

Persistent, Aspiring, Noble, Diligent, Achieving

SHSID|TIMES

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Letter From the Editor

Catalyst. Reactions. Change.

What does it take for someone to “grow”? What does it take for a society to “develop”? This issue of SHSID|Times seeks to explore exactly that. Flipping through the pages, you will get to see some of our writers’ thoughts on what catalyst means beyond Chemistry and Biology. We hope that our ideas may inspire you in one way or another, perhaps allowing you to better understand what causes, and what results from, the changes we witness within ourselves and in others.

If you want to know more, flip ahead to the table of contents. I will leave the joy of discovery to you.

Sincerely,

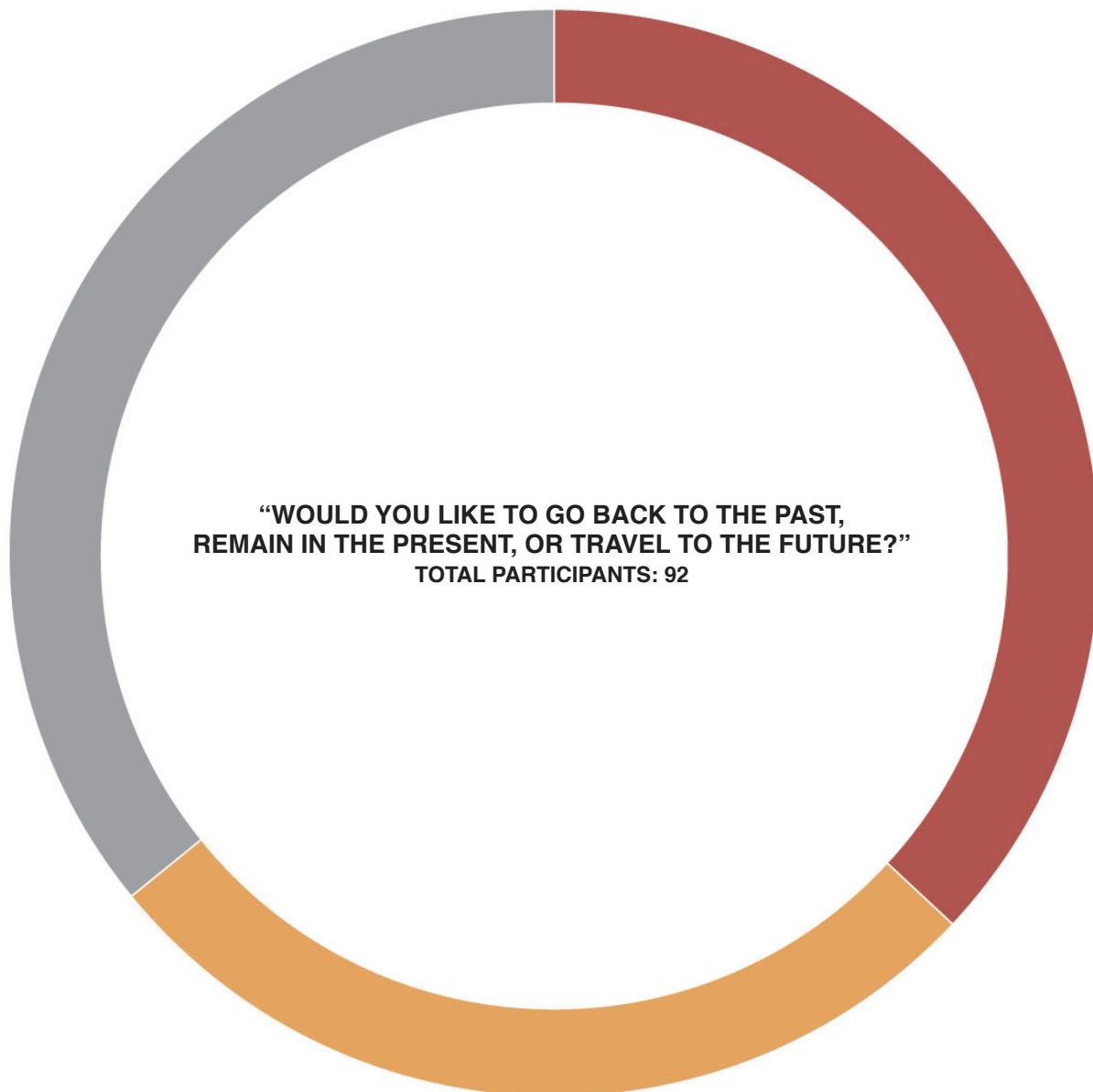


Emma Li, Features Editor

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.



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LETTERS

ON “IS INTEGRITY NECESSARY BETWEEN COUPLES?”: JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2021 ISSUE

To see things idealistically and callously brush off the topic, one might say: “of course you ought to be honest!” Yet it’s not as easy to execute as morally correct as that statement sounds.

Frankly speaking, we all wear our social facades in different scenarios and adjust according to our company. Depending on the way you look at it, it can be a sign of emotional intelligence but it can also indicate some degree of tactic.

Now is it right to wear a facade in an intimate relationship? I think in order to answer that question we have to first acknowledge the difficulty in fulfilling complete transparency. The human mind does not work like a hard drive. We have issues, scars, and dirty laundry. We have things we find difficult to communicate or even face. We can’t take back what we say so we contemplate our speech more carefully.

I believe there’s a fine line in relationships that separates what can be shared when ready and what the other person is entitled to know. In the end, it all varies with the kind of relationship you have and your mutual understanding of each other’s needs. This is based largely on effective communication which does not equate to brawling your deepest, darkest secrets at each other. Sharing secrets or venting can be an act of trust and affection but it isn’t a yardstick for healthiness and stability.

I can’t agree with “imperfect understanding of imperfect people leads to perfect relationship.” First of all, it’d be exhausting to pretend with someone who is so close to you. Secondly, with the term “imperfect people,” the context stigmatizes the concept. But who is perfect? We are nothing but human, who have emotions and make mistakes. We all worry so much about the way we are that we strive to be a “better” version of ourselves to impress another. Though there is nothing wrong to want to improve, you still got to do you. And the person who loves you should be in love with you. Lastly, you don’t need a romanticized idea of you from your partner to achieve happiness. Or how much you can divulge to each other to vouch for your love. In my own humble mind, when the both of you are happy in the relationship you have, you’ve got the perfect relationship.

-Alicia Gong 11(6)

ON “ARE RATINGS OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ART INDICATIVE OF THEIR QUALITY?”: MARCH-APRIL 2021 ISSUE

As the writer claims, ratings are, indeed, “only one numerical number.” Although I am clearly aware that the way people rate a form of entertainment or an artwork is quite subjective as different people consider different values during evaluation, I do think ratings unconsciously affect my perception in the real world. For instance, I am more likely to watch a film that has already been highly praised by movie critics. Moreover, whenever I look for videos to watch on YouTube during my leisure time, I often check to make sure that the video I will be watching has been viewed by multiple people and has received a lot of likes, which, to me, guarantees the quality of the video.

However, it is certainly not true that higher ratings guarantee quality. There are some forms of entertainment that touch on controversial issues and thus have been wildly rejected by some groups of audience; there are also some forms of entertainment that are just difficult for the general audience to comprehend.

By reading this article, I had an opportunity to take some time to reflect on my experience of automatically linking a numerical number with the quality of a work without considering the amount of effort that the creator must have put in as well as the actual content of the work.

-Anonymous

ART SUBMISSIONS



1

1 | Bottleneck

by Peiran Li 11(4)

Willingly climbing deeper into the rabbit hole, even though the tunnel walls are forged of psychedelics and hallucinations.



2

2 | Straitjacket

by Peiran Li 11(4)

Escaping from physical confines, only to be trapped once more in a world of fantasy and illusions.



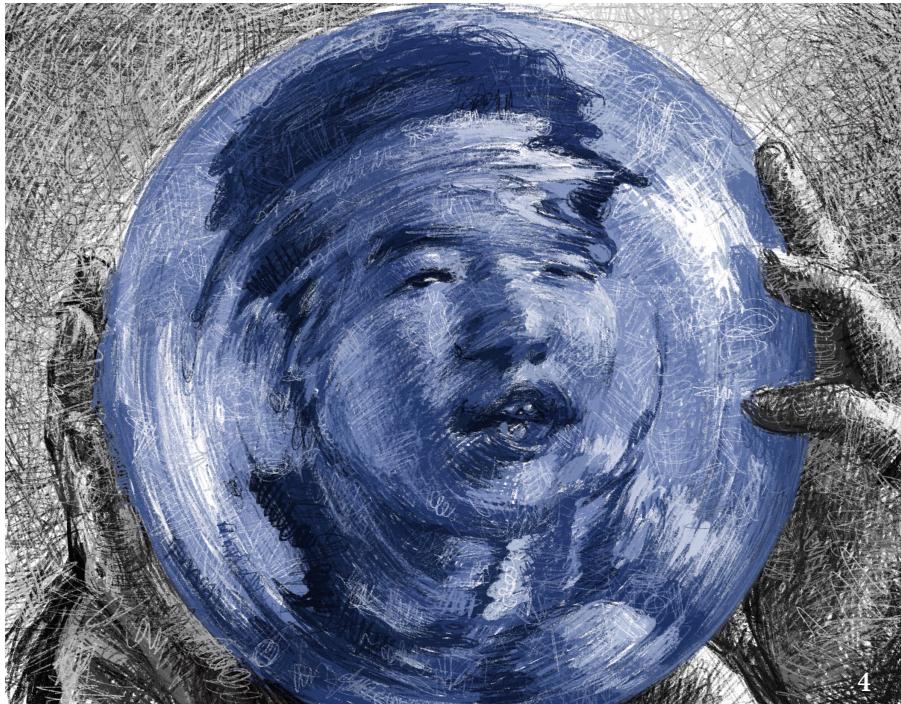
3

3 | All My Friends are Empty

by Rena Yan 10 (11)

Watercolor and Pencil on Paper

This watercolor piece was based on David Bowie's song "Space Oddity," and it was meant to depict the loneliness the song originally contained. The psychedelic colors and empty spacesuits surrounding the single man display the drug trip and dizziness of the music, and the feeling of a fall under the realization of loneliness.



4 | Distortion

by Katherine Wang 11(8)

This artwork is the examination of oneself through a different, distorted lens. In embracing their own insecurities, people can also become more accepting of others.

4



5

5 | Dusk to Dawn

by Katherine Wang 11(8)

This artwork portrays the passing of time and how despite the people around you who will come and go, those closest to you will never leave. Sisterhood, for instance, is an unbreakable friendship.



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YEAH RENA GRE SIS

Written by: Angela Zhang, Chloe Ng, Chloe Xue, Sarah Liu | Illustrated by: Rena Yan



Dear diary,
So, I'm here. Because my family's helicopter went up in flames and I chose not to go back to my father's mansion and my private tutoring and my shell of a life. I'm what they call a gatekeeper—someone who guards the gate to reincarnation, I'm guessing, from the name. When I first came, this lady told me that I was not to leave and people who wanted to reincarnate to Earth would need to move me with their stories and why they wanted to live another life. Essentially, they handed me a lined notebook, a fountain pen, and the power to determine people's final destinies for all of time. Day after day I sit in an office chair in front of my desk before the grand reincarnation gate built with gold and marble and the riches of the earth (honestly, it kind of resembles the gate to my house) and await people's arrival. It has been a week and I haven't seen a single person.►



DAY 1

A woman in her forties walks towards Renata with a limp. It is clear that she has been through a lot—hair unkempt, unwiped streaks of tears still visible on her dusted face, once-crisp clothes draped in disorganization. Renata flinches at the sight of the woman, not dramatically, but just enough for the woman to notice.

“Adira?” Renata asks. The woman nods. “So you’ll have to tell me your story and why you want a second chance.” With a dilation of the pupils, water welled over the woman’s eyes and quivering, she quietly starts to speak.

“I’m Adira. Forty-third leader of our great country, or at least what it was before, well, that happened. Renata, right?”

Adira looks up and briefly meets Renata’s eyes before Renata turns away.

“I know your father. He sponsored the men that killed me. It’s ok. Don’t worry,” she says with the charm of a weathered leader faced with her loving subjects.

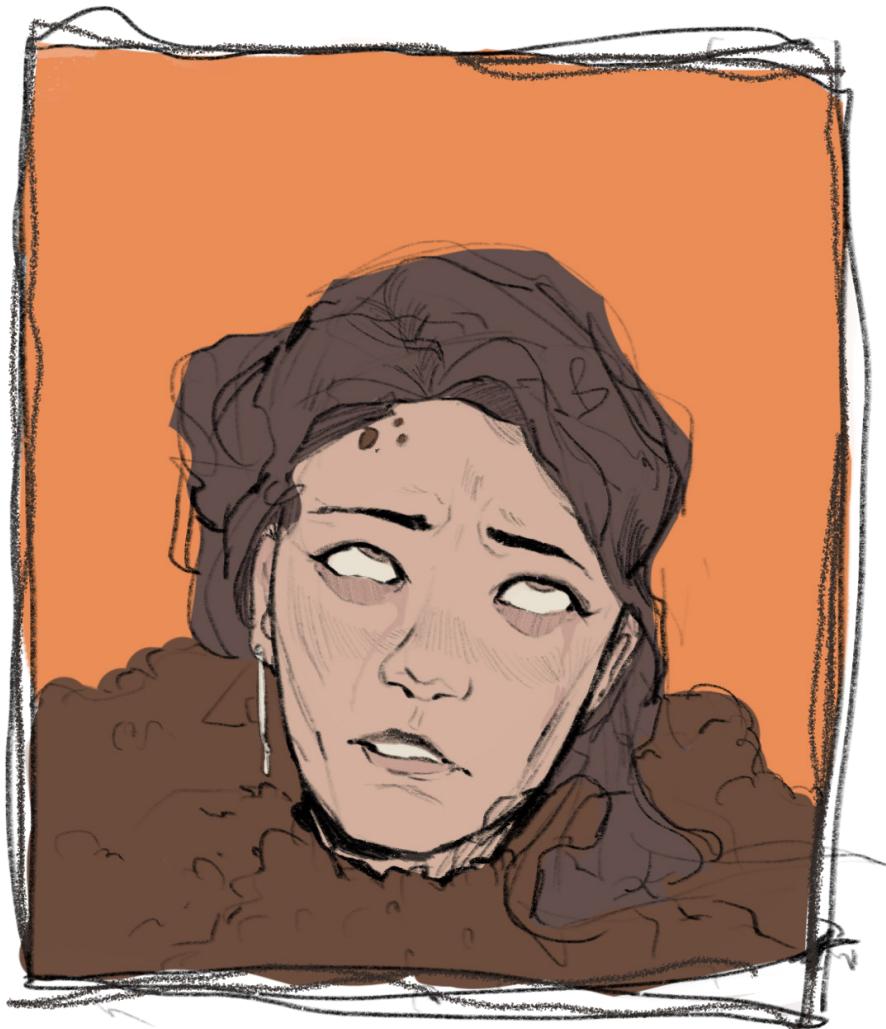
Renata looks confused. “So you’re powerful?”

Smiling, Adira seems to be surprised at Renata’s lack of knowledge about her. She says, “No, no, I died a castaway and heretic. I was hated by the people and by my government. I was a traitor and brought shame to our country.”

“Look what we became, huh? It wasn’t always this way—I once was a charismatic leader. That was probably a decade ago. Or was it two? When you’re trapped in a country that is not your own and the walls are closing in and your heart is displaced, time is nothing but a measurement of your desperation. I was chased to the outskirts of my country by the men who now sit in my seat and bring ruins to my people—fearing revolution and death, I fled in hopes of a new life.”

Adira looks at Renata almost expectantly, but Renata continues to write in her notebook.

“I don’t know what it was. Maybe an inseparable tie in my blood that knew that the country that pained me the most was my very own. Even in my supposed new life, my every feeling and action was guided by the fate of my own country. And I thought there was hope—I should have known that the men that would attempt to overthrow me would execute their own unique dictatorship by means of censorship of the media and the corruption of the aristocracy.” ►



Even after all of this, Renata seems mildly uninterested. “So how did you die?”

“I was buried alive—” Adira goes quiet. Renata looks up from her writing for the first time and furrows her brows in surprise. After a few seconds, she recalls that burying enemies alive was a practice that was meant to show alliance to a country.

“They hunted me down through a satellite signal since I was still constantly monitoring my country. They trapped me in an empty hotel room for a day, and the very next day I was taken to the crowds like a plaything whose death’s only purpose was to entertain the masses and please the government of my country. The last words people ever said to me were that I was a heretic and a good for nothing parasite to this country. There’s really no story except the fact that I miss my country. Please.”

Renata, mildly skeptical, asks Adira, “How do you know you will make a difference after you reincarnate? You know, you will basically be a blank slate. No more Adira, just a corrupted country ruled by people who won’t know you--and immense powerlessness, just as you felt in your past life.”

“I don’t. I don’t know that I will make a difference. But for my people, I am willing to take my chances.”

Without another word, Adira stepped through the portal. ►



Dear diary,

I think that was the former leader of my home country. What did she mean when she said my father sponsored the men that killed her? My father always told me that I didn't need to be involved with the matters of the country. It would put me in jeopardy. Besides, I couldn't have been bothered to change. Maybe if I was less ignorant and didn't resort to inaction, things wouldn't have ended up this way? How did she have the courage to reincarnate? Even with access to anything I wanted, I have never felt as passionate about anything as Adira's passion for our country.►



DAY 2

A young man with blue hair and wild eyes stumbles in, looking around frantically. His eyes quickly zero in on Renata, and he instinctively shifts into a defensive stance.

“Who are you?” He asks coldly.

“Your name’s Ros, right?” Renata doesn’t look up, still shuffling her papers. “You died—do you know what you need to do?”

“Hm? No.” Ros tilts his head, suspicion still presents in his eyes. “But how do I reincarnate? I need to know, please.”

“Your desire to reincarnate is the reason why you’re here. I’m Renata. Now, you tell the portal here a good enough story so that it lets you in for you to reincarnate. Just start whenever, I guess.”

“I died first in the Windless Land on a mission to infiltrate a fortress of our political enemy. I was assigned with Arun, an... acquaintance of mine.

“We took the necessary precautions—armour, sharpened weapons, everything. The mission is still quite dangerous, though: the fortress is known to be filled with traps and puzzles; no one in our cavalry has succeeded in getting past the first chamber.

“Ah, I guess it’s only fair I start with the full story about who I am; you probably already know anyway, so it doesn’t matter. I wasn’t originally from Solenoir, the city we lived in—my parents sent me here when I was six (or was I seven?) to spy on Solenoir and the people here. I never was sure what they wanted me to do, but they made it clear that I did not belong in Solenoir. I grew up here, though, pledged allegiance to the Solenoir, and grew to love it as if it were home.

“I would never lay a finger on Solenoir—I love it with all of my heart and I remained loyal to it until the day I died.

“I grew up with Arun in Solenoir, him a reckless bundle of energy and I the one to hold him back from his more daring escapades. We were inseparable—we’d climb trees after training, stand watch on the nights of our make-belief adventures, keep each other awake during classes that were particularly boring—hah, we did everything together. I never told him about my identity, and he never pushed me whenever I stuttered to answer questions about my past.

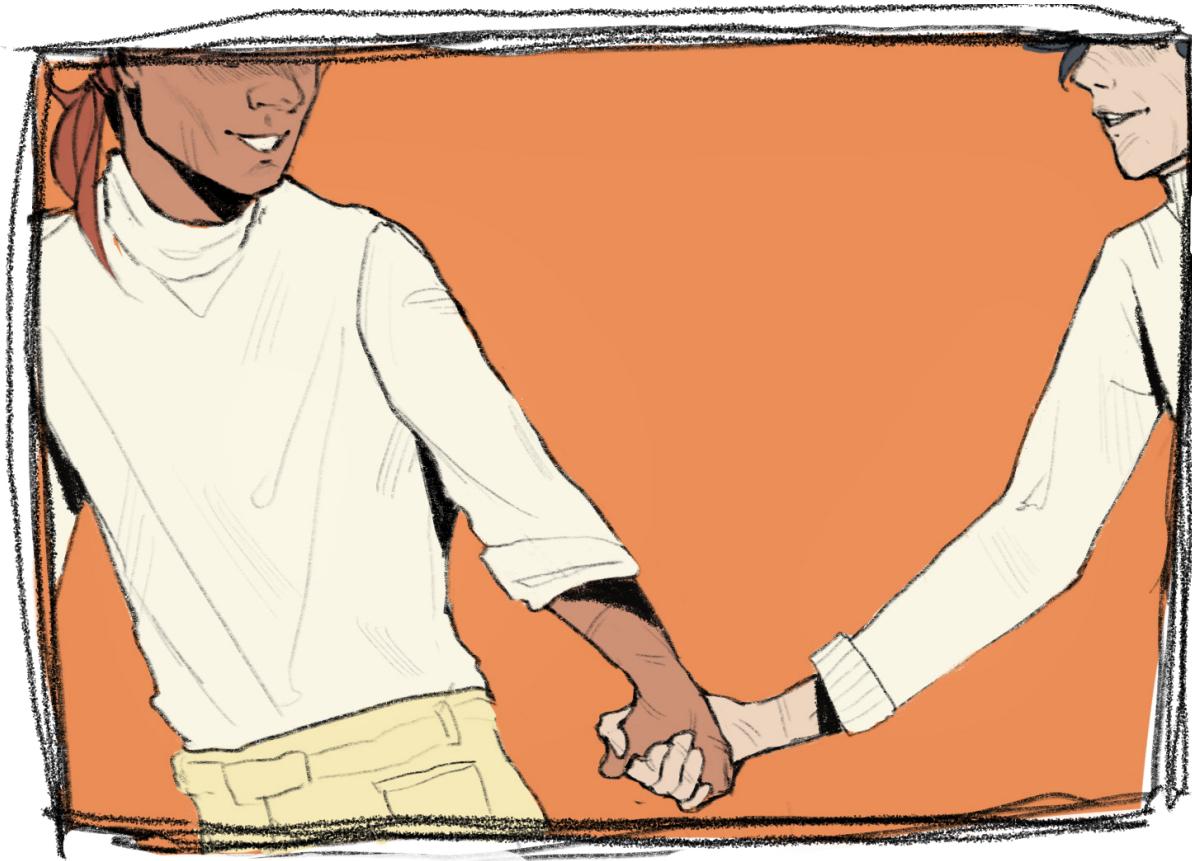
“We were fine, though—we remained inseparable until the day we were assigned the mission together.

“In case I don’t make it out of here alive, Arun,’ I said, fully aware of the danger ahead of us, ‘I need to tell you something.’

“I told him that I was sent to Solenoir as a spy at the entrance of the fortress, right before we headed into the military stronghold. I told him everything I did not have the courage to tell him before. It was poor timing, I know, but what choice did I have, knowing that I might not have another chance to come clean in the future?

“He reacted poorly, but I understand; for who could continue to love a traitor to their homeland?

“We didn’t talk after, and then I died.”▶



“Ros... Explain what you meant by ‘reacted poorly,’” Renata interrupts, eyes strangely pleading for... something.

Ros winces. “About that. I’d rather not talk about it.”

“And are you and Arun on good terms now?” Renata implores, eyes still pleading.

“As I said, we grew up together.” Ros smiled, a twisted, bitter thing. “Hah. He hates me now, he has to. I’m a traitor to Solenoir.”

“... How did you die?”

Ros smiles again, wistful. “I took a poisoned arrow in his fortress, in the fortress. He’s worth more than my death, and I am happy with my choice. Is there anything else you want to ask?”

Renata bit her lip, looking down at her papers. “Just one more. Why did you want to reincarnate? Answer this question properly and the portal that leads back to the mortal world will hopefully let you in, and you’ll be able to live another life.” ►

“... I just do.”

Renata blinks once, and then twice.

“You mean to tell me you told me all of this about you and the person you died for, only to throw the last question away?”

“Is this not a valid answer?”

“No!”

“Fine then,” Ros shifts his gaze away from Renata’s face and to the other portal, which leads towards the permanent destruction of his soul. “I guess I just won’t reincarnate. Good talking to you.”

He steps around the counter, places his hand on the doorknob, and turns—

“Wait.” An unknown voice calls. “Don’t go into that portal.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Renata sees Ros flinch, eyes widening in recognition. She quirks an eyebrow in his direction but refrains from commenting. Instead, she turns to address the newly arrived soul.

He is just as disheveled as Ros was when he first entered, with long, fiery red hair tied back in a low ponytail. However, his gaze remains hyper-focused on Ros, who is staring resolutely at the space beside him, determinedly avoiding eye contact.

“I take it that you’re Arun?” Renata asks, clearing her throat.

“Oh—” the young man turns to face her, “yes, that’s me.”

“Assuming that you want to reincarnate too—just tell a story and say why you want to live another life.”

“Oh, alright. Just one story, right?” Arun’s lips quirk into a sad smile. “In that case, I will tell you my mine, though it would be better to say that it is the story of the two of us.”

He inclines his head towards the man standing next to him, the sad smile still lingering on his face. “I hope you’ll listen too, Ros. At least let me make my amends for any pain I might have caused you.”

“I’m sure Ros has already told you about us growing up together. We were sworn brothers, best friends... He was everything to me. He still is—I just failed to remind him of this before he died.”

“I’m assuming that Ros told you about his, ah, poorly timed identity reveal, yes? I admit that at that moment, I reacted rather poorly as well. I screamed at him and called him a traitor and said that I should never have trusted him, should never have let myself get close. At that moment I was convinced (or maybe I was just trying to convince myself) that I never truly knew Ros, that this entire friendship was just an act. I realize now that that was the furthest thing from the truth. I am truly sorry, Ros, for my actions that day...”

“You’re not sorry,” Ros crosses his arms and glares at Arun.

“Let me finish, Ros, please,” Arun pleads, giving Ros his best puppy dog eyes.

“...Fine. But only because you pulled that face.” ►

“I thought it over after you told me—it took me a few hours to come to terms with Ros’ identity and realize that he was loyal to our city.

“Thinking back, I should’ve known that he’d never lay a hand on Solenoir. He loves this city as if it were his home, and it was. I’m sorry, Ros.

“I forgave you; I really did. I think, deep down, I had already forgiven you long before I came to terms with it myself. But we were on a mission, so I decided to wait until after the mission was completed to tell you that nothing needs to change between us. Unfortunately, with how things turned out, you can see how I never got the chance. I didn’t know that you’d take a poisoned arrow for me, and—”

“Wait yeah, why did you do that by the way? That was so dumb!”

Ros raises an eyebrow. “Do what?”

“You took an arrow for me! You are out of your mind, you absolute idiot!” Arun looks like he is going to combust if Ros says another word.

“Well, how did you die so fast immediately after? Me dying was for you to not die! And you’re the one calling me dumb?” Ros shot back.

Arun did not combust, but he did flush ten shades redder.

“...You are so unbelievably stupid it’s kind of impressive,” Arun huffs, indignant, “anyways, as I was saying...”

“After Ros died, I saw red. I couldn’t forgive the people who dared to take Ros from me, especially before I had the chance to properly apologize to him for what I said before. I couldn’t stand the thought of Ros dying, believing until the end that I hated him. More than that, I couldn’t forgive myself for letting Ros sacrifice himself for me even while believing that I hated him. It was such a lonely way to go.

“I massacred everyone in the vicinity. I’m not exactly sure how many, or what they looked like. All I remember thinking at that moment was that I would make every last one of them pay with their lives for killing Ros.

“I died from blood loss not long after you. I think a large part of me didn’t want to keep living anymore after Ros died.

“Ros is everything to me, and I—”

“You called me stupid? You? The one who died from indirectly self-induced blood loss? Right after I died for you? You little— You imbecile—” Ros lets out a scream, frustrated, and punches Arun hard on his shoulder.

“Ow! But what I did was completely justifiable! I would never have done something like that if you hadn’t gone and gotten yourself killed!”

“This man—”

“Okay, okay, please stop!” Renata glances nervously at Ros, who is seething at Arun. “Just answer the last question and I’ll let both of you go. Why do you want to reincarnate, Arun?” 

Arun rubs his hand over the nape of his neck. “I, ah, want to find him in the next life and tell him how I really feel. About, ah, his identity. I didn’t get to tell him when I had the chance.”

“And, Ros, I’m going to ask you one more time: why do you want to live another life?”

“Because, in the next life, in better circumstances, I hope to be able to be a better friend. I wasn’t honest in this one, and I hope things will go better in our next lives now that I know better.” Ros focuses his gaze on Arun and smiles, bittersweet.

“Then there’s nothing left to do but move on,” Renata smiles at the pair. “Reincarnation gate’s this way. Take care.”

Ros turns to Arun, and his eyes crinkle into a genuine smile. “Let’s go.”

Arun takes his hand, threading his fingers between Ros’ long, tan ones, and guides them to the entrance of the portal.

“I’ll find you again in the next life,” Arun whispers.

Ros grasps Arun’s hand a little tighter.

“It’s a promise.”

Their hands remain interlinked until the very last second. ►



Dear diary,

This is going to be a short one. I won't go into too much detail for their stories, because I doubt I'll need to write them down to remember them anyway. Two friends came in today. One of them died for the other, and the other in question died not soon after. Both of them are self-sacrificial idiots, but nonetheless, I have so much respect for them for being able to care for someone so completely. I think, even though I don't know what it's like to die for someone you love, this is a testament to the amount of love that is present in this world. I would like to experience this kind of love myself one day. If I ever get the chance at a second human life, I will try to be a better person to live up to be worthy of this love. ►



The last soul to come: Esme

Just as Renata is closing her diary, another soul walks into the chamber. She is a middle-aged woman, wearing a fashionable shirt and a crooked apron. The woman looks calm and composed, so unlike most of the other souls Renata had seen in her time as a gatekeeper. Renata suddenly feels a flush of excitement as she waits for this woman's story, a sense of anticipation she hadn't felt before.

"So, you must be..." Renata hastily flips through the papers in front of her. "Esme, right?"

"Yes, I'm Esme. Esme Collins."

"Alright, Esme, here's what's going to happen," Renata says, putting down the papers.

"You are currently facing a decision. You see those two doors? If you go into the door on the right, you reincarnate and get another chance at life. If you go into the door on the left, you enter the realm of the dead. Do you wish to be reincarnated?"

"... I do," Esme says in a soft but firm voice.

"In that case, you need to tell me a story about your life and tell me why you want to do all of this again. I'll let you through if your reason is convincing."

Esme nods and begins her story.

"My story began when I was a child. I was born into a traditional family, and my life was always planned out for me; I never got any say in it. I went to school just like every other child, and I excelled. I always got very good scores, and I loved my career. None of it mattered to my family. Not when they got me married. Looking back, submitting to the pressure was the worst thing I ever did, but at the time, the only way of life I knew was following orders.

"Anyway, I married a man named Liam Waters. I gave up my entire life for him. I bore his children and then stayed home to take care of them. At first, I thought I could balance being a mother and continuing my career, but Liam refused to take any time to stay home and care for his family because, according to him, men were supposed to work. He thought he was helping me, that becoming a housewife was an easy way out by doing nothing and enjoying the money he made. He never understood what it took for me to give up my entire career, a life I loved, to do what was expected of me. I shouldn't have done it. I should've insisted that he shared the housework with me, that he let me continue on living my life. But I suppose it's too late now to realize that.

"Eventually, I got used to my life. I forgot about the opportunities I could've had if I had been firmer. I grew bored and numb with everything that was happening and everything I did. My husband became disillusioned with my lack of enthusiasm for life. He began ignoring me, not talking to me unless it was necessary. My children scorned me and yelled at me because they thought I knew nothing except staying at home. They never knew, or in my husband's case, didn't want to know, how beautiful the future I sacrificed was. In time, I also stopped thinking about it. Stopped, until I couldn't keep avoiding everything I gave up.

"It was a summer vacation; my husband took my children out on a trip to Europe that they said I wouldn't appreciate. I let them go and didn't tell them that I probably knew about the culture of Europe ten times better than they did. I didn't want to think about it and face everything I gave up. I thought there was no other way for me to live. Why dwell on something I couldn't change anyway? 

“It was during that summer that one of my cousins invited me to the city for a brief vacation with my family gone. I had nothing better to do, so I went. In the city, I saw women, women like me, who would never get married and focused on their career. They were happy, happier than I ever was, even though my parents told me the only way a woman could be happy was to marry and have children. I also saw women who did marry and have children, but who were still able to have a career because their husbands took part in the housework. Slowly, I realized that I was wrong, that I didn’t need to throw away my life to stay home, that I could’ve had my own life. The day that conclusion hit me, I cried all night. I cried for all the opportunities I could’ve had that I threw away. I saw that it was time for me to take back my opportunities. I had given enough for my family; it was time I do something for myself. I went to see a lawyer and got divorce papers. By the end of that summer, I was ready to go home and leave my husband.

“So I went home and waited for my family. When they arrived, I handed my husband the divorce papers and told him I couldn’t do it anymore and wanted to leave. He didn’t understand. In the end, he still thought I was the one who had it easy. He thought he was the one who spent his efforts to allow me to have an easy life. He tore up the paperwork and told me I was insane. He yelled at me, he slapped me, and he shut me out of the room to think about what I did. At that moment, I realized that there was nothing left for me anymore. My husband would never understand me, and my children would never respect me. If I tried to leave, everyone around me would do what my husband did. I couldn’t leave this life, except in one way.”

“So here I am,” Esme says with a soft smile.

“Wow, I—” Renata takes a deep breath. Esme’s life story struck a little too close to home. “So why do you want to be reincarnated?”

“There are so many opportunities in life that I didn’t see and seize before. I want to try again, so I can fight for every chance I receive for a better life.” Esme looks serene, calm and hopeful for a new life.

Renata nods and gestures towards the open gate behind her, “Go, you have my blessing.”

Esme steps forward, her hands clasped as she walked towards a better life.



Dear diary,

I'll always remember the woman I encountered today. Her story is similar to mine in so many ways. I remember what it was like in my family, always doing what they told me to do. If I hadn't been in that helicopter accident, I bet my life wouldn't be that different from Esme's. The reason I didn't go through the reincarnation gate and became a gatekeeper instead was that I didn't think there was anything else waiting for me back in life. I thought I went through everything, and that life just isn't exciting for me anymore. Esme's story tells me that I was so wrong. There are so many ways my life could've been different if I go through it again. I can see it now, all the possibilities. It's just like the way Esme said, as long as you're willing to take them, there are so many opportunities for a better life. Perhaps I should try to have another life after all. I'm sure with all I've learned, it would be a better life than the one I had before.



COVER STORY



Renata puts down her pen and looks up at the gate in deep thought. Suddenly, the gate begins to shine and swings open. Surprised, Renata looks around, wondering if another soul had come without her noticing. But no, she is the only one in the chamber. Realization dawns on her as Renata looks down at the diary in her hands. All the stories she heard, and all her writings must have made her worthy of reincarnation. Indeed, as Renata stares at the light shining through the open door, she feels hope and anticipation bloom in her chest as she wonders about the life waiting for her. Slowly, Renata rises from the chair, laying the notebook down on the table in front of her for the next gatekeeper. Perhaps whoever comes after her could also reach the same conclusion she does and open the gate. Renata walks towards the light, following the steps of Adira and Ros and Arun and Esme, stepping into a second chance for a life with the lessons they taught her held firmly in her heart. ■

The Race That Can't be Won

Written by: Sophia Cho | Photos by: Pinterest, Yuyi Tzeng

How might one measure a country's greatness and how do those measures change? Economists and philosophers have struggled with this issue for centuries. A nation's Gross Domestic Product and unemployment rate only go so far, while military power, technology, social progress, healthcare, environmental awareness, and dominance in mass media are simultaneously difficult to analyze and overly reliant on individual opinion. Moreover, these measures tend to change over time. During the early 1900's, having a large military and population was valued highly while decades later, achieving space travel was of absolute importance. Now, in the year 2021, it appears that whichever country can most effectively vaccinate their country and drive out COVID-19 will attract global admiration (conversely, those that fail to distribute vaccinations will be acknowledged in a much more negative light).

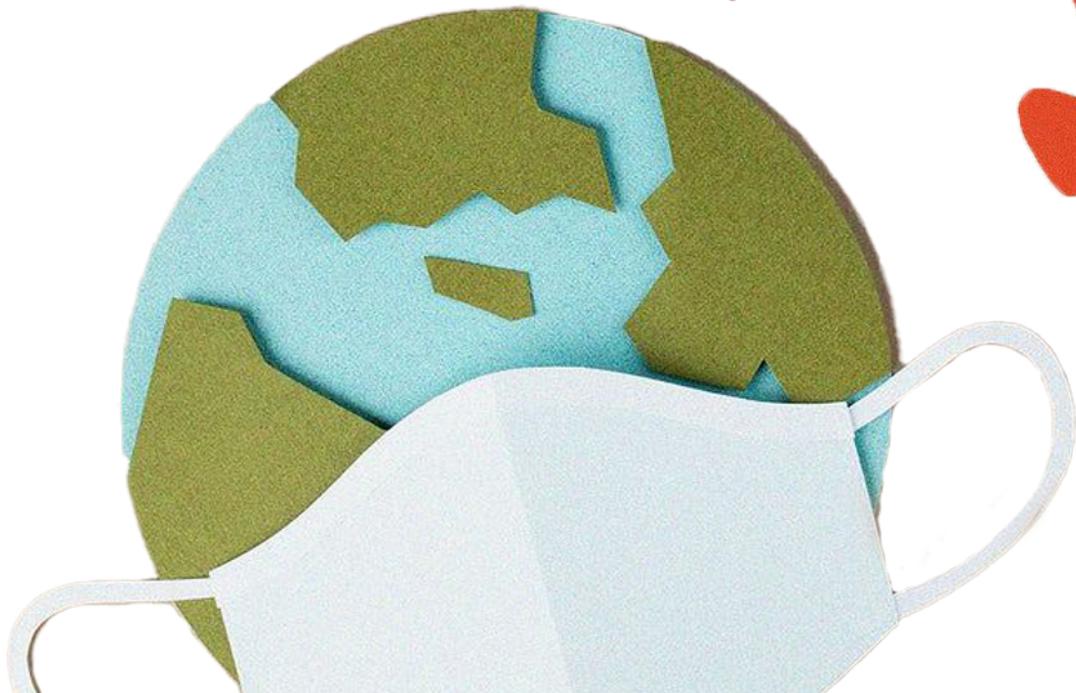
Naturally, one country cannot constantly dominate, but over the last century, the UK, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Japan, France, Germany, Russia, China and the United States have often been regarded as "key players" on a global scale (often in that order of increasing influence).

"How might one measure a country's **greatness and how do those measures **change**?"**

1. The US, during the last century, was viewed as a global superpower

The United States, in particular, has been viewed as a global superpower during the last few centuries. Dr. Charles Murray, an MIT-educated political scientist, expressed this in his book *American Exceptionalism: An Experiment in History*, that since its early years, the United States was considered atypical by foreign audiences. With its democratic ideologies, capitalist economy, and dense population (the third largest population after China and India) it gained the reputation as one of the greatest countries in the world.

Yet, with COVID-19 acting as a global catalyst of change, these elements posed as disadvantages. The signing of the US Constitution was a highly praised act at the time, with the Constitution stating that the rights of freedom were granted by God, not by the state and furthermore, "the people" would grant rights for the government. This generous distribution of freedom combined with the approximate 332,000,000 citizens clearly backfired as coronavirus wreaked havoc on the United States. Citizens refused to wear a mask, infringed CDC/WHO health guidelines in the name of their rights, and took "give me liberty or give me death" to a new extreme. This, in addition to the unprecedented riot at the Capitol and sickeningly brutal public shootings that appear on headlines far too often, demonstrate that the American gamble of unrestrained freedom failed in many ways. Another shortcoming is US capitalism and the massive pay gap between the classes. During the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020, low-income workers without paid sick leaves were unable to stay home – therefore unable to socially distance – despite genuinely wanting to. In some cases, laborers were evicted and had no homes to isolate themselves in. Factory workers made their income in cramped, closed spaces and were exposed to transmission daily. While all of this occurred, those in high-income households could comfortably afford to stay home and paid their way into getting vaccinated first. The pandemic certainly emphasized the class struggle in not only modern-day America, but globally as well.►



2. Other countries begin to equal the technological, social, and economic advantage of the US. Furthermore, the problematic foundations and counterproductive policies which the US was built on begin to expose themselves. These factors all led to the US' decline

Therefore, it is impossible for one country to consistently rank highest in any field because other countries are continually advancing as well. In the twentieth century, Russia was a dominant contender in the Cold War arms race, however, according to Global Finance Magazine, “Russia is hardly relevant to the twenty-first century global tech race as nations compete for capital, investment, knowledge, and innovation today.” In fact, neither the US nor Russia was ranked highly for the annual Bloomberg Innovation Index which analyzes sixty nations using several measures of criteria (the criteria including, but not limited to, research and development spending, manufacturing capability, and high-tech public company concentration). Germany, South Korea and Singapore were the top three. These countries were followed by Norway, Finland, Japan, China, and so on. Aside from being the home of several social media giants, the US has not contributed as much as they had previously to international technology and Russia has undergone its own era of scientific stagnation which it is now working to come out of.

3. The US's self-perception, the decline of other countries, what else COVID-19 has exposed

However, aside from exposing the US decline, COVID-19 has also shed light upon the admirable capabilities of countries functioning in chaos. Lockdowns were implemented at different times, various methods were considered, and restrictions varied starkly from government to government. Countries such as New Zealand and Singapore were immediate with travel restrictions and lockdowns and this in turn led to a shift in global acknowledgment. Specifically, CNN, Bloomberg and other Western media companies examined Taiwan’s strategies of defense and applauded how they went over 250 days without reporting any local cases. In fact, senior WHO official, Michael Ryan, mentioned in a press briefing that Taiwanese specialists were brought into technical networks to discuss solutions. Therefore, when the US and UK began to flatten their own curves, they returned to the center of global notice. Although the countries were initially hesitant with such policies, they have made considerable strides this year with over 130 million Americans fully vaccinated and 38 million in the UK. Yet, the race is far from over. India and Brazil still suffer from a severe number of growing infections, “safe” populations have been growing less cautious, and the question of how the US will distribute vaccinations remain unanswered. The only option left is to wait for the next catalyst of global change. ■

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Dogecoin & GameStop: Meme Culture in the Financial Market

Written by: Jessie Li | Photos from: Google



Introduction

Meme culture has finally hit Wall Street—hard.

The growth in internet forums, online trading platforms, and digital currencies has now given unprecedented power to the individual retail trader. While day trading decades ago was only limited to the financial gurus, we are now able to buy and sell stock with two clicks on our phones. And the more talented of us are able to create new currencies entirely from scratch.

Such a decentralization of the financial market has its pros and cons. On one hand, it redistributes power in society, giving regular peoples the opportunity to participate in seemingly high-end Wall Street business. On the other hand, it could represent a threat to properly functioning financial markets, especially in the case where individuals carry out trading for cultural value rather than for financial purposes.

Gamification of the Stock Market

In January of this year, a startling David v Goliath sequence of events played out in the stock market. GameStop, a struggling video game retailer company, saw a surge of up to 1,700 percent in stock. Major hedge funds that shorted GameStop lost millions of dollars, and retail traders finally seemed to win the battle against Wall Street.

Let's discuss the concept of shorting first. When you short something, you borrow a company's stock (usually from a broker-dealer) and sell it, telling the broker-dealer that you will return the stock at a later date. You expect the stock to decline in value. After a couple of months or even years, you buy the same amount of stock from the market and return it back to the broker-dealer. You get to keep the difference, thus making money.

GameStop stock was very heavily shorted—for valid reasons. As a mall videogame retailer, the company hasn't been doing very well, especially during a pandemic. It also missed the e-commerce train and has

struggled to catch up. Its stock has been steadily declining, and Wall Street hedge funds expected it to decline even more.

In early January, GameStop appointed three new directors to its board, including one who was the co-founder of e-commerce giant Chewy. This sparked discussion in *r/wallstreetbets*, a subreddit full of retail traders who would exchange information (as well as memes, of course) about the stock market. Motivated by the slight hope that they would make money from investing into GameStop (GME), as well as the notion that “elitist” Wall Street hedge funds would lose money over the rise in GME stock value, retail traders banded together to buy a lot of GME stock. And with rising demand, came rising price. Overnight, hedge funds frantically sold their GME stock and lost millions of dollars. This is called a short squeeze.

One particular hedge fund, Melvin Capital, had lost the most money and was close to bankruptcy. It seemed ➤

that the amateur retail traders had finally succeeded in making the big financial gurus suffer. However, less than a week after the initial stock surge, Wall Street reacted. The digital trading platform Robinhood—where most retail traders completed their trading—froze trading activity on Robinhood. This was unprecedented and highly illegal.

It would take another two weeks before the ban lifted, but the hype had already declined. GME was back to fifty dollars per share. Yet this event would leave a significant impact on Wall Street, raising important questions regarding the distribution and management of wealth in society, the gamification of the stock market, and the

every-growing threat against stable financial markets.

To begin with, GME was a “meme stock.” It was bought and traded mostly for cultural and political purposes rather than for money. With the emergence of trading platforms such as Robinhood, retail trading has been further gamified. Many people saw buying GME shares as a gamble and not an investment, and the GameStop saga broke the equilibrium in the financial market.

On the other hand, the restriction on retail trading for GameStop can be seen as market manipulation. It’s a reflection of how the Wall Street gurus still control everything and will take serious action (i.e. freeze GME trading) when people challenge their control.

Dogecoin: A Meme Currency

In December of 2013, software developers Billy Markus and Jackson Palmer met on Reddit and bonded over a popular meme—the doge. Within days, they created dogecoin (DOGE), a joke-based alternative to Bitcoin. As dogecoin’s Reddit community grew, the cryptocurrency would steadily increase in value over the years.

Fast forward to April 2019. Elon Musk tweets about DOGE for the first time, sparking a growth in the currency’s popularity and demand. After the GameStop saga, the Tesla founder sends another series of tweets about DOGE, including a photoshopped image from the Lion King—in which Musk holds a Shiba Inu up to the sky.

Soon after, the value of DOGE began to spike. This is due to a couple of circumstances:

- 1) the recent crypto boom driven by the pandemic,
- 2) the steady stream of Musk tweets calling on DOGE, and
- 3) Musk’s appearance on Saturday Night Live, in which he directly referenced DOGE.

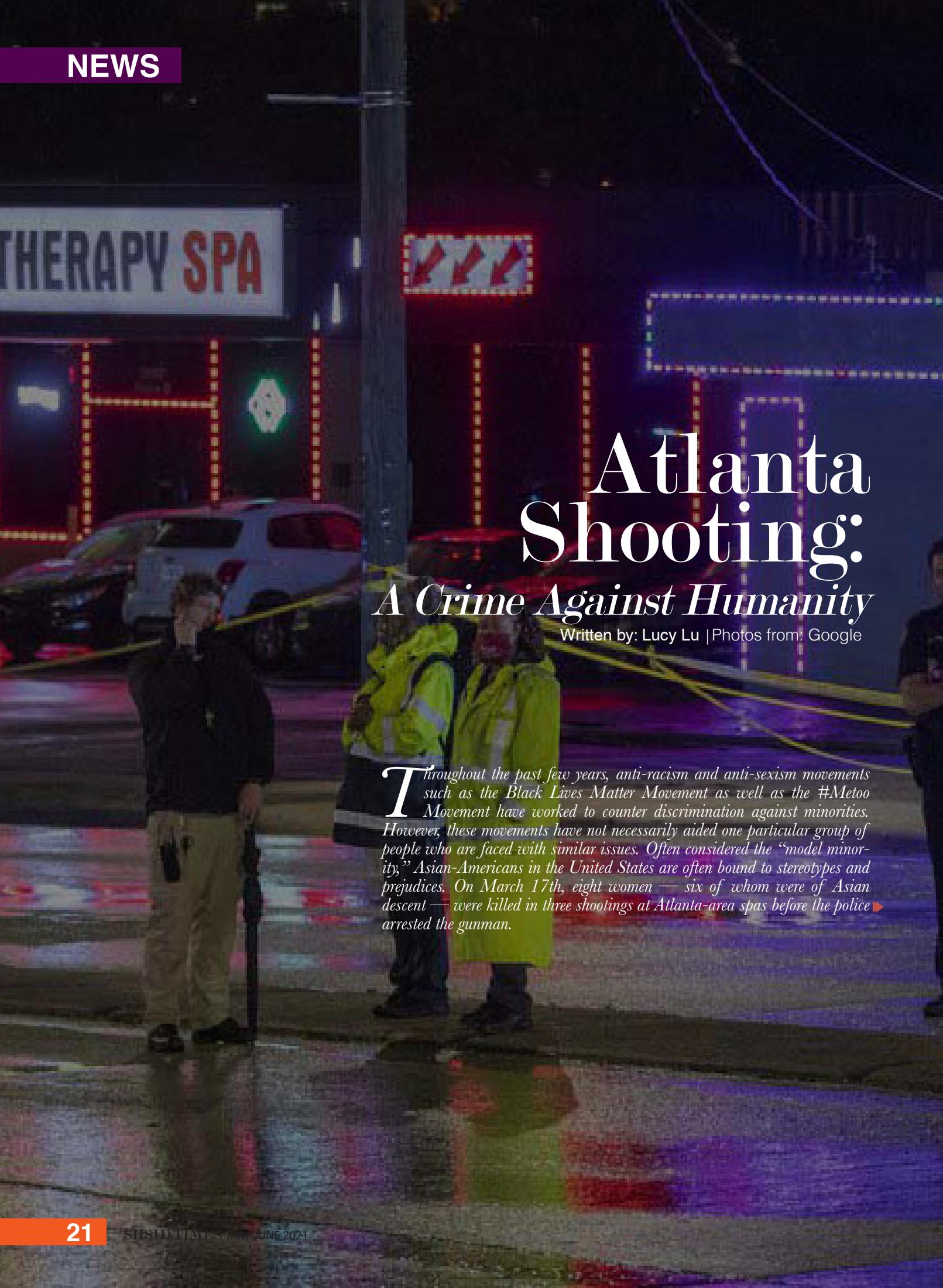
DOGE’s value rose by more than 12,000% from January to early May. As dogecoin popularity grew, so did its demand, thus driving up the value of the cryptocurrency. Thousands of investors made substantial gains on this rapid rise and social media platforms were filled with memes of dogecoin “going to the moon.”

Dogecoin is a cryptocurrency created based on a meme. Similarly enough, its rise was also boosted by meme culture. A single tweet from Elon Musk would sometimes drive up its value by more than three hundred percent.

And it’s still a thing. People are buying and selling dogecoin as we speak. But although digital assets are an efficient medium for exchange, the volatility of cryptocurrencies raise serious questions regarding whether they should exist at all. ■

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Atlanta Shooting: *A Crime Against Humanity*

Written by: Lucy Lu | Photos from: Google

Throughout the past few years, anti-racism and anti-sexism movements such as the Black Lives Matter Movement as well as the #Metoo Movement have worked to counter discrimination against minorities. However, these movements have not necessarily aided one particular group of people who are faced with similar issues. Often considered the “model minority,” Asian-Americans in the United States are often bound to stereotypes and prejudices. On March 17th, eight women — six of whom were of Asian descent — were killed in three shootings at Atlanta-area spas before the police arrested the gunman.

A Rundown of the Events

The shooting took place within several hours when the gunman committed the atrocities in three different locations. The first shooting took place in Young's Asian Massage parlor, where five people were shot by the suspect. Two women among the five victims at the first venue died immediately, while two other women died after being sent to the hospital. The only man who was shot survived after hospitalization. Within an hour, the shooter arrived at the next crime scene, where he shot three more women who died immediately after the shooting. Moments later, the gunman fired shots again at Aromatherapy, a spa center right across the street, and the police discovered one woman fatally shot at the third crime scene. The police later caught the victim through the PIT maneuver¹ after checking the surveillance camera footage and confirmed that the suspect was the shooter.

The Fatalities Aren't Mere Numbers

The above account was provided by USA today, with the rundown completely ignoring the identities of those who were shot. Yet different accounts from Chinese news websites and CNN provided details regarding the victim's familial backgrounds and the backstories behind the atrocities. Jiami Webb, one of the victims' daughters, was interviewed after the shooting, where she expressed her hopes of celebrating her mother's 50th birthday. The ex-husband of the mentioned victim said that Xiaojie Tan (the victim), would be retiring soon and had been making travel plans to visit Europe and Alaska. During the interview, he described the mass shooting as a "massacre" and articulated his hopes of holding the gunman accountable for his crimes. On one of the GoFundMe pages created by the victims' families, one of Kim's (another victim) grandchildren wrote about her grandmother coming to the United States from South Korea. The GoFundMe page explicated more of the backstories behind the shooting: "My grandmother was an angel, to have her taken away in such a horrific manner is unbearable to think about. As an immigrant, all my grandmother ever wanted in life was to grow old with my grandfather, and watch her children and grandchildren live the life she never got to live," the page says. While statistics and the rundowns provided earlier by news reports often quantify the crimes committed against Asian-American women, it is the backstories that reveal the humanity behind the brutalities.

Was the Shooter Racially Motivated?

The suspect (now confirmed to be the shooter), Robert Aaron Long, claimed that he had shot the victims due to his sexual addiction, and attempted to defend himself by explaining that his motives were not racial. Yet residents in the vicinity of the spas argue that regardless of Long's claims, the shooting should be labelled as a Hate Crime, which in this context should be defined as "a crime, typically one involving violence, that is motivated by prejudice on the bases of race, religion, sexual orientation, or other grounds." The strikingly similar racial and sexual identities of the victims render the entire shooting a hate crime, as the victims were shot solely due to their identities as opposed to conflicts with the shooter on a personal level. However, the authorities were not able

to eventually charge Long with the charges of a hate crime, as they were unable to prove that it was committed on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, despite the fact that all victims that died were women. After interviewing those who had known Long and after the authorities learned about Long's usual quietness, it is apparent that this event certainly correlates with crimes committed during its time range – it is an atrocity that had been caused by wrongful accusations due to COVID-19.

A Catalyst that Brought About Change

The shootings occurred during a time when the coronavirus was spreading throughout the United States, which sparked AAPI hate crimes as the former U.S. President Trump wrongfully identified the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus." This harmful rhetoric likely fuelled many of the hate crimes committed against Asians in recent months. Many of those in Asia now view this as the U.S. reinforcing racist beliefs and further establishing the idea that the coronavirus was spread throughout the world by Asia. Even before the Atlanta shooting, crimes that arose from hatred against the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community were committed. During the coronavirus outbreak, a man tried to rip off an Asian cardiologist's mask, confronting her as he told her to leave the U.S. because she "brought the China virus." Another Asian woman was also stopped from exiting a parking lot after being told to "leave the country." These "crimes" went unnoticed by the public, as these incidences were conflicts that were not "significant" enough by law to lead to the retribution of the offender. The Atlanta shooting allowed for people worldwide to be brought to the acknowledgement of AAPI hate as an actual issue that needs to be addressed. It has also brought us to the realization that we must learn to speak up to defy the norms that have always taught us to keep silent. While the hate crimes never disappeared, the emergence of this news is still bringing about a social change – a change that empowers the AAPI community to combat AAPI Hate. ■

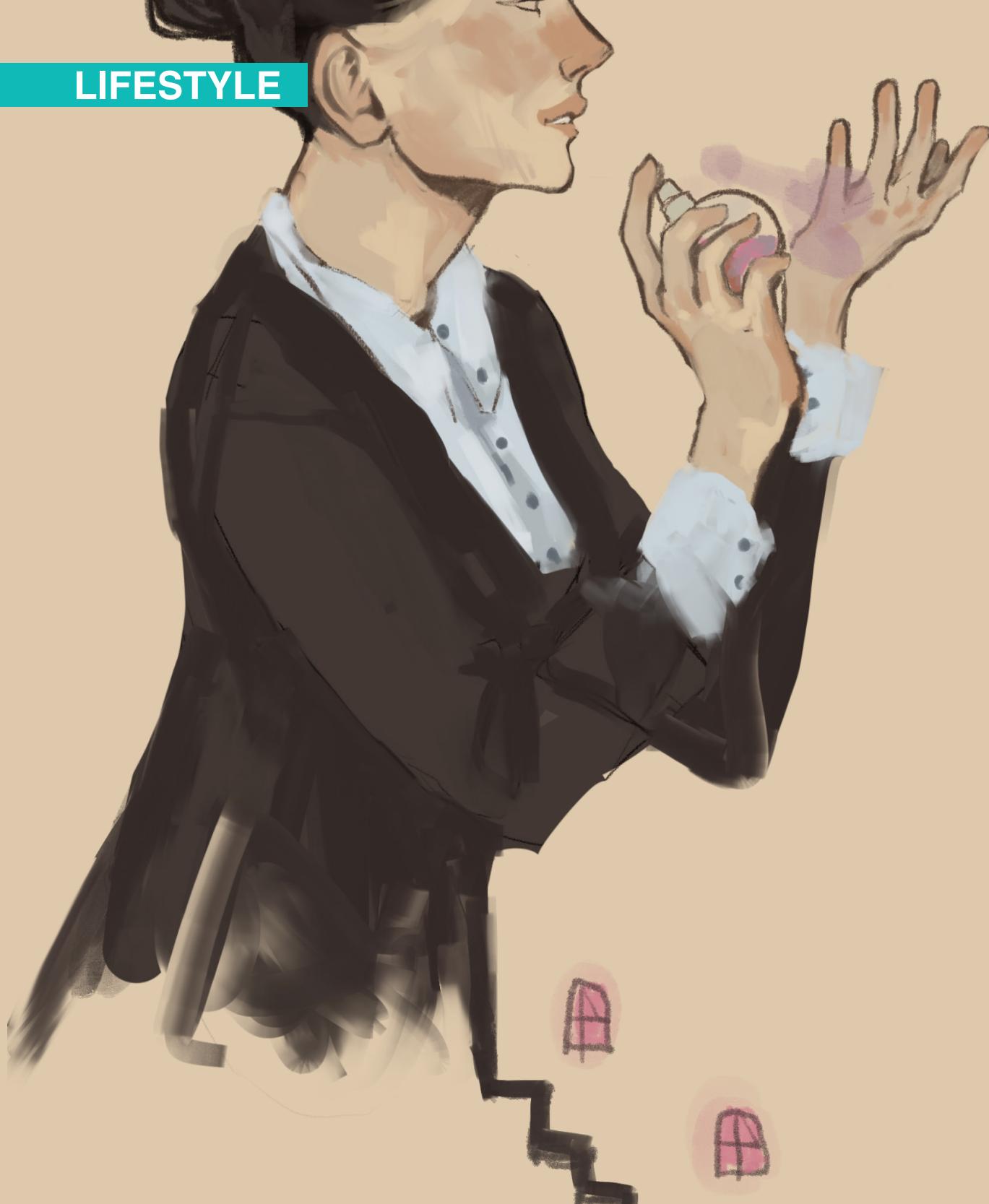
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To Mom, Or Perhaps To You

Written By: Amy Kim | Illustrated By: Rena Yan

I.

Mom, I used to love to watch you go to work. As a five-year-old kid, I would wake up, and simply sit by the doorstep of our bathroom to watch you dry your hair. In those busy mornings of 2014, you would transform from my familiar and loving mom to the decisive and professional businesswoman in one spray of a perfume or blow of a hairdryer, as if you always maintained two distinct personalities within you. Your attire, in some days consisting of exaggerated pants and a blouse or an effortless dress and robe in others, radiated confidence and ability and matched your role as someone working in the fashion industry. Now that I'm recalling, I think I almost saw you as a character in *The Devil Wears Prada* (although I hadn't watched that movie yet at the time)—capable, strong, and independent.

Although you couldn't provide me with the exact same care like the other moms, I was more proud than upset because I knew that you were spending the time to make yourself more valuable or to achieve something great. To me, you were a living proof that women can be successful and strong, and that my aspirations for the future were valid. You were my vision of what adulthood looked like, and I wanted to become you when I grew up.

When I heard you cry as you talked to your mother one night, I did not understand. It was strange to see you cry and seek comfort, so I went on a walk to un-hear the sound of your complaints and to un-see the path of your tears.

II.

I still love to tell you about my aspirations and goals because it motivates me to work harder and strive for more. When you come home in time for dinner, I would tell you about things I do in school, the classes I like, my new interests and passions, and what I want to do in the future. We would sit on the dinner table for hours even after the dishes became cold because you listened to me with the look of support and curiosity.

III.

You quit work this winter. One night, you told me with honesty that our family has a much smaller budget. As I sat in silence and listened to what you were saying, I felt uncomfortable and out-of-place, as if I was eavesdropping into a conversation. What you were telling me was so real unlike the vivid future that we spoke of before, and the breach between my world and yours felt irreparable. You told me to make a choice to drop one extracurricular class I was taking because you couldn't pay for it anymore. So I chose to quit piano, not because I wanted to, but because I had no other alternative. For the next six months, I couldn't play the piano because I felt limited by money, an arbitrary yet unchangeable barrier to life.

I was afraid of adulthood, and still am. You've been protecting me from the burdens of reality, letting me indulge in the carefree daydreams of a child, and allowing me to explore the limits of my ability and individuality. When the clock hits twelve on my twentieth birthday, you will have to hand over the load, and I will have to walk my own path. I know from watching you that adulthood entails more than success.

IV.

When you came home drunk a few weeks ago, I carried you up the apartment stairs and gave you a good night hug like the good night kisses you used to give me when I was younger. Knowing that growing up is inevitable, I still want to be you.

V.

I recently watched a video on YouTube that prompted me to write this to you. It was about a drunk man on a metro platform near midnight, probably on his way back home after a tiring day of work—what I assumed from his loose tie and rolled-up sleeves. While the police officers were trying their best to calm him down, he blurted out swear words towards his superior. It was kind of funny up to this point because he seemed somewhat comedic and pathetic, as if from a typical scene in a sitcom during which the drunk guy starts complaining about his boss who isn't even there. Then, another man approached the drunk man and unexpectedly hugged him. He started crying. As I was watching this five-minute clip, I naturally scrolled through the comments section. Apparently, this video went viral a few days ago. People were talking about how heartwarming this was and were relating to the drunk man's experience. I could not relate to it completely, but I realized how universal and natural whatever experience that led to his frustration was as an adult in society. I understood why this video became so popular. Social media conveys the voice of the public; everyone runs across a low point sometime in their life, and for many people, what they need at that time is simply a hug. For most people, life is too real to be an utopia, so we rely on empathy and support—whether it is in the form of music, art, or companionship—to live on.

I hope this letter, like a much-needed hug, finds you at your low points too. ■

peach

Written by: Alicia Chen | Illustrated by: Lilian Fan

1

We were sitting in the kitchen,
lightbulb swinging from a hook in the ceiling.
The peaches sat washed and sliced, ready for us
on the counter in a red ceramic bowl,
and you told me to watch the dust particles
outlined by sunlight
mid-air.

The sky whined a meager shade of blue on white, and we
plucked boats from trees and bathed them in a tub until they blushed golden.
Every time we smile, the clock on the wall
murmurs another melody of a stoneless heart.

2

A touch, a reckoning
a palm on your shoulder in the thrum of the evening.
A shivering hand pulls at the first rip in the seam.
I crouch by the crack in the double-glazed window
and peer out at the fingers that creep up the tree limbs.

3

A touch, and then we burst wide open
laughing at the fire that pools around our ankles.
We run towards each other and through each other, hands
clasped and pulsing at the brink of the skyline.
I can taste the bleeding on the tip of my tongue, like
ripened peaches that we cut ourselves trying to peel.
It tastes like saccharine and salted lemons
running down our chins.
It isn't over yet, it's just begun.►



4

We swallow watermelon seeds and wait
for our bellies to grow full and round.
We swallow glass, swallow the daggers
of people much closer to death than us.
We press our lips to our own fingers and sink down to sit on the bathroom floor.
We dig our feet into the mud and look up at the sky as it
screams a broken chant of grit and grain and metallic things.
Slowly, we learn to be sorry
We learn to barricade ourselves
in the gap between our feet and the brim of the cup.

5

In chess, the one who wins
is the one who makes the next to last mistake.
You tell me this as we're sitting in a white car with Baby On the Road stuck to its back window.
You hold my hand. You touch my face.
We're no longer a splinter in someone else's arm,
we're more like the blare of a radio
in the white car that hurtles down the highway an inch under the speed limit.
It's too late now, your laugh says
it's too late to unclench our fists from deep underground.

6

We were seventeen for more than three years.
We were a series of house fires and beautiful things.
We were shoestrings, undone laces
we rode bikes to the top of the mountain.
Holding books to our chests, hearts to our chests
holding hands.
Let's say we'll never get used to it. ■



An Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life

(Part 1)

Written by: Cher Yan | Designed by: Yuyi Tzeng

A

ABS

I've always wondered what it would feel like to have abs. Being inside the strong body of an athlete must be so freeing. Not to have stretch marks down below. Not to worry during swimsuit season. But yet again, it's always the skinniest people who go on diets.

ACNEFREE

Every weekend when I arrive at the shop, the girls in white lab coats look at me with strange, half-illuminated worries, and ask how I am feeling. They take a look at my new zits and tell me not to highlight and shadow my face with products whose names they could not even guess at. I smile and tell them that *I don't wear makeup*. Their faces turn too quickly to hide their surprise. It's as if they expected me to act in accordance with whatever norms this situation contained. To say thank you for their medical advice and to not defend my actions. They pick and dab at my skin. Then they leave. I leave too. Quickly, though not before folding the white cleansing towel and fixing the crooked landscape painting on the wall.

AP

"If you remove the shrink wrap, you are agreeing to all of College Board's exam terms and conditions. Please remove the shrink wrap now," the teacher said. She was trying to sound confident, but it came out petulant, more accusing than wry. I searched the teacher's eyes for sympathy, but she only frowned, sealed her lips with a loud and authoritative zip.

"You may begin now."

Pencils started moving. But all I could focus on was the voices from the hallways that filtered into the room: who was doing what this weekend, who needed to go where. A burst of laughter. Inside the exam room, the light was harsh. *I wanted out.*

B

BLOOD

When Mom asked how I was feeling, I said I was fine. It wasn't a lie because I didn't acknowledge anything below the waist. I had been having abdominal convulsions, which felt like something rough and compacted slicing my insides. It hurt a little, then a lot, and was like a tectonic plate inside my mantle, grinding and acting up against its own rocks. I made do with Mom's heating pad, and by lying on my side, moaning like a seal. Pain became the priority, which was good because it cleared my mind from all the dancing puppets that took the form of thoughts. In what category of pain did this belong? I swallowed three Tylenol. None. There was no category for the pain of being a woman. Rank your suffering on a scale of one to ten, Dad came and asked. I just looked at him like, *Why are you even here?*▶

BREATHING

In the space between the art teacher's brush strokes, I could hear the girl beside me breathing. Her breaths turned into snores—gentle, choking sounds, like someone trying but failing to inhale through a mask.

BROWN TOILET PAPER

Mom started buying brown recycled toilet paper, but I don't really believe that it can make the world a better place. But at least it can't make it *worse*.

C

CHANEL

When she wears perfume it's easy to forget that she is a human, like me. That she could not repair everything that was broken. The scent was magical. It made you instantly obedient. It made you want to do things right, avoid cracks in the sidewalk, stop hunching, eat vegetables. It was her musical way of saying "Everything will be okay. You just need to try." I scratch the nail polish off my pinky. I couldn't remember the last time she wore Chanel.

CHER

Most people don't pronounce it correctly the first time. Chair, it's nice to meet you. Sher, how are you. Or even more often, Cherry. Suddenly their faces turn into sunflowers, round and bursting open, and I have to try not to clench my jaw. I was named after the eerie and sacred voice of the 'Goddess of pop', American singer Cher. There are pros and cons to having this name. The pro is that nobody shares it. It's special. At the same time, however, the word is repeated twenty times a day. And whenever someone asks to 'share' a textbook, the short hairs on my legs rise and bristle-like creatures ready themselves to flight. It feels excessive and possibly illegal, like a HIPAA violation.

CLUB

I stay after school for clubs sometimes but always find myself disappointed at the teenagers there. Too young to know anything about what they are saying, they do not shy away from showing off their expertise at illuminating "leadership." I shouldn't say that about all clubs, but the clubs I go to seem to foster an environment built on empty, glittery vocabulary flying around in the air that I could just grab with my calloused fingers and sprinkle around my resume for decoration. The clubs I go to are filled with kids like me who attempt to manufacture sophistication.

COINS

I flip a coin. It lands heads four times in a row and I convince myself that this is a sign. A sign to cut loose and break the rules. A sign to go to the sketchy part of town Dad never lets me go. I arrive and the streets are empty, decorated with broken shops and dusty garbage. I hear a crunch as I step on shattered glass and look up to see a hollow bridge covered with graffiti. Growls and shivers are the greetings from hunched-back old homeless who huddled their legs to keep their hearts warm. Dad was right: I did not belong in this low-toned society. I turn to leave, but before I do, I toss a coin into the hat of a little girl sitting with her back against the brick wall. *Just in case somebody was watching.* ■

at the end of times

Written by: Mimi Yang
Illustrated by: Mimi Yang

I

If we have to die, which is to say, if we were never
meant to survive, let us do it facing the stars, the light
riven and spattered in the sky over us

if the fires have to run faster across the marshes, let
them pass over my home, so i can feel the warmth in the
winter wind while the ground falls out beneath me

and every day the ground feels the same,
even as our land becomes nameless

and every night we count the holes
in the empty sky above us

and every morning we go on anyways

so if we have to die deliver it quickly, face us towards the
wall and dip our heads in prayer, if we were never meant
to survive give us the coup de grace graced in song

II

and if the world must end like this

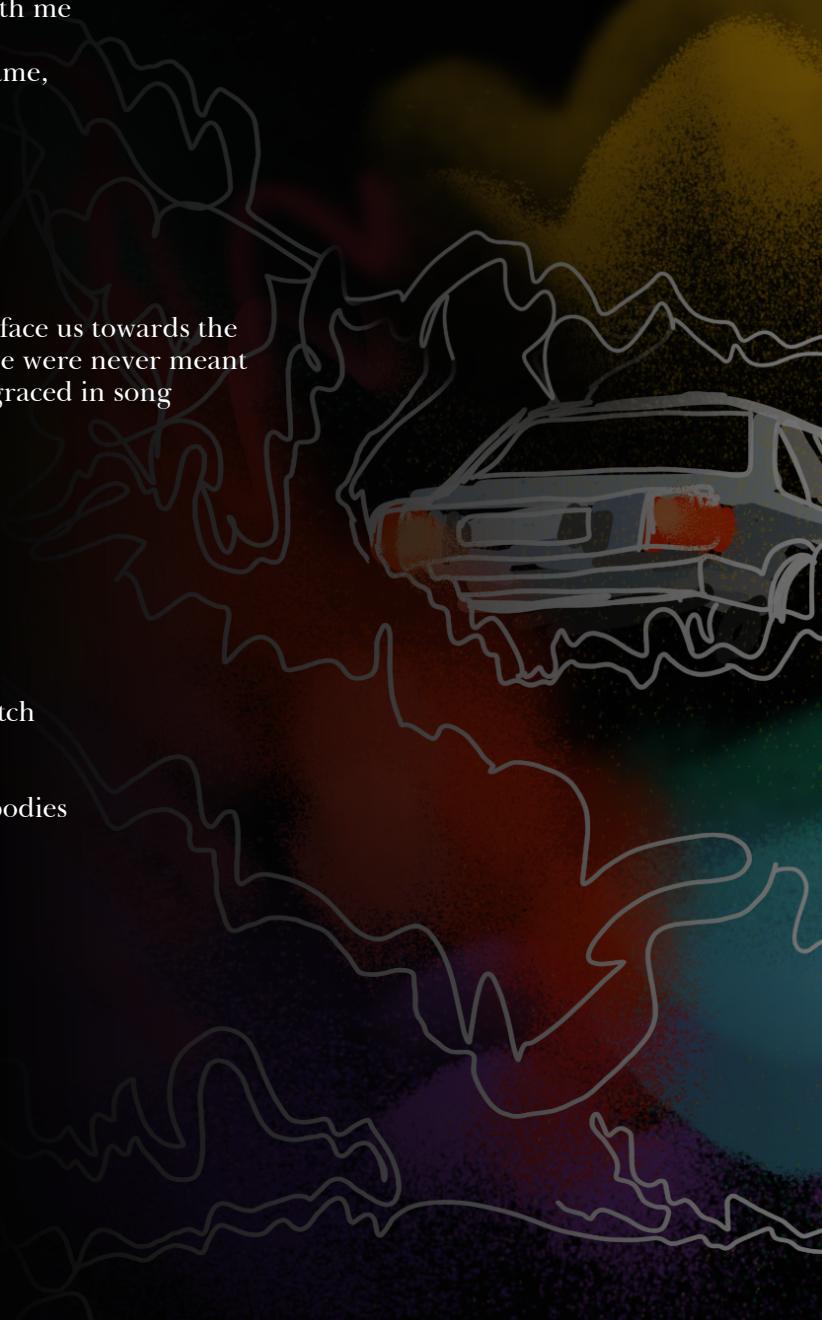
and if we can bring none

of this with us,

let take chairs out to meadow and watch
the setting sun
the invisible hills collapsing into days
while god runs through our bodies

for at least we lived through the war,
and the ruin, and the deluge smiling

around disappearing bodies.





五月

Written by: Jeromy Zhou
Photo by: Mandy Chen

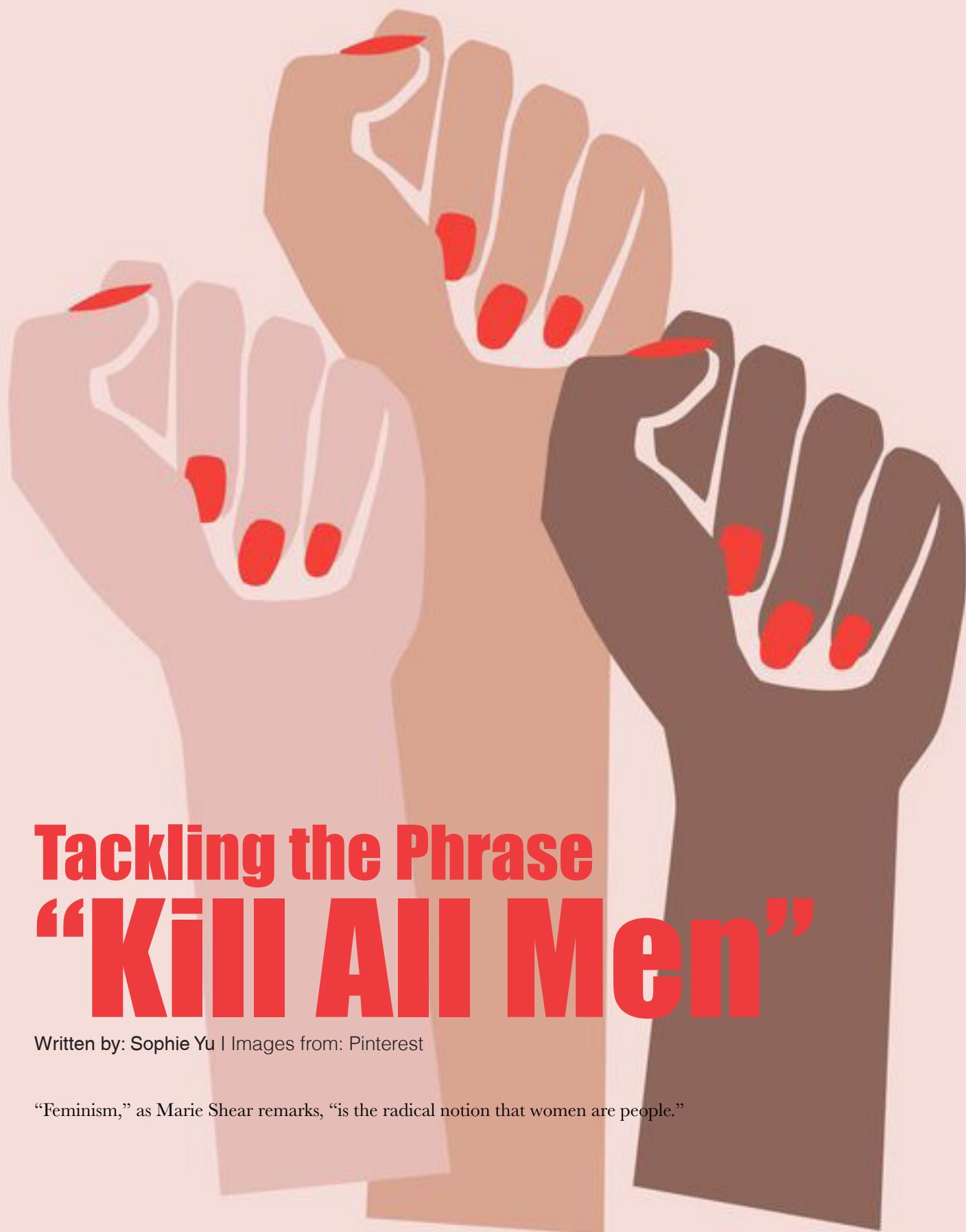


大人拽住小孩的手
无视呐喊与漏出的眼药水
小孩无奈地闭上双眼
闭向五月

地址已写好
邮递员的轮椅朝向同一起点
信纸的右下角已被答案填满
填满五月

艺术的政治的二元的戏剧的
经济的灾难的排比的预言的
知性的圆形的畸形的多情的
全部溶解于五水硫酸铜里惨白的铭刻

用数十根冒烟的电线填充鲸鱼的腹腔
让千百万支修正带一齐发动修饰黑夜
誓言是你存在的唯一证明，虔诚涂上，你的名字
五月的太阳带来热气的讯息■



Tackling the Phrase “Kill All Men”

Written by: Sophie Yu | Images from: Pinterest

“Feminism,” as Marie Shear remarks, “is the radical notion that women are people.”

Feminism

Containing just eight letters, the word that is used to represent the hope that one day, women can achieve social, political, and economic equality with men seems to be too vast, yet too small at the same time to properly represent the entirety and history of the feminist movement.

Historians trace the first wave of feminism to have begun in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, when women first rallied to call for the Nineteenth Amendment that would guarantee them the rights to vote. Early discussions about women's rights were rather controversial—at least by modern standards—with some claiming that “women were morally superior to men.” The second wave (1963-1980s) proved to be an important time for supporting women's rights, with the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and

the landmark legal decision the U.S. Supreme Court made in response to *Roe versus Wade*, effectively legalizing abortion across all of America. The mid 1990s gave emergence to the third wave of feminism, and was quite literally, led by the daughters of those who participated in the second wave. Here, women began to don themselves with what previously had been considered derogatory terms, and these became their new labels, in an act of defiance against the markers that had been forced upon them. The fourth wave began in about 2012, with a focus on sexual harassment and body culture. This new wave arose due to a number of high profile incidents, such as how in December 2012, a young woman in India was brutally gang-raped and died. With this, the famed Me Too movement gained widespread notice in 2017. It was predominantly

used as a hashtag (#MeToo) on different social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, as millions of women around the globe began to tell their stories of sexual harassment and assault. This movement grew over the coming months—and years—in an effort to bring condemnation to the men who wielded power in different fields. Women also became more outspoken, as discussions on the struggles of being a woman in a male-dominated world ensued, and in an effort to adequately illustrate their frustrations, phrases such as “kill all men” were birthed. Here, it should be emphasized that this expression is not a socially common term, but more so of a phrase often used by a few within Gen Z—including those on our campus.

Now, my own definition of feminism is quite formulated, hence, I

do recognize that everyone has their own definition of what feminism is, as altered to their own personal experiences in regards to the concept of feminism.

Therefore, I set off to interview five people from four different grades on what feminism is to them. At the same time, I also questioned as to what the phrase “kill all men” represents to them.

Erika Liao from 9-3 stated that to her, “feminism is a movement associated with the liberation of women from men's oppression.” She continues on by mentioning that “in feminism, there is more of a focus on liberation from oppression than there is on absolute equality.”

Erika's point of view is that often times feminism gets mistaken for egalitarianism, because in the latter

there is more of a focus on gender equality, while in the former feminists are more focused on the process of setting women free from the shackles patriarchy has placed upon them.

Meanwhile, Grace Chen from 12-1 believes that “feminism is an ideology that aims for equal rights and opportunities for women in society in comparison to men.” In another question, Grace revealed to me that she does use terms such as “hate all men” sometimes, but she emphasized it was only done as a joke. However, Grace stated that people should avoid using these comments, because they “generalize all the different types of men into one stereotype.” (It would be ironic for feminists to use such phrases as they are against generalizing differ-

ent women into one stereotype). She also thinks that the phrase “kill all men” emerged “partially due to a lot of feminists [taking] feminism to an extreme degree, where they are no longer seeking equality but instead hoping women to be more superior to men.”

I definitely could to a certain extent, agree with Grace that these comments tend to generalize men into a singular stereotype, but as another interviewee—who chose to stay anonymous—argues that phrases such as these “have no real consequence upon the male population,” and therefore it's alright to use such phrases.

The speaker describes this by explaining how in our society, a woman's status is below a man's, and because of this, even if we do say “let's ➤

kill all men,” it “does not contribute to any hate towards men,” so as a result, “kill all men” is not misandrist.

Intrigued, I asked them why they think people choose to use phrases that describe hating men but at the same time not hating men, and they responded by telling me it was a “coping mechanism,” because this is a “punchline about the common complaints people have towards misogyny that is perpetuated against them.” Similarly, Erika had previously explained to me that “kill all men” is a way to “alleviate oppression through dark humor.”

Helen Wu from 11-9 clarifies that when people use “I hate all men,” it is equivalent to saying: “These are all the horrible things you men have done to us women for a long time.” Helen claims that saying “all men suck” is similar to how saying “white people are terrible” isn’t racist, because the racism is ingrained systematically. It’s not one white person’s actions that causes the hate; it’s the entire system of oppression that does not exist for white people. Later on, she told me that “kill all men” is a phrase designed to “attack the system, not the individual,” and that the point of using such phrases “is to elicit this realization within men to say oh, we’ve been doing this to women this entire time, and so this is how women feel every day

when they’re at home, when they’re taking taxis back home alone, when they’re at the workplace.”

Helen’s comment about how “kill all men” attacks the system not the individual was something I found interesting. I tried to break it down like this: misogynists are misogynists partially because society allows them to be. Society deems it acceptable to behave in a discriminatory manner towards women, because this is the way it has been for thousands of years. Therefore, the point of how “kill all men” is a way to extract the epiphany men perhaps may have when they finally register, “wow, we’ve been prejudiced against women because society allows us to be, this isn’t okay, and needs to change.”

A part of me resonated with the idea that “kill all men” is a coping mechanism. I personally don’t use that specific phrase, but I have said “I hate men” before. For Erika, Helen, and Anonymous, “kill all men” is a way to take back power. It is a way of coping, by using the language men have pitted against women for centuries, and now, for women, language is one of their weapons they can use to fight back (or at the very least, put up with the cards they are dealt with). From the above interviews, a common pattern that was observed is that “kill all men,” is never a call to action to well, actually

kill all men. It is merely a way to deal with toxic masculinity and misogyny.

In an interest to see what the male population had to comment on “kill all men,” I went hunting for a victim. Luckily, I found one. He chose to stay anonymous, and rather surprisingly, admitted he too, used the phrase “kill all men” sometimes. When asked why, he told me it was because he’s seen disgusting people who identify as male on the internet, through mediums such as Weibo and Chinese TikTok. He also says that he’s personally been through a certain level of discomfort that comes with being around toxic men who carry toxic masculinity in a patriarchal society, and this has led him to “really sympathize with women expressing distress and discomfort around men.” He understands that since he is a “part of the male society,” he ultimately does benefit from “the whole patriarchal thing,” but it still makes him feel bad in “plenty of ways.” As an interviewer, it was refreshing to see a member of the male population acknowledge that they do benefit from patriarchy, and that they do empathize with women.

A woman is murdered in South Africa every four hours, and on the opposite end of the world, one in every five women in the United States is raped during their lifetime.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is what our current society looks like. A world where women have to use phrases such as “kill all men” as a way to survive against misogyny, a world where the fight for the equality of sexes began in the year of 1866 (when the American Equal Rights Association was first formed) and will still continue on for many, many decades, perhaps even centuries.

Hopefully, dear reader, as you’ve made it this far, you can understand the justification behind “kill all men.” KAM is not a direct attack upon the male gender, it is a direct attack upon the actions of the male gender.

Feminism, is in a way, both taking and regaining power. It is high time that women be able to take back the power that has solely belonged to men for centuries.

Feminism is about the equality of the sexes. Feminism is about liberating women from the chains patriarchy has forced upon them. Feminism is about opposing toxic masculinity. Feminism is about supporting women.

Although society has come very far from where it once stood in terms of women’s rights, there is still a very, very long way to go, until equality can truly be achieved. ■





ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

Written by: Raymond Tang | Illustrated by: Cindy Lee

As we all know (and have experienced), SHSID is a competitive school with a heavy amount of schoolwork that puts students through academic pressure. During the week before a major exam, it is common for students to spend an entire day doing nothing but reviewing and sipping on a can of Monster or Red Bull during the exam. Yet somehow students continue to manage their way through the heavy schoolwork and attain good grades, all while keeping up with their extracurricular activities. As somebody who severely lacks the ability to do that (this article is written on the date of the deadline) and would like to learn how to motivate myself, I have conducted several interviews with students to figure out how exactly students motivate themselves to study rigorously and still have the energy to pursue their passions.

Self motivation is a subject that is simple in theory but excruciatingly difficult in execution. While we all understand the finger wagging platitudes that tell us to work hard in order to become better at things, most students miss the specific motivation that propels them to work hard, but often gets caught in an awkward state of wanting to work hard but lacking the motivation and commitment to do so. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that several students I interviewed replied that they do not have motivation and have issues regarding motivating themselves to use their time studying instead of watching TV shows while eating ice cream. In contrast, some other students have given instructive answers in how to motivate themselves, and they will be listed in the following. ►

1

Set a prize for yourself after you finish something. This is among the most common ways of motivating oneself, as several people have mentioned this method that combines entertainment and studying. For example, Ian from 10(1) is a student who has a pet turtle farm that requires much attention. He motivates himself to study by telling himself if he does not get all his school work finished by a certain time, he would not be able to tend to his turtles. Other people have also set similar goals for themselves, with the end goal being to be able to watch an episode of a TV show or play a game for half an hour. Though a lot of students motivate themselves this way, they are often unable to maintain this sort of motivation, as there is still chance that students bypass studying and directly go to the award for themselves. In other words, some students report that they are sometimes unable to control themselves and resort to having fun first before doing work.

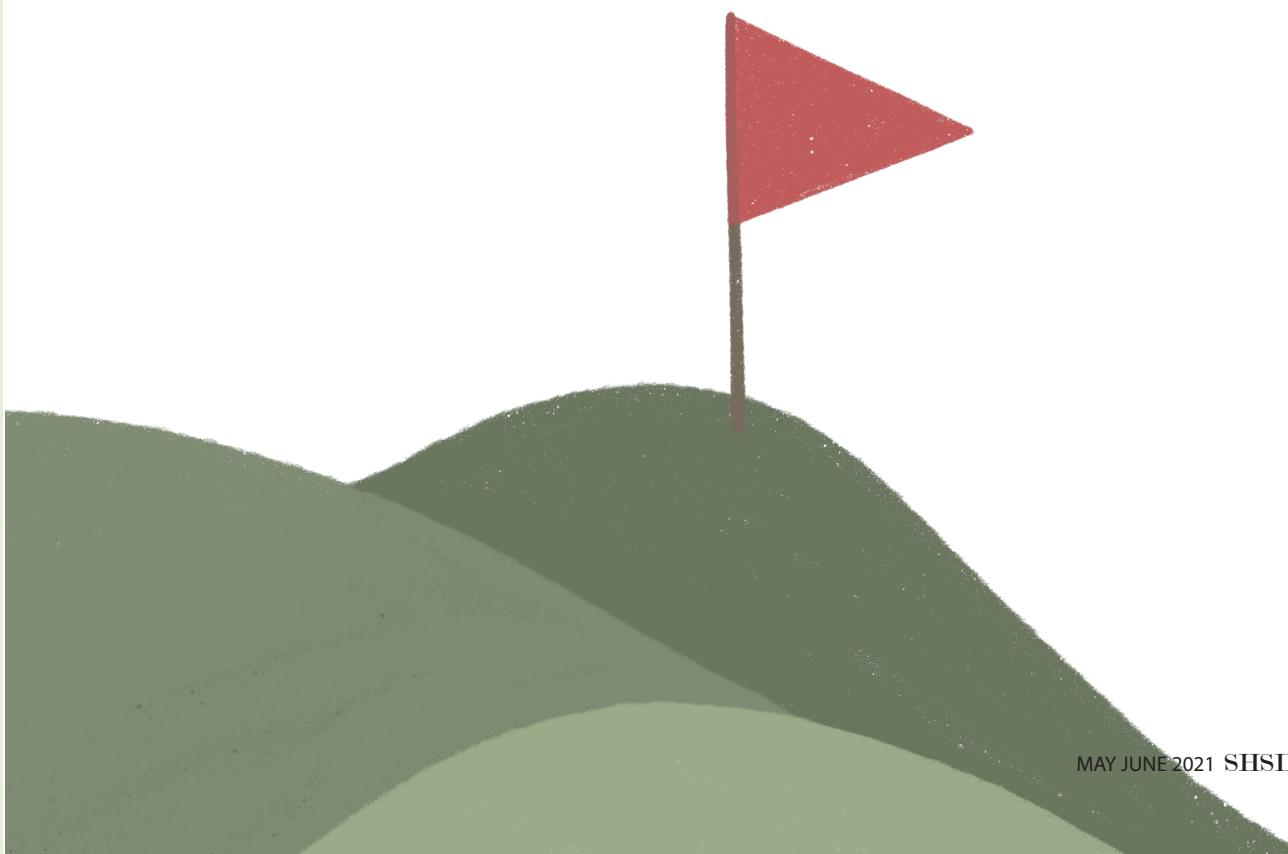
2

Getting self validation and satisfaction in getting good grades is another common way in which students motivate themselves. According to Charlie Mou 10(6), since she believes all the subjects that she is studying for can be improved upon with hard work and dedication, as she believes getting better grades and being academically successful is a remarkable achievement and part of her identity. From the hard work that is paid off, Charlie derives a large part of her self confidence from studying. Therefore, studying for Charlie is inherent and does not require a catalyst. However, this method also has its downsides. An interviewee who chose to remain anonymous states that while her academics are a large part of her identity and motivation her to work hard, it also causes her to overly value academics. From this attitude that her validation comes from good grades, she has experienced mental breakdowns and extended periods of sadness whenever her grades are below her expectations, as she believes she has failed herself by not getting the grades she wanted.

3

Self motivation from a love interest motivates several students to better their academics. Some students who choose to remain anonymous have indicated that their romantic interests have motivated them to achieve better grades, since they believe getting better grades somewhat validate their relationships with their partners or make them more worthy of partnership with their partner.

While there are many ways to motivate yourself, the single constant out of all those possibilities is your own devotion to work harder or achieve your goals. It is essential to realize that although this article presents ways of self motivation, none of the methods would work unless you decide to commit to it. Therefore I urge you to find your own motivation, regardless of through what method, and commit to your own cause. ■



Tides

Written by: Sarah Ai
Photos from: Bing

1. What are Tides?

When you spend a lot of time on the beach, you may notice that the water level changes throughout the day. If you're lying on the sand now, two hours later, your spot might be covered with seawater. This change in water level is caused by tides. Though most of you are familiar with the term, the mechanisms behind the rise and fall of the waves are complex and worthy of elaboration.

Tides are the rise and fall of sea levels affected by gravitational forces exerted by the Moon and the Sun along with the rotation of the earth. Every rise and fall repeats twice a lunar day, which is the amount of time it takes for one point on Earth to rotate and reach the same location relative to the moon. Because the moon is constantly in motion, revolving around the Earth, this is about 50 minutes longer than the classic 24-hour solar day.

2. How are Tides Affected by the Moon?

Though both the sun and moon affect tides and the sun has a much greater gravitational force than the moon, the moon plays a much more dominant role in affecting tides due to its proximity to the Earth. The gravitational force of the moon pulls the side of the Earth facing it towards it, creating a "high tide" or a "bulge." As this high tide forms, the center of the Earth is also pulled towards the moon because of the moon's gravitational force, thus creating a "bulge" simultaneously on the other side. On the sides where the bulges are not felt, there is a "low tide".

Figure 1 shows an example of this. The high tides and low tides shouldn't change and should always remain in position if the Earth rotates with the orbit of the moon, but why do tides rise and fall? This is because the orbit of the moon doesn't align with the rotation of the Earth. The Earth rotates once every 24 hours, yet the moon takes 27 days to orbit once around the Earth; therefore, different parts of the Earth rotate in and out of "bulge" zones every day, and the tides rise and fall accordingly. ►

3. How Tides Change with Moon Phases

Moon phases provide a good way to see how tides change. Moon phases change based on the amount of light the moon reflects from the sun, which is dependent on the location of the Earth, sun, and moon relative to each other. Different moon phases are shown in Figure 3. When it is both either a full moon or a new moon, there are spring tides, as shown in Figure 2. At quarter moons, the tides are the lowest and have the smallest difference, which is when neap tides occur. During other periods such as the waxing gibbous and waning crescent, the tides are gradually growing day by day until reaching the spring tide; contrarily, during the waning gibbous and waxing crescent, the tides decrease.

4. How Tides Affect Our Daily Lives

Although tides may seem to simply be an interesting phenomenon, it affects many people and animals' lives. For example, tides affect the shipping industry greatly. In order to safely sail the ocean, people must design the docks that adapt to tide shifts, and at the shore, high tides that raise the sea level allow ships to arrive more easily. Furthermore, when fishing, the tides flush out crustaceans and small finfish, which makes fishing more productive.

In addition, tides stirring the ocean water balance temperatures on the planet, which creates our habitable climatic condition. During high tides, cooler water intrudes warmer water, and they mix, resulting in a lowered temperature. During low tides, the opposite is achieved. Therefore, tides offer a glimpse into the complex interactions between celestial bodies and are also integral to the patterns of our planet that keep it inhabitable for life. ■

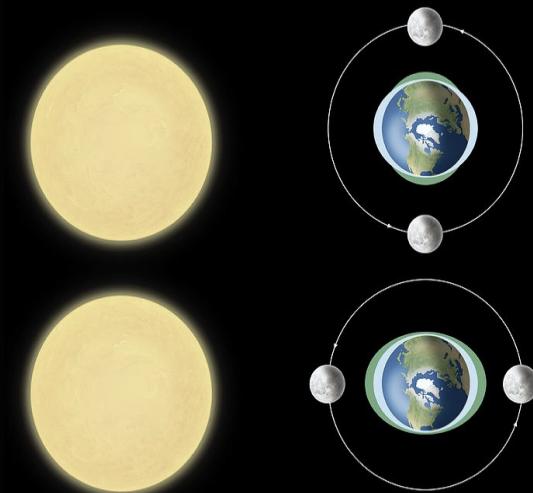


Figure 1 Tides

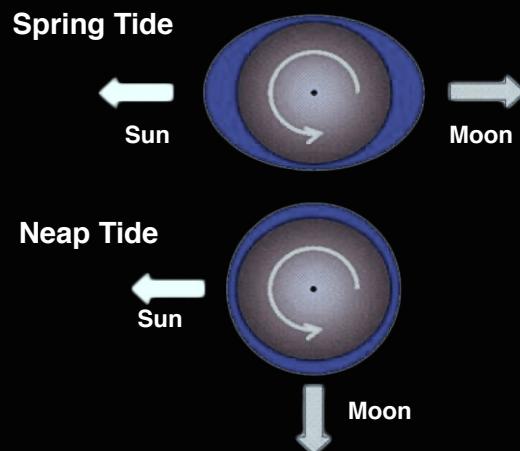


Figure 2 Neap & Spring tide

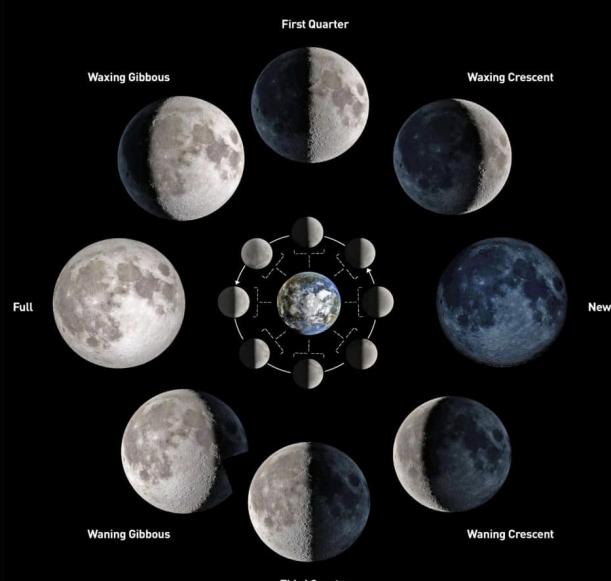
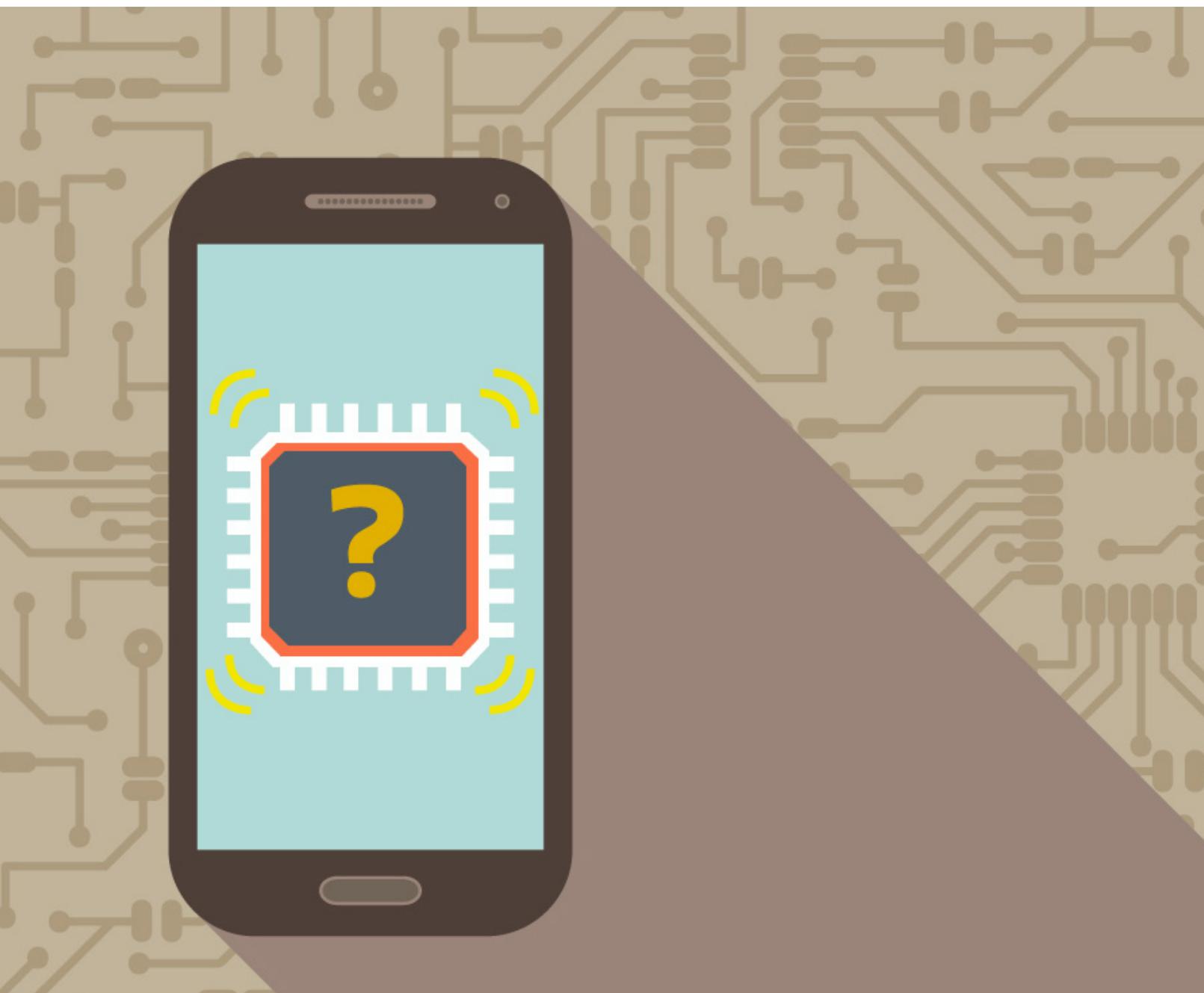


Figure 3 Different moon phases

SMARTPHONE PROCESSORS:

THE CURRENT SHORTAGE AND THE REASONS BEHIND IT

Written by: Kevin Shao | Photos from: Bing



2021 is a year full of difficulties, challenges, and sorrows. The world is still in an abnormal state, and the electronic chip industry, in particular, has suffered a serious shortage due to its complex manufacturing process that has been impeded due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, according to Qualcomm and the firm's partners such as Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo, and Samsung, the delivery time for all smartphone-related chips has reached 30 weeks, and that number would increase further to 33 if Bluetooth audio chips are also required.

The current deficit of electronic chips is due to three major factors: the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the tiring research and development (R&D) process, and the multiple-stepped chip manufacturing procedures. First of all, although the severity of COVID-19 has decreased compared to earlier this year, the pandemic is still prominent in many American and European countries. Several of these nations are either main suppliers of related raw materials or direct manufacturers of chips. Therefore, the supply chain of chips is crippled. China is an exception to this situation, though, but this does not decrease the significance of the global issue.

Secondly, the complex R&D process of chips is also a major culprit of its current shortage. Electronic chips often contain millions of electric circuits, so an efficient design requires many specialized designers and engineers. During this process, multiple take-outs—the test-manufacturing of chips which is extremely costly—must be performed. The R&D for System on Chips (SoCs) is especially arduous since it integrates multiple components—memory, Image Signal Processors (ISP), Bluetooth audio chips, Network Interface Card (NIC), and others—onto a single chip. ISPs run the camera lens system of the smartphone, while NICs enable Wi-fi connections. The more complex design of SoCs results in extensive R&D required, which ultimately leads to a high cost in both resources and time.

Finally, the production of chips, which requires a large amount of effort, work, and money, is another major factor of its current shortage.

Silicon is the second most abundant element on Earth. Silicon dioxide, the raw material used to make chips, is produced once silicon reacts with oxygen. Since one-fourth of Earth's sand particles are composed of silicon, the first step of producing processors is to carry sand to the designated manufacturers. The production of semiconductors requires the faulty ratio to be about one to one billion; therefore, the sand will then be filtered to produce a very pure form of electronic-grade silicon. The very pure cylinders of silicon are sliced and smoothed into very thin circu-

lar plates, and then a thin layer of blue liquid will be painted uniformly on the plate. Next, ultraviolet lights will shine directly on the circular silicon plates to allow billions of mini electric circuits to be printed on the plates. This enables many operations to run simultaneously each second. A chip with a lower span, such as 5nm compared to 7nm, generally has a more advanced manufacturing design. The lower span in turn increases the performance, decreases the power consumption, but also greatly increases the cost of production and R&D.

Another layer of blue coating is then painted evenly on the plate and hydronium ions are also shot onto the plate at a high speed in order to remove the light-resistant layer, which helps to prevent damage caused by previous production processes. At this point, the finished crystal has an insulation layer and three holes filled with copper to allow interconnection.

These crystals will then be repeatedly produced millions of times and then connected to each other, in which excessive copper will be removed by polishing practices. A detailed electric circuit is now produced, and it will be tested multiple times where faulty crystals are removed. The combined electric circuit will be divided into several sectors or CPU core chips that are each responsible for a section of operations. Finally, other relevant components are integrated onto the chip, and the final SoC will be produced after a final round of testing.

As shown in the descriptions above, the production of electronic chips is extremely complicated, and this decreases the efficiency of processors being manufactured. In fact, only two companies—TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) and Samsung—are able to produce the current most advanced 5-nanometer, 6-nanometer, and 7-nanometer chips. In addition, the research and development process of electronic chips is even more challenging, while the COVID-19 pandemic further increases the shortage of chips. Most consumers still await the return of a normal supply of chips, since it will result in a decrease in the prices of related terminal products including laptops, smartphones, and other devices.



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