他赴往加拿大留学。全新的人与事物以及在学校里静心学习的快感，几乎要将他变为另外一个人。

杨建回到了祖国，开始混迹职场。但现实给了他无比沉重的打击。怀揣着学历与学识，他却依旧度过了一段狼狈不堪的日子。父母的责骂随着生活的压迫几乎要将他击垮。但她依旧在他身边，同他一起度着日子。

所幸，他是幸运的。慢慢的，他开始向上爬，并在短短几年间便爬到了公司较高的位置。逐渐的，他体验到了截然不同的生活，并在每天的工作中找到了曾经所没有的热情。他开始赚更多的钱，说话也慢慢带上了一种自信。三十岁那年，他和林音结了婚，随后有了小孩。几年后，他说服自己的父母搬来上海一起生活；他们对当年发生过的那些冲突依旧耿耿于怀。三十八岁，他在上海有了真正属于自己的一套房子，一个属于自己和家庭的落脚地。

在这个繁华到令人惧怕的城市，他却也时常想起曾经的那些年岁，曾经在单位里的那些年；他时常留恋着曾经那平淡且简单的生活。但这种留恋并不使人厌倦，反倒时刻提醒着他自己是从哪里来的。

四十岁钟声敲响的那个凌晨，他坐在窗前，玻璃窗清晰得仿佛伸手就能触到夜空。上海的夜晚没有星星，但灯火却点缀着这座城市，使这夜景添了几分人间烟火气。于是在这烟火下，他捧着一本书，在夜灯下静静地读着。她就睡在一旁的大床上。而父亲的呼噜声，哪怕隔着两扇门也能听见。

他想着，如果当初自己没有恰好在那一刻，去了那一个火车站，坐到了那一个座位上，遇到了那一个她，自己恐怕也不会是这一个自己了。

(中央 - 4)

四十岁钟声敲响的那一个凌晨，他躺在病房中央的病床上，心中思绪乱飞。

他想到了自己那平淡但庸碌的生活，想到了自己的小家庭，想到了自己是因何才会躺在这里的，不禁微微失神。他的头脑混乱地转了一会儿后，终是在茫然中想起了住院那昂贵的费用，他便格外渴望出院回到单位去了。

随后，他想到了自己那儿子；他已经从一个只会咿呀乱语的胖小子长成了如今能自己上学的小大人了。这不禁使他笑了起来，连带着心里也明媚了许多。他想着，自己这一辈子，能供孩子上学，能供家人衣食无忧，能没有疾病困扰地和家人度过一生，就已无憾了。

莫名的，他想到了上海，那座繁华的城市。他想着那里的夜空究竟会是何种情景，是否与这里一样。这里的夜空是带着星星的，总令人觉着遥不可及。

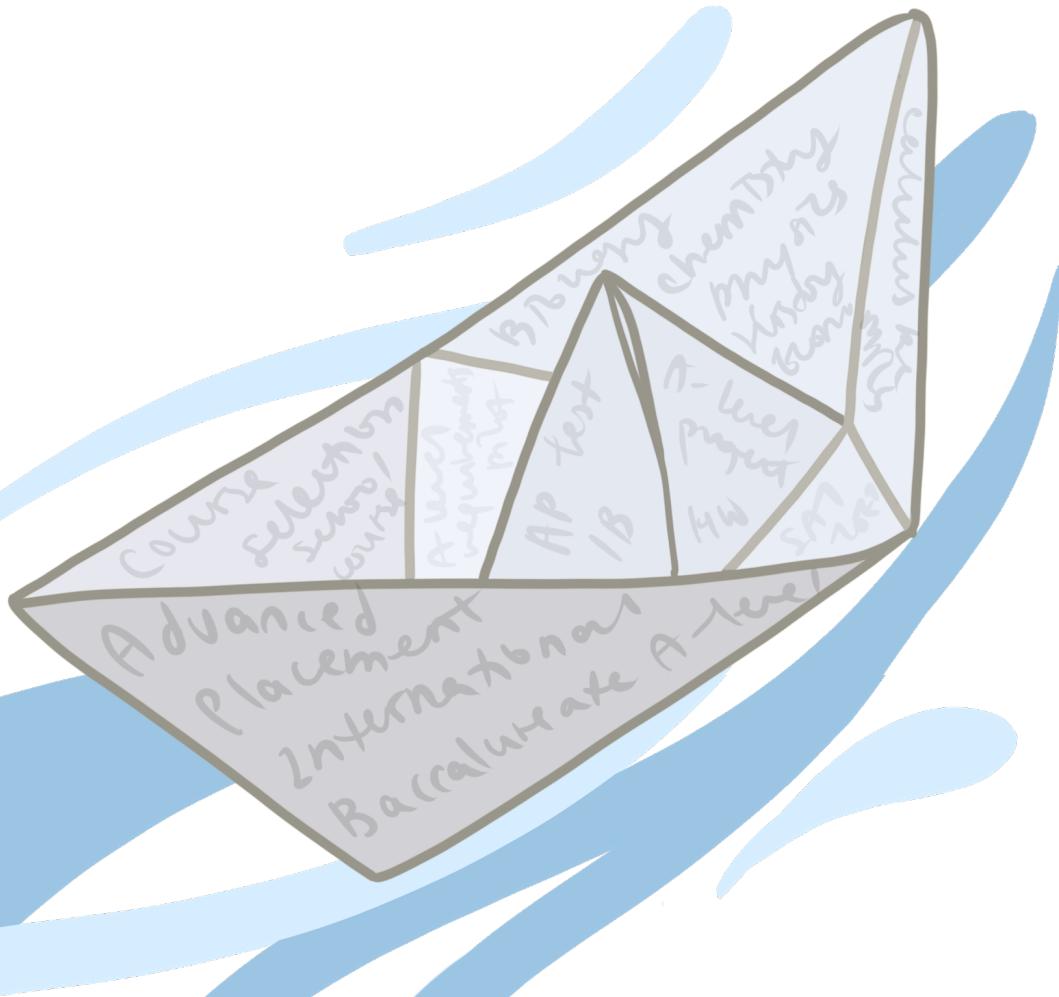
他也幻想过住在上海会是怎般滋味，也羡慕过能住在大城市的人。但转念一想，他的根已经深深地扎在了这座小城的土壤里，也唯有这里才飘着家乡的味道，他便也不再念着那些大城市了。

他扭了扭头，看向身旁的父亲。妻子在白天的时候陪了他一会儿，随后便回家照顾孩子去了。而母亲的腿脚不便，正待在家里。唯有父亲，从白天到晚上，一直守在这里。但无论是正在陪孩子睡觉的妻子，还是家中的母亲，亦或是父亲，他们的关怀总令杨建心中一暖。

漆黑的夜空和洁白的墙壁交织在一起，而身边的父亲就坐在硬邦邦的椅子上，头微微歪着，昏昏睡着，呼噜声在寂静的夜里格外响亮。 ■

FLOATING BETWEEN CHOICES

Written by: Lucy Lu | Illustrated by: Seoyoung Park



The transition from eighth grade to ninth grade, from the middle school building to the newly built Zhen-Tao building once seemed to be the biggest change. However, another major change approaches the sophomore students who are now in the crossroad of APs, IBs, and A-Level courses. Hanna from 10(6) says that “I used to want to enter the International Baccalaureate program, and it used to be my only dream. Yet as I struggled to find what truly suits me along my academic path and worry if the IB curriculum is going to bring me to the best college? I worry that I’ll chose a course that won’t suit me.”

This is a common struggle experienced by all the sopho-

mores who cannot come to a decision on the course they will take for the next two years. While it is known that the intensified competition has led to the reality that only less than half of the IB pilots can make it to the end, and more than one third of the entire grade has decided on risking the rest of their high school on this important decision, it makes the drifting process a less entertaining one. This is probably one of the toughest decisions they may face in their high school life. To see how similar decisions have been made by earlier sophomores who are now juniors and seniors, where they landed after their long “drift” might be worth a look. ►

APs

The Advanced Placement program is the course the majority of the students going to junior year decide to take. Because the students are given the choice to select which AP courses they want to take, it allows them to focus on their future majors. Emma Hui from 11(5) introduced her life as an AP student.

As a STEM student, Emma has used the benefits of the AP program well and decided to focus on science related AP subjects rather than humanities and language. Because Emma had always been interested in biology, she explains that “although AP Biology is not an easy course as there are lots of contents, some of our teachers have managed to cover them in 9th and 10th grade, making my life so much easier.” Despite the AP program being a challenging course, the teachers of SHSID have prepared the students well for their future academics and have lightened their pressure and workload. Emma also points out the benefits of the AP program is that “we have many free periods, although it really depends on what type of courses you take. Also we have an average of 4 PE classes a week.” While time management is a critical element in high school life, the school providing free periods and allowing the opportunity for physical exercise shows their efforts for students to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Although the school does provide AP courses, they also provide an opportunity to take the AP exam and earn credits without having to take the AP course. With enough effort and usage of third party sources like Khan Academy and AP review books, taking AP classes aren’t mandatory. So any of the sophomores considering the AP program should make a two year plan that outlines the specific AP credits they plan to achieve and if they are planning to self-study any of them.

IBs

The IB program is desired by many students, but teachers and the school set a relatively high qualification mark due to the many requirements the curriculum has. The biggest difference of the IB program from AP courses is that there is a chosen template of courses that each IB student must take. They need to take two different languages courses, a math course, and three out of all the social science and natural science courses. In addition to the six mandatory courses, they also have to take Theory of Knowledge, take care of their CAS activities, and write an Extended Essay on one subject of their choice. Although the IB program seems appealing to many students, it has a rigorous workload, and efficient time management skills are mandatory as it is a lengthy course of two years for the IB Diploma. The IB program is suitable for students who thoroughly enjoy all of their current subjects and want to apply the knowledge learned in class to analyze real life events happening in the society. However, it is not recommended to students who wish to focus specifically on

certain subjects and enjoy theories and logic rather than applying knowledge to real life.

Bill from 12 (2), who is in his final few days of IB, provides an insight into what a life of an IB student looks like. Bill remembers when he was considering the AP program and the IB, he felt the IB was going to allow him to experience all the different courses such as English literature —something he wouldn’t have taken if he were to take the AP. Bill expresses that “I feel like the benefit of the IB is that it provides lots of opportunities for you to do your own thinking. For the IB, you have to perform an Internal Assessment for each topic. And for science topics, we have to choose a research question and plan out our experiment and record data.” Bill does agree that although these opportunities are special, they sometimes bring stress and pressure. One thing Bill finds most dissatisfying about the IB program is that he only has one PE class each week. Due to the multiple curriculum requirements, IB students are only given one PE class each week, making them physically unfit and sad when other students leave for PE and they are the only ones left in the XianMian Building — but this is not a reason that should deter you from choosing the IB.

A-LEVELS

While the above scenario is mostly encountered by those struggling between IB and AP, A-level is also another good choice that one might consider. A-Level is a relative new curriculum in our school, hence why there is such a small proportion of students taking it. Selina Chen from 11(3) is currently enrolled in the A-level curriculum. During her interview, she also shared how choosing the A-level was not easy. She had considered other curriculums when in middle school, yet she felt certain of entering the A-level curriculum after she stepped into high school.

“I personally think that the A-level STEM courses are relatively easy while the literature courses are relatively more difficult. Writing essays for A-level courses requires a lot of different tactics as well as practice. I took 4 A-level courses, including math, chemistry, biology, and economics.” Selina tells us that the benefits of A-levels are that some of the content are very similar to things learned in tenth grade. Unlike the IB program and similar to APs, you can pick any A-level courses in preferred combinations. Additionally, there are no pre-requisites for each of the courses which provides equal opportunity for all students. Although the A-Levels might seem easy due to the low barriers and flexible course selection, Selina explains the A-level curriculum assigns loads of homework. She outlines her daily routine: start doing my homework until 9 p.m., and preview new course contents until 11 p.m. However, due to assignment deadlines and extracurricular activities, this routine is often interrupted, and she’s still finding her way around time management. ■



SET SAIL TO __

Written By: Raymond Tang | Illustrated By: Nina Li

The turmoils and ordeals of our age tend to be justified by the eventual possibility of reaching a prestigious college that will offer us the opportunity to thrive in society. Students' academic abilities are put under rigorous testing through rounds and rounds of tests and projects to achieve that goal. Students rarely take time and contemplate the meaning of their works beyond college throughout those years of hard work. Students often drift in an ocean of academics without reason or direction, but only with a vague ambition after college is finally finished. This article seeks to urge students to think about what they want to do after college and which island they ultimately want to land on after years of drifting. ►

Ian Lu from class 10(1) is very passionate about humanities subjects such as history. Enamored with the topics he takes an interest in, Ian is willing to devote massive amounts of time even after college to learn more about East Asian history. Unlike other areas, East Asia has a continuous culture that evolves and changes through time, attracting his interest. Ian looks forward to researching history in his near future, where he "has access to primary sources that [he doesn't currently] have access to," and analyzing the fascinating changes and continuities in East Asian cultures — something he loves. Ian is thrilled to gain first-hand experience as a historian and as a researcher, plan his expeditions to historical sites, and gain valuable experience.

However, his desire to research history conflicts with reality, where he understands the impracticality of simply conducting historical research for a living. Despite his passion for East Asian history, he understands that these are not well-paying jobs and indicates that his research aspirations may be interrupted by fiscal needs. Therefore, he might choose a workshop that pays better than his desired field of East Again history and continue it as a side-job. Interviews that follow in the article will also be conducted along the lines of recognizing adult life's reality. Many interviewees' aspirations focus on how to gain money in a way they enjoy instead of focusing on what they want. This demonstrates the impact of fiscal needs on our lives and their influence on our aspirations.

Max Liu from class 10(1) is among the best STEM students in the grade and engages in many extracurricular activities: rock band, math modeling, tennis, and math competitions. Interested in so many different things, Max seems to enjoy the process of drifting more than finding an island to settle in. His description of what he hopes to attain beyond college is rather vague yet indicative of how he wants to keep on drifting and exploring the options life offers. Max wants to go to college to discover more subjects and find out more about his passions. After college, "if [I] still don't have a clear answer [about what I want to do], I'll keep getting higher degrees." This demonstrates how Max does not limit what he wants to do in the future to a major or a job but seeks to continue drifting and seeing where the current takes him.

Max exemplifies how many students on campus feel about their future. Several interviewees declined my interview because they did not know what they would do after they graduate college. Drifting seems to be the only thing they can do, and not much attention was

paid to what could be done after the drifting.

The following anonymous interviewee illustrates the fiscal-based ambitions and grim understanding of adult life that was first demonstrated during Ian's interview. Contrasting with Ian, the interviewee said that they will probably "be stuck at a dead-end job doing regular stuff, not doing anything I'm dreaming about now." This pessimistic acknowledgment of what life would be like in the future might seem extreme coming from a high school student who is typically portrayed as upbeat and optimistic — who is ambitious to change the world. However, the interviewee is able to outline what she would like to achieve in an ideal situation: The interviewee wants to open a small pub where she can "chill" and invite friends over to have fun. After all the grim statements of what she envisions life will be like and her economically based aspirations, the interviewee surprisingly delivers a warm vision of a life that allows enjoyment and comfort despite being rooted in realism. The interviewee's dreams present a possible combination between the grim realities of a teenager's adult life and fantasies.

The three interviewees present three distinct approaches to life after college for students. There are people like Ian, the enthusiastic, passionate student who would like to pursue a job in their interests, yet feels discouraged by the financial hardships that will come if they gave such aspirations fulfillment. There are people like Max who do not know when the drifting will end and do not give much thought to life after college. There are students who does not aspire much but a simple, happy life untouched by fiscal worries like the anonymous interviewee. These three interviewees' aspirations reflect many of the student body's goals (of lack thereof) in life, and each shows the ways in which we envision where and when our drifting end. While we acknowledge that there will be financial hardships in the future, we believe now is among the few times in our life when we are given the freedom to aspire to whatever we desire. Now is the time to dream a dream that is larger than college or academics. Though this article seems to inevitably end in a finger wagging pedagogy that calls for a grand aspiration from all students, we must also admit that there is nothing inherently wrong with drifting. Ultimately, I am not here to judge the people who have no aspirations for the future or praise those who want to pursue their wild dreams. I am simply asking students to think, or consider where they want to set sail to and start widening their vision beyond school work. ■



THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL NEWS

Written by: Kevin Shao | Photos from: Google

Today, I will share three pieces of recent technological news about smartphones. They are all stunning events that are either product launches that mark a cornerstone in their own brands or events that can be seen as actions of bravery towards unfair treatment in an ever-competitive global market. Note that when this article is published, much more exciting technological advancements may have been released, but the events being introduced below will still remain influential and valuable to read.

There are many smartphone and smartphone-related products that have been launched in the previous two months, including Honor V40, Oppo Find X3 Series, Realme GT, Mi 10s, and iQOO Neo 5. However, arguably, the most exciting of the recent events within the realm of digital technology are related to Oppo and Xiaomi.

On March 10, Xiaomi released the Mi 10s models in China. Mi 10s is Xiaomi's (not including Redmi or Poco-phone) first model equipped with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 flagship processor. In addition to the Snapdragon 870 processor, Mi 10s is also equipped with truly symmetrical dual-speakers powered by Harman Kardon, a specialized sound company. Mi 10s also uses a 108MP (Mega-Pixel) Samsung Bright HMX main camera lens with a 1/1.33" size and has a total of four camera lenses. It also has a charging system that consists of a 33W wire charging, 30W wireless charging, and 10W reverse wireless charging system, and uses a China Star curved AMOLED screen with 1080P + resolution and 90-hertz refresh rate. Mi 10s starts with an 8GB LPDDR5 and 128GB UFS 3.0 variant with a price of 3299 RMB. Mi 10s is not a smartphone with an extremely honest price, a feature that many previous Mi-series phones have, but rather a product with balanced specs and relatively competitive prices. Mi 10s is a phone that indicates the beginning of Xiaomi's next step towards the high-end market, and also marks a crucial change in the entire Chinese smartphone market.

Just on March 11, approximately one day after Xiaomi's 15-minute launch event of Mi 10S, Oppo launched its flagship smartphone series Find X3. Oppo Find X3 and Find X3 Pro uses the same Samsung E4-material K+ 120Hz AMOLED display with the LTPO technology. Specifically, LTPO, standing for low-temperature polycrystalline oxide, enables a dynamic refresh rate from 1 to 120 hertz, making the screen more energy efficient. Also, both models have the same camera lens system with two Sony IMX766 sensors for both the main camera lens and the ultra-wide camera lens, each with a size of 1/1.56 inches. Compared with the basic model Oppo Find X3, the pro model is equipped with more powerful processors (Snapdragon 888 versus Snapdragon 870), faster memories (LPDDR5 versus LPDDR4x), and better waterproof abilities (IP68-rated versus daily waterproof). Both Oppo Find X3 and Find X3 Pro also have the 3MP magnifying glass lenses, supporting up to 60x zoom, and a charging system allowing 65W wire

charging, 30W wireless charging, and 10W reverse wireless charging. Oppo Find X3 starts from RMB 4499 (8GB + 128GB), and Find X3 Pro starts from RMB 5499 (8GB + 256GB). The launch of the Oppo Find X3 Series reveals that Oppo is also starting to design products with stronger specs though at more honest prices, while also maintaining a unique design. This also hints at the increasing rationality of consumers in the entire future smartphone market, where people are pursuing higher-grade products.

A much more exciting event happened only a week after the two consequent launch events. According to Xiaomi Official and related US media reports, judges at Washington DC's Federal court recently issued an order to temporarily remove Xiaomi and other related companies from the "list of companies related to the Chinese government." According to Xiaomi, this protects multiple Chinese companies from "receiving unfair treatment" and related sanctions, since "they are all firms owned by citizens rather than officials of countries." Company representatives all expressed their excitement and satisfaction towards the United States courts after receiving the news about how "the United States government [was] willing to retain justice for related companies." Xiaomi's victory in the United States' court indicates the will to create a fair business environment, while it also urged other related companies to strive for justice. This is an important step for the industry and affiliated phone companies.

Through these events, we can see the dramatic influence of related products on the smartphone industry and the entire world. The launches of the Mi 10s and the Oppo Find X3 series indicate the changes in philosophies, beliefs, and strategies of modern firms. These product launches also suggest that firms believe smartphones with balanced specs, designs, and prices are the most desired products, and the main reason for this is people's changing tastes and rationality. This pushes the development of the entire smartphone field to a pace faster than ever before. Furthermore, Xiaomi's victory at the United States Federal Court regarding the "companies related to the Chinese government list" indicates a strong step towards equality and justice in the global market. After a tumultuous time with the coronavirus outbreak, the smartphone industry has seen an impressive recovery, and these three latest smartphone news are a testament to how quickly technology can develop and how fast the industry can bounce back. ■

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TO MARS! AN ADVENTURE OF THE LIFETIME

Written by: Kevin Wang | Photos from: NBC News

Have you ever dreamt of drifting through space, exploring the vast unknown? Well, Elon Musk certainly has with his ambitious Mars plan. Unveiled in 2016, Musk's space-faring company SpaceX aims to land humans on the red planet by 2026, or maybe even as early as 2024 if SpaceX is "lucky" enough. Currently, though, SpaceX is still building up to its final goal and plans to first send unmanned vehicles to Mars within the next two years.

The key to reaching the Red Planet will be the highly advanced Starship rockets designed by SpaceX; each vehicle is made out of stainless steel and could carry up to 100 tons of cargo as well as 100 people in a single launch. One of the most exceptional characteristics of the Starship (other than its massive boosters) is that it

will be fully reusable—this significantly drives down costs and makes the exploration plan more practical and environmentally friendly. Because of this, each flight may only cost up to \$2 million, which is hundreds of times cheaper than existing rocket launches of similar capacity.

Because of Starship's practicality and convenience, it is also planned to be used for future missions to return to the moon in 2022 under the Artemis program and several other trips around the Earth for different purposes, such as flying tourists around the moon by 2023. Therefore, Starship is not only important to the Mars mission but is also essential to many others, and it would likely be the key to SpaceX's future success. ►



One of the main motivations driving Musk to work towards his goal is the dream of building an entire permanent human colony on Mars. He believes that it will help humankind survive catastrophes on Earth such as our home being destroyed in a nuclear war or an asteroid strike. Yet, as can be seen from his Mars mission, Musk is currently focused only on the transportation system to Mars from Earth. He is not designing or constructing any Mars bases but instead is just responsible for safely carrying cargo and people to the planet. Therefore, even if SpaceX's transportation system is fully functional by the time of its tight deadline, humans cannot migrate to Mars just yet—to do so would require multiple other highly developed life-support systems which is not SpaceX's top priority as of now. This is a slight flaw in Musk's plan—yet, Musk hopes that by showing people travel to Mars can be achieved, the government or other entrepreneurs would more readily support the program, including to help “[fund and develop] the remaining pieces of the puzzle,” allowing Musk to complete his dream.

The results of Musk's Mars dream would be far-reaching and would leave a deep impact on the space-faring capabilities of humankind. Musk predicts that his plan would eventually lead to 1 million people flying to Mars by 2050, attracted by the large number of new opportunities for jobs and a better lifestyle in Mars' new society. A fleet of 1,000 Starships could also be built over the next 10 years with 100 built per year; this allows 100,000 tons of cargo and 100,000 people to be launched to Mars every year. These trips to Mars would be accessible to anybody as long as they have the economic assets to afford them. Once the Starships are in space and the “migration” to Mars begins, Musk expects megatons of cargo sent into orbit for a successful settlement on Mars. Yet, one fact to note is that Starships can only be launched during a 30-day period that occurs every 26 months because of the time window

when the orbits of Earth and Mars align. This alignment can allow a low-fuel journey, springing the rocket off of Earth's rotation towards Mars. So, theoretically, all of the Starships will have to be launched during this tight period, which would require highly skilled management so that there won't be delays or mistakes in preparation that might severely affect the outcome of each mission.

If Musk succeeds, then a whole new frontier for space exploration and colonization would be opened, providing mankind with the opportunities to touch upon resources that are scarce on Earth but much more abundant on other planets. After Mars, humans might explore other new planets, possibly allowing human civilization to explode in size, influence, and even look beyond our galaxy. Current problems such as our energy crisis and overpopulation might be all solved with new land and resources; others could be simply worked around—for instance, in response to global warming, more people could migrate to Mars and hopefully cut our greenhouse gas emissions here on Earth. This would help reduce global warming significantly. Therefore, the reality of going and living on Mars may seem like a dream come true for many Sci-Fi fans. However, this new edge in travel would also pose new problems for the future. Who gets to be in charge of the new land? Will governments fight for control of the rich frontier? How about exploitation, law, and enforcement? Will we soon devour and take advantage of other planets as we are doing to our own, with pollution, global warming, and the depletion of limited natural resources? So, instead of being purely beneficial to humanity, the ability to travel to Mars and possibly other worlds may be a source of conflict and accelerated destruction for the people of this planet as well.

So, what might the future hold? Do the positives outweigh the negatives? Well, we can only wait to find out. ■

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Shanghai High School International Division
400 Shang Zhong Road
Shanghai, China 200231
Website: www.shsid.org