

OLD IS GOLD

2021

#1, 2021 ISSUE

# OLD IS GOLD



# Leau fait pleurer, le vin fait chanter.

water  
makes  
one  
cry

wine  
makes  
one  
sing

The word Renaissance means “Rebirth” where new beginning and revival begin, so why Old is Gold? Join us as we take you back to the Golden Age of Art where Sappho waxed poems of her lover and Rembrandt painted the people gold. Not only that, we seek to rediscover campus life after a year being locked away indoors. We have big promises of reinventing MONGA and what better way to do it than to link it through Art? Soft pastels, wildflowers and sunrises don’t have to just be an aesthetic, but we’d like to give hope to our readers that even though the past year may have been harsh bright colours where everything turned upside down, or dull monochrome, where routines were mundane and repeating, we’ll present this year to you in gentle poems and blooming spring. Take our hand (or this magazine), turn up Claire de Lune on your speaker as you travel through time with us and who knows, maybe you’d end up finding a new or old piece of yourself somewhere in between.



## I. (Don't) Leave the Door Open

It's already bad enough that we're always looking at our screen from morning to night, so let's try to elevate the stress of squinting at your phone a little too often. Close your blinds, or maybe open your window to let the cool breeze wash over you, light up a scented candle and make yourself your favorite drink in an aesthetic glass (if drinking Coke from a wine glass is your thing, that's fine too!), just sit back at your favorite spot on the couch or maybe your bed, relax and treat yourself to some well-deserved me time.

Go to Spotify, tap on the search bar, and click on the camera icon to scan!



[Or click here to be redirected to the playlist!](#)

## II. The Bluetooth Speaker is Connected

Setting the mood is a fundamental part of enjoying MONGA, or anything really ;) Plug in your phone to your speakers, turn up the volume and press play on the Spotify playlist that will remind you of the dreaminess of cotton candy sunsets and gardens filled with wildflowers and gold, dripping in honey.

# How to Read

*(a.k.a. how to read a PDF magazine in a more boujee way)*

## III. Aiya, just read only!

Okay, maybe you don't have time for all that fancy stuff and just sitting around. Holding a phone and reading a magazine through your screen just doesn't cut it emotionally but let's try to be optimistic! As you scroll through these pages, you're looking at not just one person's hard work, but a collective effort of the person behind the story, the eye behind the lens of the camera, the words that came from the heart of an individual, the brain behind every design. These are things that make every page worth scrolling down to.

## IV. If it's not on Instagram, it didn't happen.

How would you post a PDF on Instagram? We took great care to make almost every page so aesthetic, you just can't help but screenshot, crop and post it on your IG stories! Which is your favorite page? Your favorite article? The best design? The prettiest photo? Let everyone know that you're reading the highly anticipated *Old is Gold*, make your friends from other universities jealous that you have a magazine specifically catered just for you, and solely created by students! Is this a shameless promotion? Maybe, but we would really appreciate it if you could tag us @musamonga if you do repost anything!



# Editors' Note

Oh, fancy seeing you here!

Thank you for taking the time to click into our humble first edition of MONGA 2021 <3 What you're seeing here is not just random articles pieced together at 4AM or casual shots taken outside our window or from our balcony, but a product of hours of brainstorming for ideas, churning out content that will both match our concept as well as put a smile (or create tear tracks) on your face.

This magazine was created with you, yes you!,  
in our minds the whole time.

This would not have been possible if it weren't for our amazing, show-stoppingly talented subcommittees!

Despite facing setbacks due to lockdown, you guys have done exceptionally well nonetheless! MONGA 2021 would NOT be MONGA 2021 if we didn't have our team of photographers, writers and designers so kudos to you guys!

All credits go to you <3

From the bottom of the Editor's hearts (Angeline Ho, Christie Wong, Jared Soh and Shannon Ho), we would like to bow down to all of you who have been supporting us from the very beginning. From our first 'Zoom Meeting' Introduction, to us randomly sprinkling Pepe and Bird memes into our articles, thank you for putting your faith in us to entertain your year in Monash! As the meme goes, we are the Big Birds in a room full of seriousness.



We hope you enjoy reading Old is Gold as much as we loved creating and curating it!

With all the love and pepe memes in the world,  
The Editors of MONGA 2021.





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Click on their pictures or go to @musamonga to read their full stories.

Written by Christie

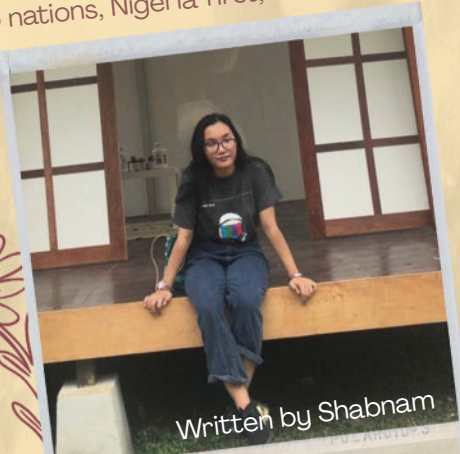


INGRID

"I'm not perfect, but I don't think I deserved whatever they said about me."

Aren't we all just tiny humans,

Awkward, anxious, exciting, adventurous, curious, reckless, headstrong, passionate, furious. The defining years of my life, my angsty yet compelling teenage years were spent abroad in two nations, Nigeria first, then Spain.



Written by Shabnam

WAFIA

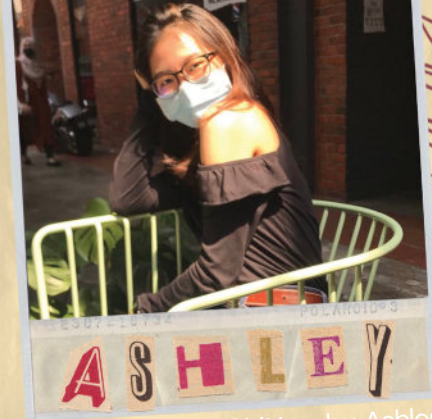
Written by Christie



JiAYING

I didn't want to be the average kid who had nothing to offer and I didn't want to be discarded, neglected or overlooked again. That's why I'm such an overachiever, because I'm afraid.

Now, when I'm referred to as the "Banana" I wear it as a badge of honour instead of disgrace.



ASHLEY

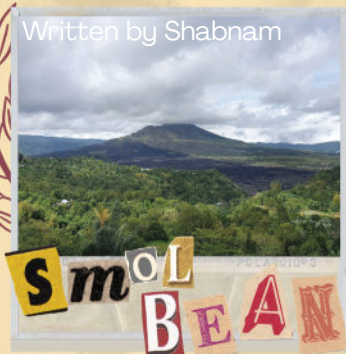
Written by Ashley

ORDINARY AND FULL OF FLAWS

at the end of the day?



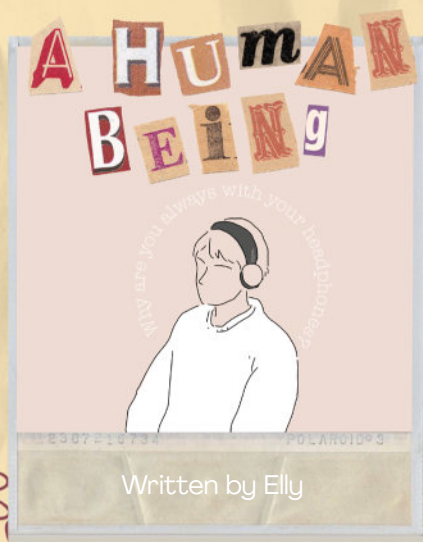
Written by Shabnam



As rudimentary as it may sound, the expression “blood is thicker than water” is of immense significance towards the close-knit relationship I share with my family. Having lived abroad, and then moving back home, my family has been the only constant in my life.

It's ironic how I felt an overwhelming sense of loneliness despite being in a room full of people I was supposed to count on.

Written by Ashley



I regarded any social contact with another human being as an intrusion into the safe space of my solitude, and it would seem best to avoid establishing new friendships. I thought the world outside still seemed to me, dauntingly noisy and clamorous. Until I met Amina.



When you feel like an outsider, that grass always looks greener inside the bubble. But as a solo rider, not affiliating to any bubble has driven me to look for belonging in the most unexpected and peculiar of places.

That's what brought both of us together.



I've had it, I really don't want to care whatever, whoever has to say to me because I know myself best. My pace, my mental health, I know it all myself. Even if it means failing certain expectations towards me, at least I know whatever it is, I tried my best.

The strength, bravery and perseverance of Myanmar citizens will continue to inspire me. I've never been more proud to be a citizen of Myanmar.





# RITHI

When it comes to grief, regret is a word that gets mentioned often. We all have things we wish we'd done differently or things we feel terrible about. For me, I wish to say goodbye one last time.

Just like how calico cats are considered lucky due to their rarity, her name Leap also means lucky in Khmer, and I really was lucky to have had her there during those dark, lonely times. People would call her my wife as an inside joke because we were inseparable. She always knew when I was feeling down, so she would stay near me and purr.

A lot of people may think that it's weird that I have this much affection for a pet more than I have for a human. Sometimes humans can be unnecessarily difficult to deal with and they're more nefarious in ways they show that they don't like you. Animals are more trustworthy, more direct than humans because

they don't have this sort of 'fakeness' that we do. It's something I appreciate more which made my view on humans much more cynical than the average person.

Ironically, it was my carefree view of life that became my undoing. Constantly choosing to free me from any kind of responsibility (running away literally) turns out to be the one that trapped me in my careless mistake.

I knew she was sick for a while, she was having stomach issues so we sent her to the vet, but I didn't bother going because I assumed everything was okay, which was reassured by the doctor. However, the next day, her symptoms worsened so we brought her to the vet again. She had to stay there for two days. I didn't see the need in meeting her within those days because I thought she was going to be fine. I am going to see her again anyway, right? She left us on a chilly morning in March three years ago. 10 years of my life squeezed into a cardboard box; not even a proper burial at first. Now she rests in the backyard of my girlfriend's house under two fruit trees.

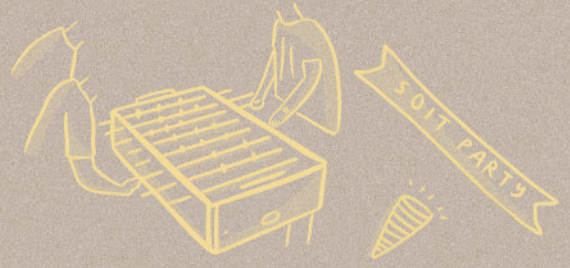


After Leap's death, things went downhill from there, and I took a gap year before Monash. It really was by far the hardest year of my life, but her death marked the end of an era of hardships and started a new journey of personal growth and acceptance. While I still regret from time to time that I couldn't properly say my goodbyes, Leap's presence is still felt by keeping her memories alive through my self-improvement process: growing to appreciate the smallest things in life, understanding the consequences of not taking responsibility, and being more open in expressing my emotions.

I am still the quiet, cynical yet less-of-an-ass-now, care-free-yet-careful person and I suppose humans aren't as bad as I assumed. But I still rather much prefer the company of a pet than anything else -if someone were to ask me.



# 4 A.M. buddy buddy buddy



Sitting by myself on a lumpy bean bag, a slice of (cold and therefore disgusting) pizza in hand, I remember feeling excited and overwhelmed yet somehow fed up and underwhelmed by everything that was happening around me. The MUSA lounge had it all: unfamiliar faces of bored seniors, the occasional scream by that one guy who's way too aggressive on PS5, the clanking of the foosball table, the speakers blaring boring pop music, the usual. Long story short, I was regretting my impulsive decision of paying that RM5 fee for the SOIT senior party. For God's sake, it was still O-Week but here I was, surrounded by literal strangers.



Oct 19,  
batch?

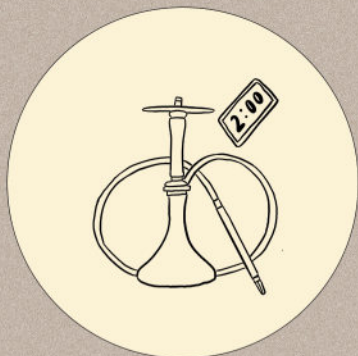


Just as I was about to give up and binge Brooklyn Nine-Nine with mediocre Thai comfort food (sorry not sorry), a guy whose face I couldn't quite place came up to me asking, "Hey, October'19 batch as well?". And I kid you not, I released a breath I didn't even know I was holding - What. A. Relief.

I hadn't known at that moment but I'd find out in the next couple of months just how grateful I was for this guy's presence (let's just call him T for now). When we first met, he literally told me his entire life story in one night and I just stood there listening, gauging how much I should believe this guy and how much I should tell him in turn. Later that night, we left and talked as if we weren't just total strangers 10 minutes ago, then he asked me out for dinner the next day. I was confused to say the least but he literally just wanted company.

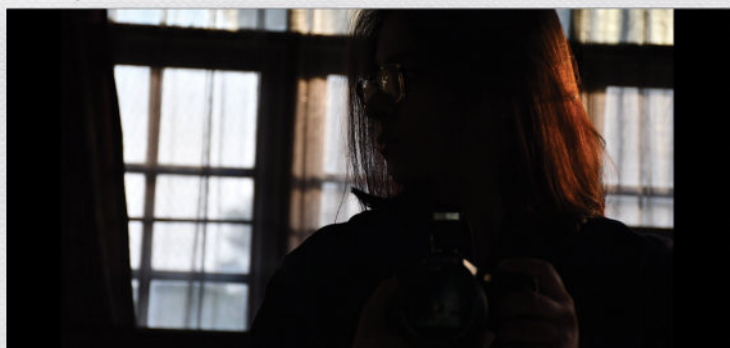






He was there when we'd need to grab a quick bite of shawarma and a 2AM hookah from that one Arabian place nobody could quite commute to (the server let us blast Bollywood jams - he passed all the vibe checks); he was there when we'd literally spend hours of our evenings just walking around the Canopy walk, Sunway Pyramid, random ass deserted streets where we once got chased by dogs at 4AM and had to hitch a ride with surprisingly friendly strangers (never again though); he was there with a bitter espresso in hand for me during those unbearable 8AM math lectures; and he was there to pick me up from the airport even when I thought it'd bother him - it cost us an RM1000 fine but let's not go there.

But I've been there for him too, I'd run over from my room in SMR to Subway when he needed urgent dating advice (a Herculean feat when you're sleep deprived), we'd stay together on campus until 6 in the morning figuring out how to do labs, I'd nod and reluctantly agree that whatever music he was listening to was "so great, so cool" when he'd insistently hand me his earphones (it was always Machine Gun Kelly or G-Eazy anyway), I'd rush down the building when he needed a smoke and a good conversation - we had a give-and-take sort of friendship going. We've talked about anything and everything without really judging each other for it.



Turns out, it doesn't matter in the end does it? Different groups of friends made sure that we wouldn't really see much of each other, well at least he had his people and I never was the type to fit right into a group that well - I've always kinda floated around solo, doing my thing. People mistake it for me being a stone-cold bitch and a not-so-approachable individual, so you can imagine my surprise when a guy comes up to me out of nowhere and introduces himself. Now I know this isn't as much of a story as it is a nostalgic rant about being friends with T. But I miss him and the time we spent navigating uni life together, and I don't know how to say this to his face. What would he even say to me?

We've been terribly awkward at texting anyway. Just want to end this by saying: Hey man, you're like the brother I never had. I don't even know if you feel the same way I do, what do you think of me? I know you probably won't ever tell me. And even if what we had lasted for just the first few months of our uni lives, I really wish we'd get to do it all over again. Can't wait to see what other shit we get up to once this dumb pandemic is over (though getting lost at Sunway Lagoon at midnight wasn't our best idea tbh) - if you're ever up for it again.

SUNWAY  
LAGOON

SUNWAY  
LAGOON



Written by Lay



"Kimia, she has cancer"

Deafening screams were blasting in the background, but that sentence that came out of my mother's mouth—I heard it crystal clear.

The call ended.

For a split second, every part of me comes to a halt as my thoughts try to catch up.

I sat in disbelief. We were supposed to go to the cinema the other day. She had to go to the hospital instead because of a digestion issue. I thought that the worst-case scenario would just be appendicitis.

I thought to myself: "How did this happen?"

Being a med student is already so draining. From studying all about the illnesses that the human body can bear to witnessing the disheartening and goriest of things. I wonder if I could ever be strong enough to endure these sights every day of my life.

# KIMIA

trigger warning: death

I see myself being immensely disturbed, especially after seeing my aunt in this state.

I held her hand while she was in the hospital bed and told her how I don't think I'm smart enough and can handle being in the medical field. Her kind eyes glanced back at mine.

"You're a smart beautiful girl, you can succeed in whatever you try. You will definitely become a great doctor."



Despite having to pretend she was fine, shave her head, and pose for the camera—she still didn't know she had cancer. She's been told that she had ovarian cancer that went away and she had to go through chemo to prevent it from coming back. I understand how hard it is for my family to tell her, but I still can't fathom that we all lied to her. My grandmother even told me to photoshop my aunt's pathology results to show her that it's gastric ulcer instead of gastric cancer. I feel horrible for going through with this.

Anyone in the medical field agrees that a patient's unexpected death is the most challenging aspect of their career. I can't imagine being in the moment where I would put my coat back on and prepare to tell a family that literally the worst thing imaginable has happened.

It happened to us.

"Kimia, she's dead."

This time round, those three words bypassed my ears and directly hit my heart.

My aunt has always been the striving force of my life, despite not being present on the earthside. Generous, compassionate, and altruistic are all an understatement to what her character was. She even wrote in her will not to bring her flowers after she's gone. She requested to donate the money saved up for the charity organisation she was voluntarily working for.

I stood in the cemetery, yelling her name whilst tears were running down my cheeks. I glimpsed at her peaceful lifeless face one last time.



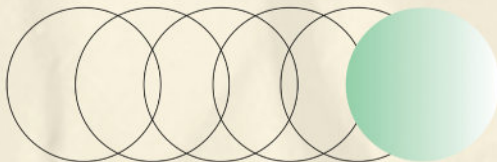
"I promise you, I'm gonna make it. I will succeed and will not let anyone else go through what we went through."





“How would you tell an 8-year-old kid that they have an autoimmune disease and chronic illness with no cure?”

Written by Elly



I was that kid with Psoriasis. It is a skin disease where the skin cells multiply faster than normal skin cells. The skin will turn red and leave white scales behind. Plus, it can show up anywhere on the body. Since my skin was extremely dry, I had difficulties moving—walking, lying down, running, and even sleeping—without inflicting a new wound.

When I was eight, I frequently visited this salon to have my scalp cleaned by this Auntie. She knew I have Psoriasis and told my mom about it. ‘The doctors would just give her steroids’. It did not work.

This is not my first time being diagnosed with an incurable disease. The first diagnosis was at the age of six; an irregular heartbeat. Back then, I just did not understand, nor comprehend, the gravity of this news meant for my parents.

Later, I was diagnosed with Psoriatic Arthritis (Psoriasis + Arthritis) when I was 11. It was painful to walk and my knees were hurting, so I went to check for the doctors. But they—and the MRI—told me it was nothing. Deep down I knew it was.

I remember when my mom apologized to me about this when I was 15. Psoriasis was genetically passed down from my mom’s family for generations. I assured her it was fine, and it was not her fault. But deep down, it must have been challenging for her, as she was helpless and forced to witness her own daughter grow up with it.

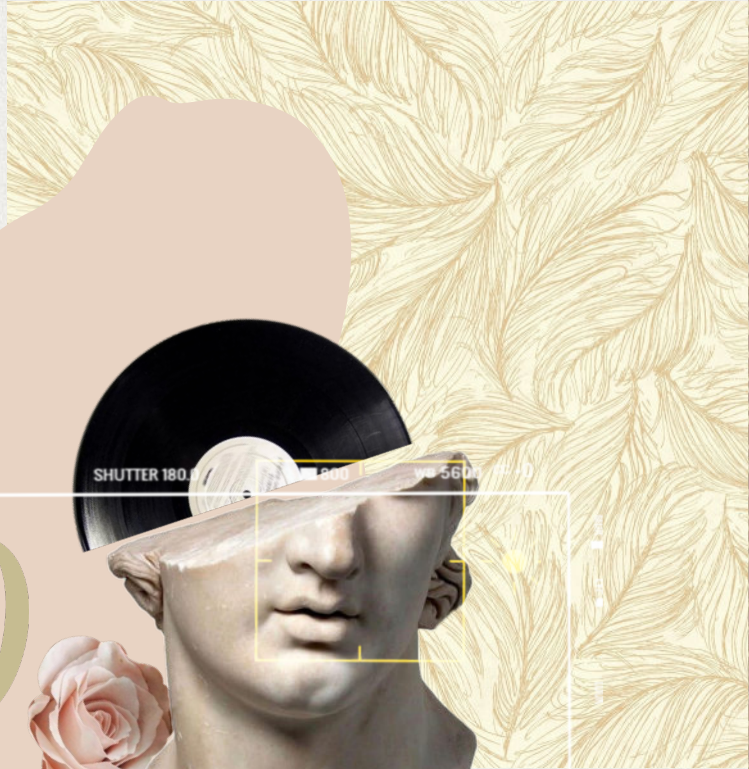
People generally did not understand what Psoriasis is, and they refused to understand it. Once, a roommate told me my skin flakes (caused by Psoriasis) were annoying as they messed up the cleanliness of the room. Another person even advised me that I should take better care of my hygiene.

At 19, I contracted dengue. Consequently, my Psoriasis caught up all over my body. My dad bought a bathtub for me, as there was none in our house. He even bought 20KG of Epsom salt! But showering was excruciating. Imagine putting soap on a big wound that is all over your body. At least the bathtub made it somehow less painful.

Later that year, I enrolled in a biologic program. It was a solution proposed by a doctor we found, instead of relying on steroids. But at age 21, I stopped going for the program for a year. I still have my Psoriasis, but it is bearable. I am in a healthier mindset and I can handle it better. I admit that Psoriasis is difficult and painful, but it makes me a stronger individual.



# SNAPSHOT



SNAPSHOT CHALLENGE  
SNAPSHOT CHALLENGE  
SNAPSHOT CHALLENGE  
SNAPSHOT CHALLENGE





Photo by Lee Wen

CAMPUS  
MEMORIES  
CAMPUS MEMORIES



Photo by Mikey Hao



Photo by Yi Shan

RE-CHARGE  
RECHARGE



Photo by Sakura Matsuyama



Photo by Yeng Tey

MONO-CHROME  
MONOCHROME



Photo by Sandar Maung

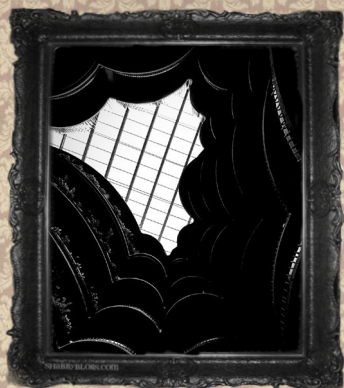


Photo by Khai Ng



Photo by Ishika Dua



Photo by Ally Teh



# MONCH!



## What's packed in this issue

📍 Rock Cafe

📍 December Eighteen



# Rock Café

We know you miss it.

📍 Jalan PJS 11/20, Bandar Sunway, 47500 Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Photography by Prissie Ong Article by Layan Alkaf  
icl

*DISCLAIMER: This article covers non-halal food.*

## “Eh abang, satu limau ais”

As I eavesdrop, I go down memory lane to a time where I would have to push through the crowds just to find a table, only to be seated under the scorching sun. Due to the new norm, the claustrophobia I used to bottle is all a distant memory. Despite current circumstances, it is safe to say that the vibrancy of the Rock Cafe is evergreen. I still found myself amidst an atmosphere filled with chatter and potent aromas, with an array of cuisines shown on the posters that are plastered all over the stalls.

If there is one thing that all Monashians have in common, it would probably be the fact that we have all eaten at the Rock at least once. The affordability of the food and generous portions never fail to fill up your growling stomach. The chaotic yet

refreshing ambience is a breather from the ingrained university stress. Whether it is a spot for gossip or an impromptu sports bar, it is fair to assume that going to the Rock Cafe is an integral factor of our time at Monash.

The open-air food court filled with infinite stalls is a true ode to the diversity that is infused within Malaysian culture. The assortment of available dishes shows no bounds; ranging from the different regions of Asia to the Middle East, specialising in recipes that appreciate and highlight the art of fusion cuisine. Whatever you're craving, be it at any time of day, the Rock Cafe has your back.

Before embarking on our culinary adventure, two small cups of limau ais



were the perfect thirst-quencher duo to combat the radiant heat.

We then went on to order Kimchi (RM 5) and Fried Dumplings (RM 7) as a starter. The kimchi never disappoints as the cabbage and radish tasted fresh, just like we have always remembered. From the first bite itself, the dripping fish sauce leaves a strong tinge on your tongue. We immediately recognised the blend of chilli powder, garlic, ginger and sugar. The crescent-shaped dumplings arrived piping hot, seamlessly pleated and crispy in texture w(author’s note: the succulent yet tender pork filling oozed into my mouth, leaving me in complete awe).

It was then time to further explore our taste buds, as we ordered Mixed Beef and Chicken Teppanyaki (RM 13) from the Japanese corner. As promised by the appealing image that was present, we were anticipating the savoury and flavourful taste of the beef but were left with a disappointing and cold rubbery taste instead. The chicken, however, lived up to our expectations as it was nicely seasoned and lush, making up

for the beef that accompanied it.

Next in line was the Ikan Bakar (RM 9) from the Indonesian vendor Ayam Bakar Jakarta, as we wanted to try something different other than their signature Nasi Bakar. Unfortunately, we found ourselves slightly unsatisfied. Although it passed the presentation test, the fish looked visually appealing with its charcoal-grilled texture. It was not as mouth-watering and seasoned as it looked on the poster. The sambal definitely saved the day as it added an element of moisture and flavour that the fish was lacking—making the meal more delightful.

Last but not least, we tried the Shish Kebab with Puri bread (RM 11.80) which was the last meal on our list. The blend of Middle Eastern and Indian flavours aided in ending our “global” food journey on a good note. The flatbread was soft enough to break yet crispy enough to feel the crunch and the chicken kebab was brittle and its flavour was also quite overpowering. Although the chutney was watery, it still had that subtle taste of mint that balanced out the strong flavour of the kebab.

Fried Dumplings RM7



Limau Ais and Watermelon Juice



Ikan Bakar RM9



Shish Kebab with Puri Bread RM11.80





Kow Loon bubble waffles and roasted duck. These stalls are part of the countless options available at Rock Cafe.

We then washed down the collision of flavours in our mouths with another round of drinks. The freshly blended watermelon juice hit the spot just as expected, as it is the perfect beverage to end a feast on a humid day in Bandar Sunway.

Stumbling upon this particular hotspot for Monashians gave me another opportunity to explore the food, those of which I never even knew was offered. Honestly speaking, we believe it was a great experience. Not only did it bring back fond memories, but it also made us appreciate the simplicity of the place. The Rock cafe caters to everyone's taste buds, be it picky or refined, and offers a variety of choices.

At the end of the day, there is no doubt that the Rock cafe will always be every student's "go to" pit stop to have a meal in Bandar Sunway. Whether it is Plan B, C, D, or E— the Rock Cafe will forever be in our minds.



FOOD  
7.5/10



ATMOSPHERE  
9/10



PRICE  
9.5/10



ACCESSIBILITY  
6.5/10

It is important to note that the Rock Cafe is not wheelchair friendly due to the rugged pavements. They also do not take into account people who have difficulty in hearing or affected by overstimulating environments. They also do not have many vegan/vegetarian options despite it being prevalent in all the cuisines mentioned above. There is also a slight issue with communication as some vendors don't understand English that well, posing a small risk of misunderstanding their customer which is a problem when it comes to serving food that may contain allergens due to this slight oversight.

**With that said, Rock Cafe is MONCH approved!**



# December Eighteen

Walking into the set of a Wong Kar Wai movie?



Photography by Vihaan Philip Article by Shabnam Sidhu

*December Eighteen is halal friendly!*

## It feels like you're on the set of a Wong Kar Wai movie.

A working jukebox playing Chinese oldies, posters of popular East Asian films plastered on walls, and carrom boards being repurposed as dining tables draw attention to the lush recreation of 1980s interior that December Eighteen evocatively executes. Deriving its name from the date the owners of this stationery-antique store as well as restaurant got hitched, December Eighteen offers a pleasing dining experience, amplified by the artistic olde-worlde ambience.

A prominent aspect of December Eighteen's menu is that it offers a wide variety of local as well as East Asian delicacies, some with flavourful twists. It took us a while to decide on what to eat as almost everything looked delectable.

The Deep-Fried Dumplings (RM 10) and Sweet Potato Fries (RM12) were the two appetizers we decided to savour first. The chicken and vegetable filled dumplings were



well-seasoned but lacked remarkability as the wrappers were slightly too thick, giving off a rather doughy taste and texture. The sweet potato fries were crispy, but failed to impress us as they tasted just as you would expect them too, sweet and slightly salted.

The mains on the other hand is most likely where December Eighteen gained its popularity from. As it approached noon, we noticed the tables around us placing orders for the same dishes, relishing every bite, just as much as we did.

The Orange Chicken Rice Bowl (RM15.90) was the perfect blend of sweet and savoury. Topped with corn, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, as well as an over medium egg to accompany the strong orange and mildly peppery flavour of the chicken, this rice bowl was appetizing, every bite was distinct.

The Scallion Chicken Noodles (RM15.90) was equally delightful. The noodles and deep-fried chicken cutlets alongside a poached egg, and scallion garnishing, was a desirable combination. Although occasionally overpowered by the strong taste of scallion, the simplicity of this dish made every flavour stand out.

The final main dish was Nasi Lemak with Curry Chicken (RM18.90), a local favourite



📍 18G, Jalan PJS 8/12,  
Dataran Mentari, 46150 Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Scallion Chicken Noodles RM15.90



Orange Chicken Rice Bowl RM15.90







and comfort food. The curry chicken looked mouth-watering, however failed to meet our expectations as it had a bland flavour to it, slightly tangy and lacking the spice that most Malaysians are accustomed to. Nonetheless, the fragrant rice, spicy sambal, and salted hard-boiled egg made up for the lack of flavour in the chicken, making this a piquant meal.

To go along with our meal, the drinks ordered include an Iced Matcha Latte (RM15), Signature Café Mocha (RM15), and Iced Chocolate (RM10). The matcha latte was creamy and sweet, with a mild earthy taste to it. The mocha had a bitter aftertaste but the high caffeine content does have its perks. Lastly, the iced chocolate was rather watery and lacked the sweetness one would expect from it.

December Eighteen possesses the interior and food presentation of a social media post worthy restaurant. The décor exudes the charm of a bygone era while the food was appetizing.

A functional vintage jukebox. You can select one of the many Shanghai Jazz tracks for only RM0.50.



Nasi Lemak with Curry Chicken RM18.90



**FUN FACT:**  
This place is halal friendly and just a six minute walk from the Mentari BRT Station!

Iced Chocolate RM10.00  
Iced Matcha Latte RM15.00  
Signature Café Mocha RM15.00

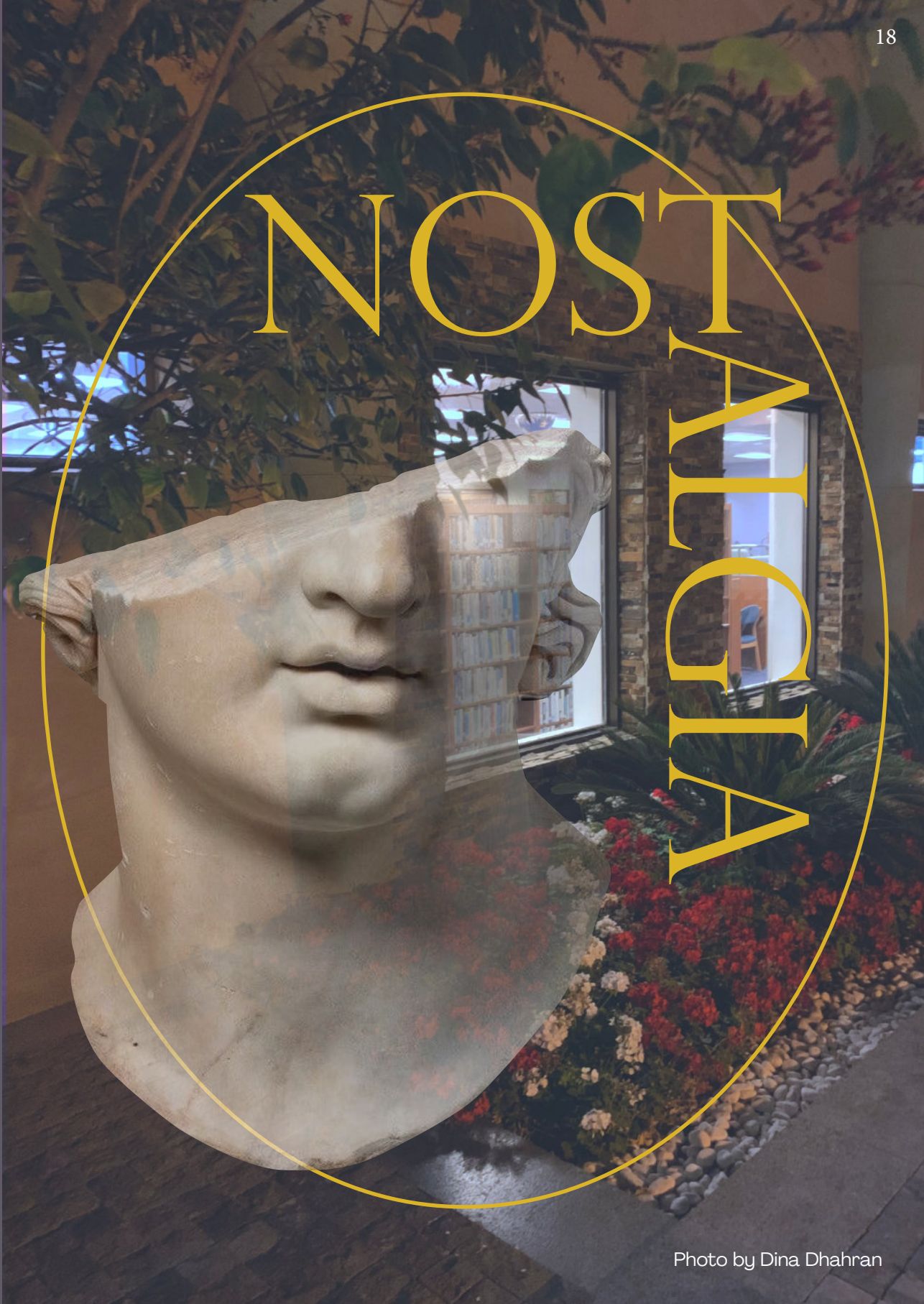


FOOD
7/10
ATMOSPHERE
9/10
PRICE
10/10
ACCESSIBILITY
8/10

**December Eighteen is absolutely MONCH approved!**



# NOSTALGIA







# PULAU KETAM

Photos by Prissie Ong





# SAUDI ARABIA



Photos by Dina Dhahran



Photos by Wong Syen Jeng/Shawn



# KAM PAR







# CAMERON HIGHLANDS



Photos by Tatiana Sutulova



# JOHOR BAHRU

Photos by Jared Soh





# KUALA

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# BATAM



# PAKISTAN

BAHRIA MOSQUE



# SELEMBAN

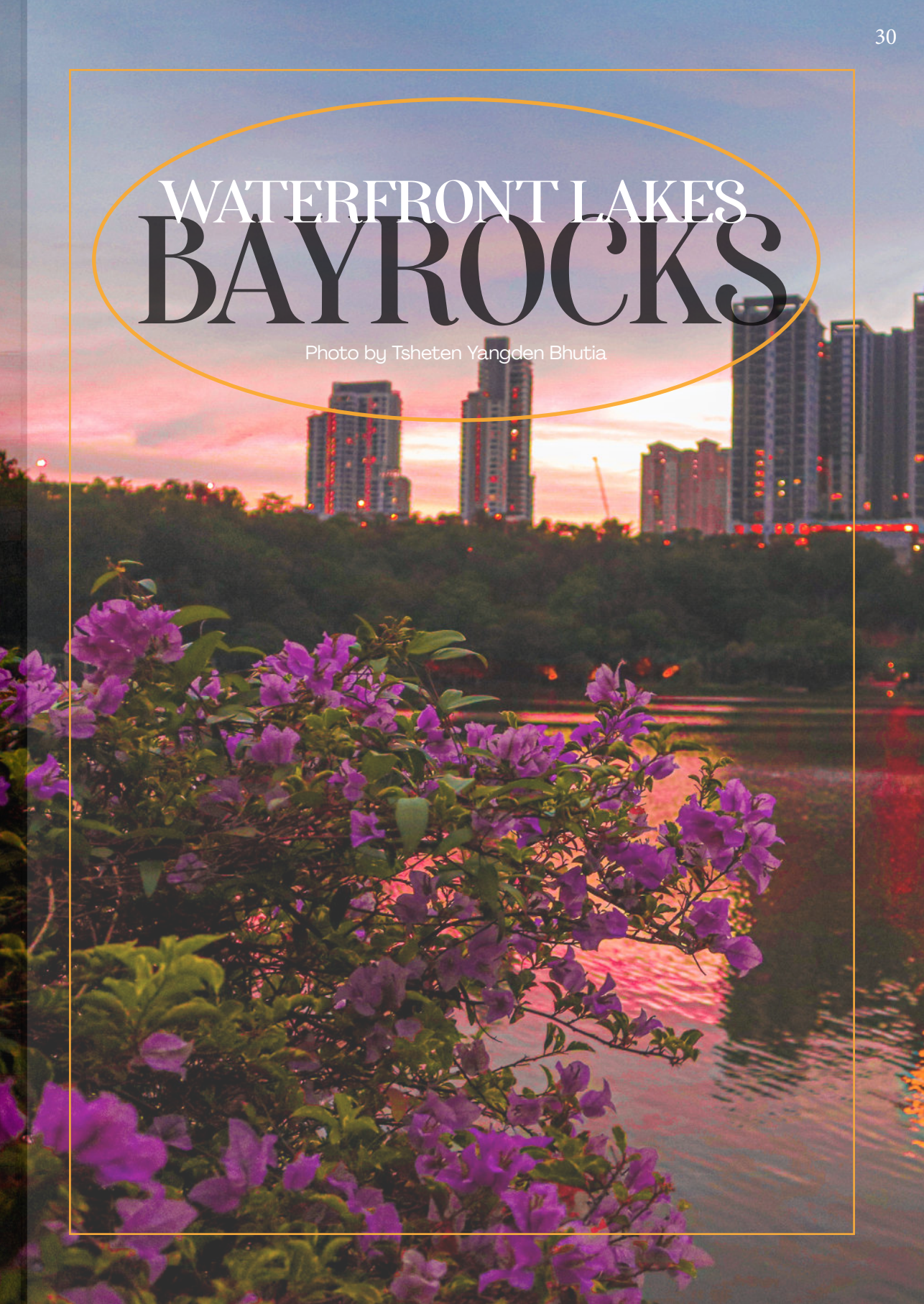


Photos by Prissie Ong



# WATERFRONT LAKES BAYROCKS

Photo by Tsheten Yangden Bhutia







Photos by Wong Zi Yi

# KAJANG





# MASJID NADWI MADINAH

Photos by Amna Shahid





Photo by Prissie Ong

# IPOH



# WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE

Written by Christie Wong

You're all grown up now, aren't you? Or do you just wish you could go back to the simple times, your childhood days where you didn't want to go to bed so early, wanted to eat all junk food for lunch, back when all you had to worry was how you'd spend your pocket money at the school canteen and how you'd spend your time gossiping at the back of the classroom.

Our parents have been there for us ever since we were young, while they remained a constant and reassuring presence, we have evolved from being a curious bumbling toddler in kindergarten, to eager primary schoolers exploring the world of new friends and new sceneries in school, to our rebellious phase as high schoolers where we used to scoff when they tried giving us advice that sounded so

foreign to our ears back then. And even then, despite maybe having fallouts along the way, they're still there to guide us.

Some people may not have met their parents, or their parents are only parents by blood and name, but not by action. Some don't have a good relationship with theirs or they just simply didn't grow up around them. We hear you and we acknowledge you. People who have been there from the start with us don't necessarily need to be directly blood related, it could be your best friend, your brother from another mother, sister from another mister, your guardian, your aunt, or your grandparents, your foster parent. Nonetheless, we want to celebrate the people who have been there for us since Day 1. The ones who have rooted for us since the beginning.



**JIA YING** What is the one thing your parent(s)/ guardian told you that you'll never forget?

I remember being stressed out over an assessment that I hadn't done well on when my dad called to check on me. I thought he'd give me a lecture about being more careful and prepared, but to my surprise, he told me not to worry, instead, take it easy and to learn from this experience. It's such a common advice but it was so, so valuable because we're so often caught up with what's in front of us that we rarely see the bigger picture and we fail to learn the lessons embedded in past experiences. My mom told me the same thing when I called her to talk about it later that day, and since then, it's been the advice that replays in my head every day.

What is the funniest story your parent(s)/ guardian has told you? Or your funniest memory with them?

As a toddler, I would have banter with my parents and looking back at those memories, I really have to give my parents props for dealing with my bullshit back then.

Exhibit A.

My dad used to call me 小蔡, meaning 'Small Chua' and so, I started calling him 中蔡 which means 'Medium Chua' because there was a third Chua, my Grandpa! Because he was the oldest, he was meant to be 大蔡 'Big Chua'.

Exhibit B.

My mom would feed me a mouthful of rice topped with some fish meat when I was younger and she'd tell me to look out for bones '看骨', to which I replied, "How? I don't have have eyes in my mouth..."

Lame, I know. But, my mom used to think I was the smartest 2-year-old on Earth so...

What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

This was something that my Dad told me shortly before my Grandpa passed. At that time, I was spending a lot of my time studying in the dorms or on campus, barely going home once a month.

My dad called to tell me that I should come home more often, to spend some time with family and take breather. I was nearing finals and graduating from college soon, so I wanted to receive the High Achiever's Award so I could show Grandpa my name and picture published on the newspaper. Unfortunately, he passed 3 months before graduation and though I did make it onto the list, he wasn't there to see it. I wish I had taken my dad's advice and went home more often.

Life is finite, cherish every moment you spend with those you love so that at the end of the road, you'll be able to look ahead with no regrets.

**SEL** What is the one thing your parent(s)/ guardian told you that you'll never forget?

Failures and mistakes do not define your capability, it's just the process to success,



**SANDARRR28** What is the funniest story your parent(s)/ guardian has told you? Or your funniest memory with them?  
Cracking jokes and laughing together.

What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

Never take decisions without thinking carefully.

**CHAI TING** What is the one thing your parent(s)/ guardian told you that you'll never forget?

A few years ago, I got myself into a sticky situation and felt like there was no way out of it. In the midst of all the anxiety that I was feeling, my dad came to me and told me this very sentence "Ting, don't worry. We are all here for you. You are my daughter, and I will protect you okay? Don't worry." Till this day, what my dad said still makes me tear up. My dad isn't the lovey dovey kind of dad, I guess you could say that he's the typical Asian dad, so the fact that he said those words of reassurance really warms my heart and it holds so much of weight till this day. And it's definitely something that I'll never ever forget.

What is the funniest story your parent(s)/ guardian has told you? Or your funniest memory with them?

My mum told me that back when my dad and her were dating during their uni days in Perth, they went on an ice skating date thinking that it would be a cute bonding time. Turns out they spent 90% of the time falling in the ice skating rink because they couldn't skate HAAAA. It was really funny thinking back of this story, the thought of my parents in that skating rink makes me laugh so much.

What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

I wish I took my time with my dad more seriously. With his new job, he works everyday now and he only comes back at night. We used to spend more time together, playing chess, going for weekly Saturday dinners as a family, etc. I feel like I took those times for granted :')

**NONU** What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

Save money.

**EVILBAGUETTE** What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

Be as independent as you can be.

**HAMBURGER** Do you think your parents/guardians have influenced you a lot?

No doubt! I am who I am today cuz of them, I'm always appreciated for the values they've instilled in me.





**QIS** What is the one thing your parent(s)/ guardian told you that you'll never forget?

"You should consider marrying someone after the 3-month mark of your relationship". My parents dated for only 3 months before getting married. You would think because we're Muslims, so it's good that she married quickly to prevent, well, 'temptations', but she vehemently disagrees. "I've dated so many people before that and well these temptations you talk about can easily be controlled (if you wish) when you're with a man who respects your choices". My mother doesn't hate my dad, but whenever I asked her if she loved him, the slight hesitation and silence is always there, so I wondered if she stayed only to raise me and my sister. As I grew older, I kept her advice a lot. I don't ask her a lot about the reason why she married him anyway (I am not born out of wedlock in case you're wondering), but it sort of become a guidance in any relationships I'm in, where I should keep an open mind towards the guys I meet and not just settle for someone just because things looks rosy for a short period of time.

What is the funniest story your parent(s)/ guardian has told you? Or your funniest memory with them?

My parents said growing up I am a wanderer. Literally anything would grab my attention, and distract me. Once, we were at a department store, and my mum turned around and saw me gone. My parents panicked hard and made announcements and even ran around the store frantically looking for me. Then they decided to go to the toys section and saw me blissfully unaware of my surroundings and playing with cooking sets. I still have that same short attention span today, and I have gotten lost, away from my parents before, even literally up until a few months back. Sometimes I think God came through cause I ended up in uni, a place where you need focus like at all times.

What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously? I've always been a very black-or-white person. I point out people's mistakes when they are wrong (black) because whatever I learned must be right. But my mum always tells me that we should not call out people who make mistakes and tell them to follow your way. It took losing a best friend in college to finally knock some sense into me that the best way to help people who make mistakes is embrace the fact that they made it and intend to amend it. WE have differing opinions in the world and that's fine. What's not fine is when we impose that opinion on others, and expect others to follow (unless your opinion involves the abuse or violence of people though = I'mma call you out if it is).

**ME** What is the one thing they told you that you wished you took more seriously?

Money is important.

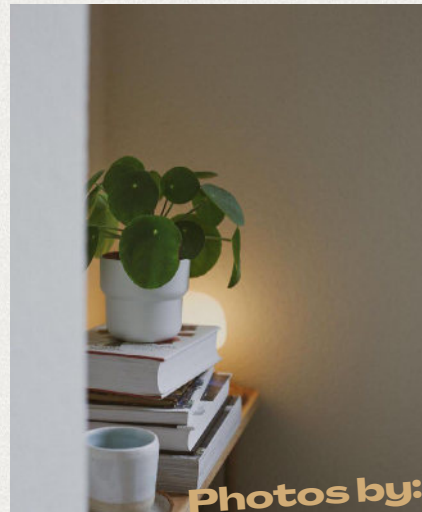
Do you think your parents/guardians have influenced you a lot?

My father is terrible at educating, luckily he didn't educate me much, now i know what are the things you shouldn't do as a parent cause it will hurt your children.



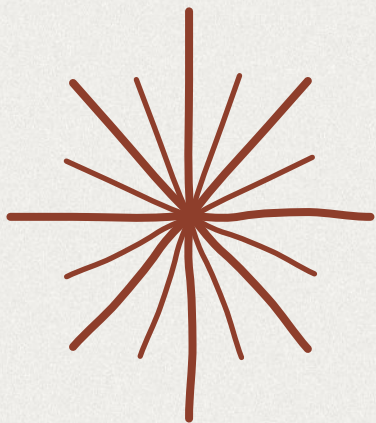
# #Being Minimalistic

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Photos by:  
**Amna  
Shahid**





Photos by:  
**Prissie**



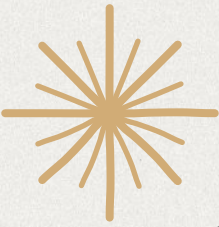
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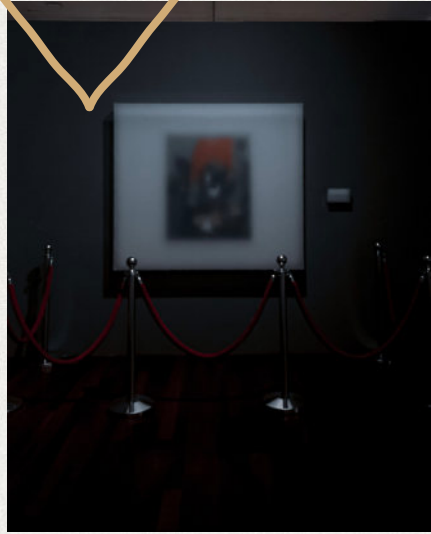
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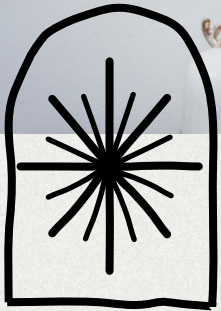




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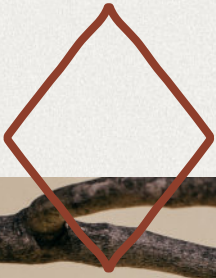
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Photos by:  
**Shawn**







**Photos by:  
Zi Yi**







# WONDERLAND LIES

written by Shawn Wong  
photos by Shawn Wong

## What's the most beautiful lie you've been told?

We've all been told a lie:

Pronouncing every alphabet and counting every number on the numbers letters playmat is going to win praise from my parents. Scoring full-As is going to guarantee me a bright future. An imaginary girlfriend is going to help me go through all high school problems.

Sometimes we lie to ourselves.

Life is getting better. Next semester I'm going to study harder. I'll watch that particular Netflix show soon.

What is life without lies?

People don't stick to the truth, people don't even know what the truth is. What's the origin of human beings, what is the real meaning of time, do unicorns exist? Sure you can google or ask your grandparents about those truths, but the truth is nobody knows 100% about anything.





Admit it, we feel good when we've been lied to and we cultivate this nature of human being by telling lies to others as we assume they will feel good too.

The harsh truth of lying is we need to lie and to be lied to. It's the nature of human beings. If lying about one's appearance can save one's life and lying about a product can save a dying business, why not lie? As long as we maintain a good position and a good starting point, we are good to go to lie.

Next time you've been told a lie, move on and be ready for more lies.

A hand sanitizer is going to kill 99.99% of germs, but what about the remaining 0.01%? Is the manufacturer of the hand sanitizer lying about the functionality of their product? If they are, why do they do that?

The ultimate goal of people telling a lie (good or bad ones) is to live with their lives. Imagine every single human being on this earth is telling the truths, how many more keyboard warriors will be born? How will the suicide rates increase due to criticism? How cosmetic companies are going to survive?





# MOGAL

## expression: the right to be

In  
middle school, I would run from  
the bus to catch Rosie O'Donnell's talk show.

She fascinated me. There was something about her that  
felt so familiar. A few years later, I found out what that something  
was: in 2002, I met my first girlfriend at freshman orientation and O'Don-  
nell came out publicly at a comedy club.

Celebrities have come out in all sorts of ways. A stirring speech. A short tweet. A  
solemn statement. But years before same-sex marriage was legal, amid heavy speculation  
about her sexual orientation, O'Donnell came out during a stand up set. "I'm a dyke!" she  
declared. And she followed that up with material on everything from Anne Heche's relationship  
with Ellen DeGeneres to Florida's law prohibiting gay men and lesbians from adopting children.

For most queer people, coming out is a process. I assume that was true for O'Donnell; it certainly was for  
me. It doesn't always feel freeing to tell your friends, family, or the world that you're queer, but a sense of  
freedom is exactly what you feel when you read about O'Donnell's set. In that moment, she no longer felt a  
responsibility to be the "Queen of Nice," that close-set character I related to while eating cereal and watching my  
13-inch TV so many years ago. She was simply herself. Bold. Bawdy. Brassy. And queer.

— Kate Childs Graham

In the eighth grade, I dumped my boyfriend for Harvey Milk.

Alright — it was a little more complicated. But barely. In the eighth grade, per the suggestion of my favorite teacher, I  
chose Harvey Milk's Hope speech for a research paper our class was assigned on historical texts. This was the fall of 2008,  
when "hope" was a buzzword for a wholly different reason, associated with a wholly different man. But I first had eyes —  
and ears — for Harvey. I'd stay up late each night, my eyes glued to the lanky computer monitor in my kitchen and a pair of  
wiry airline headphones wrapped around my ears, bringing all the footage I could find of the country's first openly gay elect-  
ed official delivering his signature stump, over the next month or so, I memorized the text in full — and then the pauses, the  
pacing, the pitch of his voice.

I used to joke that the speech was a gateway drug to so many of the identities I now claim. It awoke my inner politico and  
made me a Democrat. It hooked me on the power of words and led me to my current job. Still, for most of my life, its actual  
content — a call for the LGBTQ+ community to come out of the closet, replace stigmas and stereotypes with family and  
friends — felt beside the point. I was straight, I thought. As for Milk's words weren't aimed at me.

Then, a year ago, I fell in love with a woman and the speech went from poetic and powerful to deeply, deeply personal.  
Though mine is a generation that spurns labels and things calling myself queer felt important — and freeing. Like coming  
up for air. "Without hope, the us's give up," Harvey once said to eighth-grade me.

Today, I can still recite his whole speech from memory. But it reverberates differently. Now, when I talk about hope, I'm  
speaking from experience. And when I talk about "the us," I'm included.

— Jordana Narin

Sometimes a great speech deserves a sequel. That was the case on December 10, 2011, International Human Rights  
Day, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared "gay rights are human rights" at the United Nations (UN) in  
Geneva. Echoing her famous "women's rights are human rights" speech, Clinton sought to elevate LGBTQ rights as  
the next frontier in the moral arc of history.

Clinton spoke before an audience that included delegates from countries with harsh anti-LGBTQ laws and  
attitudes. She pulled no punches in describing the legally sanctioned violence imposed on the LGBTQ  
community, and called for all countries, rich and poor, to recognize the basic dignity of its citizens.

Her words were even backed by action, as she announced policies to protect queer people around  
the globe.

In 2018, I stood in the room where Clinton delivered this speech. As I reflected on its  
importance, I realized for the first time that I could be both out and safe. Clinton —  
and the Obama Administration — imagined a world where queer voices are  
heard, and queer lives are valued. In a time of rising phobias, this speech,  
delivered not even a decade ago, may seem but a relic of some  
bygone age. But so long as ordinary people stand up for  
our rights, its dream of a bright future will never  
disappear.

— Violet Lhant

click this button  
for more Pride Month projects!



a pride month corner



the colors *the colors of my flag* of my flag

i was born pink. maybe purple.  
 a bit blue.  
 and some saw me through the  
 tucked-in  
 flannels inside the cuffed jeans.  
 i remember  
 my best friend laughing,  
 "u know what my dad said?  
 is abigail a lesbian?"  
 i laughed so hard  
 i couldn't breathe.  
 i remember thinking,  
*oh well. i might be.*  
 like moth to flame, i remember  
 the  
 colors in my hands when i bled.

pink, purple, blue.

i hear often:

*good girls wear a nice dress,  
 smile nicely.*  
 i don't want to smile if you  
 don't give me the respect  
 my identity demands.  
 i will wear dresses over  
 leather jackets but i would  
 not live in woe of what  
 was expected from me.  
*that's not how girls should act.  
 as a girl, you need a husband.*  
 or about my sexuality,  
*that's not very bisexual of you.  
 swinging both ways makes you  
 a slut.*

i did not find myself in  
 this black and white of  
 how i should settle or how  
 i should dress.  
 in my own body, in my  
 own skin.

i am just existing.

i found myself in side-  
 glancing of pretty girls  
 and having fictional boys  
 in my head.  
 i found myself comfortable  
 in the baggy clothes, in the  
 short skirts, in the cute  
 dresses, in cuffed jeans.  
 in anything i wore that  
 made people think,  
*that's a little gay.*  
 i found myself  
 in they/them pronouns.  
 i found myself in the saying,  
 "gender is a social construct."  
 and it is.  
 i find myself saying out loud,  
 frequently, even right now,  
 "oh. i'm bisexual.  
 that's alright."

and it is.

- bee



# A Nominated Major in Gender Studies

written by Aiman Aiman

---

Gender is a spectrum.

I eat up this spectrum as much as I can, I lift the lid of it open and stick my girl fingers in its gut and I pull it out and I bite on gender as hard as I can- I gorge on its contents, I let gender slip into the crevice of my nails. I eat up this spectrum as much as I can.

The neck is the biggest give away.

Biologically, the 'male' sexes have broader necks- it is sectioned in threes with a jutting middle and that middle is jolted again with an adam's apple. it should be revealing then, that at the ripe age of sixteen, that I was born into the wrong body.

I can close my eyes, and fix my puberty all the way back in my head- physically, my breasts would form into tiny french lumps because this is what my mother has her's made of. I would be allowed to have my hair grown out long in school, and would decisively wear my pinafore every day opting out the modest praxis of the 'kurung' - but none of this matters now. You are a boy born then bred and you will die off suppressing the need to replace a hormone for a hormone.

My mother is outspoken in nature; but there is a conscious practice in her to adhere to housewife culture. She occupies herself in the practice of conforming traditionally to femininity but the theory fails to fit on her. She makes my father dinner, and he presses her on when he notices a stain on his glass so she gets up from the table and immediately runs to the back to have it washed. She comes back and my father has already started on his meal without her.

I love my boyfriend.

He is lanky and tall, and has the biggest neck I know. It stretches down into his collar bone before running itself down to the symmetry of the lining of his stomach. He enjoys rap music, and for the most part, I reckon, is a 'boy' boy. We met in theatre school, and I recognised a Richard Siken writing about him- the one where you hold a boy's hand for the first time in a car and you choke down the need to tell him you love him. I love my boyfriend because I wear my high waist denim and he says nothing; I love my boyfriend because he is a boy and he understands that I am the definite opposition to that: I am a girl.

We hate going shopping and we like the theatre.

We have the Wes Anderson filmography collection revised, and are now on the momentary fixation onto the Japanese New Wave incline.



Funeral Parade of Roses (1969) is a transgressive film on the queer culture that operated around 1960s Tokyo. It is tragic, confiding in it's black humour and like any other revolving facet of being queer, eventually was imitated later on by a cisgendered, heterosexual man (Stanley Kubrick did his unfavourable attempt at copying Funeral for his adaptation of A Clockwork Orange just two years later). I know this was my favorite of the binge list.

Funeral and I were never politely accommodated by God, we were violently thrashed into this and left to figure out the route of a labyrinth that promised only a murky way out. You can shave all the facial hair you want, I will grow my hair out until it passes my belly, I wear silk underwear in bed and my wired bra catches no fat under my chest area. I can be so angry with myself when I face a mirror or when I park myself in a public situation outside of my boyfriend and the social exertion comes along that I do not look the way I feel- but I can feel the way I look so much. The labyrinth is so wide, and so tiny at the same time and I am thinking if you mean that gender is a spectrum: That this is the spectrum.



I made my boyfriend dinner and it is my birthday.  
I baked this cake and I am housewife tonight. This cake is pink and it is littered with edible glitter by it's brim.

We blow the candles out and the light passes by us in smoke before we slice gender open.

We eat up this spectrum as much as we can, we lift the lid of it open and stick my girl fingers in it's gut and we pull it out and we bite on gender hard - we gorge on its contents, we let gender slip into the crevice of our nails. We eat up this spectrum as much as we can- now there is only bone.



We gazed in each other's eyes. We talked. We were teenagers and we dated for a while, but then we went separate ways. Was I attracted to him? If so, I must be straight, right?

It was dark and the music roared with the crowd. We kissed and my heart was racing. Was the feeling mutual or was she drunk? Does that make me a bisexual, or a lesbian?

We cuddled and I felt safe. I wanted to stay but I was afraid of what was next. So, I left. Why didn't I want to do it? Could it be that I'm asexual, or demisexual?

I'm not sure who I am.

Hung out with some friends and casually dropped the words "I think I'm bisexual... or a lesbian". As soon as I uttered these words, I froze. Some thought it was a joke and laughed, some eyed me silently and dismissed me, few stayed back and talked to me. I opened up to them, and they supported me. I felt comfort.

Growing up in a country that considers a marriage to involve only one man and one woman makes you think that this is the only type of relationship that can possibly exist, and the only one that is acceptable, and that you're expected to follow this rule. School only teaches you about two genders, male and female. Men wear shirts, trousers, and shoes. Women wear make-up, dresses, and heels. That's it. Then you educate yourself about other genders. Now you're an adult and you're filling up forms, you're confused about which box to tick: male, female, or other. Sometimes you feel like venturing in a different section of a clothing store-

but you find yourself compelled to stick to the same old department. You start questioning. Why can't men wear make-up? Why can't women be shirtless?

At home nobody is aware of the LGBTQ+ community because nobody talks about homosexuality. When the topic is briefly highlighted on the television, one would either change the channel or comment on how 'ridiculous' it is. Every time that would happen, I would recall videos of people who have come out in reality, and TV shows about homosexuality such as 'Feel Good', 'You Me Her', and 'Orange is the New Black'. Then I would inhale deeply and imagine myself bravely coming out of the closet to my family. But then my brain starts to play out all the different scenarios of how wrong it would go, and how I would probably be cast out of society. I would then exhale and scream internally.

You have to get married in your twenties. You have to have children before thirty. What if I don't want to get married early, what if not at all? What I don't want children? What if I wanted to be polyamorous? For some of us it's never been an option, and it won't be so any time soon.

It is hard to believe that we are in a century in which there are still people who are not prepared to accept other people of different genders. To be honest, living feels more like trying to survive. Set aside religious beliefs for a moment and ask yourself, what really makes us different? If you think about it, we're all humans made up of the same basic elements of life. Then what is it? I'm guessing our thoughts are what makes us different. Is that it? What else? Hmm... So, where do we go from here?

THEY WILL NOT ACCEPT ME

WRITTEN BY TIMED CENTURY



# Reminiscence

REMINISCENCE  
REMINISCENCE

## remembering

By Tasia Khoo

I stand blinded in the mist of tomorrow's  
morning  
to greet my melancholy who—in a heady  
haze—  
hums their sweet melody.  
That song as woody nightshades, those  
berries bittersweet



Graphic by Sakura Matsuyama

Lull me into deep slumber, only half asleep.  
My remembering is foggy like the murky  
water  
of yesterday's rain.  
But still, that laughter of a time passed  
rings clear as day—  
What heavy echo brings this solace, this  
pain?  
It seems my memory has come again.

I find you there,  
on the path among the paddy fields.  
You rise at dawn to watch the dragonflies  
wake.  
You barefooted little thing,  
too busy to notice your feet aches.  
I watch you—me—  
play pretend in the garden;  
soft in the warmth of the sun,  
quiet in the winnowing wind.  
Thinking—  
thinking tomorrow will never come,  
and so be it.

I hold your hands—my hands—  
but I cannot hear you.  
You reside only in fading sight,  
a fleeting light.  
My memory came and left, and I awake.  
Still, the remembering is always.



# PASSENGER SEAT

By Joeyee Chin

being allowed on the passenger seat was  
always a special treat being able to see  
people walk down Bangsar's street  
watching the scenery along the freeway  
fleet  
not being in control of the direction seems  
to make the experience just that much  
sweeter

funnily enough,  
not being in control seems to have taken  
the crown to be my biggest fear, maybe  
that's why when my therapist told me to  
look back and find similarities between all  
my past relationships  
relationships were alliances  
and I was the tribe leader killed by stray  
bullets caught in the cross fire the help-  
lessness of being in those partnerships  
made me hopeful about the future and felt  
needed, wanted, guarded, bonded.  
I've always taken the passenger seat.

then you came in my life and took the pas-  
senger seat  
a talented humorous kind and healing soul,  
too precious to be put in a spot of help-  
lessness

so, I navigated, I navigated the lines of  
compatibility and complement-ability  
I navigated,  
the line of extroversion and introversion,  
trying to match or even complement yours  
with mine  
I navigated and took you on a ride  
of ego and safety  
of chaos and serenity  
of kindness and empathy



Graphic by Prissie Ong

the passenger seat smells like you,  
a mixture of tobacco and your newest  
shampoo  
yeah, I smoke now,  
I've always hated the smell of cigarette and  
how it blurred my eyes while my attempts  
to navigate the way between us  
the blurry eyes blended into the streetlights  
and  
your hatred for my electronic cigarette,  
and so I complemented you  
from the driver's seat.

you've shown me places all while being in  
the passenger seat, you held my hand while  
my eyes blurred,  
you've shown me places that I know will one  
day be in ruins  
and be ruined for me, just like how  
macNcheese, KLpac, and alcohol have been

you've taken over the car radio  
queuing bad mandarin pop while being in  
the passenger seat, shot-gunning the seat  
but skipping the song shotgun  
and god forbid if car radio by 21 pilots  
comes on





**you've asked me,  
when did I fell in love with you.  
I fell in love with you, when you held  
my hand and navigated the car.  
I fell in love with you, when the fog  
blurred my vision,  
but you were on my shoulders.  
I fell in love with you, when you smiled  
at my attempt of following along to  
the mandarin pop you queued.**

but maybe, just maybe  
I fell too hard  
complemented too hard,  
toned down too much  
being in the driver's seat when I  
should've navigated more. I didn't  
want to overpower,  
overshadow,  
overtalk.

but maybe, I do belong in the  
passenger seat after all  
and you weren't supposed to  
have road anxiety

when you told me, we are not  
compatible  
I wished that I was in the passen-  
ger seat  
that I did not just get by  
that I did not just complemented  
maybe I had something to prove  
even to you after all

when did complement-ability burn into ashes  
reborning as compatibility with the shine of  
the Phoenix? I don't want to be in the  
passenger seat

I wish I was in the driver's seat,  
I wish I did not agree to the open chest  
surgery  
I wish I took you to places,  
my places.  
I wish I played Ride by 21 pilots more, cause  
maybe just maybe, we really are not  
compatible.  
I'd live, die and kill for you,  
but would you ever do the same?

you got out of the passenger seat  
"turn it off now, don't burn the engine"  
but how else could I show you that, I love you  
without letting you shine  
and without burning myself with fuel.  
but I was driving from the passenger seat,  
and I guess, the rule of going by, but to never  
go by, shouldn't have been what I lived by.



# Sun-dappled Memories of Childhood

By Sreana Habiba

It's 3am. A song is softly playing on my phone, the singer emphatically but mournfully lamenting over the loss of childhood and the bitter-sweet experience of growing up. I look up to the flood of lunar-esque glow strewn on my ceiling from the dim blue lightbulb in my room, and the blue makes my heart hurt; the blue reminds me of good things and then drowns them, takes them away. Lying on my bed, the thought that runs through my mind is this: I wish I never turned an age older than ten.

The light of the world around me seemed to have dimmed after that age, the saturation going down, all the lovely, hopeful things that living connotes turning murky and desolate. Is that what growing up entails or is nostalgia lying to me like it always does; is this a case of rosy retrospection? Maybe just a smidge, but mostly I know this to be true at the very core of me: that childhood was iridescent and green and the kind of blue that doesn't make you ache and soft breezes and rain and running through grassy, yellow fields and the bliss of limited self-awareness, and it was magic. I miss being somewhere and actually, fully being there, my corporeality not a hindrance but a blessing, a means to amplify every experience I was having.

I turn these memories of adolescence in my mind over and over again like stones, picking them up from the clear, glittering stream of recollections in my heart and inspecting them. Echoes of carefree laughter, distant memories of spending time with family and friends, a kaleidoscope of painting and singing and playing with abandon.

Eating mangoes my mom had lovingly cut up and given to me, the saccharine taste and smell of it filling me with joy; cycling to this lane then that, falling off and scraping my knees numerous times yet still persisting; going to my grandma's house and listening to her telling me stories of her own childhood, the warmth and the tenderness of her hugs; playing with my uncle's labrador, stroking its fur, thinking I could never love anything on earth more than I love this dog; falling asleep while watching TV or in the car and somehow magically waking up in my bed, swaddled in a blanket; summer vacations and all its sickly sweet, humid charm, when it felt like the world was opening up and blossoming just for me. However dappled with sunlight these reminiscences are, it quickly and inevitably gets shadowed by the bleakness of adulthood, of life as it is now.

No friendship ever matches up with the ones I had experienced as a child, no sight seems as beautiful, no love seems as pure. I want it back, I want it back, I want it back. Would returning to these wistful, nostalgic places and recreating these memories make me feel placated, content? For a fleeting moment, perhaps, but I think it would intensify the loss of youth and the lack of it all even more. So I let it go. I let the stones fall back into the stream, watch as the water caresses them and ripples around them.

The song reaches a crescendo, then slowly fades out and ends. I let a single tear fall, wipe it away and try to fall asleep with the memories of my childhood drumming like a heartbeat inside me.



# hiraeth

By Fatima Omer

I look at you  
And I see yellow  
Dotting my vision with hope  
Promising new horizons  
And opportunities we could explore

I look at you  
And I see blue  
A certain tiredness  
Tinting your eyes  
As you leave me  
And go  
There is a low  
To your highs

I look at you  
And I see red  
Colouring your vision  
Exploding out of your veins  
As you take me by the throat  
And throw me  
In the rain

I look at you  
And then I look away  
The world is a brilliant kaleidoscope  
of colours  
And I realise that to see  
I never really needed you to stay  
(My world is more beautiful without  
you.)

Thinking back of all the shade in  
the world

It's funny how black and white  
made so much contrast  
and tho they are not colors

Unlike roses with pointy leaves,  
or skies with a tint of yellow

He's so different,  
but always falls back to the  
same category

Deprived as I smell the scent  
of jasmine tea,  
I knew he was here  
Although he is lost behind  
white curtain,  
promises are along with him

His gentle smile tells a story

"Tian Yi", he said, "My brother"  
"It is not your fault."

To whom I am sending this too,  
hope you are doing well,  
as this is a message from your  
brother.



# searching

By Kar



By Ashley Lim

## innocence

If I could turn back time,  
I want to experience,  
My innocence as a child.  
The innate curiosity and wonder,  
I experienced back then,  
Was something I reminisced frequently.

Now I notice patterns of deception,  
Of harsh truths and uncomfortable  
reality,  
Or pondered life after death,  
I can't help but wonder,  
'Why did it happen so quickly?'  
I am suffocating underneath it all.

My innocence has been replaced,  
With a bitter gift that others glorify as  
'Maturity'.  
How could people celebrate this?  
I happened to grow up so soon.

People say I'm way mature for my age,  
I suppose I should say, 'thank you?'  
Oh, what choice do I have?  
How do I turn off this part of me,  
Even temporarily?  
For I sometimes wonder if,  
Ignorance is bliss.

Even as I lament this,  
Someday I will come to my senses,  
And thank this maturity.  
Until then, I should say, 'Curse you!'  
For making me so bitter with life.

innocence,  
replaced.

By Elly Zulaikha

"I can't wait to grow up."

These were the words that, honestly I've uttered the most often as I progressed through life. It was always about getting older, to leap out of the nest as soon as I could fly, to savour that sweet nectar of freedom that comes with age. It wasn't just me, my friends too were enamoured with visions of independence.

So much so, that we turned our backs on our childhood, choosing instead to press the fast-forward button on the remote control of our lives without even goodbye to our younger selves.

But that's the problem with going through life at the speed of light, we lose that child-like innocence and wonder that causes everything to glow with a golden light.

Simple games of "Rock, Paper Scissors" and the quintessential "Hamburger", piling our palms on top of one another now seem childish and a waste of time.

I no longer feel the same jittery sense of glee as I did when the Milo truck came to visit our school. We would eagerly clutch the paper cups handed out by Prefects as they shepherded us into neat rows, hopping from foot to foot, impatiently awaiting our turn. When it finally came to my turn I would stare up at, to my eleven year old self, was an enormous, shiny vat of ice-cold Milo, condensation dripping against its surface. Unsatisfied, we would sneak to the back of the line again, giggling as we were caught and sent back to our classrooms for violating the "only one drink per person rule".

Now, daunted by the fear of taxes, job interviews and the thought of spending the rest of my life chasing a paycheck, I ask myself when I burst that bubble of innocence, wondering if I could ever go back to the days where a visit from the Milo truck could fix everything.



# Underwater

Voices are muffled, there's a weight on my chest weighing my breath down, I watch as everything goes by my eyes in flashes but I'm stuck here with watery images. My toes curl but land on nothing, my fingers stretch but grip on air. It's cold, I think. I can't tell.

Is this a bathtub or an ocean?

I breathe in but I feel the sting of loss too much, I think I'd rather have a noose around my neck than have a knot around my chest, slowly cutting me off, depriving me slowly.

I wish I had never known love, if the withdrawals were like this. Won't it be easier to wonder? When I didn't know warmth, I endured it so well, not knowing the coldness exists.



Time pushes the world into its place. But what about me?

Regret twists in my stomach, it rears an ugly feeling. I open my mouth now, to take in the waves hoping that it'll wash the nausea away.

I feel the loss of the burn when I resurface. I breathe but it's empty, painless, it's unfamiliar, I don't like it.

The lack of empathy people hold for the person who pulled the trigger surprises me, but I'm not disappointed in them, but rather in myself, for trusting other people to keep the waters warm for me.

They swear that it's still the same, but when they reach in to grip my hand, it slips from their oily fingers.

I drown the 'Sorry's and the lies with water. I wish with all my might that the waves would take them out to sea and never come back. I'm done and tired trying to anchor them down, saving them from the monsters of the sea. Take them.

The shores turned to monsters, tsunamis

# underwater



# tidal waves

By Sakura Matsuyama



at times when the moon is at its  
brightest  
and the only light in my room comes  
from its glare  
i remember the feeling of numbness  
as i begged for the universe to be  
spared

i remember how easily i could have  
fallen  
captive to the waves ashore  
how the sea foam would engulf me  
like a child to reassure

gone are those woeful days  
like treasure swept by the sea  
hidden but not forgotten  
ingrained in my memory

# getting b\_itter

By Joeyee Chin

When you told me  
The stars were not aligned  
While we stood, there under the  
crescent moon  
I tasted copper, alcohol, and bitterness  
all at once  
The tears  
Pain  
Tears  
Death  
Smile.

*better?*

The concoction of copper and alcohol in  
my mouth,  
And the lingering taste of it  
made me  
Crafted dejected words,  
Trying to scrape together  
whatever that is left

The bitterness made me wish  
You were doing worse  
In pain  
Bleeding out

But now, the taste of tea, smiles and  
lavender  
Wherever you are  
The lingering taste makes me,  
Wish and pray, and manifest that  
You find happiness,  
That you are safe, and you are happy.

And may we meet again,  
On another shoreline,  
Under a full moon.



i replay the same daunting  
moment  
again and again  
until the tears roll down my  
cheeks  
and onto my sheets

praying that this time  
it won't happen again  
hoping the night will pass  
without an unfamiliar creak

because no matter where i go  
no matter what i do

you have stripped me from me  
the feeling of safety  
in the comfort  
of my own home

# loss of a home

By Sakura Matsuyama

## the heartbreak letter

We never did make it to forever. And we never did make it old and grey. But I can promise you that I loved you in every way.

And hey—I know you're sorry. I am too. Sometimes things don't work out the way we planned. But I would do it all over again if I could. From first dates and first kisses to the last time I laid my head on your shoulders.

For a while now our visions will be blurry and our nights will be sleepless, but we'll be alright. I know we will be. We have to be.

And look—don't worry. If it's meant to be, we'll find our way back to each other.

But now we can finally love each other without being hurt.





# One Day

Maybe we'll finally be ready a few years from now. But this doesn't mean that I never loved you. Because I did. I do. I loved you yesterday, I love you today and I'll love you tomorrow and the day after that. We just have so much time to grow and learn. If you love me as much as you say you do, then we'll find each other again. And perhaps then we'll finally be ready. And I know you're confused too. We don't have to hold back for each other. I love you completely and wholeheartedly, no matter how far you are. Don't worry about me. I'll be fine here. And I know you'll be fine there too. Sometimes in life, we have to leave the things we love to know how much they really mean to us. Hopefully it'll be enough to draw us back together. Until then I hope we find what we're looking for along the way.

By Sakura Matsuyama

# One Fine Night

Some nights I sit and wait. I'm not sure for what. Sometimes the tears fall, and other times not. I wonder about who I am underneath the skins and bones.

And I wonder how someone could love me if I can barely love my own. I wonder about the leaves falling from the trees. And

I wonder how it would feel like to be free. I think I'm empty. Like something is missing from me.

Memories I never had. Memories I've never felt. But a million emotions run through my head.

I think I'm in a rabbit hole. There are no other places for me to go. But I'm hopeful. For a little bit better tomorrow.



D(ARK), that is how the world felt like when we met  
 E(XAGGREATING), what people thought me when I told them you were my only friend  
 P(ANIC ATTACKS), a bi-product of spending too much time with you during those nights, I wept  
 and wept

R(AGE), what I felt when people told me to let go of you, as if forcing me to 'mend'

E(XHAUSTION), the strange feeling I had after the 'productive' nights we spent

S(TRENGTH), what I needed when I decided to put our relationship to end

S(ELF-ESTEEM), what I gained when I let you go, a wonderful achievement

I(NTELLIGENCE), a skill of mine, coming back to me is something I won't recommend

O(PTIMISM), my new way of life, started practicing when you left

N(OTEWORTHY), what I think of our experience even though it's time for 'THE END'

# D.E.P.R.E.S.S.I.O.N

By Naheen Maseem

Photo by Shannon Ho

## longing and reconciliation

By Joeyee Chin

How can I speak of admiration  
 When I am left behind  
 Trying to get on the same page  
 With you, your interest, and your love?

How can I speak of love  
 When my home is built on stilts of  
 Clinginess, trauma, fear, and despair  
 One that you fear, and you hate?

How can I speak of longing  
 When I'm building our future in my head  
 While you're in bed trying to build a  
 Convincing enough argument to break  
 my heart?

I no longer long for, neither do I  
 expect  
 Reconciliation, forgiveness, or peace  
 But I know, and I hope  
 That the days ahead, be kinder to me  
 heart.



By Akriti Serthi

Rummaging

Keys, card, books, pages

Scrambling going through everything once, twice, making sure that you don't leave anything behind while the merciless clock blares 9.05

Frantic steps towards the BRT station

and hastened pace while stepping down to be welcomed into a vibrant bustle of

You

Me

Us

just embracing the university culture and making it our own.

When I step down the same station today, all laid in front of me is the carcass of old memories shrouded with the intricate threads of my complex emotions that drive me to insanity with each passing second.

How do I even begin to comprehend, let alone convey, because most people cannot fathom

That what I lost and mourn the most

Is the feeling of tangibility.

The touch, feel and smell of an abstract campus atmosphere that is no longer mine to have.

The detachment of reality as my very lived university experience has been captured and imprisoned behind the realms of this stupid, stupid glass screen.

What if this is all we have anymore?







# Pantom on REMINISCENCE

By Naveen Subramaniam

Now is the time  
Realising the value of a normal life  
Thinking of a time  
When we failed to live a fulfilled life

Realising the value of a normal life  
I went to my campus  
When we failed to live a fulfilled life  
Recalling that my life started with a prospectus

I went to my campus  
I lamented  
Recalling that my life started with a prospectus  
I realised what had been implemented

I lamented  
Thinking of a time  
I realised what had been implemented  
Now is the time





"I once purposely walked on a strip of grass that had 'do not walk on grass' signs placed all over."

*scandalous much?*

"I had a fivesome (3 girls and I'm one of them) and it was amazing. The straight girl ended up being the best kisser I've ever had the pleasure of kissing. I had the chance to fuck a model."

"Sometimes I still think about fucking my ex(es)."

"I was in a squad with another 2 female friends. It was Christmas and we decided to rent an airbnb for 1 night. We bought some chips, bottle of vodka, and played poker games. One of them drank a tad bit of the bottle and fell asleep. Me and the other friend had no choice but to finish the rest of the bottle. We ended up both drunk as hell and started making out. Yes, right next to our sleeping friend."

PS: I am straight and I am still best friend with her. We sometimes joke about this."

"When someone asks me what is my deepest darkest secret, I usually actually keep digging deep but I couldn't find any. I am the type of person who shares my issues, secrets and doubts to my partner. They say if you and your best friend were not to be friends anymore, everyone will know, right? As for me, my partner is my best friend. That constant doubt of "will he leave me" always runs in my head."

Being a virgin at the time, I was really really insecure about my body and those thoughts doesn't help. I keep thinking, what if I don't look good enough, what if I am not good in bed. I didn't worry much on how I perform in bed would affect my partner since we were both Virgins."

When he arrived to visit me from another country, it was all fun and games. Until night time, we both thought we would be a nervous wreck. But on that specific night, it was no doubt magical. Everything happened so slow, so smooth, and it was pure bliss."

And honestly, till this day, that night is tattooed in my brain, implanted in my chest. And when I think about that day, the only highlight is that. When someone asks me if I had sex before, I can only replay that scene in my head. It's like a broken record, replaying over and over again."

scandalous.  
scandalous.





## "I'm Mr. K and this is my story:

*content warning:*  
 infidelity, depression

I've always been in a scandal since the first spring of 2019. It started when I was alone without my roommate at night. I went on a dating app and was attracted by a girl the same age as me. I found that we had a lot in common. After few days of chatting online, I finally had a chance to date her in real life.

Her name is Snow. It started well and she became my girlfriend as expected, but I realized something shocking after a month. She was married! I was pretty sad that time when I knew this reality. She apologized and even wanted to break up with me. Still, we didn't break up because I didn't want to give up this relationship, neither did she. We continued our relationship without her husband knowing.

After a year of relationship, I felt that our relationship wouldn't last. Snow always wanted me to find another girl which can lead me to a normal relationship because she knew she wouldn't divorce. I loved her deep in my heart but she started to keep away from me. We didn't meet for more than a month and only keep in touch through WeChat.

Tired of being lonely, I went on the dating app again and met a girl named Abbie. I dated her out and this was the first time I had sex with another girl... Maybe I was guilty or I really liked her, I lied that I'm single and asked her to be my girlfriend. Apparently, she said yes. Since then, I was dating two girls at the same time.

Unfortunately, Abbie found out I was also dating Snow because I didn't delete my chat history with Snow. Abbie was so sad and depressed, I really feel bad for her. I told her how much I love her (this is not a lie, I swear) and promised I would break off all relationships with Snow. She believed me and gave me a chance.

Before breaking up with Snow and deleting Snow in my contacts, I had to return all her belongings to her house. I didn't tell Abbie about this and I went to Snow's house early in the morning. I called Snow out when I arrived at her house. She sat in my car and we talked so many, including that Snow actually knew I had a new girlfriend and told me that I should be nice to Abbie.

After the talk, Snow wanted to leave and say the last goodbye to me. Maybe I missed her too much, I didn't let her go and drove to the nearest hotel... to had my last sex with her... but with Abbie in my mind. When we finished it, Snow cried and I realized how much hurt I caused to these two girls. I'm really sorry and this is really the last time I met Snow.

I told Abbie that I had broken off all my relationship with Snow and finally we can have a good time together. However, I did not expect Snow would message Abbie and told her everything including me having sex with her! Abbie was really depressed after receiving the message and almost having mental health issues due to my betrayal. I knew she wouldn't forgive me but I still confront her with my love. I've forgotten how we came through that period of the "Great Depression", but now Abbie and I started over, as great as new.

I knew I hurt Snow and Abbie very much, especially Abbie. She is innocent from the start but she is the one who suffers the most. I accompanied her to encounter her depression because I knew it is my responsibility. She is the most adorable, lovely, and kind girl I met. I was very grateful and sorry at the same time that she was willing to forgive me and start over. She even cooked porridge and take care of me when I'm sick, which none of my exes did for me. I swear I would love her as much as I could for the rest of my life because I had such a nice girl.



My first relationship was bad. Really bad.

Everything went well for the first few months until one day I saw a text message popped up in his phone. From that point onwards, I found signs of him cheating and lying to me almost every month.

When he was working as an intern during the summer break, the place where he worked was too far away from me so I only visited him from time to time. The days I didn't go, he'd call random girls he know to have lunch together without me knowing. He'd send pics of the lunch to me, and what I didn't know was that a girl was actually sitting next to him when he's sending me those pics.

He'd would on and off text with girls he know, saying things like 'wyd' and 'I miss you'. When I confronted him, he told me "When I'm bored and you're not replying, I just like to find others to chat with".

Because of what he said, some days I'd wake up from my naps and the first thought in my head would always be 'oh no, I dozed off, is he talking to other girls?'

When I was on my period and I didn't want to have sex, he asked "What about anal?" As a dumb and innocent person I was, we did try it. We put a towel underneath us so my blood wouldn't stain the bed, but I was in too much period pain so we stopped. When I was washing the blood off of the towel in the bathroom, I looked out to the room and saw him chilling on the bed watching Youtube videos. It then hit me, 'what am I doing?'

There was one time when he had fever so I walked him back to his house but he insisted on having sex. I didn't want to so I struggled to leave while he was on me. That was the first time I realised how much strength a guy has, even when a guy's sick, he's strong. When I finally managed to get out, I left the house immediately. Walking back to my house that day was unlike the other days. My legs were weak, I was shaking, I felt as if like I survived from someone attempting to rape me.

It certainly did not help the fact that the person who made me feel this way was my boyfriend at the time.

He begged and promised he will change. He really did, but I caught him going on dates with another girl again not long after. I broke, I thought to myself: This is the end. But on the same day, he came to my house and apologised with a surprise gift.

I forgave him, again.

The relationship continued for 1 and a half year from here.

Fast forward to almost the end. I knew our relationship was dying and he'd never do LDR with me so I decided to give him a meaningful present, wishing that maybe I could remain special to him. I made a photo album with the polaroids we took and wrote him a long loving message. I gifted him in the morning of his graduation day before going to my classes. That afternoon, almost all the students in the graduation ceremony including him had left, I got a message from his friends. The message was a photo of my gift, sitting at the corner of the stadium where the graduation was held hours ago. His friend asked 'Is this yours?' I thought to myself: Oh, he forgot to bring it back. It hit me again, 'what am I doing?' That day I went home with my own present.

One day, a friend of mine texted me that she saw his profile on Tinder. I confronted him again. He acted as if it wasn't a big deal and told me 'I just wanted to try'. And that's when I broke up with him over text. He didn't beg for apology, didn't ask why, didn't do anything, all he replied was 'ok'.

That 2 years of dating him was as if something had been pressing on my chest, suffocating me. The second I broke up with him, that feeling was gone and I was finally able to breathe again.

Heard he got a new girlfriend recently, I just hope he's not doing the same to her.



What are some things  
my   ex  
would never know

1. THAT I MADE OUT WITH OUR MUTUAL FRIEND AT A CLUB THE DAY WE GOT TOGETHER.
2. THAT I WAS FWB WITH HIS GOOD FRIEND BEFORE WE DATED.
3. THAT I USED HIM AS A REBOUND IN THE BEGINNING.
4. THAT AS MUCH AS I WAS A PIECE OF SHIT BACK THEN, HE CHANGED ME.
5. THAT I REGRET EVERYTHING I'VE DONE THAT HURT HIM.
6. THAT I STILL LOVE HIM.
7. THAT I LOVE HIM NOW AS MUCH AS HE LOVED ME BACK THEN.
8. THAT I STILL THINK ABOUT HIM AFTER TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE WE BROKE UP.
9. THAT I WISH SOMEDAY WE COULD CROSS PATH AGAIN AND FALL IN LOVE AGAIN.

- H



# BEND MY BACK

by Christie  
Wong

He only kisses me behind closed doors.

When our friend excuses himself to go to the bathroom, he comes over to caress my face, pushes my hair away from my face and kisses me, steals my breath, propels my heart. And when said friend unlocks the bathroom door, 'click!', he drops his hands and steps away.



It's as if he loves me, then he doesn't. As if he wants me, but doesn't want to be with me.

His gentleness makes me want to cry all the time.

It's clear what we are, in my eyes. Both my eyes are wide open but why is it that my traitor mind says just close them, pretend like nothing is wrong. Go back to your self-destructive habits, it says. I say.

When we're in front of other people, it's as if now I'm invisible. But when the doors are locked, I can't help but listen and believe the sweet nothings, like I actually matter that much. Like only my body matters. How does he do it? My sweet liar.

Use me, my love.

I love his attention, I crave it, I feel so alive because of it and I never see anyone else get the exact same unless she is me. Did he just call me 'baby'? Must've been my ears, but I won't ask.

It's crushing me inside out. He holds my hand, and then he doesn't. He acts like he cares for me but I can't seem to tell if it's for my body or me.

Does he think of me like I think of him? I think not. I've always been a victim to fall trap to my first love.





# Illicit Affairs

by Elly Zulaika



I regretted giving Will a second chance when I knew this relationship was not meant to be. *'Take the road less traveled by, tell yourself you can always stop.'* But how can I? If all I felt when I was with him were butterflies, sweet kisses, and just being in the moment? How can a love seem so innocent but consume the life out of me?

Perhaps my eagerness to fall madly in my first love clouded my judgment. When he revealed he was engaged with another woman, I denied it. The initial revelation resulted in a bloody mess of tears, shed in full public view at a mall afterout for dinner.

He was clearly guilty of it. He apologized profusely and still defended his love for me. He told me how special I was, and not even his fiancée could rival.



My naiveness forgave that, and so I took this torture upon myself for the next 5 years as that 20 something who still believe in love at first sight. I couldn't tell if 1) this was pure infatuation from myself, 2) emotional manipulation from his end or, 3) if this love we shared was simply two consenting adults who chose to indulge in an *illicit affair*.

The whole of our being was so forbidden, and we remained as secrets. But as sinful as it was, we were in delirium.



On those happy days, we enjoyed each other's company as if it's our last day to live—from a simple lunch date to those times when surprise kisses led to hot, messy sex—I worked hard to bury the moral guilt in the back of my mind. A part of me argued, 'Why not, right?' Everything is fine, so long no parties speak up on this secrecy. Another side of me protested that this was so, so wrong. How would I react if my future husband cheats on me? *'Take the words for what they are, a dwindling, mercurial high.'*

The first 2 years of this affair were turbulent. Navigating this forbidden relationship—while balancing my seemingly mundane life as a university student—wore me down. My mood swings and insecurities often sent us into petty arguments but it can't be helped since we sow the same toxic roots in this relationship. But unlike others, he patiently weathered until my storm died. *Oh, no wonder I kept coming back to him.*

He convinced me that the irrational insecurities I experienced then were 'normal'. I went to war with myself. I was torn as I overthought the impending doom awaiting my relationship. *'A drug that only worked the first few hundred times.'* In the end, I made peace with the fact that "I will continue to love you for as long as time permits us".



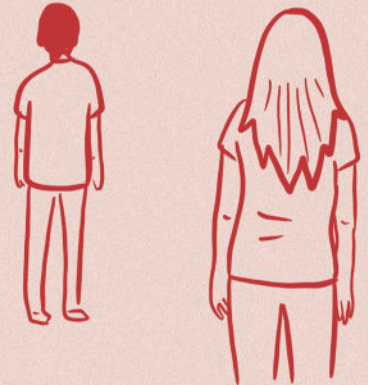
I should warn you that, as I dissected this shameful past of mine, I figured his actions mirrored his father's choices in marriage. He was a child of divorce and, of course, he begrudgingly carried his emotional baggage.

When he shared that piece of him, it hit me that, as much as he despised his father, he ended up straying down the same path as his father when he started this relationship with me. I can understand why others might say this was all his fault, after all, an affair is born out of choice.



I wondered if he had an unspoken issue with his fiancée because if he didn't, why would he commit a serious relationship with someone else? Has he given up the fight? Has he given up on her? I wanted to ask these questions when I was close to breaking point, but I decided I didn't have the heart to say such a painful thing to him. How much is he going to be truthful to me anyway?

Despite how passionately real our relationship was— that is, what we believed— nothing could possibly replace this broken piece of me. *'Look at this godforsaken mess that you made me.'* I realized my first love was nothing like in the movies, nor like what my friends experienced because for the first time ever, I wished I were like them. No secrets, no lies. *'Look at this idiotic fool that you made me.'*



When I decided to end this with him, I thought it would be catastrophic. We parted ways peacefully (minus my utter breakdown), but perhaps, deep down, I sensed that he truly loved and cared for me. "I'm sorry for wasting your time. I regret that I didn't stop myself. I hope you find a guy that's worthy for you because I know you deserve better than me."

*'You taught me a secret language I can't speak with anyone else, and you know damn well, for you, I would ruin myself, a million little times.'*

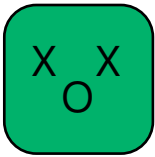
So, this is me moving on from you, Will. I wish you all the best with her.

Sincerely, Em.



# zoomers

Join a meeting



## Shannon:

So this is my friend's story and everytime I hear it I cringe so hard. One day she whatsapped us saying don't ever Facetime when you're on Zoom. We're like what.. and she continued her story saying she asked her bf to call and wake her up for class just in case but she ended up waking up herself before the bf called her.

When the bf facetimed her while she's in the tutorial, WHAT SHE DIDN'T KNOW was when you accept a Facetime, Zoom automatically UNMUTES you thinking your mic is opened because of the call. For a hot minute, she was sweet talking with her boyfriend without knowing that everyone..in..the.tutorial..can..hear...



## Qis:

It was during a film tutorial and we were all discussing about a certain Hollywood actor, and one of the other students said that she did not like him/watch him/get the hype surrounding him (I can't remember), and I found it slightly funny and weird. I ended up being in a breakout session with her and she turns out to be really nice and smart. However, my itchy fingers failed me. I used the Zoom feature to chat with my friend in the class, and told her "Oh my god, I got the girl who didn't like [this actor] in my room" (or something a little less nice, I did not insult her for sure. I think my mind has completely tried to block it off because it was too embarrassing). My friend told me that I sent the message to everyone instead. THE HORROR. As if it could not get worse, my microphone was still on from the breakout room, and I kept saying expletive after expletive, and then screaming so MY SHAME COULD BE HEARD AS WELL. The lecturer was in confusion as to what was going out, after reading my message and hearing my screams. I just slam the laptop hard and didnt go to that class for awhile. HOWEVER, she turned out to be in ANOTHER CLASS WITH ME, AND I GOT HER IN THE BREAKOUT ROOM AGAIN. I felt so bad but I was still too embarrassed, so my friend pitched in and sent her an apology message (private this time) to her for me, and when I had the courage, I reiterated the message as well. TURNS OUT SHE DIDNT READ THAT MESSAGE IN THE FILM CLASS AT ALL, AND DID NOT KNOW WHY WE APOLOGISED. welp. Basically she was cool about it anyway, but by a stroke of luck (or punishment really), I ended up being in TOO MANY Zoom classes or breakout classes with her. That was a year ago, but that shaped every single response I automatically adopt during tutorials: every 2 minutes, I religiously check my camera, microphone, and chat messages. To the girl reading this, you're really cool, thanks for not thinking I was an ass, even though I kinda was that day.



The day I woke up to

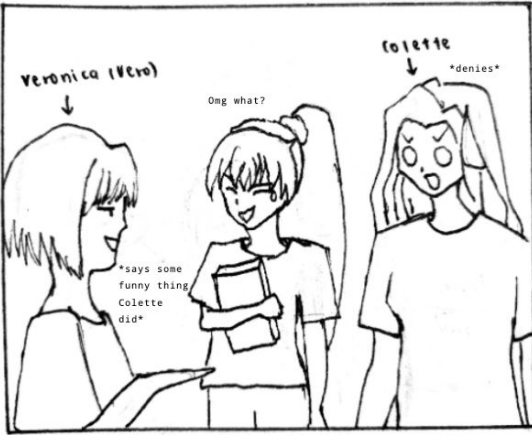
full online learning

by Mikaela

Hi everyone, I'm Mikaela. I am a Monash university student and the main character of this story.



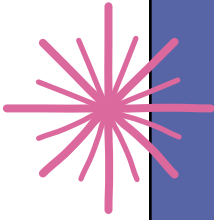




The university life I imagined is filled with friends, rock climbing and trips.

Hence, I look forward to my first year in Monash university.

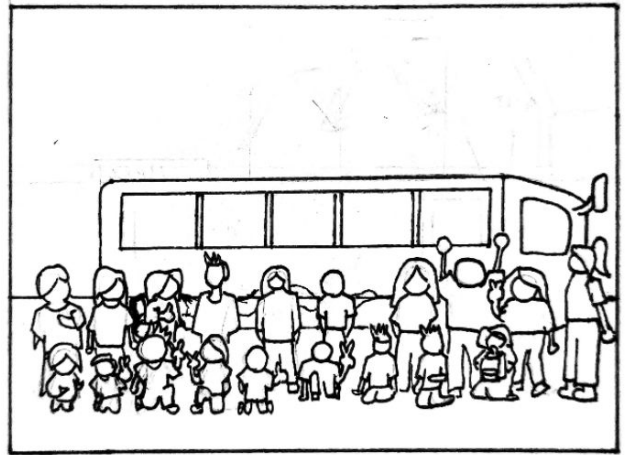
Friends



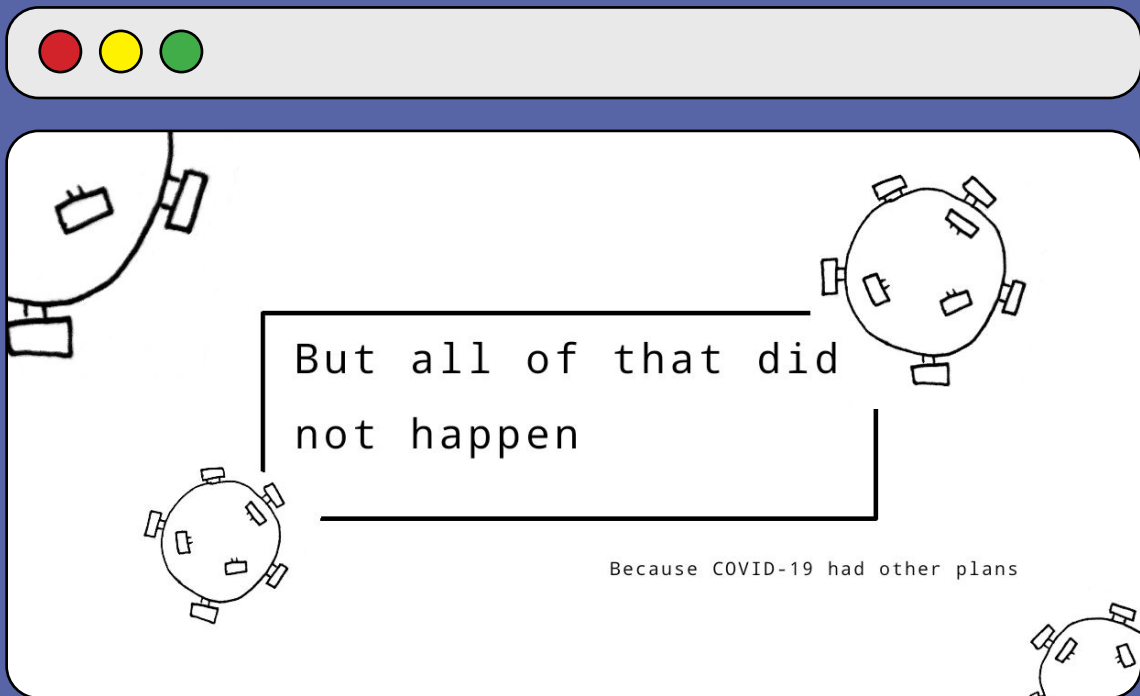
Rock climbing



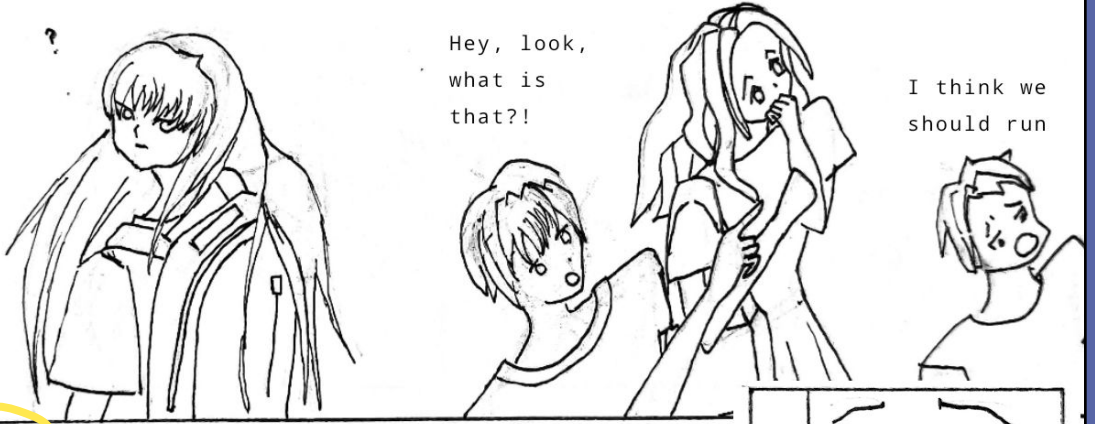
Field trips





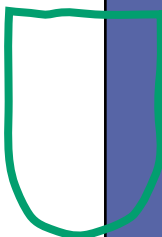
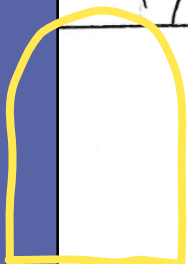
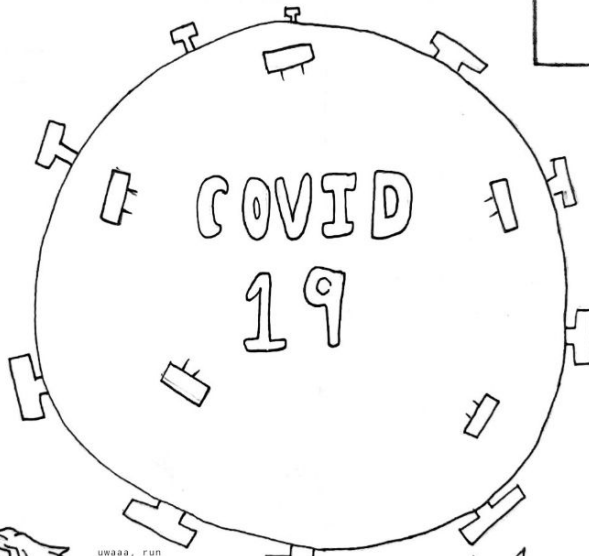
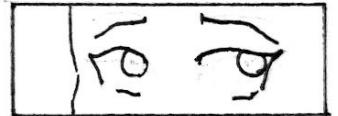






Hey, look, what is that?!

I think we should run



(2) That should be my line, you're not even wearing heels.



uwaaa, run

run run run


Fell down

(4) Why are you guys arguing?

(3) Arguing is the worse thing to do now, the virus is airborne. You're going to get infected.

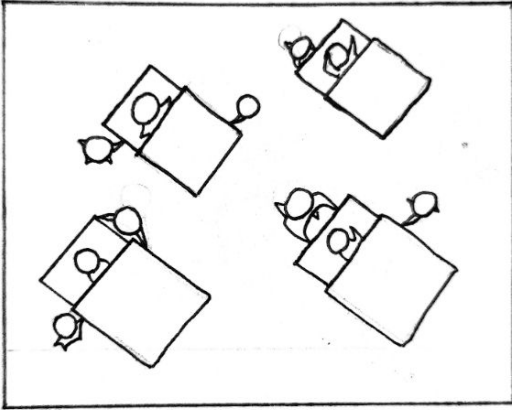
(1) I'm tired, when can we stop running, my legs hurt.





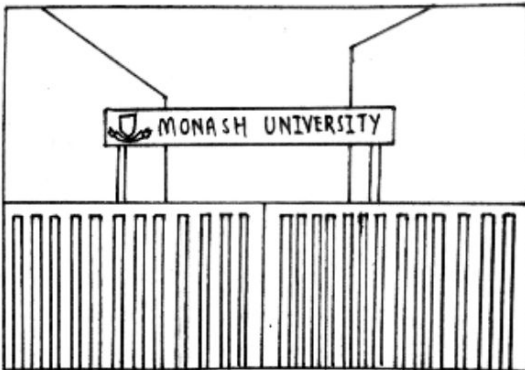
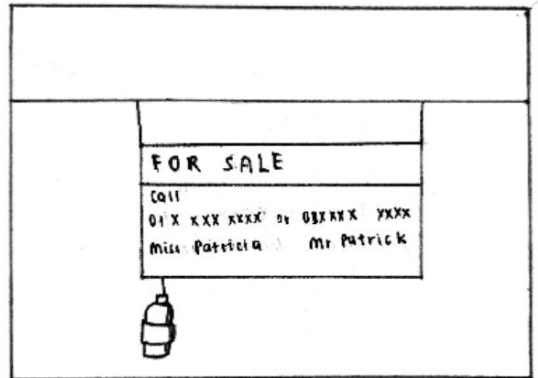
The existence of one virus turned the whole world upside down





People were sent to hospital

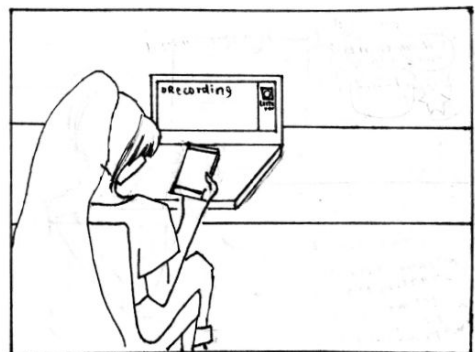
Many businesses experienced failure



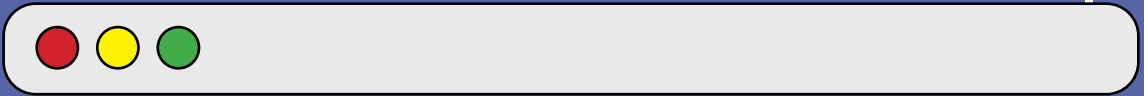
Entry to universities were prohibited

Malaysia went into Movement Control Order due to the increasing COVID-19 cases nation wide

Us, as university students have to stay at home and study online







The next few chapters will illustrate  
my life in Monash zoom university.

Side note: Due to an overwhelming amount of zoom classes,  
I'm starting to become a zoombie. \*pun intended\*



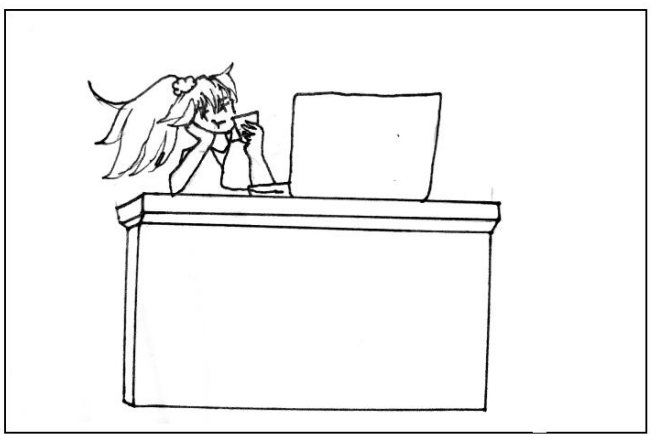




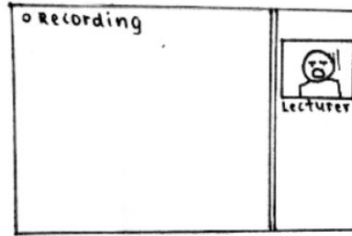
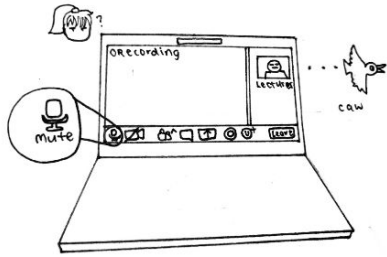
Chapter 1: Have you muted yourself yet?



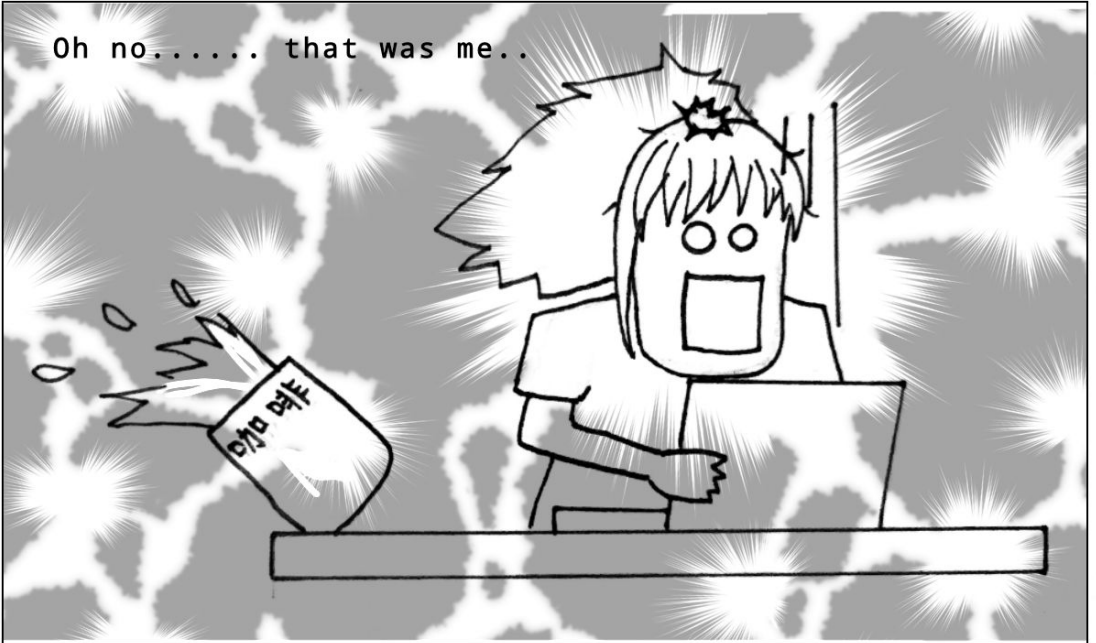








Oh no..... that was me..



When the recording is uploaded...



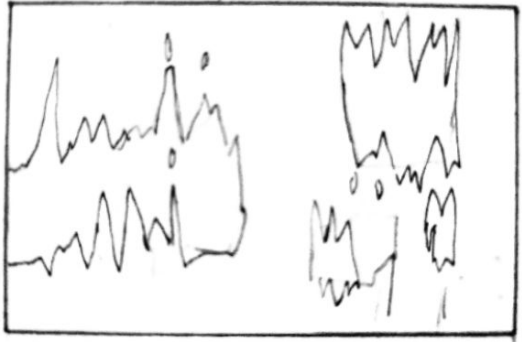
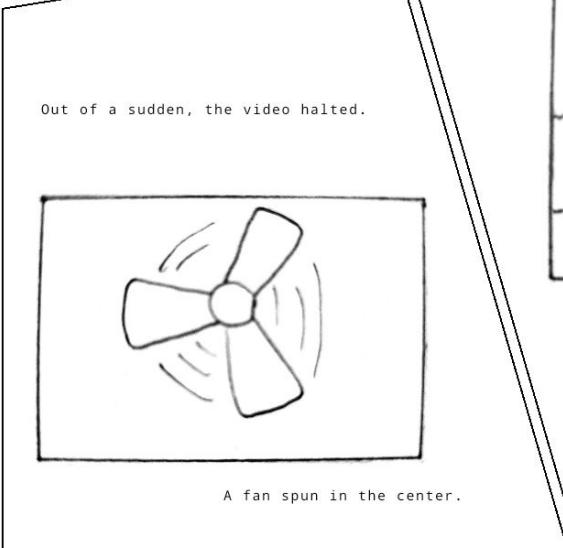
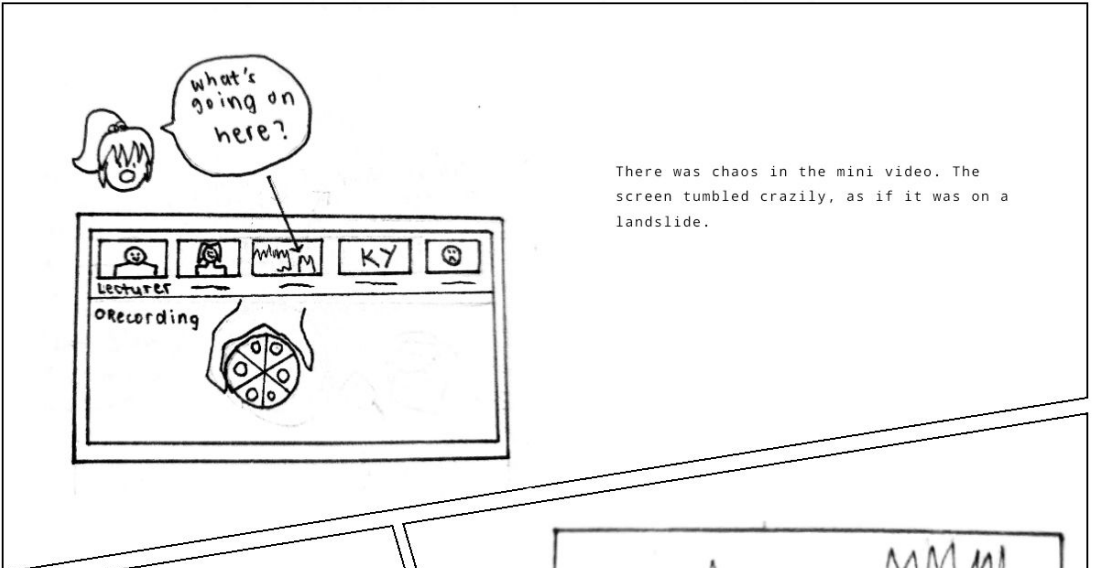
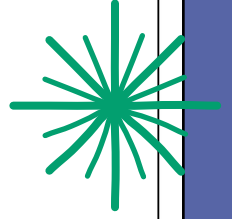
Lesson of the day:  
Check if you are muted before saying anything.



**Chapter 2: A handsome young lad was caught on camera, what are the odds of him listening to the class.**







Looking into the video, a whirl of colours flew past. I observed the motion in the tiny zoom video.

After a while, the phone was lifted upwards...by a handsome young lad...



The young lad then fell asleep again...in class with his camera on.



# THE END



Dear reader, you have reached the end of this comic.

I hope you enjoyed reading these 2 chapters.

On a sidenote, remember to stay safe and stay at home during the pandemic.

Last but not least, good luck for your final exams.

Author: comyqgal

Editor: comyqgal

Scriptwriter: comyqgal



# CONTRIBUTIONS

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## Editors 2021

Angeline Ho  
Christie Kitlam Wong  
Jared Soh Jun Sheng  
Shannon Ho Hsi Shan

## Photographers/ Videographers

Ervina Wijaya  
Koo Shi Tian  
Dina Ghazali  
Prissie Ong Hui Been  
Tatiana Sutulova  
Tsheten Yangden Bhutia  
Vihaan Philip  
Wong Syen Jeng  
Wong Zi Yi  
Zara Abbas

## Designers

Farah Kamila  
Ho Chai Ting  
Ishmal Rabbani  
Koh Hui Wun  
Maesha F Seraj

## Writers

Ashley Lim Ai Li  
Avantika (Avi) Mishra  
Elly Zulaikha  
Layan Alkaf  
Shabnam Kaur Sidhu

## Contributors

Amna Shahid  
Benjamin Keu Lian Jin  
Qistina Binte Bumidin

## Editors 2020

Cheah Wei Shang  
Chua Jia Ying  
Ivan Liew  
Kieran Li Nair

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