



Inkling

2019-2020

FORWARD

This is Inkling's second year as a part of the UWCSEA's art and creative community, and it had been the biggest pleasure for us to be a part of this group of a really warm and creative people. It has not always been easy, creative blocks are, and unfortunately will always be, a big wall that all of us will have to face now and then. However, Inkling will always be a place to go home to, every time there is an idea that deserves to be out there and shared with other people.

We believe that creativity is what makes the world a less bleak world. In current situation -- a global pandemic none of us would've imagined 10 months ago, we believe in the power of hope, love, and the arts. Inkling will remain being a creative medium for the East community, and hopefully can be a kind of strength during these dark, unknowing times.

Every Monday lunch had been inspiring, each and every one of it. The sound of keyboard ticking or low, hushed conversation, or us trying to make sure that everyone's writing and creating. We hope that this literary tradition of writing and creating will continue in UWCSEA, and we look forward to seeing it evolve together with you.

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan & Libby Ye
Editors, Inkling 2019/2020

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ABOUT

Inkling is a culture-based literary magazine that endeavors to collect creative and critical pieces to showcase the diverse output of the East writing community all while fostering the creation of an open, inclusive, and encouraging platform for writers to share and compose.

TL;DR: We are East's culture interpreters. Aside from publishing our thoughts on school events and school culture, we'll also lead the community's creative souls to think and contribute.

#EVERYONECOUNTS #WITHREFUGEES

Art by Libby Ye

As an international student, I am fortunate to be able to interact with people around the world, and to have the opportunities to help those less fortunate than me. Painting this piece has been a form of escapism from the chaos of reality and a token of my gratitude to all healthcare workers, especially refugees who selflessly tackle the Covid-19 crisis despite their own vulnerabilities away from home.

This is an acrylic depiction of my main inspiration – Lubab al-Quraishi – a refugee from Iraq joining the frontline workers as a physician in New Jersey. In the painting, Lubab al-Quraishi is resting her hand on a refugee boy who wants to grow up and become a hero just like her. The boy's animated grin and his teddy bear symbolize his irrepressible fantastical spirit (inspiration from a photo from the Stanford University website of a refugee boy in front of a UNHCR camp).

Over half of the world's refugees are children, and I hope this painting not only celebrates their resilience, but also inspires them and demonstrates how people from around the world recognize their hardships, appreciate their parents' sacrifices, and are united in our aim to alleviate their hardships.

I believe the only way for us to emerge from this nightmarish predicament lies in unity, regardless of status, race, or gender. We must celebrate and support those heroes who emerge in times of viral crisis, risking their lives to save others.



Art: Libby Ye

voyage

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan

For UWCSEA East, Class of 2020

When goodbye comes early, what do you do?

What do you do when the world flips over and suddenly the person you spend 7 hours of your days with isn't there anymore? What do you do when goodbyes catch you off guard? Its claws digging into your heart, piercing and screaming. What do you do when you realise that the next time you wrap your arms around them and say see you soon — you don't really know when soon really is? What do you do when time runs out before the alarm starts ringing?

It is strange when home is home because of the people in it. What happens when they go? What happens when the blocks that build the tower up high and turn it into a home get taken out one by one, leaving gaps and holes?

What happens when you get homesick ... at home?

We wrap our arms around each other and try to hold on for as long as we can, wishing for the hands of the clock to stop ticking and for the universe to freeze and stop. Tears roll down as quickly as the wheels of suitcases, and still the sun says goodbye in the

Art: Alexandra Kern

zandraart

west. Then there are hearts crashing onto the ground at the idea that while the sun will still rise come morning, their presence would no longer be familiar.

It terrifies me.

It terrifies me that this will happen 3 times in the timespan of my time here, forming love that is more than love, sailing on the sea, and eventually having to arrive at the shore. I wish we never saw land. I wish we could continue voyaging through the waves and watch the sun rises and sets like we will always have tomorrow. I wish–

A pair of arms.

An enveloping warmth.

“Thank you for everything.”

The sun rises despite their absence;

a whisper;

“Have a safe journey.”

A Weary Traveller

Libby Ye

You drag your finger along the indented wall, your nail gobbling up specks of paint like a dehydrated and weary traveller stranded before the journey has begun.

You trace the uneven crevices from the fractured wall like a worn-out road on an ancient map, stopping above a chewed-up wad of gum.

Artificial fluorescent light filters in from the rigid bars behind you, their metallic sheens glinting, their mouths smirking. They tower over you, retracting as your eyes refocus.

Strips of green are halved by window frames and quartered by football lines. You tilt your head back, thirsty for a gulp of nature. Yet, you are greeted by cold plastic with an undertone of rotten cabbage. You swivel around, lashes levelling with the pungent offender.

A lone abandoned meatloaf.

Garnished with freckled pastrami. Varnished with cling wrap. Encased in a metallic locker. The dull light reverberates off the coffin-like walls, patches of light overlapping with pigmented dabs of spongy spores.

The sordid fragrance smothers over you in thick waves, oscillating vigorously like the relentless tussles between cantankerous waves at dusk.

An ant scuttles between the sandwich and the gum, conflicted with delight as it acclaims its victorious quarries.

You graze the amaranth colored gum. Two freshly punctured teeth indents – drenched in a thick film of saliva, still as microscopic bubbles congregate towards them.

You reverse.

You trace your finger back along the familiar road, specks of paint flutter like residues of an ambitious dream. You trace higher, dipping the tip into moistures condensed across the mildewed underbelly of water pipes.

Desperate for a sip.



The Criminal Psychologist

Sia Jain

When I sat down in my chair, I was expecting an extremely grim, old, scary-looking man to walk in and start talking gravely but I was surprised to find a young, calm and friendly man – Christian Perrin. His main job is to interview serious offenders such as murderers and rapists, research and develop rehabilitation programmes for them.

He told us that one of the most frightening things about speaking to criminals is how normal some of them are – not like the stereotypical bald, scary-looking guys. They look friendly and speak normally – you wouldn't even know they were criminals until you read their awful record. As soon as Christian said this, my mind immediately connected this description to Joe, a nice friendly looking character from the TV show 'You' who turns out to be a psychopath and a murderer. That just bewilders me and also scares me – how deceiving and dangerous some personalities can be. Christian also mentioned how sometimes he sympathizes with criminals but his job demands for him to be objective but he says, "I'm a human and sometimes that gets in the way" He gave an example of a person who was charged for a crime he didn't commit simply because he was part of the culprit gang. That also brings up a big question – how good is our judicial system?

When he was younger, Christian went through a lot of trauma

and have frequently had panic attacks – he required counselling as well. As a 25-year-old, listening to a man describe how he gruesomely raped a 1-year-old is the most harrowing story he ever heard. Sometimes in such cases, he often thought there was nothing that he could do but as a psychologist, he had to believe in them. He also said that the death penalty is not an option since there is no 'deter' effect and it doesn't solve any problems – "Killing people for killing people" is not progressive.

77% of the UK population offends again within 2 years which really makes him think – "What am I actually doing?" To see what you put so much of effort in fail again must be without doubt very disappointing which leads me to think – is counselling criminals and serious offenders doing any good for them and society? Or are we and they much better off being taken away from this world?



prized possessions

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan

What do you do when you only have 10 minutes to gather your most valuable things, before they're all burned down to the ground?

It was a dry day in June 2017 in Woodridge, Port Elizabeth. A Saturday morning, when the rest of the world is probably sleeping in after a long, tiring week, Caroline Howarth, one of our guest speakers for Writers' Fortnight 2020, woke up to a strange smell of burning, and strings of smokes outside her window. Her husband told her that he would check what's happening, and drives off.

She received a phone call just moments later, with the instruction that she has 10 minutes to gather all the valuable things in the house to pack into the car before she had to leave. "The fire is coming, and it's coming fast." Caroline had woken up her two teenage daughters, gathered her cats up into the car, before scattering to save all her valuables in fear that flame would come to eat them all up.

Those 10 minutes made me think; if I were only given 10 minutes to gather my most valuable things before I had to watch them burn down, what would I take? What would I let go? I feel that now we have too many possessions that we take for granted, but



Art: Alexandra Kern

what would we really feel was prized when we're going to lose all? Would it be our children, like Caroline? Would it be my Harry Potter books, like Caroline's daughter, or clothes, like her sister?

This was a question that pierces right into me throughout the session in which Caroline shared with us what really happened at the Woodridge fire in 2017. She had shared with u that when she lost contact with her husband, who was somewhere out there in the midst of all the smokes, she had stopped thinking about the house and how she hadn't gotten insurance for it. Because the house didn't matter anymore;

It's the people.

I found myself being invited into a very complex and messy maze of human being's emotions. Maybe when things are really driving into the edge, it's when we can realize and understand what is it that truly matters to us, the things that are truly important to us. Maybe it's when we're at the edge of the cliff, when the waves are 5 minutes away from washing us off, when the flames are roaring and when drought is near and sea levels rising, when we can finally recognize what is it that truly matters to us.

People. Harry Potter books. A prized surfboard. Pets.

It varies for everyone, and I found that maybe, that's what makes us all such complex, complicated, difficult, yet mesmerizing creatures.

venn diagram

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan

“Mental illness and faith are venn diagrams that you can't pull apart.”

There are moments where words that people say hit you hard in ways you can't fully explain, and for me, when author Hanna Alkaf stood in front of us uttering these words for our Writers Fortnight 2020, it was one of those moments. I'm perfectly aware that this is a sentence that may not be as hard-hitting to some compared to others, or it might not even have made sense for them. But it did for me, simply because I identified with it. It is a hard-hitting reality, that I also felt throughout reading Hanna's book, *The Weight of Our Sky*.

The Weight of Our Sky talks about Melati, a teenager suffering from OCD who went through the race riots in Kuala Lumpur on May 13 1969. Instead of OCD, however, Melati thinks she's being possessed by a Djinn, a spirit in Islamic culture. Having grown up in an extremely similar South East Asian, Islamic culture, it bewildered me that I've never seen it from that perspective. Melati wasn't the first OCD character I've encountered, and yet, I've never thought of sounds in your head as Djinn, have never thought of having demons as... the actual demons I grew up being taught to believe in.

Hanna told us today, that books for kids and teenagers should be two things; a window, and a mirror. It has to be a way for them to be able to look out to the world, but they should also be able to see themselves in it. It made me think back to the books I read growing up; I've seen fragments myself in the books I've read, sure. Hermione Granger, for instance, and her attachment to books and knowledge. Or that character who got scolded by her English teacher for submitting a fanfiction as homework. Or that character who writes poetry on every surface she finds.

But never a character who's a Muslim teenage girl. Never a South-East Asian who speaks a language that rolls my tongue with familiarity. It just never is, because I grew up reading English books, grew up reading books that are meant for kids that aren't me, I've simply been finding pieces of myself in them. Reading Melati's journey, I realized, was the missing representation of a bigger picture of me, which absence I have normalized.

Sitting in that classroom with my peers today, I felt seen, despite never even feeling like I wasn't all these years. Hanna also told us that she didn't italicize any "foreign words" in the book because they weren't foreign to her, weren't foreign to the characters either. She had grown up reading English books with Western culture, without given context and explanation to everything. That's also a way of looking at things I've never thought of before.

For English, I've also been working through *The House on Mango Street* for months, I saw Hanna and Cisneros as people who stood up to represent. One thing I remember very clearly from *The House on Mango Street* was that Cisneros dedicated the book for the women. I felt that Hanna was the same. I feel that both of them wrote in response to their feelings towards something that wasn't there, even though it should be.

Something worth fighting for.



Celestials

Daniel Ofori

A heart that cares too much,

A messy mind.

A body that perfectly fits the couch,

Some blurry eyes.

You- me, the winds and fireflies

Tonight is all about us

Help me help you count

The fault in our lovely stars.

Lungs that host pain,

Menace that crawls through our veins

A mane head gone bald,

Dark hair gone grey,



And a bunch of wrinkles that come of age.

You – me, twinkles and the open sky.

Tonight is all about us,

Help me help you count –

The fault in our lovely stars.

The maniacs ;

Anglomaniac, anthomaniac, dipsomaniac

and the maniac list goes on.

Emotions gone on a wild spree,

Mind on a wild goose chase.

You-me, constellations and the milky way.

Tonight is all about us –

Help me help you count –

The fault in our lovely stars.

Bodies that rot,

With Souls that simply fade away.

Cheers to a life we never sought.

You- me, the moist grass and howling moon

Tonight is all about us.

Memories,

We will make them anyways.



Memento Mori

Art by Libby Ye

This is my final acrylic piece in response to the theme “memento mori”. I have always been fascinated by the differing beliefs surrounding life and death. Whilst the skull is a reminder of death, the rose is a reminder of love and the finer things in life. This monochromatic black and white painting is eerily reminiscent of a photograph faded over time. Perhaps, this will be my own memento mori. Therefore, I believe that these two beguiling absolutes, enveloped by a mystic haze, perfectly embody my philosophy and outlook on life and death.

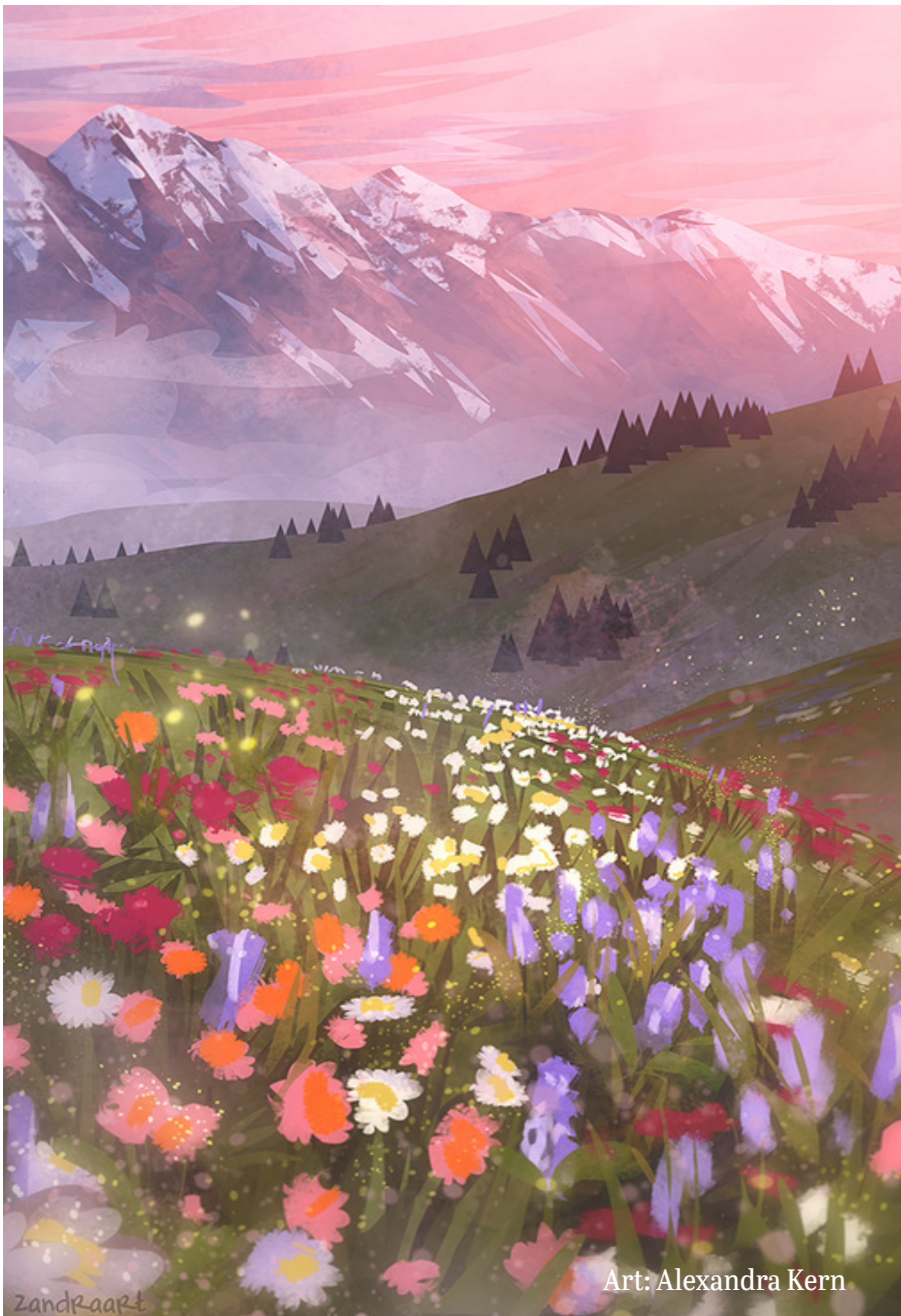
Joy Found in Jo March

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan

Following the release of the new movie starring Emma Watson, Saoirse Ronan, and Timothee Chalamet in the theatres, the *Little Women* book, released in 1869, was all over the top shelves in the bookstore. I happened to be there, during one of my usual bookstore visits, and I decided to pick it up for my casual, before-bed readings.

I don't usually read classics, but reading *Little Women* acts as a good tone down after a long, tiring day. It envelops you in a bear hug and sends warmth and happiness in every flip of the pages. It brings you joy and cosiness, everywhere, all over you. It tells the story of Jo March and her 3 sisters; Meg, Beth, and Amy, and their daily lives together with their mother Marmee and Jo's best friend, Laurie.

Walking into International Women's Month, I feel that it was appropriate to read this book. Jo was an aspiring author, still tied up with the expectations of being womanly like her sister Meg and with the idea of marriage surrounding her. But I learned a great deal of courage from Jo, as she broke out of these expectations and followed on with her dreams either way. Jo aspires to be an author and makes money out of it — which was almost unthinkable for a woman in that age and time, but she did it anyway. She embraced what it is that she wanted to write without caring



Art: Alexandra Kern

about what others said, and I thought it was just one shape of empowerment in this story.

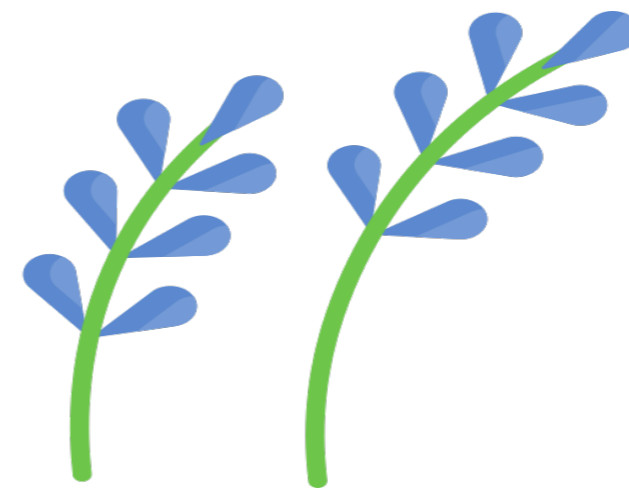
Another thing that struck me beautifully was the relationship between Jo and her sisters. They're not perfect, like any sisters out there. They fight and pull on each other's hair. They get angry at each other and stomp off the room. They yell and hide each other's favourite things. But above all, they forgive and love. They kiss each other's foreheads and hold hands. They put the other above themselves. They found happiness within themselves even when they gave up their Christmas breakfast to a family that's way poorer than them. It is the nature of siblings, good and bad, all reflected in Alcott's beautiful writing about the March women.

“I don't believe fine young ladies enjoy themselves a bit more than we do, in spite of our burnt hair, old gowns, one glove apiece, and tight slippers, that sprain our ankles when we are silly enough to wear them.”

No less importance on the characters alongside the March sisters, of course. Delightful Laurie, a lonely boy who later befriended Jo and became a valuable addition to the family. Their warm, loving Marmee, who's not afraid to tell the girls straight out if they're doing something wrong. Hannah who adores the girls like they were her own. John who broke the idea of marrying for money and showed what love actually meant for them. Little Women is packed with characters that are rich in love and warmth, and all of them bring an equal amount of joy for the readers.

I think it's important to give a quick shoutout to Alcott for this amazing masterpiece of a book. Her characters, pacing and creating page-turning suspense within a context of moderately low stakes. She's absolutely amazing — from her writing talent to her personal life as an abolitionist and feminist. There's a lot of her personal advocacy in every page of Little Women, as subtle as it is sometimes. I have learned a lot on how Alcott put in her views and values inside her work, it is admirable.

It is a great book to read if you're looking for something to read on International Women's Month — or any month in the year, really! Get a cup of coffee, a blanket, and dwell into the cosiness and the warmth of the March sisters!



trust issues

Nigella Marx

The concept of trust has always been something I couldn't quite grasp. Like an image in a puddle that changes every time I come close to understanding. It reminds me of the time when a duvet was pulled over my head, the thick fabric wrapped around my face while darkness enveloped my vision. The feeling of panic as I throw my hands out, kick my feet in an effort to hit something solid, to throw the sheet off, to stop my thoughts screaming of suffocation.

I had established that the girls in my dorm were not to be trusted as they giggled, removing the cover from my head whilst my breath raked through my lungs as tears threatened to spill.

Yet they were there when the world flew past, wind brushing my cheeks as branches and leaves whizzed by. They were the ones to grab my arm as I fell from that tree, my stunned mind still lagging a few seconds behind. They were the ones with scraped skin and bleeding shins as they lowered me to the ground. Hadn't I just been standing on the highest branch? They were the ones that climbed back up to grab my shoe caught in the branch above. I was just chanting victory at the trees peak, why were my feet now pressed against grass?



Art: Alexandra Kern

ZandRaart

Trust is something that leaves me stunned. Like falling out of a tree, it feels out of your control. You never know how things will turn out yet somehow, that time, I ended up on the ground unharmed. But what could happen next time? Would I be left falling from the sky as earth pummels towards me, bracing myself for the inevitable impact of flesh against dirt?

At the age of ten, I decided that trust is an abstract thing.

4 seasons

Rakeb Abraham Jebessa

It's Summer

The only time we wake up early

just to play outside with our friends in the neighborhood.

Being twelve

No care for breakfast, we dash to the door to go meet our friends

The only thing in our mind is

“First to get the soccer ball gets to be the boss of the day.”

Mom shouts out our name telling us to be careful

not to fall,

“What about breakfast! ”

“I'll come back real quick!”

We holler as we wear our shoes carelessly

“Don’t fall!”

“I won’t, ma!”

With blood gushed knees

We come back that night

Ma look up to us

And we look down

We mumble an incoherent sawrry

Looking up slowly

to meet her eyes

Filled with worry

I’m so sorry

Ma’s arms are wide open

“Come here, baby, why are you apologizing?”

Slowly

Lips spread wide

filled with lost teeth, And new teeth popping

We smile.

Here comes fall,

where we purposely don’t wake up at all.

fourteen

“It’s the first day of middle school!”

Ma is too excited

I can’t imagine what it would be like

But I would be lying

if I said I wasn’t too

Ma kisses both of my cheeks

I get out of the car

Wave her goodbye

2 weeks into the school

unwillingly

I found myself fitting

Into their norm

Winter Break

“Let’s make a Snowman!”

I hear my friends shouting from outside

I would rather scroll through Snapchat

Spring is here

Sky crystal clear

When I got rejected

by my very first crush

“Too fat, too ugly.”

Summer

Ma says

“You going out? Any plans?”

“I’m comfortable at home.”

Wallowing in my insecurities.

With ben and jerries.



Contemporary

“A Doll’s House”

Libby Ye

Reading Ibsen’s “A Doll’s House” was an ordeal because of Nora’s seemingly hyperbolized yet accurate resemblance to a typical woman’s persona in nineteenth-century Norway - a subservient doll-wife stifled by her husband Torvald and a conservatively patriarchal society. Nora is unable to prioritize the duties to herself, and her desires and thrills of “being a man” through earning money were kept hidden, much like how LGBTQ individuals living in modern Africa, a place bearing heavy traces of homophobia since 1553, have to “hide in closets.”

Struggles for self-identity persist to plague our world, where 34 African nations continue to criminalize same-sex conduct, forcing individuals to flee their homelands. In the article “I Can See You Are Gay; I Will Kill You,” Hylton and Politzer explore the idea of how LGBTQ escapees are funneled into a system that exposes them to the same persecutory treatment they sought to escape in a society designed to exclude those who threaten “traditional values” as resettlement applicants are confronted with deliberate mistranslations and a ceaseless influx of volatile homophobes.

Torvald’s desertion of Nora when her secret unveiled is echoed as LGBTQ Africans are subjected to violent exorcism conversion methods and expelled by families. In an intolerant environment where individuals are criminalized for self-expression, many

sacrificed heavily to pursue their identities. This is eerily reminiscent of the ending in “A Doll’s House” when Nora negates her sacred duties as a woman at the expense of respectability and her family.

Torvald is a representation of the oppressive forces of society, where laws are imposed on everyone regardless of potential detriments. Just like how Nora’s actions are assessed from a masculine standpoint, homosexuals are judged by rules devised for straights, forcing individuals into criminality. Torvald’s abasement of Nora takes form as pet names like “my little skylark,” mirroring ignorants who call LGBTQ individuals by inaccurate pronouns. Africa is currently overflowing with Torvalds, whose lack of understanding manifest into draconian responses to homosexuality. Many in our world today don’t recognize that forcing a gay man to be straight is equivalent to forcing a straight man to be gay. Homophobic discrimination is currently part of the African motif, with tens of thousands facing daily threats of sexual assault and mob violence.





Art: Alexandra Kern

Reminiscing

Ananya Nayak

Remember,

when we traded, slipping behind our backs, crumbs, rubbery glues jumping from finger to finger. When we would whisper across rooms our excitement only grew. Up was such a terrifying thing, elevators, planes, the climbing structure sitting outside, taunting us through the window, yet we never faltered.

Remember,

the colours covering our arms, tickling our skins, even acrid scents only slightly wrinkling noses, hugs with no care for. The next day turning in our books meticulous yet careless, we were something happening.

Remember,

when we cared, were caring, what we did had no excuses, every little movement, she played with her not me, so we'd scream, now we scream but it's silent. hopeless, restless, vapid, sparks fizzling in our eyes, as we whisper quietly swears at. nothing.

Remember?

hands scraping, like our knobby knees

glancing past one another, clandestine meetings

exchanged glances as we sneak by

our eyes dance like characters on the screens & we

dance with them

till we collapse on prickly ground

writhing. wriggling around each other because if not

who steals those peeks round the corner

passes food, weaves a bright web, crying, squirming, grinning

and groaning

make us remember

Recollection of a Difficult Past

Anthony Shen

Poring over black and white photographs is a surreal experience. In the mildewed, dusty room of my deceased grandfather's bedroom, I am transported back to the Chinese New Years I spent in this house. The inscrutable calligraphy covering his wartime letters and the gleaming ensign of the lapel pins lay almost unblemished in his briefcase and drawers, like artefacts frozen in time. Only the yellowing of the margins and slightest of tarnishing hinted at their great age.

My grandfather's narrative, as a Kuomintang (國民黨) lieutenant colonel during the Chinese Communist Revolution (第二次國共內戰), is now only accessible to me through the decrepit remnants of historical memorabilia. Their untold stories from that fading period of history are the ones featured in Taiwanese writer Lung Ying-tai's (龍應台) novel-length work, *Big River, Big Sea* - 1949 《大江大海，一九四九》.

Perhaps fittingly, the emptiness I feel from having irreversibly lost any chance to hear my grandfather's stories is like what the author laments in the prologue- her father passed away and mother afflicted with severe dementia before she had wanted to hear theirs.



The book is an ambitious compilation of war-time stories gathered through the author's interviews of Chinese and Taiwanese veterans. In contrast to the high tensions and media hype surrounding the cross-strait issue, the book refreshingly offers a coolly objective yet poignant portrait of this controversial period history through the lens of ordinary people. A far cry from the whitewashed history textbooks used in the local elementary school I went to in Taiwan (and presumably even more so in those counterparts in China), its sometimes disturbingly honest accounts simultaneously function as a lens and a critique of history- as well as a sobering warning on the impersonal brutality of war.

Weaving together distinct narratives in a straightforward, unembellished style, Lung paints a picture of the pain of physical and emotional separation with gently moving gravitas. I wonder how my grandmother and grandfather had felt, forcefully displaced from their native province of Henan (河南) and Hebei (河北) over fifteen hundred kilometres away from Taoyuan (桃園), Taiwan where they have lived together for the past half-century. Unable to even send letters to their loved ones due to the suspension of postal service between China and Taiwan after the war, the river and sea of the title take on the symbolic significance of an unbridgeable gulf. In Taiwanese author Pai Hsien-yung's (白先勇) fictional short story, *A Sea of Blood Red Azaleas*, 《那片血一般紅的杜鵑花》¹, this divide- the Taiwan Strait- is what drives the main character, Wang Xiong, 王雄, into hysteria and ultimately, suicide. Perhaps, underneath the veil of polite courtesy and joyous greetings in the letters my grandfather received from his rela-

tives after postal service resumed in 1979 lies an undercurrent of unspeakable sorrow and resigned acceptance.

In one of the chapters, Lung describes her mother's reluctance to visit her hometown of Chun'an, Zhejiang Province (淳安, 浙江省) after the resumption of air travel in 1987 – we learn that it has been submerged in 1959 by the Xin'an River (新安江) hydroelectric station, and what was once “a sea of mountains is now a sea of islands.” Her hometown, a two-thousand-year-old city that had existed since the dawn of Chinese civilization (during the 東漢朝代) has been forever wiped into oblivion. Lung further recounts conversations she had with those relocated. She intertwines stories of the past with those of the present with dreamlike fluidity, yet still manages to retain a strikingly dispassionate tone. Like a detached external observer, Lung peels away the layers of history and invites the readers into this world. In her silence, Lung allows the stories to speak for themselves.

My grandfather was more fortunate. When he finally returned to his hometown in the early 2000s, he paid a visit to his mother's and father's graves. Captured in one of the rare colour photographs in his drawers, he stands alone on a windswept hill beside two oblong pieces of polished stone.

Lung makes no attempt to shy away from the raw inhumanity of war. Indeed, her most stunningly moving descriptions are those of raw hunger in famine.

“Only three thousand remain out of a town of thirty thousand [永年] when it was finally ‘liberated.’ Yet, when the PLA marched into the city and saw the remaining survivors had ‘fat bellies and round faces’, they were positively astounded.”

Changchun (長春), a city of originally fifty thousand, only seventeen thousand remained after the barbaric 1948 siege. The city was barricaded until the civilians starved to death. Yes, this

“glorious victory and honorable liberation of Changchun was done without spilling a drop of blood.”

In an interview, she laments how the book, *White Snow, Red Blood* 《雪白血紅》², by Zhang Zhenglong, 張正隆, on the cruel atrocities of the Chang Chun Siege, was banned in mainland China. When do these illusions melt away to become a part of reality?

In a speech made shortly after the release of the book, Lung said, “My intention for writing was not to place blame on any one actor- not the Nationalist Party or the Chinese Communist Party. No, I wished to dismantle the vast machinery of the state, revealing that behind each cog and screw is an individual life at stake.”³

I picked up another photograph- this one undated- depicting a group of uniformed soldiers lounging outside a block of army barracks. Sometime in 1948 perhaps, when the regiment was retreating to Hainan Island. My grandmother said that my grandfather always had a camera on him, taking photographs of

everything and everyone around him. They're just people like you and me, whether they left for Taiwan in 1949, or were already in Taiwan, or had stayed in mainland China, it's just that they had just been caught up in the unfortunate throes of history.

¹ There exists no English translation of this work. An original Traditional Chinese version can be found here: <http://tw.shuhai.org/books/4380-那片血一般红的杜鹃花/>.

² There exists no English translation of this work, 《雪白血紅》，and is only available in simplified Chinese from select bookstores in Hong Kong.

³ Translated from a speech at The University of British Columbia. “Lung Ying-tai — Why 1949 (in Chinese).” Youtube, January 27th, 2010, <https://youtu.be/GPKynvGdDIY>.

author's note: There, unfortunately, exists no English translation of this work, and sale is banned in mainland China. The things I have mentioned here about Lung's book touches only most briefly upon the ideas presented. If you are literate in Chinese and want to find out more about this historical period, I highly encourage you to find a copy and read it.



Art: Alexandra Kern

Zandraart

Minecraft

Sia Jain

No

Not the game

It is our house

Was our house

Our old house

Is it a house anymore?

The door to the stairs

Which I slammed to annoy my grandmother

The stairs to the rooftop

Which I climbed chasing my brother

The cracks between the tiles in the TV room

Art: Alexandra Kern

ZandRaart

Which caught magic eraser dust my brother and I made

The swing from the wall

Which I swayed day through night

They are no more

Replaced with blinding shiny new tiles and iron doors

Locking away my memories

Never to be seen anymore

When I go back

I can't see the little girl jumping around

I can't see her smile on the swing

I can't see her running up the stairs

I can't see

anymore

With your hammers and pliers and wrenches and clamps

You didn't erase the stairs or the door or the swing

Dadu, why did you have to erase my memories, erase me?



The Garden

Libby Ye

Engulfed by monotone blue, I stared at the sky, emptiness gnawing at me. The grass tickled at my neck, yet I could feel nothing inside. Time flowed like cement, as I begged for something. A flicker. A spark. Anything to feel alive, to contradict the perfectness around me.

I felt the breeze caress my face, lit up by patches of sunlight filtered through the trees sheltering above. I ran my hand across the rough bark of a tree, and cupped the delicate rosy peach between my palms. Nectar dripped from the bottom, and I savored its golden inside with the perfect blend of tartness and sweetness. The flowery flavor turned sickly as I turned towards the rustle of leaves behind me, face to face with a shrunken skull covered with revolting scales. Two beady red eyes balanced out the rows of fangs beneath.

“Serpent,” I whispered. Did I mention that I had ophidiophobia?

It slithered closer, the air around me stilled as my mouth opened in a silent O. Scampering, I ran and ran. The rows of trees blurred into swirls of green and yellow. My heart pounded harder with each step I took, until bright white spots filled my vision. I felt the hard prickly leaves as I found myself collapsed against a giant tree.

I had never been to this part of the forest before. My tongue was stuck to the roof of my mouth, and my lips were cracked, bleeding. Standing up shakily, I took in the scenes unfolding around me.

Trees, trees, and more trees. I gasped suddenly, in front of me hung a blood red apple. I could almost taste the metallic tang on my tongue, mesmerized by the silky surface. My fingers reached out involuntarily and stroked the refreshing coolness of the skin.

I tilted my face upwards and bit through the crisp crunchy exterior, revealing honeyed pulp. The mellow fragrance was beyond heavenly.

I opened my eyes, the wind whipped at my face. I shivered for the first time and hid behind my hair, ashamed of my nakedness.

Pure Bliss

Art by Germaine Zhi En Ng

“This was my response based on the prompt “childhood”. It’s a digital drawing of me and my brother playing tag in my childhood home. With this drawing, I wanted to capture the bliss and simplicity during that time.”



Hopelessly Hopeful

Aabha Hattangadi

She flies where the winds take her

Yet she is trapped in a four-walled prison

She feels the silken sunlight

Despite being embraced by darkness

She hears the triumphant cries of war

Though all she sees are broken bodies

For she knows the battle will end

Their victory is near yet out of reach

She will obey, but never give in

She will believe in heaven from the depths of hell

She is the living, breathing paradox

That lives in the minds of us all

And makes us look forward to every sunrise

When we are too afraid to think of tomorrow



Art: Alexandra Kern

Zandraart

Each for Equal: Within Reach?

Medina Ayasha Nordiawan

On Friday, March 6 2020, the UWCSEA East community gathered together in Santai to celebrate International Women's Day, a day of the year to celebrate women and yet another day to fight for women's rights all around the world. Members of the community were getting the special IWD cupcakes from Santai to gift for the women and girls who inspired them, creating an appreciative atmosphere all around the campus.

Organised by the Global Concerns Daraja Academy, General Education Period, and Because I Am, this year, an exhibition celebrating women were set up on the plaza, followed by a movie screening at the second level of Santai, packed with people. It is incredible to see the community sharing their views on women empowerment and sharing about the women who mean a lot to them.

This year's International Women's Day theme is #EachforEqual, with the idea of that an equal world is an enabled world. For me, it's always pleasant to be surrounded by amazing women of the community who do so much work for the world, and yet it is still saddening to think that thousands of millions of girls and women out there are still struggling to get basic human rights.

I see International Women's Day as two sides of a coin.

On one side, it is celebrating women. It is remembering how far we've come in building a more equal world, in seeing more and more women making decisions. On the women whose flowers grew back as thorns. It is celebrating women who grew from the things that tried to drag them down and were turned into diamonds and the women who have gone through horrible things to fight for their rights. It is celebrating the women all around us and empowering each other, a reminder that together, an equal world is visible.

But also on the other side, it is remembering the fact that gender equality is still so far away from reach in many major parts of the world. Girls all over the world are still deemed unworthy of quality education. Stigma surrounding women working and domestic gender roles are still unavoidable. Discrimination and quiet abuse are still happening behind closed doors. It is remembering that there is still so much work to be done, and that we still have to continue fighting for women's rights, all over the world.

It is always a bittersweet day.

There are still mountains to climb ahead of us, but it doesn't mean that it's unreachable. Women all over the world continue to work hand in hand for a 50:50 planet, and for us, together, no mountains are too high, and no ocean is too deep.

In the words of Michelle Obama,

"There is no limit on what women can achieve."

La Fin

Daniel Ofori

Here we are, what is left of the broken me and lost you :

Shattered pieces of a brittle love left to fall,

A bunch of songs left on cue,

And memories hung against the wall.

Here we are, what is left of the broken me and the lost you :

Angry voices echoed across the hall

Our passions and fondness have lost their hue.

I used to be the first to text and you to call.

Now I wonder where you are although I have no clue.

You are simply gone and you left no trace ;

Not even footprints that could lead me back to you.

Art: Alexandra Kern

zandraart

Here we are, what is left of the broken me and the lost you :

Pushing, shoving and slamming doors.

Day in day out like there's nothing better to do.

Going out just to get wasted on bar floors,

Who thought it would be this hard getting over you?

What happened to me being forever yours?

Guess I have been such a fool.

Here we are, what is left of me the broken me and the lost you :

Empty spaces and silent nights.

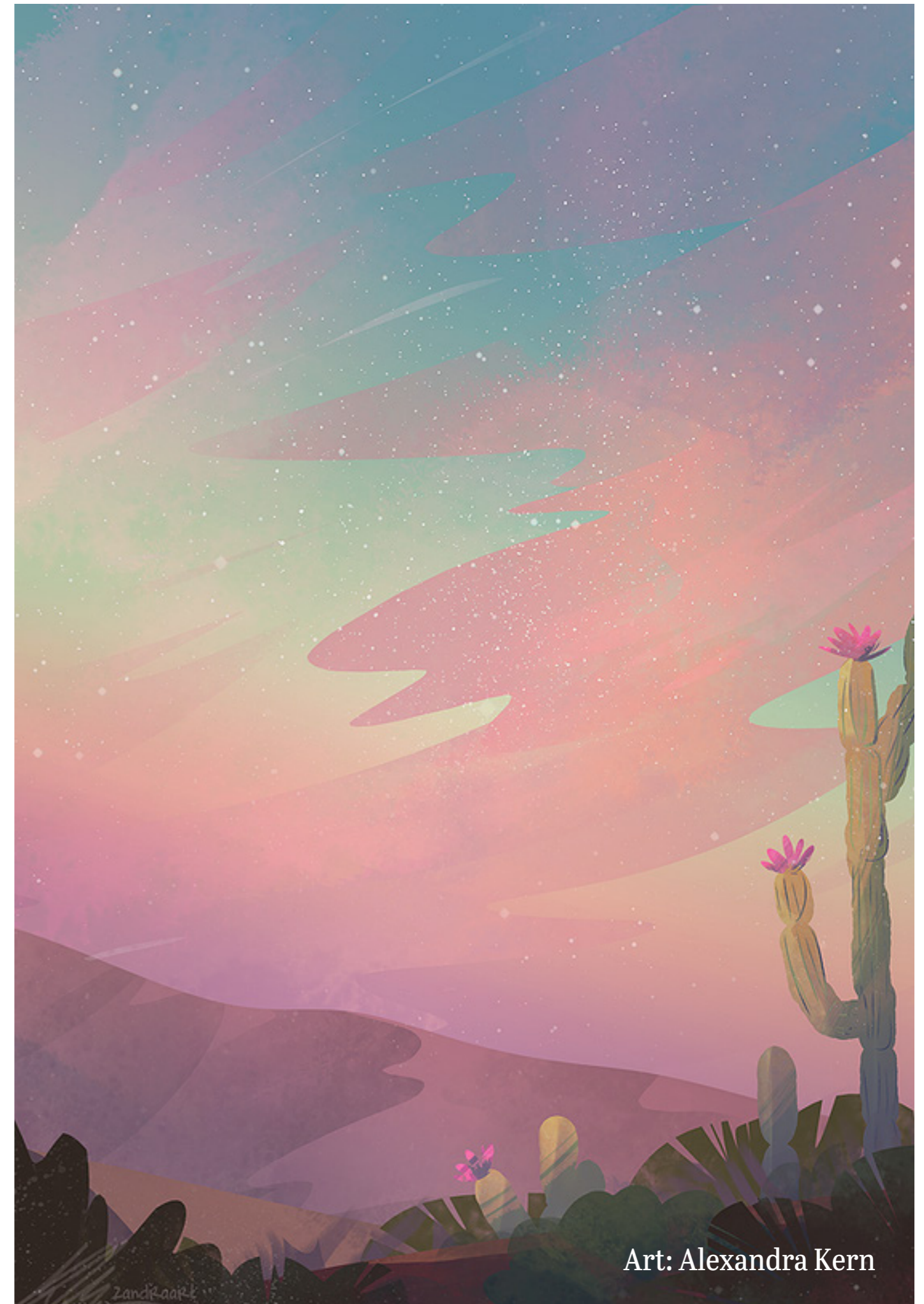
Letting you go will forever be my biggest rue.

All the quarrels and silly fights ;

They have driven us far away from what's true.

Stargazing into the open nights ;

They will never be the same without you.



Art: Alexandra Kern