



Inkling

2020-2021

FORWARD

It has been 4 years now since Inkling became a part of UWC-SEA's creative community, and 2 years since we started leading it. It has changed and evolved with time, but the core of it remains the same; a bunch of people coming together and creating things and weaving words. Some of the pieces you read in this would have come from our creative sessions, while others are contributions from very wonderfully remarkable people.

It feels important to note the feeling of purpose that this little community brings in the middle of the world we're living in. We cannot control the course of life and time, but we can control what we make out of it. We cannot control what tomorrow looks like, but we can control our art. Moving forward, hopefully in a brighter world, Inkling will continue to be a medium for the creatives - and we hope we will continue inspiring hope and joy.

It is our last issue before we hand over to the next editors, Maya and Ananya. Every Monday lunches have been extremely inspiring and a heartwarming break from the constant hustle of school. The future remains unknown, but I hope to see Inkling grow as the time and space for those who wish to share their world. From chickpea erotica to quiet loves, we hope you enjoy this issue.

Ayasha Nordiawan & Libby Ye
Editors, Inkling 2020/2021

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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.



Art: Axy Xaytouthor

miss 差不多

Johanna Liu

“差不多啦” was the phrase I heard most from her. 差不多啦; meaning more or less, almost, nearly. A relatively simple phrase, used slightly grammatically inaccurately by her, but still understandable. Used in especially Singaporean ways.

Madam Ah Mui likes to watch television. Taiwanese dramas are entertaining, but also 差不多啦. She's been to many places, from Korea to Macau to Shanghai, Beijing, and Taiwan. She remembers a Nam Ho Travel agency and the few colleagues she went with ten or twenty years ago, but what we got out of her was that travelling was... okay. She didn't like it that much, anyway. Travelling was 差不多.

Born in Hong Kong, Miss Ah Mui was brought to Singapore by her parents when she was four months old. If we heard correctly, she went to Yangzheng primary school and lived in Chinatown. She is reminded of Chinatown's shops-filled streets, where her parents operated a small coffee shop, selling teh and milo and sodas. Her childhood was 差不多, where she did housework and studied hard for academics; her parents were strict, and so her life outside of school and home was 差不多, no going out or playing with friends.

Miss Ah Mui stayed at Yangzheng until sixth grade, where she graduated to St. Anthony's Convent, a British school for girls. She told us with perfect memory that it was on Middle Road, and indeed it was.

And so her story went on--miss Ah Mui told us she worked as a clerk for a car insurance company. When we asked her if she liked her job, she replied with a deadpan of sorts: "what you are good at you need to do." Her eyes were calm, like she was at peace with her life, despite her description of her days as repetitive.

Seventeen years went by like that, repeating everyday, but Miss Ah Mui was amazingly unbothered. She knew that life had to go on... and money was money and a job was a job.

Then, she worked as a cashier in old Singapore's SOGO shopping mall. She told us that SOGO was near orchard road, across from Nee Ann city, precise descriptions that prove just how long she has worked there. She bookkept for a store, and the most significant part of her job was simply the products she could see everyday and the foods sold in the mall. She said she took care of the same things every day until she reached sixty something. SOGO closed down in 2000.

On the topic of health she told us that as long as she can walk and eat, it was fine by her. She has diabetes and takes medicine daily. She would visit a doctor every few months in the fifteen years she's been at Saint John's. Her siblings have passed away, and so have a few friends at Saint John's. She remembers going to

church with her parents. She cooks sometimes; fish, vegetables, but not a lot of cakes or desserts anymore.

She thought that Singapore hasn't changed much. She thought that she hasn't changed much, either. Everything was 差不多 or similar compared to the past, and she was okay with that. Content.

She likes to eat lychee,
durians,
cherries.

Why cherries? Because they are cute. And pink. Bright, colorful. Full of energy.

To me, she was describing the very opposite of 差不多.

Upon the pleasant surprise that she liked pink, we asked miss Ah Mui if she was a positive and optimistic person. She said that sometimes she was, but sometimes she was grumpy. And of course, she said, anyone gets grumpy from time to time.

I'm no longer young, you know, she said. I'm already eighty something. I'm eighty-five.

Her life was 差不多, she told us.

差不多 was grey. Uneventful. Unremarkable.

But when I look back to the smile she wielded when we asked to take a selfie with her, she was 差不多 and everything more. Her 差不多 words inspired great meanings, showed her mature and deep thinking.

She was the light shining through gloomy clouds,
The pink hiding behind monochrome.
She was the leaves that swayed on their branches,
Along with the wind, wherever it might take her.

She has surrendered to life and faded into whatever living demanded, but so what?

She was as delicate as the water that follows the river's flow and as strong as the water that withstands crashing against river beds. She was 差不多 and she was beautiful.

So, yes. Madam Chui Ah Mui: thank you. There's nothing wrong with "nearly", nothing wrong with ordinary.

是啊。人生, 差不多, 就好了吧。

sycamore trees, touching hands

Elizabeth Joseph

Willows weeping,
Bold, strapping redwood trees observing
The youthful pines playing,
Thoughtful Bodhis' nurturing wisdom,
Sycamore trees touching hands,
The trees are alive.

Chainsaws snapping,
Axes whacking,
Saws swishing,
The forest is lifeless.

The Fireplace

Nigella Marx

The change I had longed for had come in the form of a house. A house with a fireplace.

A fireplace.

That was the moment I realised that I was somewhere else. I wasn't in the place I had grown up in, I was somewhere new. I could start again, I could build myself up from scratch and become someone different.

But it was in this house that I realised I didn't know how. I realised that there were no instructions or guidebooks on how to restart, how to form new bonds or how to make friends. Even if there had been I don't think it would have told you that eventually the strings would begin to tug. The strings that awoke when I drifted too far from the things I left behind and forced me to remember that I was something before this, that there were people before this.

The strings had planted themselves into people, objects, memories, all of them so far away yet their connection to me held like a leech unwilling to let go.

Now I cherish my strings and allow them to strengthen, but back



Art: Mihranush Varzhapetyan

in that house I yanked at their chords only to have their roots dig in deeper, my mind tearing at the seams as my insides continued to wail.

It was when we had that house with the fireplace that I looked up at the sky as earth below me began to crumble and for the first time I saw something other than ethereal darkness. It was in my room that I began memorising the patterns of the sparks of fire hanging in the sky, and reached for them because, finally, I had something to reach for. It was there that I began to see the beauty in the trees that slept outside my window and escaped into their branches after years of thinking I had grown too old to be welcomed back, it was there that I picked up my father's old skateboard and saw that if I wanted to use it I would have to plant my feet on top. I taught myself the art of gritting my teeth and wading through the murk because dreaming about flying over meant my feet were still on the ground. I taught myself to march out of that library and past the bustling children, towards an empty seat in the cafeteria and to say 'hello'. Where I found the courage inside of me to say 'goodbye' but in such a way it sounded like 'see you later'.

I lived in a house that is now no longer my own, a house that begins to fuzz at the edges when I think about it for too long. I lived in a house of firsts and of lasts. A house where I learnt of hurt and of healing, I lived in a house of stars that taught me to wake up before dreaming.

Heart

John Veliz

Let my words rip through the pages
just as yours ripped through my heart.
My ever beating fragile heart,
beating slower every time.

I gave you my thoughts,
I gave you my words,
I gave you my heart,
and you tore it apart.

Let the flames of destiny burn through these pages,
Let the pain of today subdue this passion,
All I ever wanted from you was compassion,
But all I got was your heartless fashion.

I tread lightly on the edge of being callous,
but how to combat the fire left in my palace?
There's no getting rid of this malice.

Like a plague you interfered with my dreams,
but how can I speak of dreams now that I can't sleep?
You've robbed me of my peace.
You've robbed me of my screams.

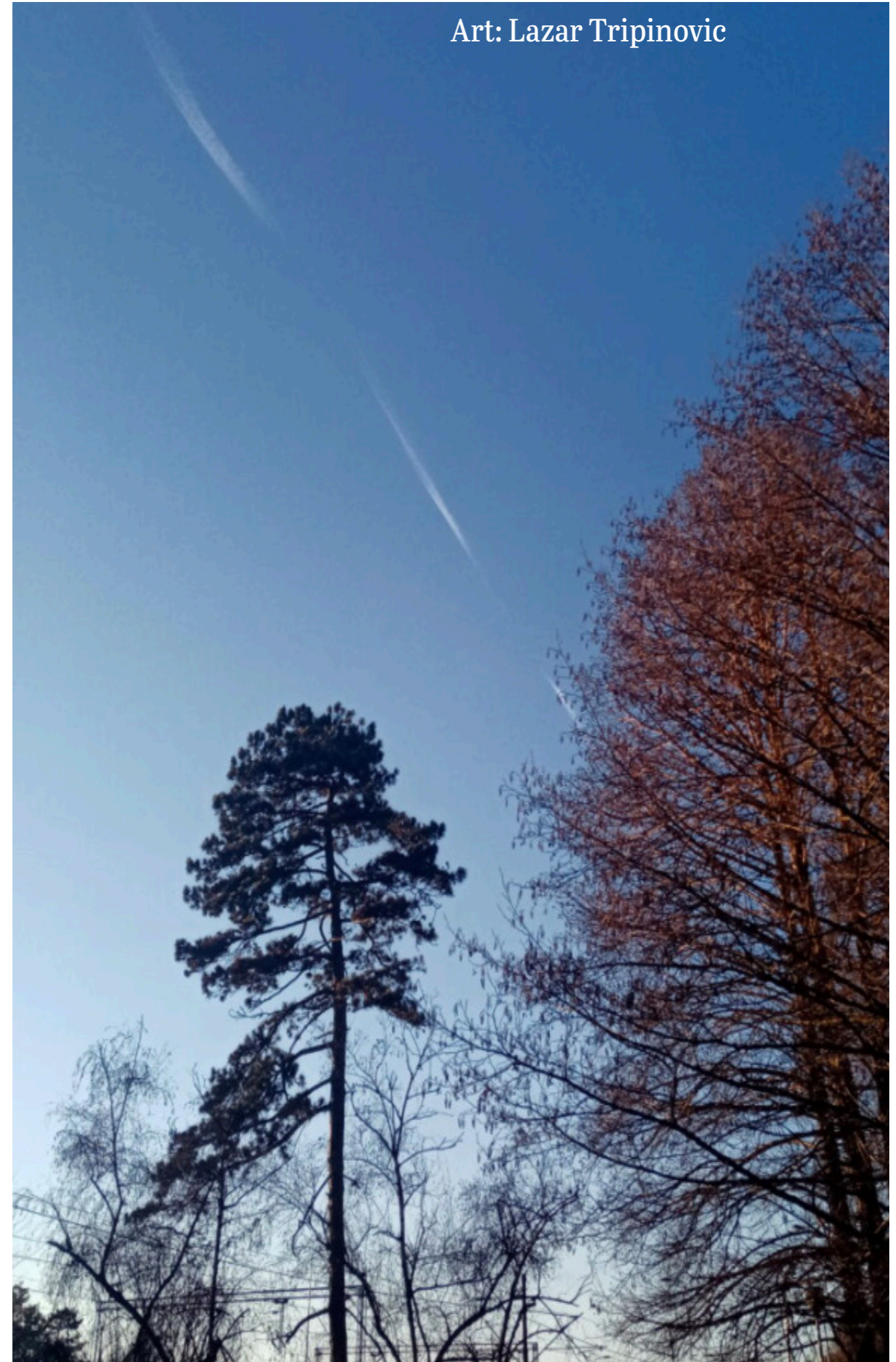
You took away everything.
You took away my heart.

I don't ask you to give it back,
just please don't leave it in the dark.
Please don't let it bleed,
Please let it be freed.

How unjust is this,
You get to play with my heart as I play with my words.
I'm left in the abyss,
as I miss how beautiful my words used to sound as your own.

I don't want this to end,
But there's nothing else to defend.
All that is left is to pretend,
pretend one day I can be your friend.

Art: Lazar Tripinovic



the mystery section

Ayasha Nordiawan

I passed by the bookshop today.

It looked comfortingly quiet in the midst of the rain, so I decided to walk in. Impulsive decisions are never my thing, I'm sure you know, but I had the time. I figured there's no harm in doing so. The breeze of the air conditioner hit harder through my already soaked shirt, but there is a feeling similar to coming home settling in my stomach, like waking up on a rainy morning to a cup of coffee on the table. I smiled at the lady at the counter and browsed.

It still looks the same as the last time I came here. One of the books on the staff picks shelf is still what it was the last time I came here. I might have lingered on the cookbook section for way too long this time, though. You know I make my meals myself now? My toasts are still slightly burnt but I spent less time - only having to make coffee for me alone. There is no logic to it. I stood at the corner flipping through dishes I would never be able to - or have the courage to try. But they are still beautiful, and worth my time.

I sat down under the stairs by the give me a new home! SALE 2 books just for \$4! pile. My hands ran through the loved, weary spines - the titles unfamiliar, but not unwelcoming. *Altered*

States. The 27th Kingdom. The Passage to India. I sat and thought about the homes that covered over these books - the hands that flip through the pages, steaming coffee a few distances from it. It felt like a different world - the way the margins are crinkled and scribbled on. The underlines made me wonder why those lines were significant.

May this help you find answers to the questions you keep stuffed away in a corner of your heart, a message in pencil says in cursive handwriting. There is no name - not the sender, not the owner. I tuck the book back into the pile. It's getting a little bit too intimate in this corner. Too stuffy, too claustrophobic, too full of--

You know what I didn't do, though?

I didn't look back. I did not linger at the mystery section. I did not stand at the exact corner you wrapped your arm around my waist and kissed my forehead before reaching for the high shelves for me. I did not pick up the book you spent 15 minutes flipping through the last time we were here, me jittering waiting for you to hurry. I did not stop and pick up a title because I thought you'd like it.

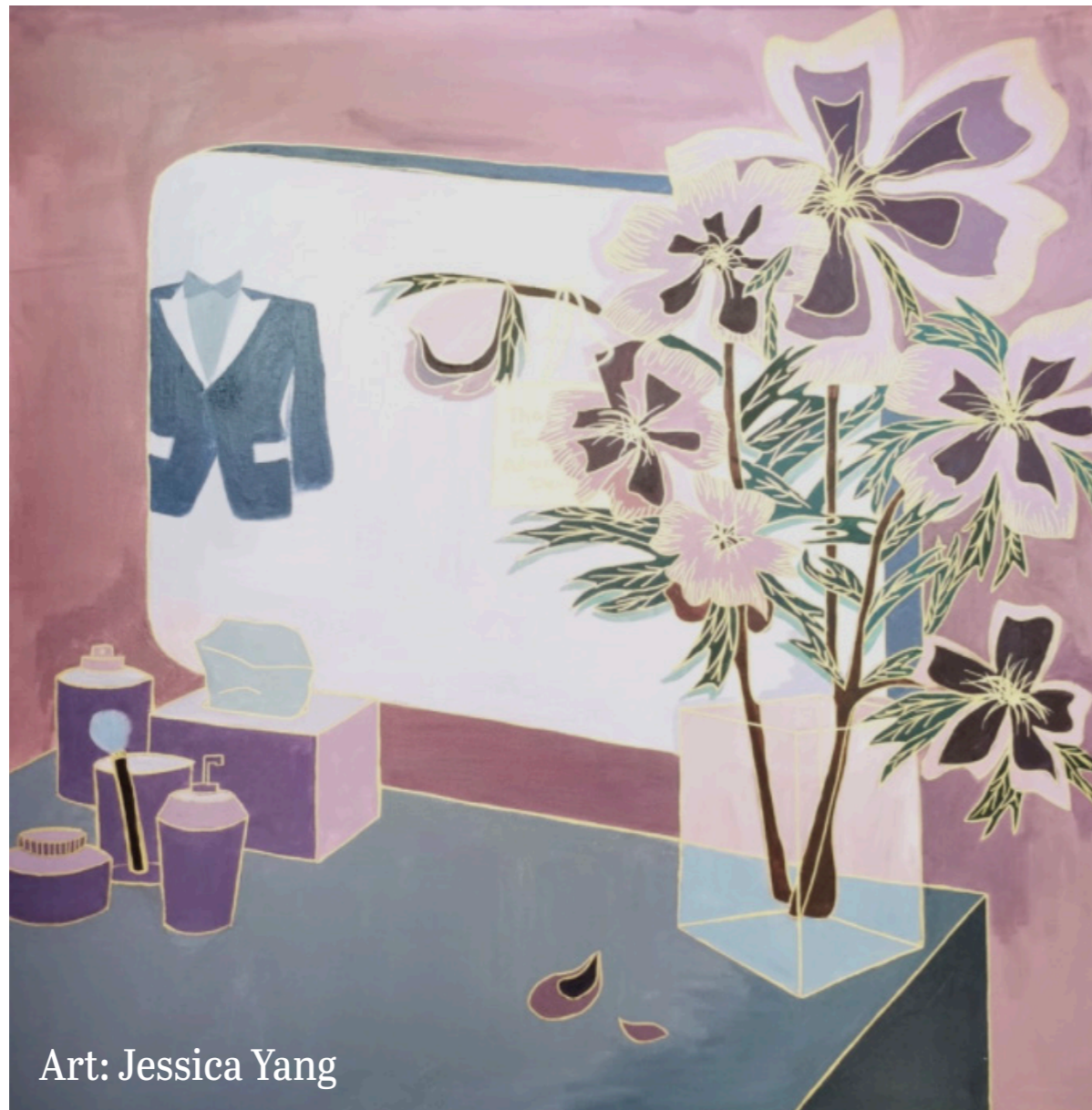
I passed the bookshop today, and I found that there are still corners that are mine. The cookbook display and the tall travel bookshelves. The me who makes coffee for one. The margins that are clean and unfolded, unwritten on. The title recommended by a girl who sits next to me at lunchtime. And one day I will be able to stand on the mystery section and not think of your deadly touch

and how I will never know why you left.

For now, though --

I walk away from the pile of books under the stairs. My bag a little lighter. One day someone will sort through the book pile and find your handwriting on the first page of a green-covered book. I wonder if they would stop and linger for a moment on the leftover shadow of you and me when they catch the thick, black ink;

This would be forevermore.



Art: Jessica Yang

Words

John Veliz

I was told to write some words for you today, but I can't think of anything to say. I've already exhausted all the words in the dictionary, every sentence, every paragraph, I've already given all of them to you. I gave you all the meanings and you gave me all my meaning. Sadly I ran out of words for you today, there's nothing new for me to say. There's nothing that can change reality, no words will ever be enough for you. Yet I thought I was enough for you. I suppose it's better to live in reality than under a lie, but that lie was my reality, that lie was everything to me. I have exhausted all alternatives, explored every option, I have thought about all the possibilities, but thoughts aren't enough. If I had only run out of words I would've found another way to reach you, I would have invented new ones, I would have found new patterns to describe these thoughts. I would have done it all if it meant being with you for a little longer, I would have fought for a little longer. I would have killed Chronos dancing over his grave, I would've strangled destiny demanding another chance. I would have done it all; because with you I felt powerful, with you I -I felt like the king of the world, and my purpose was to serve you. But it doesn't matter if I'm the king of the world anymore, it doesn't matter if I can fight against every demon. No power I had matters anymore. I didn't just run out of words, you ran out of love. Scratch that. You got tired of your lie. And there's no power in the heavens that can change that.

My Love for You Likens to Fourth Dimension

Libby Ye

my love for you likens to the fourth dimension -
unchartable and intangible

You say that the fourth dimension is time,
that my love should be constant and invariable
but see,

nothing is invariable because you

don't understand that invariability invariably leads to disappoint-
ment

you don't understand that it's better for us to live in the moment
that commitments should be us sharing a PB&J rather than a last
name that sticks

to the back of my throat and can't seem to roll past my teeth

because you

you have never felt the aftermath of a divorce

and I have never witnessed a successful marriage

you say that we will be different

but I'm tired of the cliches and suffocating embraces

I'm sick of you trying to put a ring on love

because let me tell you

my love for you likens to the fourth dimension -



unchartable and intangible

it cannot be understood

least of all by you

I suppose that's why I fell in love with you

because I know that you can't understand

and I'm not ready for someone who does



Art: Nora Seller

Forever is for Memories

Jeslyn Jerota

Under the soft moonlight,
Upon a kiss of promise,
With you, I find my solace.
Memories made, forever cemented tonight,
Held a waltz beneath the keen eyes of the moon.
In your eyes, I saw the truth.
This moment is only an illusion of youth.
You will let me go, and change partners soon.

In my poetry, I pen to you.
To get lost between the lines.
Of the time when our souls intertwined.
Hope that I am in your stories too.
I write you to fill the pages.
That while we share histories,
There was never a future, such misery.
A truth stays, no matter how the time changes.

You love the moon.
As it belongs with the stars.
With its light, it buries our scars,
When you joined them in June.

While you did not reach the end of my story,
I reread the chapters, within its pages;
I will search for you in different places.
Upon your lips, you whisper sorry.

You promised to hold me forever.
Now I understand the word's purpose.
Not made for people, but for memories that preserve us.
Cherishing in my mind's eye wherever and whenever.
I was only supposed to write Chapter One.
Because you are my one.
And yet I am in Chapter Five, nowhere near done.
Still examining the first chapter, relishing how it began.

To be happy, we must remember of a time;
When we experience life at its most beautiful.
Love's forces push and pull,
Yet now is not the time for him and I.
I now let age and forms fill in the gaps;
Of my love for you, I cannot give back.
Of the time I deserve but did not have,
Stuck in moments, thinking of perhaps.

When home is where the heart is,
Homeless am I when I became his.

no, you do not

Kinanti Anjani

So you've seen her with her clothes off,
Cloaked only in skin
You've seen her facial expressions when you go in
Face to face
Lips locked,
Hands intertwined,
Pulling her waist closer to yours, thinking, this is all mine
So you think you know her.

What keeps her up at night when you're sound asleep?
What does she do to keep herself busy when you're not around?
Have you noticed she wears hoodies when the sun is out?
Or maybe she wears less clothes than usual compared from back
then
Do you know her favorite things to do?
Or do you only know what she likes to do
With you?



Art: Aditya Nirish Unni

outside the window

Aditya Nirish Unni

This window represents an individual perspective.

A man looked through the window, his size, minuscule in comparison to his surroundings.

Life is a matter of perspectives, everything we see and look at differs depending on how you look at it.

The lush greenery around him provides a natural yet industrial atmosphere

The solid grey asphalt with streaks of color

They can all be seen through the window

The sky is a bright blue color

A stark contrast to the somewhat desolate landscape

And in between all of this is the man in the middle.

His body camouflaged like a chameleon in the trees

This window that we see him through is one that we all have

This window is the barrier providing comfort and safety in our decisions

But when we look beyond this window we see the different things in life

Away from our natural perspective, a different view

Can Physics Prove if God Exists?

John Veliz

Godly streams of light
streaming oh so far from the sky,
silent as I close my eyes,
deafening wonder as they rise.

Godly by whom?
If we only understood.
Would they lose their bright?
Or will it add to their might?

Is understanding enough?
Or have we superseded our bounds?
Faith is but a bluff,
Reason is not enough.

Experience limits knowledge,
it all but pays homage
to the sensible condition.
A meaningless opposition.

A priori is how it crumbles,
value in the unknowable.

Silent unyielding mumbles,
explanation for the disposable.

Yet somehow we intuit
a supreme flawless unit.
How can we justify
such creation of the mind.

Art: Jessica Yang



being lost

Amairah Islam

Dry leaves rustled across the grounds, forming a tornado of autumnal colors and crackling sounds. The trees above bent toward each other forming a welcoming archway. A cooling wind breezed through, grazing the surfaces of the leaves and playing with the branches. The sweet smell of apples and plums from the first day of fall wove through the air with their phantom touch, replicated inside my head. I had walked down this road countless times, each step a manifestation of muscle memory. There was a newfound solace and peace in this familiar place that I came to recognize even in my dreams.

The thumping of limp frogs legs on metal trays getting ready to be examined, the hissing of knives as they sliced through flesh and bone and the squelching as certain parts were poked and prodded at, all greeted me as I entered a lab room. I grabbed a pristine white lab coat to fit over my school uniform. This was the first time I had dreamed about a biology class dissection. As I was about to begin, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed one of the lab frogs escaping, hopping toward the natural archway in the schoolyard with purpose, croaking in delight at the prospect of freedom from a sentence of execution. As if in a trance, I followed.

It hopped on, leading me to unfamiliar corners within this familiar place. The delightful croaks I had once heard turned into sinister rasps that led to a growing pit in my stomach. The soft light and colors that made me feel safe, started to disappear; The space filled instead with stormy grey skies and shadows that seemed to shift as if signaling a changing season. My legs rebelled, reluctantly taking each step forward. I could almost smell the fear and insecurity emanating from me. It was a maze, luring in lost souls. Whorls of nightmares leaked from the brick walls in inky tendrils, consuming everything in their path. Like layers of plaster, the facade of this superficial utopia came crumbling down. What emerged from the darkness were physical manifestations of despair and desolation; faceless entities with shadows weaving and banding and twining around themselves. Birthed from memories of the past that I had tried so hard to leave forgotten, they were back now, rising too fast above the surface and leaving me no choice but to cower before them.

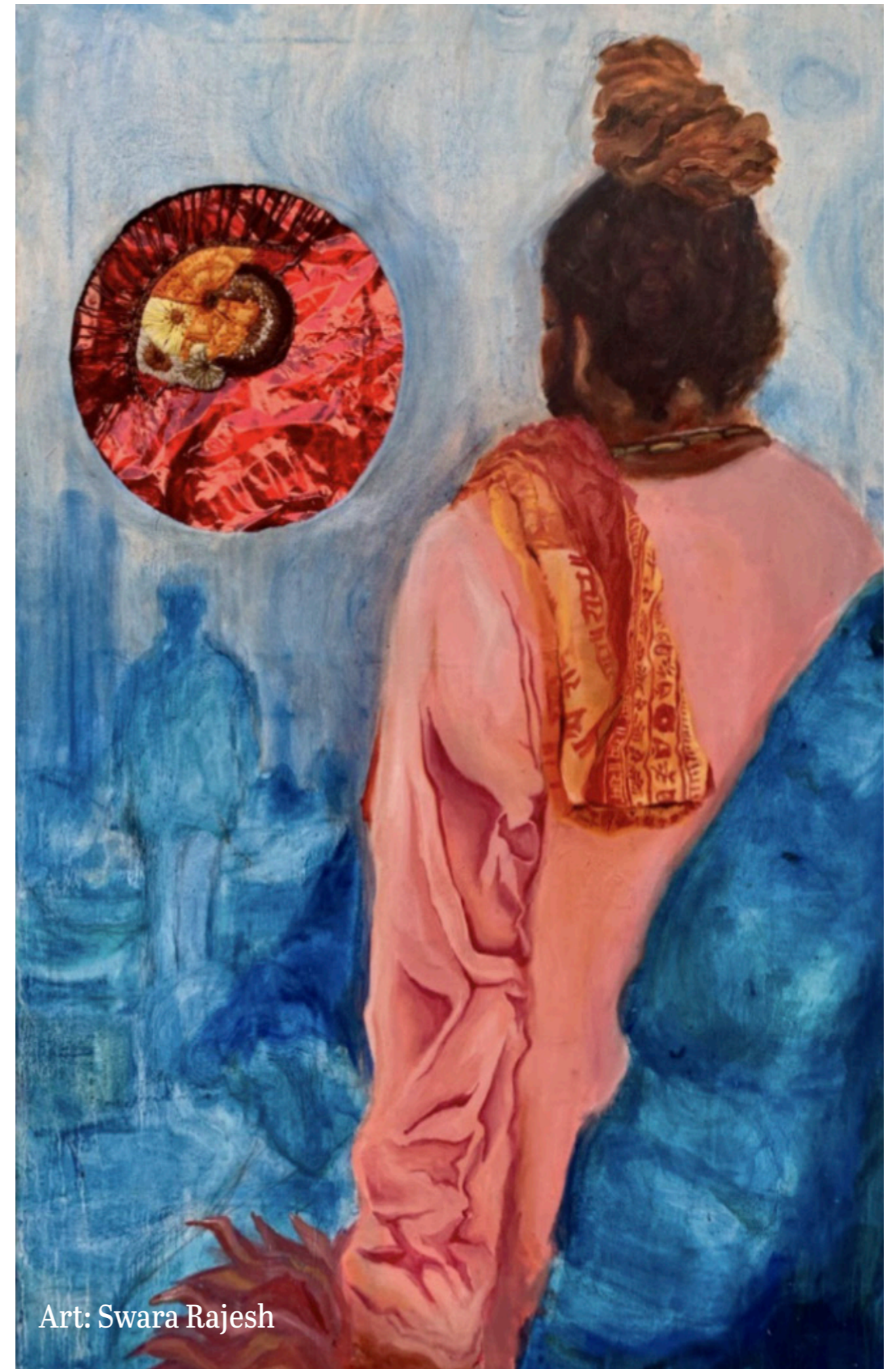
The horrifying cackling and taunting shoved themselves into my ears, their staged whispering and pointed fingers became a crushing weight on my shoulders. Even in sleep the memory of their bullying was a suffocating presence, like hands wrapping around my throat. The constant gossiping and sneering shoved me down to a miserable place, I could not get back up from. Feeling helpless and alone, I lay down on the floor in crushing defeat.

But then the slithering shadows grew fangs that began snapping and biting, clawed fingers started to reach out for me, eager to wrap me up in its darkness. Another lost soul. It lunged, a beast

freed of its tether, and I ran. Heart pounding, thighs burning, breath coming up in short pants, I raced toward the school building, the place that always provided sanctuary. Maybe it would protect me now.

I scrambled to get through the double doors, shoving them together behind me. They banged against them with an impact that shook the world, but they could not get in. I gulped in gallons of air, trying to calm my shaking body down. A sense of relief washed over me as the physical barrier that separated me and my demons stood firm and strong before me. I felt the shadows leave, dissipating into nothingness. Turning around, I found myself alone again, in the worn-down hallways of the school I left, with no one by my side or any fond memories to take with me.

The door creaked open, just a sliver, to let in the light. An offering. My hands twitched, warring over whether open the door-knob or not. I could see through the foggy glass, of all that could be. A new school, a new beginning should I take it. Fear and apprehension began to overtake me. I reached a shaking hand towards the handle, ready to be lost in a new place once again.



Art: Swara Rajesh

A Paradox You Are

Jeslyn Jerota

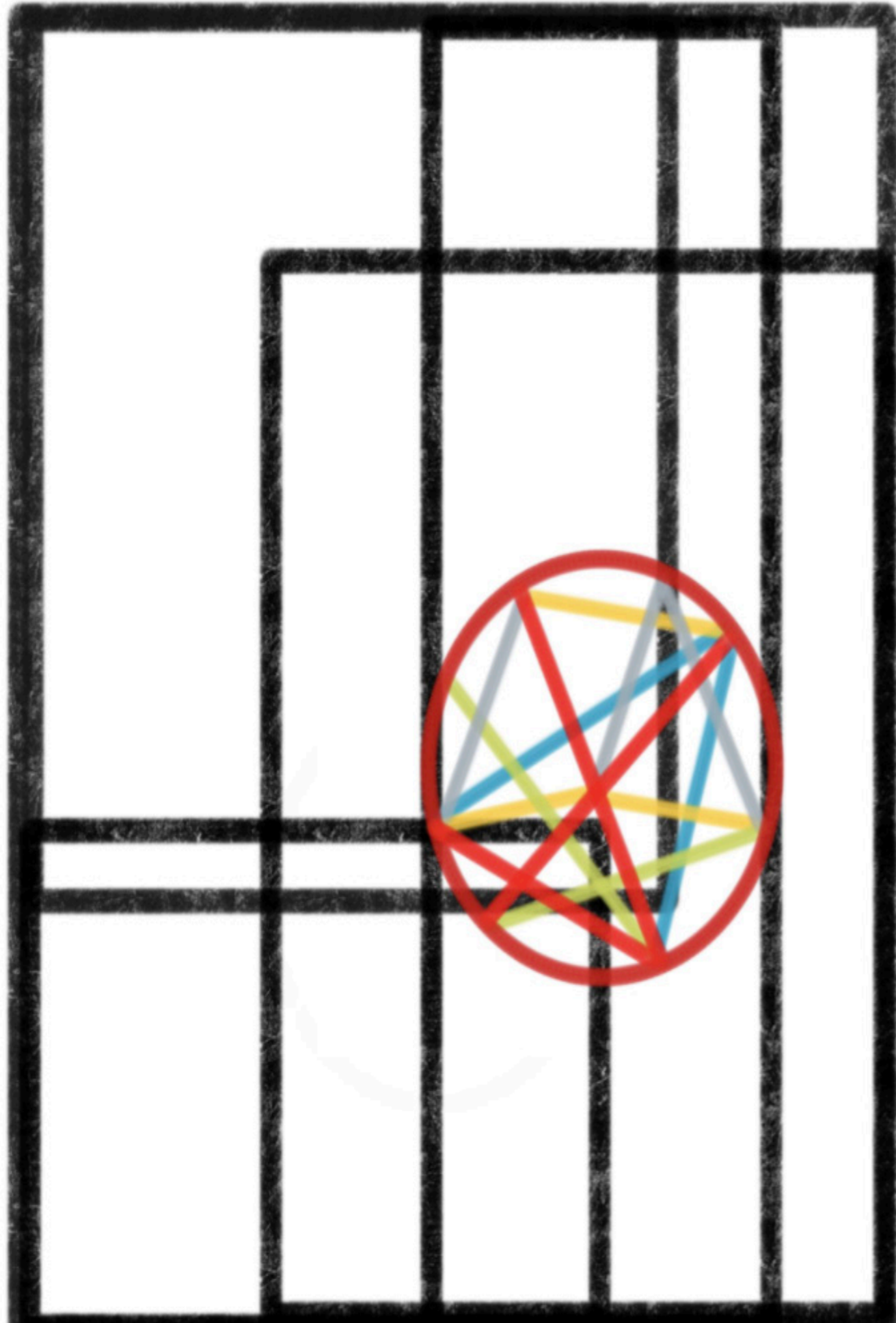
While I love to listen to the sound of your voice,
I prefer the unspoken language, hidden in silence.
Where a look makes all the difference.
A mutual understanding, a conditioned choice.
The one that caught my eye is not your physical,
It's the mystery that lies in your heart,
To where your soul embarks.
Where ideas imbibe the mythical.
Yet despite your inner beauty,
I wonder why you only think,
The worst of the world- became a second instinct.
Loss of creativity, others' view you copy.
You claim to be independent.
To decide without emotions,
Conceived to follow the notion,
To live life without resentment.

You claim that humanity is stupid,
While I say you are as well.
To believe that feelings disappear at farewell.
With memories replay, became your ruin.
You say she wasted your time,

For not loving you,
Despite everything, you have gone through.
You now walk through life with an empty smile.
You wish to remove the experience,
To continue dreaming the unseen nightmare,
To forget the moments, an unwanted affair.
That only made you delirious.
You often wonder about the meaning of life,
And why it gives the harshest lessons,
Never giving you the answer when you question.
Criticizing life left you unsatisfied.

It is impossible to feel passionate about another,
Without being burned in the process.
Now scarred and in pain you repress,
With a broken heart, you discover-
That beauty lies in tragedy,
Only through pain, we appreciate relief,
Only through loss, we know what makes us complete.
Only through regret, we appreciate amnesty.

I hope you would open your eyes to see,
The wonders that others may bring to thee.



to you, and to me

Ayasha Nordiawan

A commentary on Alison Bechdel's "Gradual Impact" and "Sappho 19"

Through their works, Alison Bechdel and Sappho explore and present their take on romantic love and the complexities that come along with that concept. While both of them seem to be approaching it from contrasting perspectives, there is clearly a common point of Alison Bechdel and Sappho talking about lost loves – regrets, but also coming with it is understanding and the atmosphere of bittersweet, as the two look back at their respective relationship retroactively and reflect on what it was – what they did and what they remembered.

Bechdel looks back at her relationship thinking of who she was back then, trying to figure out what she was thinking, and why she let go of such a rainbow filled situation. There is a contrast shown throughout the story – the Bechdel from 30 years ago, and the Bechdel now. It is a part of her exploring her identity and a part of her reflecting on herself, the decisions that she made, and why she made them. The fact that she was also able to acknowledge that she was “uncomfortable” because of Tamar’s beauty also shows that she actually consciously makes those decision – but perhaps during that time, she wasn’t completely aware of it yet. I think Bechdel brought up an important aspect of romantic love – that like all things, it may not make sense during the time it

happens and you will make reckless mistakes and things you will question many years later – why? But it is that process of experiencing and understanding that shapes the complex identity of who you are.

Sappho might as well be from thousands of years ago, but the universality of the feeling of loss and yearning for love that is so thick in her voice makes it still applicable to make a connection to Bechdel's work that is written many many centuries after. To me, putting it side by side with Bechdel's work, Sappho's work almost seems like it is from the other perspective. The one being left behind, perhaps, and not leaving. However there is a distinct tone of growth in Sappho's work. The description of strong sadness, of longing for something that is no longer there. But there was also acceptance. Of telling them to go but asking them to “remember me”, and descriptively explaining the beautiful things that happened while it lasted. It's similar to Bechdel recalling Tamar's physical traits – her skin and her hair, as she reminisced back when she saw Tamar again. Sappho presents romantic love in such a real, vulnerable way – the hurt that comes along with it, while also acknowledging that it brings the good. To remember that both parties have done good for each other and the courage to acknowledge that even after things stopped working out.

It is also perhaps worth to note that this tone of growth comes from the fact that both works are ‘apostrophes’ (i.e. “an address to a dead or absent person”, The Poetry Foundation). It is only because the people are gone that they're able to look at it the way they do right now. Sappho asks for the lover to remember her,

boldly making a claim that there was “no dance, no holy place, from which we were absent” — but perhaps that sense of having enough, the fond reminiscing, can only come from the absence. The same with Bechdel remembering the gray hair, Tamar's hands, all that she ran away from when Tamar was physically there. It addresses the idea of love being the most impactful when absent – and I think both Bechdel and Sappho explores that extremely well.

Through this, Sappho not only explores the concept of romantic love, but also how an individual grows and is shaped by their prior experiences in their lives. Past loves – flowers around throats or movies or refused river walks. Her work is universal because those feelings are a part of being human, the same as explored by Bechdel, thus making it timeless even when read many centuries later. Time may pass and change, and yet humans still continue to explore love, continue to hurt and heal, continue to grow. Nothing much have changed there.

Thailand

Meira Quah

Adapted from FIB object piece vignette task.

Lemongrass, the aromatic Thai staple scent.

Compressed into a small glass jar of wax, effused into the air once lit.

Packaged in an olive green box, a small ribbon glued to the top

A film of dust protecting it all around

And given to me as a memento of my time spent there.

The scent, so distinct from any other.

Clean and crisp,

citrus and spicy,

earthy and floral.

Not like orange,

not like eucalyptus,

not like chamomile, but much rather hints of all.

Its aroma was powerful, energising

Yet calming, and comforting.

The scent brings me straight back. Straight back to clouds of flashbacks.

Unclear moments, but moments of familiarity.

Tainted by rose-tinted glasses

I see my sister, stretched out along the couch, her computer placed on her lap.

My mom, sitting by her desk, reading the news, legs crossed and eyes squinted.

My father, sitting out by the shaded terrace, gazing out into the garden.

I see my room, my bed. My school, my friends. My life, already established.

I see comfort.

The scent teases me with this longing desire for comfort.

And resonance.

A sense of resonance so potent to be brought back to a moment in time from nothing more than a single scent.



Art: Jiyo Min

Madam Sandathevi

Libby Ye & Isabelle Jeffries

Cut,

Butter,

Fry.

Smear with chili and sandwich between bread -

the perfect recipe for chili crab curry.

Flatten,

Add,

Fold,

Fry.

Garnish with chutney and bury under cilantro -

the perfect recipe for fried lentil samosa.

Madame Sandathevi could perhaps be most aptly described by her favorite song, “甜蜜蜜.”

When we first met Madam Sandathevi, we were met with her enthusiastic and passionate personality. Her strong relationship with food left a remarkable impression on us, and over the course of 3,600 seconds, we learnt many intriguing things about her life.

Madam Sandathevi was born and raised in Singapore. She was born in the year of 1941 and is turning 79 this year. Badminton was a hobby of hers during her high school years, thanks to her mom, who helped her take an interest in the sport. Sandathevi

went to an Indian secondary school, where her favorite subject was English.

78 year long relationship with food - a relationship brimming with passion and gaiety. It was her mother who taught her how to cook. As she excitedly told us, Newton was the best place for local delicacies, with special mentions of beef steak, chapati, chima, and her favourite - chili crab curry. Crab tarts on Serangoon Road were also featured in Mdm Sandathevi's suggested food. She even talked many times about taking us to Newton to eat her favourite dishes, which made all three of us giddy with anticipation. Mdm Sandathevi is truly a kind and considerate person when it comes to getting to know her.

We asked Mdm Sandathevi if she had been to any other countries apart from Singapore. It turns out that she loves to go to Thailand - she says that she likes it for its cheap seafood and clothings. At this point in time, we were certainly starting to see a pattern, with the mention of food prevalent in nearly every question.

Despite living in Singapore for a long period of time, Mdm Sandathevi explained to us that she never finds Singapore boring. When we met her, she was full of life and energy. Her favourite places in Singapore include Chinatown, Marina Bay and St John's Island. Her adventurous personality was something that left a strong impact on both of us, particularly when she talked about her steamboat, in which she cherishes. Her attachment to steam boats is demonstrated through frequent voyages with her family.

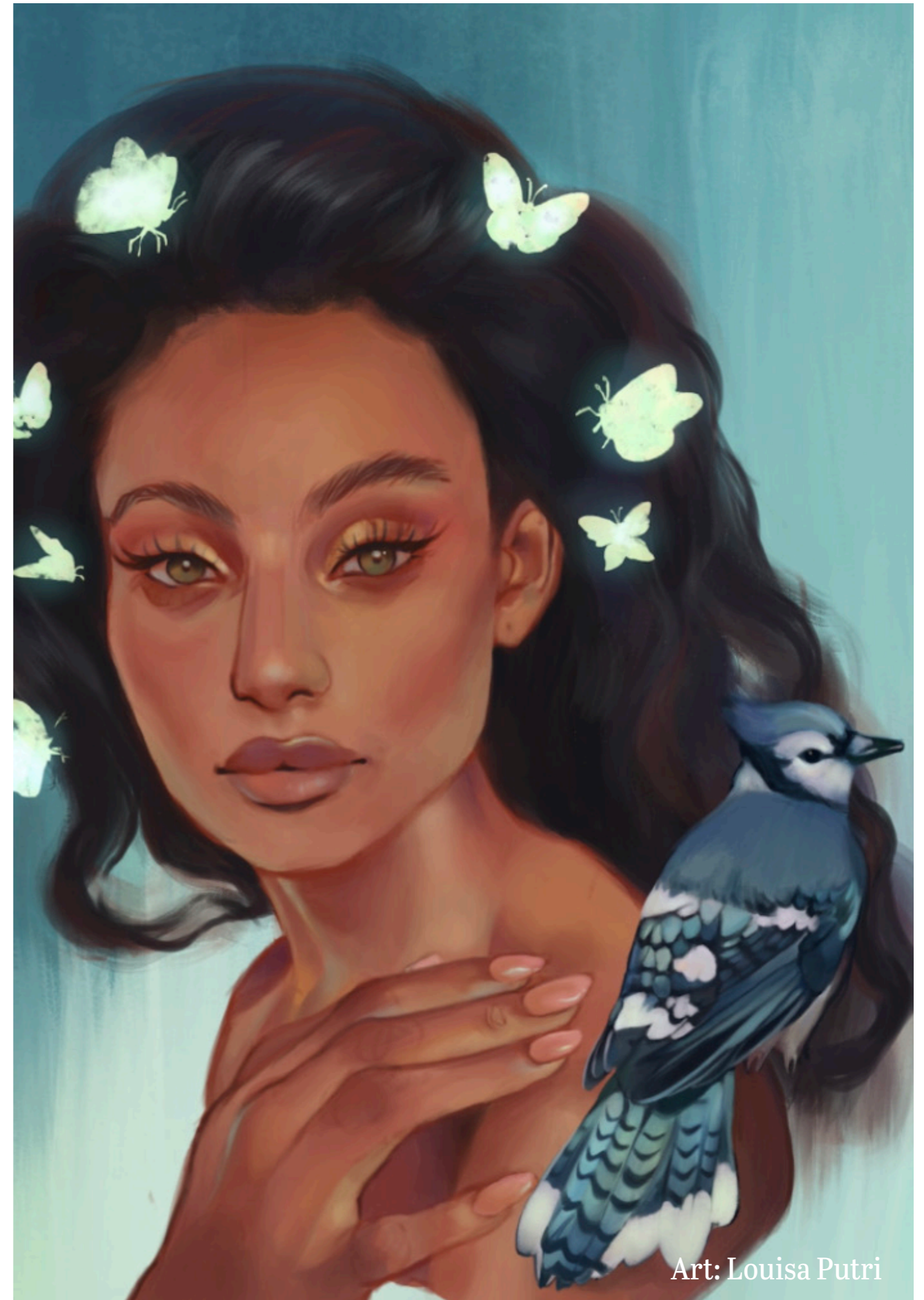
Singapore's famously monotonous weather has not curbed Madame Sandathevi's fondness towards the nation. Whether it be the scorching sun or drenching rain, you can find her embracing them. Within the confines of St. John's garden, Madame Sandathevi spends most of her free time under the rambutan trees.

The only other tie that could rival that of her relationship with food is her unwavering devotion to her children. Their ritualistic activities range from engaging in games of water polo to fishing by the Sembawang beach.

Madame Sandathevi frequently wins against her children and grandchildren in tennis and rugby.

Her favorite holiday is Christmas; unsurprisingly, she has familiarized herself with a plethora of Christmas carols - from Silent Night to Gabriel's Message. Other than the songs, Madame Sandathevi is obsessed with the Christmas Eve feast - plates laden with roast beef, turkey, and pastries glazed with cranberry drizzles.

Perhaps our next encounter with Mdm Sandathevi will be over a plate of chilli crab curry and cranberry pastries.



Art: Louisa Putri

the moon's young, trying

Rachel Jung & Jeslyn Jerota

The moon's young, trying

To die. She's already so tired

Of lighting the night and

Blocking meteors to protect

This weird little dirt ball.

But the sun keeps bouncing

Its rays off her and she's like

“What the fuck is wrong with you.”

But the sun is too far to hear her.

Or just being an asshole.

And the universe keeps flinging

Rocks randomly and she understands

It's only a coincidence that they all hit her,

but like...

Seriously? Get a life.

She tries to strangle herself

In darkness, but the dark

Only keeps her warm

While she drifts in space.

She thought to drown herself

In the sea, but it's just too

Far away and she's just too lazy.

She thought those funny little

Men in suits would drain her

Until she was an empty husk,

But they only planted a flag and left.

Mother.

Fucker.

She's waiting for the sun

To swallow her whole like

A cartoon mouse eating

Cheddar cheese. Except

She is more silver and full

Of holes.

Because of the meteors that

Keep hitting her instead of

The Earth. Goddammit.

Thoughts

John Veliz

I'm tired, I'm tired of it all. I'm tired of all the thoughts and all the words that emerge when thinking of you. I'm tired of this feeling, frankly I'm starting to hate it. I hate it. I hate this, I hate everything relating to these thoughts. I hate the way they form, I hate the way they come, I hate the way they find their way in the worst moments. I hate how they can disappear so easily but come back stronger every time. I hate how much I love them. How stubborn they are. I feel like erasing the memories, like pretending it was all a dream. So I can look back happily, so I can pretend it was all just a fragment of my imagination. So I can pretend you would have never done what you did. So I could go back to looking at you happily, so I could smile at your smile. Now all of that is gone. I can't look at you the same way, the thoughts come crashing down and love is replaced by pain. I wish it could be different. I wish I had control over this. I wish I could go back to the dream. Wishing is all I can do. I guess it really is over. I clinged to the hope that those thoughts would one day die. But I can't let them die, part of me loves them. Having those thoughts feels like still having a piece of you with me, and that's all I ever wanted.

when you were young

Ananya Nayak

when you're young
dreaming of slippers made of glass
of kisses to wake you from dreamlike nightmares
wishing to swim into rivers of chocolate
to find true love. purpose
things seem all too slow

when you're older
reality creeps in through the door

the slipper shatters, and you tiptoe over shards of glass
the numbing realisation that the kiss is not what you wanted
and the dreamlike nightmare only continues
and the sweetness suffocates you --
finding that drowning isn't out of reach
things seem all too fast
too crushing

when you're older
and about to find all there is to see
and the presence of love. of purpose.
becomes definite
and failing isn't out of reach
things seem all too sudden
too present
too important



Art: Erin Choi



Lifeline

Shaurya Vinod

The city represents the metaphorical heartbeat of the city and
the “lifeline” of the city.

Like an animal in a jungle

A bustling city/A bustling metropolis/A bustling jungle

Your Soul is an Ocean

Jeslyn Jerota

When I gaze into your eyes,
I saw an ocean, I saw forever.
Such a beautiful soul,
So profound and yet misinterpreted.
Nobody comprehends the depths of your mind,
Filled with ideas coming alive,
Some familiar, while others obscure,
Both angelic and devious.
Always rejuvenated with life,
Perpetually inquiring about the meaning of it.
Where the end is the beginning.
Living through life by the current of the winds,
Aimless drifting, yet thinking with direction.

Others only see the beauty of your
When the sun is shining, reflecting the lie of your smile.
Yet your true self can only be seen when the sun retires,
Shadows of doubt begin to appear.
Ominous beasts, a perpetual battle of thoughts.
Relentless desire to capture the moon,
The one you constantly wanted to reach for.
Soaring to her presence, wanting to close the distance,
Dazzled by her beauty, never comprehending her true form.

Her light in a mirror,
Reflecting a passion to be with another.
Here I am as the wind, the one who observes you ranging in re-
sentment.
Cultivating typhoons- such a vindictive soul breeds nothing but
danger.

Trembling the Earth, a statement that you are hurt.
Indecisive you become towards life,
Like the crusade of your waves,
Constantly reaching and retreating.
Constantly wavering and shifting within.
You know nothing of love,
Yet you amass memories of its past.
The illusion of serene, yet compressed with agony.
Filled with salt and grating it on your scars.
Lurking beneath the surface, lies the riches of your soul.
The burden of gold, canyons of grief memories, and wrecked
ships.

The time of the year when the moon disappears,
And as you weep a river, I apprehend here-
Time of certainty and its ambiguity.
To give infinite hope, yet forever I cannot present.

two-legged tubercular master

Meira Quah & Kinanti Anjani

Transient in air and space,
Shifting with purpose
Preying on the weak
Surrounding you
Undetected and undisturbed-

You detect me
But your heart is mine
Deflating day by day
Each breath with exhaustion

When the moon sleeps in peace
With my hand on your heart
You lay cold at night
Alone and bare

Your wrists, hips, thighs,
Compressed to the bone
Warmth diminishing

A responsibility to my name
That one cannot punish me for

Bulbul

Teia Currimbhoy

I was only four when my *dadi* died.

I have no personal recollection of her funeral, only the story of the memories of my parents. According to my father, his mother was one of the most sensitive, empathetic and generous people that ever lived. She would make food for anyone who came to her apartment, even the postman.

I remember only fragments about her. A teal *sari*, the layout of her apartment, the pattern of the carpet of the stairs outside the front door. She made the best **daal** curry.

She died of tuberculosis, in a hospital, in her sleep. My father saw her as her heart monitor flatlined.

My parents brought me to her funeral, because I was her favourite grandchild (at the indignation of my cousin Sanah, who had been the favourite before me). I did not know she had passed. My mother says that I approached the casket where her peaceful, lifeless body lay, because I recognised her and I wished to say hello.

These moments seep away from our consciousness like basmati rice, draining away from the bag into the cooking pot, burned.

A beat passed. I looked at my grandmother. I do not remember what I was thinking, but I think my mother saw the realisation dawn on me.

I began to cry.

No longer would I be able to sit petulantly outside on the carpeted stairs, refusing to enter her apartment until my *dadi* came out to speak to me. No longer would I be able to sleep in between her and my *dada* in their bed while my parents dined outside. No longer would she be a part of my world.

These moments fall from our consciousness like feathers from the broken wing of a bulbul, commanded by the wind, and by the wind only.

Once the first tear fell down my young, chocolate-buckled cheek, all the other women knew. One by one their tears fell too, until the room was full of crying women, and until the tissue box was empty.

I only know this because my mother remembers it.

Exactly seven years later, my grandfather would die in his sleep, in the exact same month, day and hour as his late wife. He suffered seven long years of depression because of his immense grief at losing her, and it is no coincidence that he died on the exact same date.

These moments leave us like our loved ones did, whether passing away gently in sleep, or impaled in the stomach with a scimitar, reaped by time's scythe.

Dadi, Khursheed Joshi, Khursheed Nani, Bulbul Auntie,

we remember you.

Words:

Dadi - Hindi/Urdu for a paternal grandmother

Dada - Hindi/Urdu for a paternal grandfather

Bulbul - A songbird

Art: Luise Heinz



hey I'm gonna go get lunch okay?

Sia Jain

Hey. Hey!

I'm gonna go get lunch, okay?

Okay

Background voices deepen

Can I sit here? Yeah sure

Okay, just give me a second, yeah?

Yeah

She whispered, "Don't worry, I won't leave you alone"

Laughter

Then I watched her sit down and

hastily take out the phone

from her pocket

So small that it holds all the wealth in the world

Incoming message

Did you see the tiktok I just sent you?

Oh my god NO wait see what Rexysna just posted on her...

Then I started wondering about the tiktok
she sent me 20 seconds ago
but it was too late because someone
else just posted something more
important than what she had sent me before
and within those seconds 20 more people had died in
India because the government doesn't care about
them but their families do
but they die anyway
because Rexysna can post something and forget about it later
but they die anyway

because they can't breathe.

Art: Anushka Shah



Loneliness

Elizabeth Joseph

Loneliness is being half-complete, being able to do what seemingly everyone can do – walk, talk, breathe, eat and sleep – and yet having your feet nailed to the ground in the middle of a sea of people, watching everyone around you basking in a soft warmth, a low hum of pleasant voices buzzing around you. Seeds of jealousy and hatred blossom inside you, their thorns squeezing your heart, compressing it, making you feel smaller and meaner.

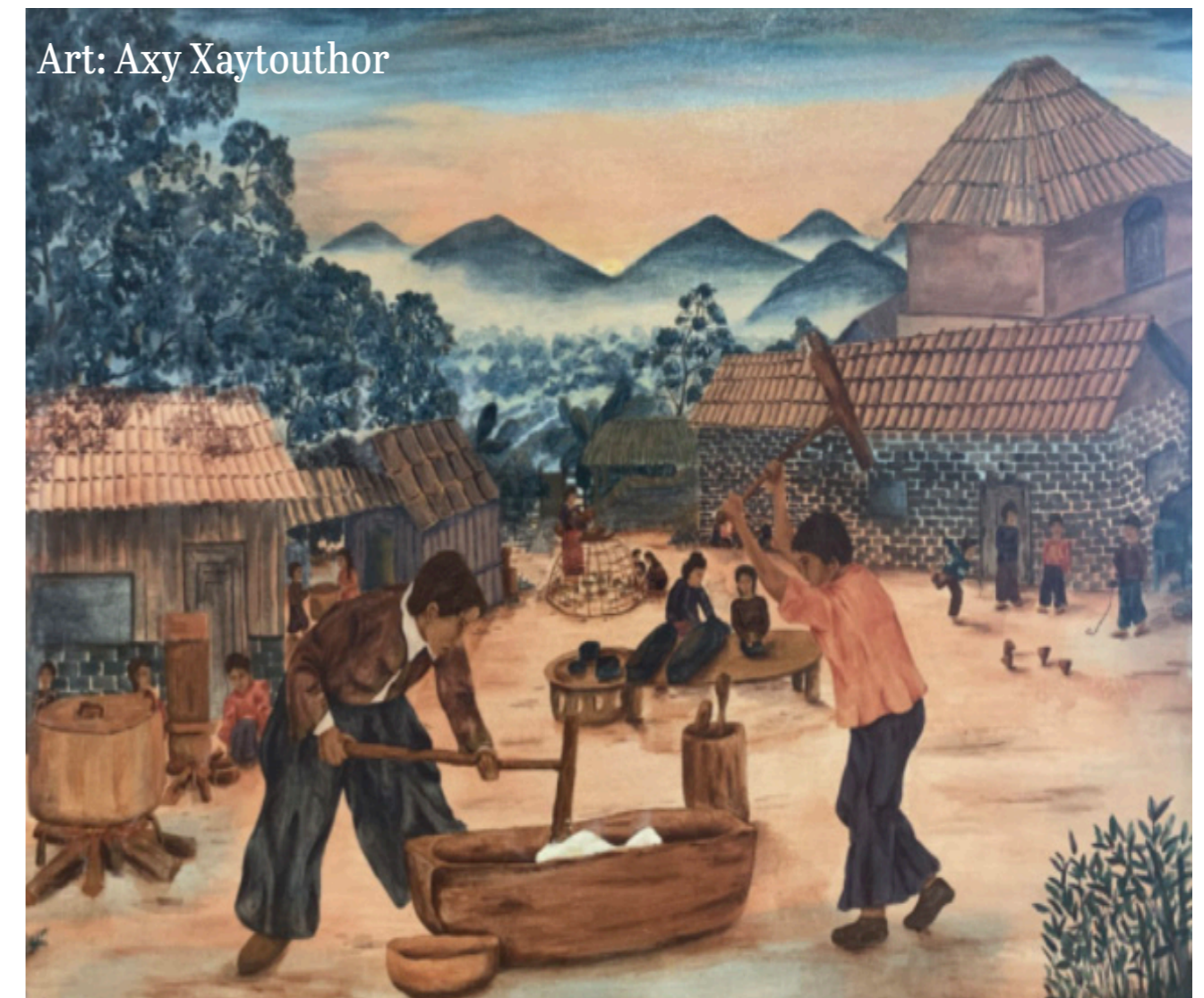
Loneliness is imprisonment. Loneliness, in essence, is having nothing and no one.

Sometimes loneliness is used as a punishment. The biggest threats to society are put in ‘self-isolation’ in prison. The excuse of ‘they’ll hurt someone’ or ‘they’ll be hurt by someone’ is used to justify this choice of torture. They’re told to ‘reflect’ on their behavior, but often times, the ringing sound silence makes in their ears 24 hours a day makes them even more dangerous than they were before.

Some will try to convince themselves that their loneliness is a gift, that they have time to focus on work and the ‘things that matter’. That they can push limits and bask solely in all the glory. Yet, for all of them, there is a strange emptiness, deep down, an

itching to be loved and cared for, and to love and care in return. Others will try to fill this empty void, perhaps with a pet or a potted plant, a little something to take up space and care for.

It’s not easy to break free from the chains of loneliness. But it’s possible. Not by finding the weak links in the chains, but finding the hidden strengths you have. Perhaps a unique talent, a special skill or your distinctive personality. Developing more strengths incites confidence, admiration and other feelings that slowly erase the pain.



mon frère

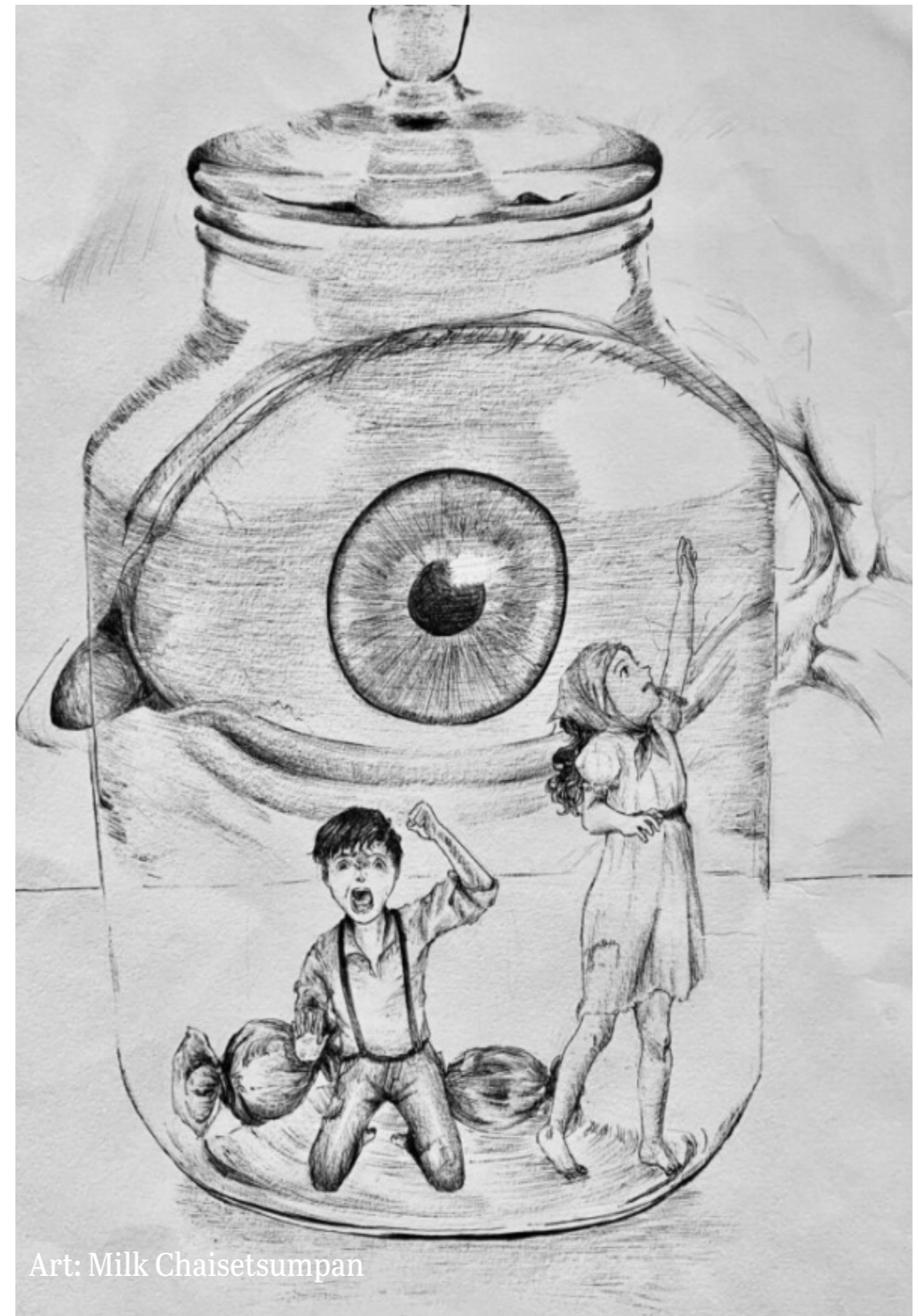
Kinanti Anjani

I could taste the cinnamon at the tip of my tongue.
I could hear the jingle bells whisper from a distance.
Frere was nowhere to be found.
Frere! Frere! I screamed and shouted.
Still nothing.

I crawled to his bedroom door that appeared to be wide open.
How silky and smooth the curtains are
Whimpering through the wind.

I followed the trail of nutmeg that ran through the air
that eventually led to nowhere.
Was that the smell of my favorite éclair?

No
that was the smell of my beloved frère.



Art: Milk Chaisetsumpan

Love is a Philosophy

Jeslyn Jerota

Awake am I in my dreams.
To be present at the moment;
Your visitation, my enjoyment.
Our hearts perceive beyond what seems.
You ask me to spread my wings.
And grant you to come in between,
To feel what cannot be foreseen-
And play me like the violin's strings.

Hear me sing you a melody,
As you accompany me.
To become the art of your degree.
And paint life with revelry.
I utter worries about tomorrow.
You say let me love you tonight.
As I am an astonishing sight,
And revel in an episode we know.

This is not the physical, for this is philosophy.
You made me fly to the ends of my mind.
To discover the meanings of mankind.
And what it means to have a fair economy.
To ask if we are free or to live a life determined.

A childhood debate, I wish to answer.
And become aware of society's cancer.
And how nothing in life is certain.

The beliefs we hold today,
Would not be the truths of tomorrow.
Yet you should know,
Integrity in beliefs is necessary not to be led astray.
If life is determined,
Then who is the master?
Who gives life happiness and disaster.
The one who hides behind the curtain.

The feelings I feel for you are not a choice,
Yet to stay with you is a decision.
And to create ourselves is our life's mission.
The reason for judgment, through my eyes I voice.
You often question the realness of reality.
That truth lies in our perception.
And to live life in other's conception.
As life is a political game, yet we do not know the referee.

To the universe, you study its laws.
Hope you find your purpose.
That somehow it would resurface.
Yet spontaneous generation is a flaw.
For life does not appear out of nowhere.
It is created with others.
A moment turned memory, life's summer.

To which we only cherish in despair.

I may not always be a good person.

Yet if you allow, I can be a great lover.

As we dine, let us enjoy each other.

With you, the meaning of my life I learn.

Out of the curiosities of life,

You are my favorite subject.

To whom I would always treat with respect.

And to be with you in harmony and strife.

Looking for a Change

Viralika Arora

Hand sanitiser bottle sitting patiently on the kitchen counter next to a basket of fresh fruits and lemon produce. On the left of the produce, there are some canned items labelled paleo and vegan. Apart from the freshly bought groceries, the kitchen looks like something untouched. There is a white noise of the water running from the sink in the background. There are barely any fingerprints on the countertops or even on the empty shelves. The only piece of furniture that seems to have been touched by another object is the bin. The bin is full of countless bottles of wine and empty cigarette cartons.

Her heels make loud clicking sounds on the wooden ground as she enters the kitchen. Her short black dress stretches every time she pulls it down her scaring thighs. Her hair is messy and strangled, her eyes are watering and pale pink. The setting of the kitchen is too tidy for her state of mind. She reaches her stubby arms to the countertop as she recklessly enters the kitchen and starts to mindlessly search for traces of alcohol.

It was supposed to be the week she turns her life around, it was supposed to be the week she learns yoga, eats clean and gets it together. She was supposed to go to her therapist today, realise her self worth, grow from the trauma. She was supposed to look in

in the mirror and instead of pointing out the flaws in her body, she was supposed to appreciate her gifts. She was going to be a shining glass menagerie on the shelf from today.

Here she is, at five thirty-six am, carrying the foul smell of the bitter night. Looking everywhere for something to give her instant comfort and dissociate her from reality. She searches the empty bottles from her bin, then reaches for the cans and throws them on the floor as she screams in discomfort at the top of her lungs. She starts to bite her scratched blue nails, then puts her palms to her head as her tired eyes scan the kitchen. She lays her sight on the small bottle of hand sanitiser, she knows this is not going to end well. It's too late.



chickperotica

Maya Dash

Soft, pillowy, plump. The pale yellow of it's skin glistening under the sunlight. A chickpea disrobes. It's skin sliding off its meat, only with the help of a very special muscle. Firm and taut, a light pink tongue slides over the chickpea. Another pea is picked up by a spoon, the anticipation is the best part, a chickpea, understated, yet delicious.

Everything About You

John Veliz

I love everything about you.
From your smallest of grins,
to your darkest of sins.

I love the way my mind strays away,
thinking about you in my every thought.
Sedated by your warmth with every touch.
Lost in your every word.

Because there's no words to express
the love I here feel tonight,
It's never been this strong,
But it will never be enough.

I want to love you more each day,
I want to fall for your jokes,
fantasize of your beautiful smile,
redefine new scopes for my love.

I love the way your mind strays away,
Destroying my love, mocking my hopes.
Disgusted by my touch, freezing me away.
Lost in your excuses, tangled in your words.

Because there's no words to express
the pain I here feel tonight,
It's never been this strong,
But I think I've had enough.

I want to erase you more each day,
I want to remain deaf to your jokes,
fantasize of your beautiful demise,
redefine new scopes for my goodbyes.

I love everything about you.
From the way that you hurt,
to the way that I forget.



Art: Libby Ye

keystone species

Ayasha Nordiawan

In ecology, a keystone species is defined as a species that has a disproportionately large effect on its natural environment. They define an entire ecosystem - without its keystone species, an ecosystem could be thrown completely off balance. It would be dramatically different, or even cease to exist altogether. These are species like starfish or otters, where if they are taken out of their ecosystem, it is likely to collapse altogether.

They once did an experiment on keystone species along the rocky Pacific coastline. They took out the starfish from the ecosystem - now, the starfish feeds on the mussels, which keeps the mussel population in check and allowing many other species to thrive. When they took the starfish out, the mussel population swelled and the ecosystem is thrown off balance.

That day, when you looked me in the eye and told me you can't do this anymore, it feels quite similar to the starfish experiment. My world, thrown completely off balance. It leaves a gaping wound that does not seem to heal, and all this time you have been making home in my heart - what am I meant to do with all this space? The loss left me on the edge, swaying dangerously to the bottom.

Like Yellowstone without its grey wolf, it takes everything in me

to carry on each and every day. I try to put one foot in front of the other but some nights I find myself not finding the strength to stand. Your words, heavy in my footsteps. I'd never go away. I still made coffee for two this morning. I drank them all myself. When I can't sleep at night, your broken promises still wrap themselves around me like an armour that has seen battle, and the cracks still sting every single time I hear your name.

I was sitting in ecology class one day and the girl sitting next to me was thinking out loud.

“Is there actually a keystone species, though?”

I turned, intrigued. “How do you mean?”

“I mean, so what if a species disappears? Then the rest of the ecosystem will recover by itself. Surely a keystone species had disappeared before, and then what? The world goes on. They find other means to survive.”

Her words ring in my head as I lay in bed alone - then I think about how despite the gaping hole in my chest, I am still here. You're no longer here to help me walk on my two feet and despite that, I still crawl. I still press the phone number I know all too well when it's dark and I'm alone on the floor trying to fight back the voices in my head because you can't undo what is once good practice. But I don't press the call button. I don't. I don't look back.

Because guess what? The world does go on.

I don't remember what my world looks like without you. I don't remember how it feels to walk on my shaky two feet without anything to hold onto. I don't remember getting excited about something new and not telling you about it. I don't remember what it feels like to not have you. But I figured that I don't have to.

After the destruction, comes birth. The loss will hurt, but it will also heal, and it will find a way. Like the rocky Pacific coastline. Like the Sundaland rainforest. This will shatter and crash to the ground, but it will also grow into something. Some days I will still gasp for air, but I will also go to sleep without having to cry. I don't know what. But it will grow into something. Because we, as living species with natural survival instinct, adjust and we adapt, and we survive. Even after loss - as damaging as they may be.

One day I will walk on my own two feet again, and it will no longer be weighed down by you. One day someone will say your name, and my heart will no longer take it like it's salt on an open wound.

The world goes on, and so will I.



Inkling

2020-2021