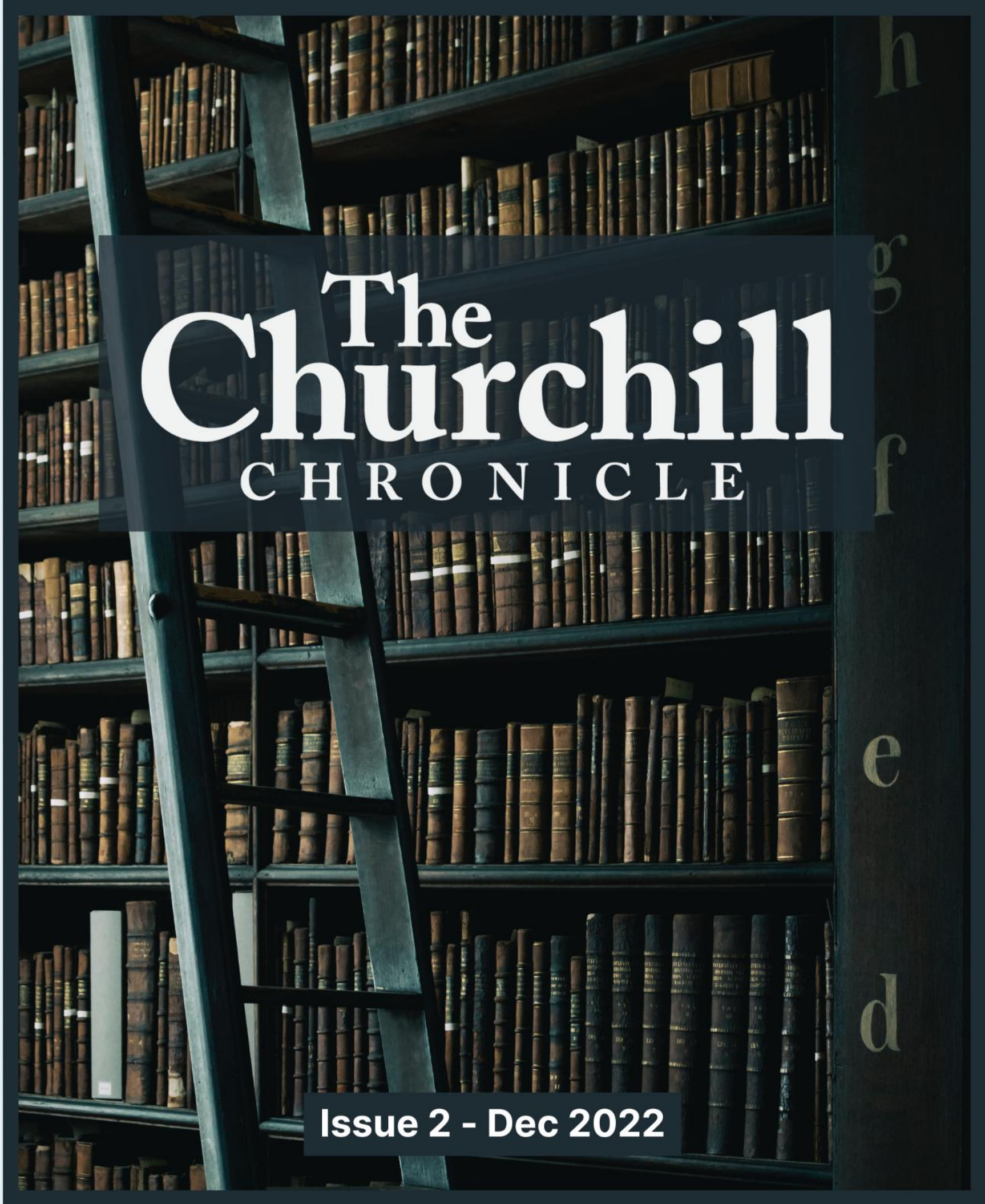




The Churchill CHRONICLE

Issue 2 - Dec 2022

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Through the Frosted Window

Jinjou Wang

i.

Through the frosted window, life passes by. The bus slows and stops, giving you a crystal clear focus of the sidewalk. You yearn for change, bored of the mundane fire hydrant, plastered windows, and cracked pavement. Yet when the bus starts moving, the view becomes blurred beyond recognition, compounded by the refracted effect of the frosted glass.

ii.

September felt like it lasted forever. The awkward moments of interaction with your new teachers stuck with you, making you cringe whenever it crossed your mind. It seemed like the beginning of the school year would never end and yet, with a blink, April is here. We yearn for change when we have stability and yearn for stability when change is pressing us. Why?

iii.

Through the frosted window, lights blur out. They refract, making even the small, insignificant streetlights cloud your vision. Each light sets the tone for the block it's on, especially the coloured lights that immediately draw your attention. But what when you get off the bus? They're discreet; subtle even. The frost on the window made the lights seem much larger than they were.

vi.

Life sets us up in strange ways. It feels like certain moments in our life are EVERYTHING, that will determine the course of our lives for years to come. Yet most of the time, we're able to see in retrospect that we massively overinflated the importance of short-term life events. Our emotions get played and fluctuate by these changes in perception, and massive personal losses are the result.

v.

Perhaps we should stop pretending the frosted window is clear. Perhaps we should stop treating our short-term judgments about life as the be-all-end-all.



Photograph by Raisa Tathoi

The Train Paradox

Simrah Zaman

"Would you chase a train?" my older brother asked.

The suddenness of the question took me aback. I was unaccustomed to things taking me by surprise, especially one as arbitrary as this. Reluctantly, I shook my head. Why would I chase a train?

"No," he began, "trains don't stop for you just because you want them to. Just like every train, the one you're chasing has an operator. They've already processed the fact that they're not stopping for you. So what's the point of chasing that train? Go back to the train station and wait for the right train to take you to your destination."

The chaos of his train had crashed with mine; I was haphazardly piecing together my life, eventually surrendering myself to him. But that can't be the case anymore. A derailed train will never find its way back. Getting on the right train is the only way I can find my destination and restore my lost identity.



Nightly Musings

By Ellen Chen

While others sleep soundly at night, I lay terrified in bed.

Every night, I gaze into the unmoving darkness that haunts my room. Not a sliver of light makes its way into the small box I lay encased. The darkness is palpable and heavy, it layers on me like a heavy blanket, laden with the weight of the universe. It presses against my lungs and pushes against me from all sides, crushing, smothering, and suffocating, all with unabated strength.

I feel so small.

As I lay in bed, a million thoughts rush through my head, chattering away like cicadas amid a soliloquy. Human life is long. Oh, so very long. It spans many smaller lifetimes; a single human life could outlive seven generations worth of a dog's life, then die. Eventually, they are buried and taken away by the ruthless force that is mortality, which swallows its victims whole.

One day, I will join those very dogs. And every night I wonder, the very thought fermenting from within my mind: who will remember me then?

But in the morning, I'll put on my socks. I'll prepare my book-laden backpack and I'll brush my teeth.

Then, I'll go to school, and eventually, I'll return home. The routine continues without a definite end... droning on and on. However, until I return to bed, that inevitable darkness, that all-consuming suffocation, will return.

Sometimes, as we stumble our way through life, our lives begin to seem so big.

What happens if I don't get a perfect score on this test? If I forget my project at home, or if I don't go to that party? What happens to me then?

As I lay in bed and gaze into the quiet, wide expanse of pitch black, I let a breath escape my lungs—just a small one at first, and then a long sigh. I release, and it feels cathartic, and the darkness becomes lighter, moving away from me, leaving me room to breathe.

Human life is long. Oh, so very long. But it's also short. Oh, so very short. The life of the universe has housed millions—no, billions, or trillions of human lives. There is comfort, I think, in the vast expanse of darkness. Everything will turn out alright because it has, for many, many human lives before me, and it will, for many lives to come.



Cartoon by Athena Xiao

welcome to high school by eva whyte

~~"Welcome to the best three years of your life!"~~

High school isn't like the movies:
it's hard,
painful,
exhausting.

~~"Where you learn to focus ideas and hone life skills."~~

Stripping creative freedom in favour of
formats,
facts,
failure.

~~"A place to shape futures."~~

Trading 8-3,
for 9-5,
everyday:
eat
sleep,
repeat.

~~"A gateway to your successful post-secondary life."~~

The only respectable path,
deciding the next fifty years in three.
Pressure to succeed,
to be,
to become the perfect university application.

~~"It is a pivotal time of transition from adolescence to adulthood."~~

A distinction between man and child,
but not yet equal.
'Grow up,'
'be responsible,'
but not free.

~~"Where those who work hard thrive."~~

The weak were trampled by the strong.
Lifting those with honour,
success,
forgetting those who don't.

~~"Remember, health is never to be compromised for grades."~~

Except,
always.
Ignore the mind,
the body.

~~"Make use of our outreach contacts."~~

Call this number,
they will talk to you,
never us.

~~"Lastly, high school is not everything, spend time on extracurriculars."~~

If you can even find a moment between
studying,
homework,
projects.

"So congratulations, and welcome to high school."

Now

The scent of old books,
the scratching of pens on
paper.

Quiet chatter in libraries,
sprinkled with the occasional
laugh.

The occasional waft
of something sweet and
something savoury
floating through the hallway.

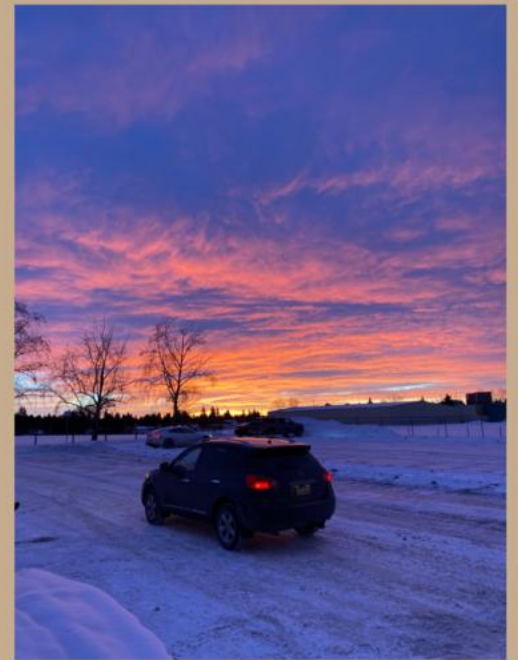
Old friends and new
acquaintances,
some turn into relationships
that last forever.

It may be hard now, but it will
be worth it in the end.

It's a transition, a phase,
a small passage of time.
Things can only get better
from here.

now by fatima sabir

sadva shamanian



I'm Tired
Anonymous

I'm tired,
Even though it's just the first few months of school,
Even though I am privileged with everything I got,
Even though I got all my friends and family around me
I'm tired.

Why?

Is it because I don't get enough sleep,
Possibly my marks?
My expectations?
Should I just give up now...
What would others think about me...
Hopeless, unworthy?
I... should continue...

But,

What if all of this ends up being useless,
How can I predict the future,
What should I prepare?

When, where

Why

Am I thinking so much about this,
Why, am I,
So,
...tired.



Sabrina Huang

First Days
By: Avery Komori

The first days of school were always the worst. She always ended up getting lost or entering the wrong class. Her sister kept telling her that she didn't have to stress about it so much. Of course, she wished she could believe her, but she never did. She let out a sigh, walked up to the front doors and headed inside. Hopefully, this time finding her classes would go a lot smoother. There was something about the first day of High School that seemed nerve-wracking. She tried not to think about how this was the first day and told herself it was just like any other day.

When she walked up and down the hallways: chaotic chatter filled the air. Everyone in sight was just as frantic trying to find out where their first class was. The hallways were jam-packed with students, and she hoped she would make it to her class on time. At least it seemed like everyone was as disorganized as she was. The bell rang, and a chill went down her spine; she was going to be late. In a panic, she went into the nearest classroom and asked a teacher to help her find room 126. After getting vague directions, she turned down a hallway and surprisingly managed to get to class on time.

Now that she had successfully made it, she had a new concern: meeting people. She scanned the class but unfortunately failed to find a single known person. *It was going to be ok*, she said, trying to convince herself.

The girl beside her interrupted her thoughts; "First-day nervousness?" she asked. She nodded, and the girl mirrored in agreement, "Me too, but don't stress about it too much. Everyone's in the same boat".

This made her relieved a bit. It was true; the nice thing about the first days is that everyone is a bit anxious. The girl asked her about some of her interests and hobbies and found out that they had a lot in common. The bell rang again for their next class, and the girl got up and waved goodbye.

It seemed like the first day of school was alright after all.

WONDERFUL LAND

Tiffany Archibong

The season of hardships comes again, and the mountains of homework rise like the dawn
My tears build up and send a horn to announce the day I start to mourn
Before the flood comes crashing down, I blink and enter a flowery gown
Lilies and Daisies with a trickling sound enter my books, and like leaves, they turn
Each page is filled with a creature of light to turn my night oh so bright
As I gallop through the lonely halls, meadows and willows start to fall
Doing homework feels so nice
And when my pencils fall, there are my mice
Every time I step into school, a magical symphony plays for me
The teachers are fairies and help me learn, and when I fail, they change the score
As I immerse myself in this wonderful land, I blink and enter the lonely land
I realize it was all so fake, but romanticizing my life didn't make me break
I walk to class and look down at my work
I blink once more like never before
The real world wasn't made for me, it doesn't play any symphonies.



GROWING PAINS

Subashini Thangadurai

my lungs consumed laughs offered in breaths of
cold air years ago
haunting me is the weight of loss.
daydreaming and storytelling under cloudy skies—
holding onto a boy with blue eyes,
son of the waves I called home.
a walk in the park as every season changes
limitless shades of magenta turn into a corruptible
gloomy umber;
to hold every word she said like a warm fuzzy
blanket around my body
Is not enough to hold onto
promises made
before I grew up



Photograph by : Raisa Tathoi

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROMANTICIZING HIGH SCHOOL

By Ava Miller

Growing up and transitioning to being a teenager is usually marked with classic Hollywood movies such as *Mean Girls*, *Clueless* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. All these movies have one thing in common: high school.

Nobody can deny that these dramatic takes on a high school experience can set unrealistic expectations. Frankly, there can be an issue with the fairly-tale-like portrayals of high school that force being a student into a one-dimensional experience focused only on one's social life. But that isn't the reality of real-life high school students, as most of us spend our free time studying and don't have time to "romanticize school".

Romanticizing school is often associated with negative connotations, and too much of anything can be hindering, so finding the right balance is beneficial.

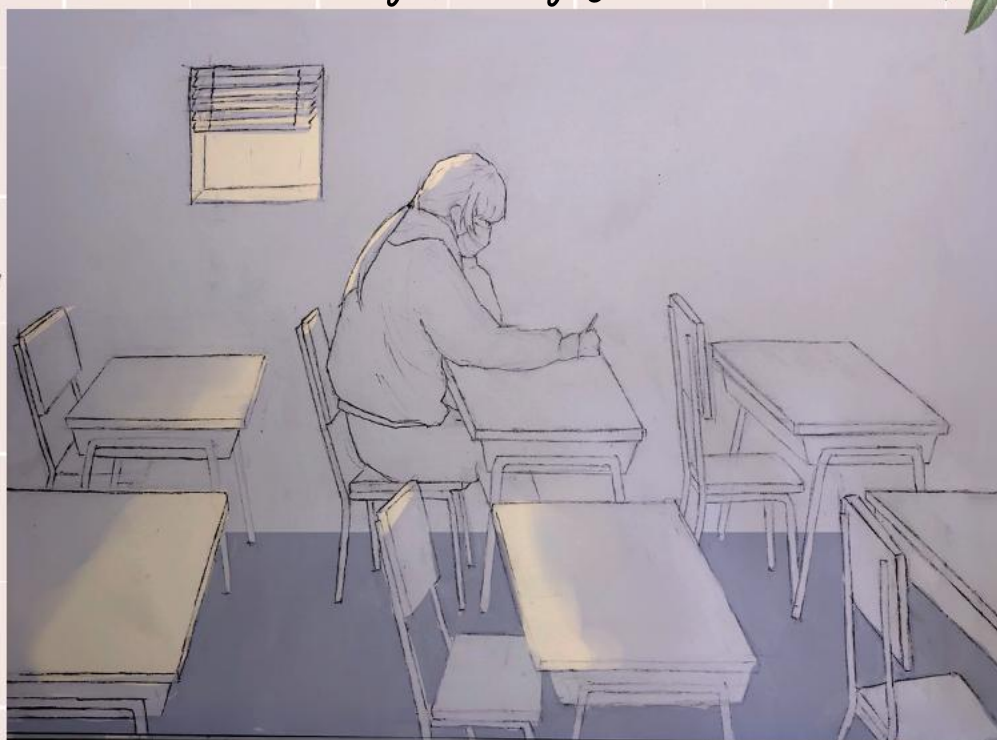
The act of romanticizing school can motivate students to study harder and achieve higher grades. Romanticizing your life overall is also often met with self-expression, letting go of the opinions of peers and the people around you.

Romanticizing your life need not be an extreme manner of living; it can just involve doing activities that bring you joy. Instead of doing what other people desire, try to do things that make you happy about life. It's easy to go through life without appreciating what's most precious, so take some time to relish the beautiful moments that occur every day. It can be simple to let these moments slip by, whether it's a lovely sunset or having a fun time with friends.

But remember, you don't have to be perfect. Romanticizing your school and overall life doesn't have to be constant. Just do what makes you happy. Live your best life and let go of the opinions of others.

DEVOID

Cartoon by Beverly Zhao





Nicolas Pakai

THE HIGHSCHOOL DREAM

NIKI HONARVAR

I was met with a banner in the foyer and a warm welcome from some new faces, all saying one thing. ‘First day of school!’

It was not just the first day of school (as it happens so often)- it was the first day of high school.

After today, I would finally be able to experience the highly glorified time that is high school, just like the movies. All the people you meet, the opportunities you have, and the things you get to experience all just simultaneously change from middle school, and I was eager to experience it all.

I apprehensively wait in line to get my ID card and a linemate wittily remarks, “Are you excited?”

I mean sure, I am excited. Excited to finally experience all the hype revolving around high school. Also, a little anxious, knowing that it wasn’t going to be easy to fit in and find friends all while trying to live out high school as the “dream” everyone bestows it to be. I knew it wasn’t going to be easy, but I wanted it to become a reality.

to reach. All the pictures I created in my mind of what I would experience have become obsolete. I realized that I didn’t have to fit into the high school I saw in the movies and read in books. I have become completely fine with not living vicariously through high school experience that doesn’t resemble a dream.

Putting a label on anything can lead you down a rabbit hole of setting overly unrealistic expectations. Not necessarily the good kind of expectations when setting an expectation of changing ourselves to “fit in”. In our time, it is easy to give ourselves expectations because we are constantly trying to be people that we’re not. I think it is imperative to see that we don’t have to alter or change ourselves in any way to fit in with what we see in the media, shows or in books, which were purposely made to be a little more fantasized than they should be.

INTRODUCTION TO AN UNHEALTHY FRIENDSHIP

BY: ALINA RUSSELL

High school is all about learning. Whether it is academics, sports, friendship or even crushes, teenagers explore their options and learn new things. As such, healthy relationships are a topic talked about in CALM, but experience helps a lot too. Relationships come in many forms and this column is about familial, friendship and romantic relationships.

In this edition, I will tell you from personal experience what healthy and unhealthy friendships look like.

It is important to note that healthy friendships benefit both people. As such, both people are happy and fulfilled in the relationship and there are more good times than bad. Friends are people you talk to and bond with, who care for you and are there for you. You may play the same videogames, be in the same class, etc. Regardless, if hanging around that person has more of a good impact on your life than bad then it is a healthy friendship.

When the friendship turns unhealthy, it means it is no longer mutually beneficial. For example, I had a friendship which was mutually beneficial in the beginning, but over time we developed communication issues which leads me to my next topic: Communication issues. They are problematic because when you aren't communicating, other issues cannot be solved. Friendship may not progress if communication is out of the equation.

I didn't feel understood and neither did my friend. Things became awkward between us because I was afraid I wouldn't be understood anyways so I didn't communicate properly. Moreover, I also sensed my friend making less effort which was the result of being burnt out because I couldn't seem to understand them. We had an unhealthy friendship and I had to end contact because things got out of hand and both our mental health got worse.

This friend was someone who I had fun with at times. We went to the arcade, got coffee, shopped together and hung out in different places. But most of the time we were unhappy, one of us was crying, etc. A healthy friendship enhances your life, and you gain a companion to talk with and do things. There are different levels of friendship, but in all as long as there is more good than bad, it is healthy.



I DON'T NEED YOU
CARTOON BY: CINDY CHENG

THE HIDDEN SIDE OF MARVEL - DAREDEVIL EDITION

BY: HIBA HASSAN

RATING: 9/10

DAREDEVIL, THE KICKOFF TO MARVEL'S THE DEFENDERS SAGA FOLLOWS MATT MURDOCK (CHARLIE COX). AFTER AN ACCIDENT LEAVES HIM BLINDED BUT WITH OTHER HEIGHTENED SENSES, MATT USES HIS SKILLS TO FIGHT CRIME ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK AT NIGHT WHILE "FIGHTING" CRIME AS AN ATTORNEY BY DAY. HOWEVER, MATT'S DOUBLE LIFE CAUSES HIM TO TAKE THE LAW INTO HIS OWN HANDS AND KEEP SECRETS FROM THOSE CLOSE TO HIM WHILE TRYING TO SAVE HELL'S KITCHEN FROM DESCENDING INTO HELL. THE SHOW CONSISTS OF THREE SEASONS, EACH WITH 13 EPISODES, AND WHILE THE SECOND SEASON TAKES PLACE RIGHT AFTER THE FIRST, THE THIRD TAKES PLACE AFTER THE EVENTS OF THE DEFENDERS.

DAREDEVIL CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS AN ABSOLUTE MASTERPIECE. THE PLOT, THE CHARACTERS, AND THE ACTORS WERE ALL REMARKABLE, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO BINGE. THE JUXTAPOSITION OF MATT MURDOCK'S ENTIRE LIFE WAS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS ABOUT THE SHOW. HE IS AN ATTORNEY WHO TAKES AN OATH TO FOLLOW THE LAW BUT IS ALSO A VIGILANTE WHO BREAKS THE LAW EVERY NIGHT. HE'S BEEN BLIND SINCE HE WAS 9 YEARS OLD BUT HIS OTHER ENHANCED SENSES ALLOW HIM TO "SEE" MORE THAN THE AVERAGE PERSON COULD. MOREOVER, HIS CATHOLICISM IS ESSENTIAL TO HIS LIFE BUT CONTRADICTS THE VIOLENT THINGS HE DOES AS A VIGILANTE AND ALL OF THESE ASPECTS ARE AMAZINGLY DISPLAYED THROUGHOUT THE SHOW. IT SHOWS THE "HUMANNESS" AND VULNERABILITY OF THE CHARACTER, CONTRARY TO MOST SUPERHERO SHOWS THAT DIVIDE THE HERO FROM CIVILIANS. THIS IS ALSO DISPLAYED IN ONE OF THE VILLAINS, KINGPIN, PORTRAYED BY VINCENT D'ONOFRIO, AND HIS PERFORMANCE LEFT ME TERRIFIED OF HOW INTELLIGENT YET RUTHLESS THE VILLAIN WAS, WHILE STILL JUSTIFYING HIS TERRIBLE ACTIONS WITH A HUMAN TRAIT, WHICH WAS HIS LOVE FOR A WOMAN. I THINK THE BEST SHOWS ARE ONES THAT ALLOW THE AUDIENCE TO RESONATE WITH THE CHARACTERS, AND DAREDEVIL DID A WONDERFUL JOB OF PORTRAYING HEROIC AND EVIL CHARACTERS.

WHILE THE THIRD SEASON PROVIDED A SENSE OF CLOSURE, AND FANS WERE DEVASTATED AFTER THE SHOW WAS CANCELLED IN 2018. HOWEVER, RECENTLY MATT MURDOCK WAS REINTRODUCED INTO THE MCU IN SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME, AND SHE-HULK: ATTORNEY AT LAW, AND A DISNEY+ SHOW CALLED DAREDEVIL: BORN AGAIN IS IN DEVELOPMENT, OPENING A NEW DOOR OF POSSIBILITIES FOR THE CHARACTER AND THE DEFENDERS SAGA.



Photograph by Sadra Shamanian

RANKING THE CHIPMUNKS ON THEIR PERFORMANCE SKILLS BY KATLYN NGUYEN

WHAT'S UP, CHURCHILL! THIS MONTH I'VE SPENT HOURS WATCHING ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS CONTENT TO BRING YOU MY RANKING OF THEIR PERFORMANCE SKILLS. I JUDGED THEM BASED ON THEIR VOCALS, RAPPING, STAGE PRESENCE AND DANCING. SINCE THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS, I DECIDED TO FOCUS ON THE CGI/LIVE-ACTION VERSION.

VOCALS:

- 1.SIMON
- 2.ALVIN
- 3.THEODORE

DESPITE ALVIN BEING THE LEAD VOICE OF THE GROUP, I WOULD ARGUE THAT SIMON IS THE STRONGEST VOCALIST IN THE GROUP. HE HAS A LARGE RANGE AS HIS VOICE IS SMOOTH LIKE BUTTER, HONESTLY, HIS VERSE IN WITCH DOCTOR FROM THE FIRST MOVIE SAYS IT ALL.

RAPPING:

- 1.SIMON
- 2.ALVIN
- 3.THEODORE

SIMON IS THE CHIPMUNK WITH THE MOST RHYTHM AND RHYME WITH ALVIN AS A CLOSE SECOND. AS FOR THEODORE, HE IS NOT GIVEN MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO RAP THUS IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE HIS SKILLS.

STAGE PRESENCE:

- 1.ALVIN
- 2.SIMON
- 3.THEODORE

OUT OF ALL OF THE CHIPMUNKS, ALVIN HAS THE MOST STAGE PRESENCE, HIS ENERGY IS ALWAYS AMAZING AND HIS FACIALS ARE ALWAYS ON POINT. COMPARED TO HIS BROTHER ALVIN STANDS OUT MORE ON STAGE WHILE THE OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THEODORE, SEEM TO FADE INTO THE BACKGROUND.

DANCING:

- 1.ALVIN
- 2.THEODORE
- 3.SIMON

JUDGING THEIR DANCE ABILITIES WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT BECAUSE THEY ARE USUALLY ALL VERY SYNCHRONIZED, BUT ALVIN ENDED UP COMING OUT ON TOP BECAUSE OF HIS STRONG STAGE PRESENCE. SIMON WAS RANKED LAST BECAUSE I FOUND WITH SOME OF THE DANCES HE LOOKED A BIT AWKWARD DUE TO HIS HEIGHT.



Your mother regales you with the three years of high school she spent with lazy afternoons, cruising shopping malls with her girlfriends. Your father apprises you of exhilarating nights with classmates, watching the sunset while sipping beer by the lake. It's no wonder high school is the subject of so many sitcoms, coming-of-age novels, and fashion magazines—a world fashioned from the alluring sagacity of fresh-teenage sensations is what one can only describe as bewitching. This is why economic empires can be mounted on a plethora of anti-wrinkling creams and clothes that are marketed to turn back the clock on age by twenty years. It is a universal fact: youth is *bliss*, yet so many of us seem so exasperated by that very same idea. Why do high school students hate high school? The simple notion of vigour-filled daydreams and juvenile convictions seems barely enough to scrape the tower of disquietude, laced with the persisting disruption of youthful life. Credit counting, exam results, and university considerations press on contentment like weights on the back. No, it's not easy being a high school student—but we often overlook the little potholes of bliss in our lives, brushing them off as temporary setbacks. Too often we ignore happiness, painting it as bait.

So here it is, the truth: you need to live life. Do not be consumed by the constant stress of academia; laugh with friends, and stay up late on weekends. As the end of these three years chase you down the road of adulthood, take advantage of your young eyes and strength. I see a promising future for us all, leaving the doors of high school for the last time. And I will miss it with all my being.



Photographed by Mira Bhatt



Changes
Eva Blakney



If the Grade 6 Eva could see where I am right now in High School with the classes I'm taking, and more specifically, the ones I'm not, she would have a fit.

When I was starting my first year of junior high, I was beyond ecstatic about the classes and years of work that would prepare me for what I had been waiting for my whole life; High School. Dun Dun Dun...am I right? High school is inevitable, something you know you will eventually get to, but it seems so far away as a child - you feel it will never really happen. In Elementary, I remember learning that I had to attend another school (Tom Baines) once I finished elementary. Back then, Tom Baines seemed like a day that would never come - but it did. During Junior High, Churchill seemed like something that was so far away - but still, it came.

A lot has changed since those early days. In Grade 6, I planned to take the full International Baccalaureate Programme and every finance and business course they offered. Now, however, I'm not enrolled in any IB courses, nor am I taking Finance. The only promise I stayed true to was the business course commitment. I'm thrilled with how my high school experience is going thus far - but it's interesting because it is nothing like what I'd imagined. I figured I would be in every club they had and be part of every council and committee. Not that I'm not involved, but rather that I have found the perfect balance. My point is that I've been romanticizing high school before I knew what it was. Now that I'm here, it's fascinating what I'm making of my experience.

Another element of change is my social interaction with my peers. Throughout my elementary and middle school years, I thought that everyone was extremely immature, but the truth is, I was just overly mature. However, nearing the end of Junior High was an absolute nightmare: unnecessary drama and cruelty towards everyone, *from* everyone. Now, everyone has caught up to speed, and we can all be kind and decent to one another, like proper young adults. I have to admit, it's a lovely change.

All in all, things don't have to go the way you plan them as long as you are happy and healthy. And if you aren't, then make the change that will make you so. Just remember to put *your* mental health first and always take care of yourself.

RED ROMANTICS

By Moumita Murshed

The setting of my studies is simply unable to be anything else, and therefore I am void of blame at the unveiling of the woods. It is a dark center of the thicket, which in turn holds every regret I have been burdened with since birth. It is too unpleasant, that swarming cesspool of words which were nothing like the romantic poetry I was fed years before I built a “home” there.

“Home,” as in, is a place where one lives permanently: Where one is swallowed and eaten and then, forgotten all together at once, just as everyone who lived in this home before me. Instead of a sweet serenade, pages that should have bled white and pure bleed ink that is dark crimson. A shade of red which I believed to be sinister and cruel, the soul of the sea of a million blossoms which never fully bloomed.

That is until I saw the girl who was watching me. She smiled at me with a mouth which tasted like metal, piercing carmine through my head wherever I turned. Then, all I could see was red, and all I could bear to do was stare back with eyes which were muddy, cold and contaminated with a soulless ink. With childish magic that shines vermillion, we have fallen into a fateless yet seemingly endless dance.

But the woods find our behaviour despicable as if we were Eve and our last waltz was the apple dripping with the scarlet snake’s tongue. This is typical of the trees—consuming every drop of red, vibrant and smooth and not thick like blood. I should have expected it, yet I seem to have forgotten the forsaken balance of the scale in the midst of our dizzying tempest. She and I have left Eve with two apples in Eden and no book to summon Adam.

So, I stayed with her until midnight. Then, I wait for the forest to take her, as it always does.

BOOK REVIEW: NO LONGER HUMAN

BY OSAMU DAZAI By Manaar Fatima

This novel is about a boy named Oba Yozo, who lives life feeling extreme detachment from the world around him. Set before World War II in Japan, Yozo finds himself torn between the two worlds of westernization and aristocratic Japan: he feels ostracized, and as the title puts it, No Longer Human. It is known that Dazai, the author, ingrained intricate personal experiences into this book, with Yozo being incredibly similar to how Dazai viewed himself. Both feel deep-seated inadequacy even as they leave home and mature into adults. As the more literal Japanese translation of the title puts it, they feel disqualified from being human.

Despite this, Yozo is written to be an oddly relatable character. Dazai takes common feelings and exaggerates them to the point where they become uncomfortable to read. The novel does an excellent job of showing a person's self-destructive tendencies. Yozo is portrayed as painfully distant: inconsiderate and degrading to everyone around him—not because he thinks he is above them, but because he is beneath them by such a large margin. He feels crushing guilt and undeserving of anything good that happens to him since he isn’t human; he doesn’t feel he should even be allowed to try being human.

I enjoyed this book a lot. As mentioned, Yozo is a relatable character taken to the extreme, but the most intriguing part of the novel is finding out which details of Yozo’s life coincide with Dazai’s. The author and the character are linked to the point where the story is regarded as semi-autobiographical. Glimpsing into the world of such a talented writer is fascinating, and seeing parts of his circumstances in life is even more so. Read this novel if you are prepared for discomfort, to question the world, and can stand reading from the perspective of a truly detached madman.

Photograph by Margaux Wu



Floriography Monthly - Witch Hazels

By Nabeeha Ali

As snow blankets our streets and homes, I cannot help but stare out at all the trees, withered and waiting for spring to return. A few flowers still bloom despite the odds, those used to the harsh chill of winter, like the witch hazel.

The Hamamelis, also known as the witch hazel, blooms in the autumn and through the winter, making it an incredibly hardy plant. Its blossoms are typically yellow, somewhat reminiscent of a chrysanthemum. As one could likely guess from the name, giving a witch hazel to someone in a bouquet means 'a spell' in the Victorian flower language. Surprisingly, the origins of the hazel's name have nothing to do with witches, instead relating to the Middle English word 'wiche' which meant "pliant and bendable," likely due to its flexibility and ability to grow in the cold.

However, more than its tenacity or origins, what sets the witch hazel apart is its medicinal properties, both in folk and modern medicine. Native Americans would use the extracts of the hazel as a natural remedy and in herbal medicines. Nowadays, hazel is used to reduce eczema and rashes, but there is not enough evidence to vouch for the use of hazel over other medicines. The essential oil extracted from witch hazel plants can cause contact dermatitis (inflammation after contact) in some individuals. However, witch hazel plants still contain chemicals like tannins that have been proven to work in skin care products, and there are a few companies that commercially produce witch hazel extract for medicinal use.

If you want to grow your own witch hazel plant, remember to plant it in fertile and moist soil, preferably with a pH between 4 and 7. It will need to be in full or partial sunlight and can grow to be up to 26 feet tall (depending on the species), making outdoor planting optimal. As a low-maintenance plant, the hazel will need watering when it is young, but as an adult, natural rainfall will be enough for it unless one lives in areas of frequent drought. Be patient if growing it from the seed, as seeds may take up to two years to germinate.

Whether you are a beginner or a professional in the garden, remember to take care of the garden as you would take care of yourself: with love, care and lots of water!

BURN YOUR BRUSSELS SPROUTS

By Finch Ginn

The brussel sprout is a miniature leaf vegetable, first cultivated in northern Europe in the fifth century. Despite centuries of evolution, it remains the most disgusting food to exist in the history of the planet. Brussels sprouts have somehow placed themselves in the most disliked food group; vegetables. As well as the most hated taste attribute: bitterness. As anyone who has ever had the displeasure of eating a bitter vegetable knows, it is an extremely repulsive and foul flavour which shows no mercy to whoever is eating it. No matter how they are cooked, and no matter how much oil or spices they have been drowned in, brussels sprouts will always remain revolting. Anyone who has to experience the god-awful consumption of a brussels sprout wouldn't be rewarded for their suffering very well anyways. While it's true that brussels sprouts have some nutritional value, there isn't anything special about them. The vitamins you can find in them (c and k) are found in almost any other vegetable. For example, you can eat broccoli, asparagus, bell peppers, kale, spinach, romaine lettuce and parsley, which are all easily accessible vegetables that would provide a good substitute for the vitamins found in brussels sprouts. They can be eaten, cooked and even enjoyed by a person. Anyways, please do yourself a favour and put the next brussel sprout you come across in the garbage, step on it, throw it out of a window, toss it in the nearest ocean or volcano, burn it, hike up mount Everest with it and leave it there. If you ever find yourself in a situation where you must consume such a rancid vegetable, I wish you good luck.



Photograph By Lisa Chen

STRANGERS

BY: FARAH NUZHAT

Olivia grasped the broken friendship bracelet tightly in her hand. They were broken beyond repair, and they both knew it. Today's fight was the final straw of the string of fights that happened over the past few months.

Their friendship used to be perfect. They balanced out each other's personalities; Olivia was calm and collected while Jenna was outgoing and amicable. Since they were kids, they promised to never leave each other's side.

If everything was fine, where did it all go wrong? Their first fight was over some arbitrary matter and took both of them by surprise. Olivia didn't mean to lash out at her and immediately apologized. They laughed over it like it was nothing, but something changed after that. The air around them was suddenly tense. Every little inconvenience would turn into a full-fledged argument. Having a normal conversation felt like going to war, always ready to fight.

This time, however, their fight wasn't over some random disagreement. It was about their broken friendship. They spat out insults at each other, aiming to hurt the other like the past ten years didn't matter.



PHOTOGRAPH BY: KELLY

It was over, Olivia knew that all too well. She let out a shuddering breath, not knowing how she should feel. Unwanted tears started streaming down her cheeks. Olivia wanted to hate Jenna for hurting her and ruining their unbreakable bond. But most importantly, she wanted to hate her for leaving her alone. After all these years, Olivia's fear of being abandoned slowly diminished, but now, her fear took root and sprung again. Yet she knew the blame couldn't all be put on Jenna. As much as Olivia wanted to make the pain go away by hating Jenna, she knew she was to blame as well.

Taking one last glance at the bracelet, she threw it away, hoping the memories of Jenna would disappear with it. The lingering thought still hung in the air:

How was it possible to go from best friends to strangers that quickly?



PHOTOGRAPH BY: KELLY

Eric Reviews: Communism

By Eric Xu

With all the conflict and strife present in the world right now, nothing is scarier to me than the war between Russia and Ukraine. All this violence made me think of all the other times that Russia has been of international interest. The most prominent example that came to mind was the formation of the USSR. First, I began to consider how it rose to such prominence, and all I could think was one thing: Communism. And it begs the question, why did communism of all the different ideologies rise to such prominence to confront the all-powerful free market?

Starting with a quick summary of communism as an ideology, communism originates from the ideas of the German philosopher: Karl Marx. He claimed that the inequalities between the working class and those they worked for would lead to a collapse of capitalism and give rise to a new system, known now as communism. This new system would consolidate all means of production into the hands of the government. The aim of this was to eliminate all inequality caused by a free market and create a classless society. In theory, this would create a prosperous society where everyone could enjoy a comfortable standard of living regardless of personal ability. People would work not because they want to amass wealth but simply because it would be their responsibility to the collective. Now knowing the theory behind communism, examining real-world examples shows something far from a prosperous, classless society. The concentration of power in the hands of the government often leads to the formation of dictatorships. Prominent examples like Stalin's government show that this often leads to the exploitation of people and creates a nation filled with poverty. Famines begin to arise due to unreasonable production quotas, and citizens began to become discontent with their living conditions. This causes paranoid leaders to persecute "traitors" and create prison camps. As a result, the accumulation of all these factors created an unstable nation incapable of sustaining itself, leading to its collapse. Considering all these different factors, one can see that the implementation of communism has historically never ended well. If I was simply considering the theory behind it, I would give communism a solid 87%. However, after examining all aspects and factoring in real-life implementations, I must give it a final rating of 42%.

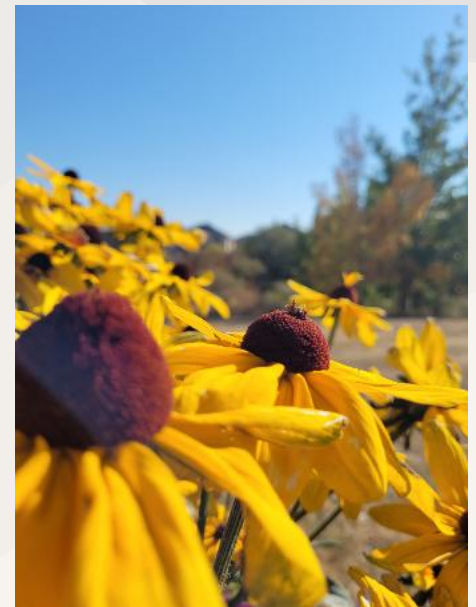
Lookism Animated

Adaptation By Celena Zhang

Lookism, a webcomic first published in November 2014, has been picked up by Netflix for an animated adaptation. The comic currently has over 400 chapters and is continuously updated by Park Tae-Joon, the author.

For those who have never heard of *Lookism*, the story revolves around Park Hyung Seok; a high-school student bullied for being overweight. Being harassed every day, he asks his mother to transfer schools. He moves to Seoul to run away from his problems and start anew. However, just before he attends his new school, he magically transforms into a new body that is perfect in every way. The sudden change in appearance comes with a shift in treatment from people; for the first time, he is treated with kindness, and people befriend him because of his looks. In this comic, every character holds value to the plot and is always memorable with their backstories, motives, and development.

In *Lookism*, the fight scenes feel quite immersive for a comic. Each panel is filled with great depth; you can practically see the flow of movement in every image. It is no wonder that *Lookism* finally got an animated adaptation, with the fanbase more stoked than ever. The first episode was released on November 4th, 2022, and I can't wait to see more! *Lookism* has been a great comic and can finally be reborn as an animated series. I highly recommend checking it out if you are interested.



Photograph by
Cami Hsieh

Coming of Age

By: Maida Azhar

Do you remember reaching the age when you were officially a teenager? The moment you wished to happen? Fantasizing and imagining your teenage years and what lies ahead? Did a wave of excitement wash over you as you about the next four years to come? Or were you nervous and realized that you were no longer a child?

As our adventures started throughout our teenage years, we met, greeted, and spent unforgettable memories with our friends, family and ourselves. We said goodbye to our childhood years and began our adventures with a new chapter in our lives, the start and the end of those teenage years. We explored, grew and learned from ourselves and were welcomed with blessings as we worked together as teams and faced challenges and fears in our journey. Furthermore, we worked hard to achieve our goals and hoped to get accepted into our dream universities. However, when you're a teenager, you never truly know how fast time flies. Do you remember celebrating your 13th birthday? Do you remember being excited about the fact you were considered a teenager? And now, within the blink of an eye, we are coming of age. Say goodbye to the teenage years and hello to adulthood.

How does it feel to be in your late teenage years? This is when we realize and take a moment to remember when we were all thirteen and said our goodbyes to our childhood years. Just as on our thirteenth birthday, we blew out the candle and began our journey as teenagers. Now, we are about to say goodbye to our teenage years and get thrown into the real-life world. Are you nervous? Excited? Anxious? As soon as we are adults, we will start a new, different chapter. We'll chase our dreams of getting into and completing university, starting our new lives with the hopes of all the success and happiness our future holds.

Although, with all the struggles and adulthood-related responsibilities waiting for us as adults, let's take a moment to appreciate and thank ourselves for coming this far in life. We must give credit ourselves for not giving up, for believing in ourselves, and for facing all of the challenges and struggles life gave us throughout our chapters of childhood, teenhood and now, through adulthood. So before heading off into our new chapters, let's all think back to the moments we enjoyed as teens and all the hard work we did for ourselves. Most importantly, to live and make the most of our last teenage years before our new journeys in life.



Clueless: A Movie Review

By: Alena Cherny

Before high school, I took it upon myself to watch any "coming of age" or high school-themed movie I could find. I did this in hopes to prepare myself for what these three years would be like. Looking back now, none of them were helpful or true to life. Despite this, I found myself circling back to one movie: *Clueless*. There are countless reasons why this movie should not be relatable: for one, the amazing, but ridiculously expensive outfits, the way everything just seems to work out for the main character, and the fact that full-grown adults are playing 17-year-olds. *Clueless*, though unrealistic at times, still manages to portray the experiences the average student encounters: peer pressure, awful guys, failing classes, and fake friends. The movie follows Cher (Alicia Silverstone) who has the perfect life: she and her best friend, Dionne (Stacey Dash), run their high school. Cher with her perfect life has a popular guy chasing after her who is also rich. Even with all this, Cher is consumed by an overwhelming fear: what if she's not a good person? In light of this revelation, she first tries to improve herself by setting up two of her lonely teachers with one another. Surprisingly, it works! Following this success, she takes on a new mission: giving the new girl at school, Tai (Brittany Murphy), a makeover and integrating her into the popular crowd. Though at first, this is also a success, it quickly devolves into chaos. As the movie progresses, Cher seems to be messing up often and taking those she cares about down with her. Like with any 90s movie, some parts will have you cringing a little due to outdated views and dialogue, but you'll also be brought along for a wild yet touching ride. By the end, you'll be rooting for Cher while also questioning if you even like her, which makes her the perfect anti-hero of this story. This movie, even though technically a rom-com, somehow manages to address some raw and difficult topics in unique ways. This movie is rated PG-13, as it includes some references to sexual content, mild swearing, some distressing themes, and references to alcohol. It is available to watch on Paramount+ and as always, can also be purchased on DVD/Blu-ray.

Brook Guderjan

THE BLUE LOBSTER

Written by Anonymous

Inspired by Jakerton's fans constantly sending him blue lobster videos

This is a satirical story as an attempt to lighten peoples' days. I hope you enjoy it and your rainy day becomes sunny :)



She stared at the ceiling bored, eyelids heavy. She just laid there on her bed, unable to think of an activity. She didn't exactly want to do anything either. After a long day of college, most of her assignments were left alone. She knew she had to do them but didn't want to. Her day was so mundane. She felt burnt out.

The student turned over and sighed, reaching for her phone on her nightstand and turning it on, almost immediately being met with the cursed blue lobster she kept seeing. The loud music blared through the tiny speakers with such a high volume she'd almost assume it annoyed her roommate as it practically filled the entire room. "Shoot!" She mumbled and turned the phone off quickly and tossed it aside. She swore she'd get that damn lobster out of the hard drive soon.

She sat up and stretched, turning until something struck her as odd. The walls, the furniture, the decorations and the items... Even her own hands! They.. were all blue! Stomps rumbled the ground, approaching closer and closer. She whipped her head around to face the noise, and to her horror...

There stood the mighty blue lobster, twice her size.

Her eyes widened and she opened her mouth to scream but a claw pressed against her lips stopped her from doing so. Instead, the lobster spoke: "Greetings, little inferior being."

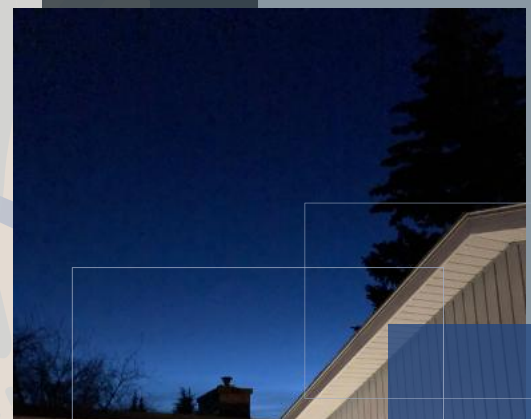
The girl scooted backwards across her bed, scrambling to flee from the lobster that haunted her mind and life, heavily panting. "Wh-Wh-Wha-"

"You have many questions, I know." The lobster continued, cutting her off. "I've been trapped in that little shiny speaker box you have for centuries, and now, you've released me. Many thanks to you, human."

CENTURIES?! The girl was baffled.

"My kind has gone extinct. We've travelled planet to planet, trying to find a habitat suitable to our needs, until we found this green ball. Earth." The lobster added, sorrowful. "However, I am still alive. There must be more of me around! Many thanks for releasing me, hairy ape-man." Then the lobster disappeared in a ball of bright light.

What the hell just happened?



Brook Guderjan



Optimism

By Fouzan

Be positive.”

You’ve heard this before, you’ve seen this before, and you probably have a good idea of what it is.

You have been told to be positive, and when you ask: “why should I be positive?” The answer would be along the lines of “because it’s good for you.”

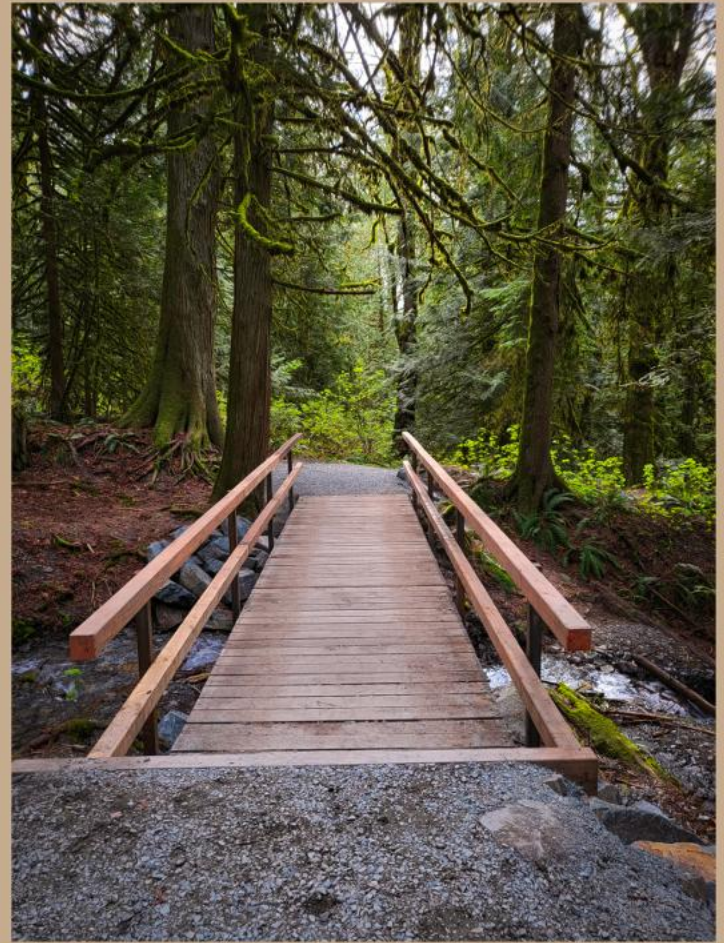
Positivity sounds like, “everything’s good here, everything’s fine, it’s all good.” However, the problem with this is that you’re saying everything is fine when everything is clearly not.

Optimism is believing and seeing that the future will be alright. It sounds like, “Things aren’t so great right now. But the future will be positive. Those things will get better, and you will get through this.”

You don’t act like things are good when they are not. You do not close your eyes to what is, instead, you accept what’s happening. And also believe that things will get better.

Or that if you keep your eyes open and keep looking ahead, you’ll be able to see the “light at the end of the tunnel.”

So Always Be Optimistic.



ASTIKA ASTIKA

ISTANBUL BY ALEENA KHILJI

Embrace the undying lure of the city of cities.

The bells of water carriers unceasingly ring

Flocks of seagulls high above, singing their chorus.

The woman’s feet dabble in the mystique Bosphorus, the wind swiftly moving along

In her hand lies an ivory cup of fortune, and soon the rich aroma of bitter

Turkish coffee fills the air.

Her face emanates the beauty of a tulip, the same tulip that the Ottomans so admired.

Her little boy runs along the cobble-stoned path, eagerly awaiting his fresh bread.

The treasure of his smile never fades, and the warmth of his heart could light the way.

Amidst the hustle of the Grand Bazaar, is a man, sitting in solitude.

He sips his tenth cup of hot apple tea and listens to the endless banter of motley buyers.

An absolute uproar as people buoyantly move toward the shops filled with lights and various fabrics.

The awe-inspiring Süleymaniye mosque.

Absorbed, in its utter magnificence, and stunning stature.

Pigeons fill the courtyard, and people gather in harmony and devotion within the white walls.

Everybody stands together in unity, indistinguishable from one another.

Topkapi stands there now, alone without its true purpose.

Once, a mighty conqueror lived within those colossal palace walls.

His ambitions stretched to the corners of the globe, yet his empire was destined to fail.

One who visits the charming Istanbul has seen the crossroads of civilization.



15 Well-Mannered Insults To Use in Every Argument

1. I hope both sides of your pillow are warm every night.
2. I hope the oreo always drops in the milk before you can put it in your mouth.
3. I hope you get a new pair of socks and immediately step into a puddle in the kitchen.
4. I hope you stub your toe on every chair you pass.
5. I hope you always bump your shoulder when you turn a corner.
6. I hope all your favourite clothes are in the wash on an important night.
7. I hope your phone only charges at an angle.
8. I hope you are never in time to stop the microwave at one second when you are getting a midnight snack.
9. I hope the chocolate chips in your cookies always turn out to be raisins.
10. I hope your mom makes your favourite food for dinner and forgets to add salt.
11. I hope you charge your laptop for the entire night without noticing the cord needs to be plugged in.
12. I hope you get splashed with a spoon every time you do the dishes.
13. May you be comfortable in your bed when your mom comes to talk to you, leaving the door slightly ajar as she goes.
14. I hope you always feel your phone vibrating in your pocket, but never have any notifications.
15. I hope you are always 0.5 marks away from acing your tests. (Or passing them)

Stardust Stories

Anhad Chauhan

Oh, her laughter. It was like a wooden wind chime being tickled. Her laughter first introduced us to each other, and that laughter brought me back to the present...

“What were you thinking of?” she inquired with concern.

“You,” I replied. “Or rather, your laughter.” Then I realized that before anything, I had to confess. I had to tell her how I felt. I couldn’t go on living with a pang in my heart every time I saw her with someone else.

She was my best friend, yes, but no way was I going to get that possessive of her. So what if we didn’t get to see each other that often?

So what if we didn’t have the same class? Nothing tests friendship better than high school, and I was going to make sure ours passed with flying colours.

I told her.

“Make me a promise,” she said. “No matter what happens, you will come to me if you ever need me. Know that I’m here for you. I always will be. Promise.”

“On one condition,” I replied. She slightly puckered her lips as if she was scolding me for not promising first. “This applies to you too.”

Her face broke into a grin. “Deal.”

A Guide to Romanticizing High School

Sharlene Arceo

We've all been in school long enough to know that it is nothing like the movies. This heartbreaking fact that has likely developed trust issues in many students may, surprisingly, be redeemable! What if I told you there was a way to make your school experience more appealing?

What if there was a way to make you feel like you're in an episode of *Gilmore Girls*? Let's start with the basics, what does it mean to romanticize? It means to make something more enjoyable, and appear better than it is in actuality by adjusting your mindset. Of course, don't overindulge in this habit and create a fake perception of high school and remember that reality is just as important. With that said, there are many positive ramifications as it can influence you to work harder towards your goals, raise your spirits and is a lot of fun.

So how do you do it? There aren't specific rules to this but I'm going to list a few suggestions for you, which you may alter to your liking. First and foremost, listen to the music you love to put you in a good mood while you study, do work, or are just chilling! Additionally, alter your study environment. A change of scenery can uplift your mood, help you focus and encourage your studying. Thirdly, focus on your goals by asking yourself questions that prompt you to think about what you want to achieve and how you want to work towards that end goal. Another tip is to utilize the school library's resources by reading books that catch your eye or are related to a class you're taking. If you don't enjoy reading, however, bring a journal if you just want to spread your thoughts on paper. Finally, the most important tip is self-care. While this should already be a part of your routine, I emphasize it as it's vital in making you feel revitalized and ready to take on the day! I hope this helps you, and have a fun time romanticizing!

Forgiveness

Kira Becker

I wrote this for closure after an emotionally exhausting few weeks in high school.

Forgiving ourselves is laborious because our wrongdoings feel like they constitute our very being. Forgiving others is far easier because we either have a positive attachment to them, usually seeing their transgressions as a one-time occurrence, or because we dislike them. Therefore, we can forgive them before avoiding them like the plague. When people we dislike say things that make us feel bad, we feel guilty for it, and it feels like we're doing it to ourselves. Perfectionism causes us to hold ourselves to a higher accountability; we stayed, and we allowed ourselves to feel the way we did, therefore, its self-inflicted harm. We fixate and replay the moment(s) in our minds. We feel that people think we're overreacting and thinking, but it doesn't feel that way to us. We want to be able to see all the possibilities, we go the distance not to hurt friends, to apologize because we've been hurt by others before. Ergo why do we try to empathize with them and why do we apologize for existing? Spiralling when things go wrong feels like the only thing we're good at. We loathe ourselves and think we're beyond redemption. This segues us into the thought that someone as horrible as us (negative thoughts about yourself inserted here) will only hurt others, reinforcing our belief that we're guilty- we'll only impose pain and suffering upon those we care about.

Thus, we don't deserve forgiveness, and when we attempt to forgive ourselves without releasing the emotions attached to altercations, it leaves us feeling incredibly repressed. We get into a pattern of self-deprecation, which obstructs our ability to forgive ourselves. We're not sure if we deserve it, or when it's appropriate to self-forgive. Sometimes, however, we need to look at the entire picture. We can't control others or their thoughts, we can't reverse time, and striving for perfection is detrimental overall. Sometimes good enough is good enough. We want to berate ourselves and apologize for everything, however, we should acknowledge that it's okay to make mistakes. It doesn't mean that we're irredeemable, just human. It's aggravating but inevitable, and I can almost assure you that not everything you said or how you acted in the moment was entirely erroneous. Continue attempting to learn instead of lingering.

Forgiveness takes (loads of) time and self-compassion. <3



Fighting

by Ryan Liang

Oh No!

BY ORE AINA

Two thousand people wandering, all living different lives. Their voices fill the air and build up to become rowdy noises. These noises cannot silence the words banging on my skull. I sit down and think. Waiting. Waiting for the moment I am unable to relate to the words said by Marina in her famous song "Oh! No."

Marina's words ring clearly "Don't do love, don't do friends. I'm only after success. Don't need a relationship. I'll never soften my grip." Her words circle my mind like a swarm of bees circling a bee hive. Just like bees, they sting me all over and cause a profound irritation within me. An irritation to the idea of average.

Being average. Something I am unable to resonate with. That does not mean that being average never occurs, and when it does I change my approach. I use Marina's wise words once again. "One track mind, one track heart," she says. That's all I need to be successful and be who I want to be. Focus. My life is like a playdoh, with me forming its shape in the palm of my hands.

What happens when I make the wrong shape? It's oddly simple. "If I fail I'll fall apart." I engage in constant fights with the thief of joy: a comparison. The people around me and those I consider friends are perfect in every way. They have their lives planned, dotting every I and crossing every T. Heads turn to me and it is my turn to show what I have done. In comparison to theirs, my life and accomplishments appear to be insignificant. "I feel like I'm the worst so I always act like I'm the best." Nevertheless, I put on my best show. Putting my theatrical skills to good use, I implement the character of an all-knowing individual into my life.

I become what people call fake. However, when we think about it, is it accurate to call it fake? After all, high school is an environment of painting the picture of our best possible selves. A place to laugh, learn and give it our all. With people running to us for questions and statements of reassurance. A facade of lies.

It is all a lie. We go home at the end of the day and repeat Marina's words to ourselves.

We cry out, "Oh, No!"



Photograph Taken By Ethne Cripps

Heightened Tensions

By: Gian C.

Trouble brews as tensions in Eastern Europe grow ever closer to what can be described as an all-out war between Russia and NATO. As the war in Ukraine hits its 10th month, Russian aggression seems to tire down as Ukrainian forces little by little halt Russian advance. But things grew dire for other countries when recently, Russia ordered missile strikes on Ukrainian Cities.

Of course, at first, this seems like a normal outcome of the War between two states, but the Nation of Poland might be pulled in due to stray missiles hitting a Polish Border village, causing the loss of two lives. It is likely a stray missile, accidentally going off its target (a Ukrainian City), and hitting the Polish town. The Polish government is part of NATO and has convened an emergency meeting between NATO member states, whether or not it was accidental, a missile attack is an act of war, and it is up to the Polish government to decide how to respond.

Meanwhile, the Russian Government has decided to deny any and all involvement. Viewing the incident from the Russian response.s perspective, one could wonder where such missiles came from if it wasn.t from Russia. A NATO report even suggests it was from a failed Ukrainian counter-strike operation.

Though it might seem like a small incident to some, the response between any of the countries can tip the scales of war. During the months before World War One, the immediate spark of the war, the assassination of the Archduke, seemed like a small footnote. An insignificant incident to many onlookers from foreign countries, without knowing how months later it would lead to World War One. However, it mirrors current events, with the two countries squabbling over whodunnit. As the months go by, one could only hope that the Missile attack on Poland is just that, a small footnote, and not the powder keg that sparked World War.

THE HORROR MOVIE: HIGH SCHOOL, A VERY MISLEADING ELABORATE LIE.



by Ema Leanne Getachew



High school is often romanticized in movies as being a period where people find their identity. This isn't entirely wrong but it can be very misleading. From these movies, they have told me that during these three years: I will make new friends and get a boyfriend or a girlfriend. This is a reality that I have not experienced in full. Yes, I made many friends, but I have yet to find that connection with someone. As a consequence, this has created a feeling of emptiness as my reality cannot compare to the movies. Additionally, within the scope of the movies, you never see anyone having to struggle with the workload of school, they all get into prestigious universities and colleges without a struggle. This image of barely working and getting into top universities makes me see myself as less than others. As I put so much in and I'm not achieving the same as they are, developing the idea of doubt in my abilities. This has made me put into question my dreams of reaching my ideal university and making my parents proud of me. Why must I suffer when they don't? Why should I have to navigate the dark world of high school while they live the high life? Is it a lie? Is it me? It must be. My reality is my truth. My reality of high school is nothing but back pain, depression, and lots of school work that leads to a grade that your parents would either pat you on the back for or tell you that your cousin got a 90 and why can't you be like your cousin, and the whole cycle starts again. No high school movie or tv show told me about this which made me vastly unprepared for any of this.



CARTOON BY RACHEL CHENG

High school may be a horror movie, and coming-of-age movies may have gotten everything wrong about high school but they did get one thing right: that high school is a key experience in our lives that leads us into the next chapter of our lives. While high school did make me want to cry, I wouldn't have made great new friends and grown so much. This is the last time that, in a way, I will ever be a teenager before becoming an adult, and while it's nothing like a high school musical, high school is 'the coming of age experience' I needed.



Imminence Pt. 2 - Ablah Gadallah

Cillian had not left his home nor slept in just over a week. Half of that time was spent peering into the mysterious orb, turning it every which way and watching the rays of light refract and reflect in the strange interior. The other half of the time consisted of contacting as many academics as he knew to persuade them to take a look at the odd sphere.

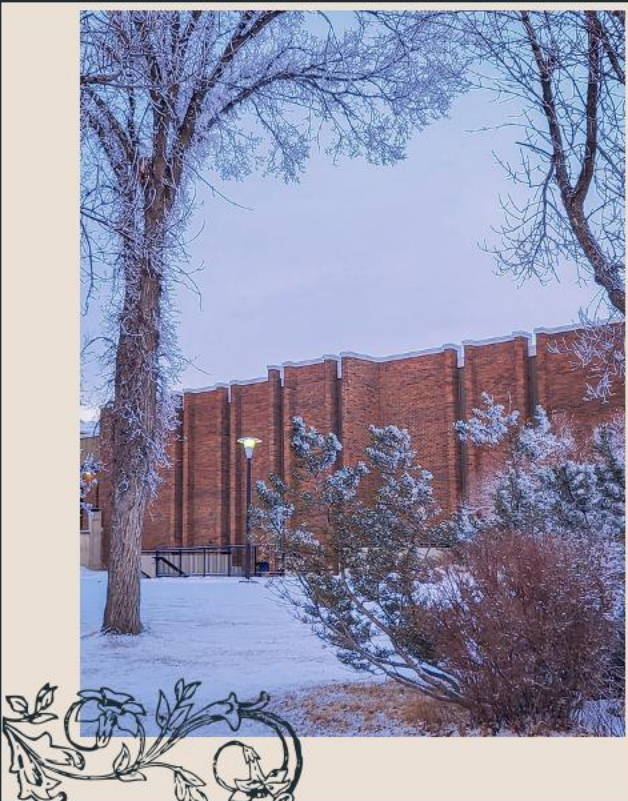
That day he found it, nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary. A mysterious sphere left beneath a park bench, nothing more. However, when he arrived at his home at the end of the day, he set his bag on the ground only to hear a dull thud through the leather. Sharply raising a brow, he knelt and opened his bag to find the source of the peculiar sound. Cillian rummaged through the bag, to find the orb from the park laying smugly at the bottom of the bag. Amused, he pulled out the sphere and leaned back on his haunches to sit on the ground.

He rolled the warm orb between his hands and looked into its mellow glow. Cillian had not had the time to properly examine the object in the park and took the time to analyze it now. He was surprised to find that the interior of the orb was not as uniform, soft yellow as he had initially assumed. Peering closer into the sphere he had found that there were slight, meandering swirls curled throughout the sphere, wound into patterns and shapes, like a snake coiled in a basket, waiting to be charmed. Cillian was intrigued, he

held it up to the light and found even more images appeared in the orb the closer he looked. Additional swirls and curls, coupled with sharp angles formed what could almost appear to be words, but not quite. Each line angled the wrong way, angles formed by parallel lines, perpendicular lines never colliding no matter how far Cillian followed them.

Cillian broke out of his trance many hours later to the sensation of the morning sun warming the side of his face. He was still crouched on the ground holding the orb in his hands, and Cillian dropped the sphere to the ground and jolted to his feet. He paused, composed himself, walked to the kitchen, filled a glass with water and took a sip. Then he returned to the orb on the ground and cradled it in his hands once more.

Photograph by Aastika Aastika



Shelly Tannis Dene

The Aboriginals have constantly fought to be treated equally like any other citizen in Canada, yet it seems no matter how much they try, the government won't ever take them seriously.

This month's story is on Shelly Tannis Dene, who has been missing since mid-July 2013.

Shelly Tannis Dene was a member of Alberta's Fort McKay First Nations. Growing up, the lasting effects of residential schools affected her parents, making alcohol addiction a problem. Her parents split in 1997, so Shelly, along with her siblings, moved with their mom to Vernon, BC. In 2007, she gave birth to her son. Having dropped out of school at a young age, she decided to resume her studies and finished Grade 12 in 2010. As a parent, Shelly suffered from addiction due to her childhood trauma. She was three years sober when she got her son back from social services and had finally enrolled in a college, moving to Edmonton. Tragically, in 2012, her father passed away. She went home to bury him and became depressed. To cope, she relapsed into overdosing and drinking, resulting in social services taking back her son.



Taken by Ethne Cripps

In July 2013, Katie Dene, her grandmother, asked her to watch her house while she left for vacation. Once Katie returned home, Shelly and her belongings were no longer there. Her family had thought she travelled to Yukon because she had been talking to them about visiting, but her abrupt disappearance concerned them. Shelly's sister, Candice, texted her, asking if she was doing alright, to which Shelly replied, "no." On November 8th, Candice reported Shelly missing to the Edmonton Police Service. Candice performed her investigation, asking all her family members when and where they had seen or talked to Shelly, only for them to say they last saw her in July. The EPS contacted the family for the last time on December 9, 2014, informing them that they exhausted all the tips they got and could not determine Shelly's whereabouts.

Candice was upset that even though she had limited resources, she found more evidence and leads regarding her sister's disappearance than the authorities working on the case. Melanie Dene, Shelly's cousin, believes the police weren't taking Shelly's disappearance seriously because she was an Aboriginal living a "high-risk" lifestyle.

If you have any info regarding the case, you can submit tips to 1-800-222-8477.

By: Khushi Grewal



Photograph by Dana Klynstra



A Useless Pebble in a Sea of Diamonds Anonymous



"I'm just a useless pebble in a sea of diamonds," I repeated to myself over and over again as I walked to my next class. It was always the little things, stupid things, but enough of them would build up inside you. Case in point; A lost percent, a misunderstood lesson, a conversation that didn't go the way I had thought up over and over again in my head. It was always the same: creating different scenarios of how the conversation might go, only to end immediately after the usual lie, "I'm fine." That was the same thing I repeated to my parents after I got benched for nearly a whole game. The first time our coach showed our lineup sheet, I knew I wouldn't be on it. I had accepted my role as a second-stringer for the season, but then I wasn't on the next sheet or the next. I wanted to cry yet I couldn't, not in the middle of our semifinal game. I was simply not as good as the other players, and that would have to be okay. So I cheered my heart out because that's all I could do.

But hope is a persistent demon. I got subbed in and ended up serving game points, and we won! My team congratulated me on my serves, and we were going to finals! And yet, I still felt useless, like a dull pebble that disappeared amongst those who seemed to shine like diamonds. But now I began thinking that maybe I wasn't quite as pathetic or empty as my brain tried to convince me. Good days became more frequent. Someone invited me to join them at their tutorial, and I laughed with my friends at lunch. I sat with someone new during class, and they called me to chill, saying I should hang out with people more because I had a good personality. All the little things added up, and I was okay with being a pebble because I was a little pebble, and maybe the small things that I did could improve someone's life the same way that all those other little things had improved mine.

High School Experience

BY MATTHEW OSUNDE

An uncomfortable construction of cliques and castes populated by ungraceful, passion-stricken youths wanting self-awareness. A big box built to bore for the amount of time it takes to fulfill its trivial tests and chores. A potent place of personal and group self-discovery, bonding, and unforgettable life events (that you better not miss). In contemporary culture, the high school environment carries a plethora of popular perceptions, all decidedly extreme. These prevalent, polarizing viewpoints have arisen quite duly from the modern decision to codify the transition from youth to adulthood. The fear, wonder, and unpredictability innate to all periods of change and growth, multiplied by the social realities of a collection of hormonal, irrational, inexperienced youths sharing such a journey in the same space, has elevated the high school to a station of great emotional significance for most of society. Indeed, much hilarity and innocent fun, along with much dire drama and trouble, emerges from having the knowledge, impressionability, and temperaments of a child yet the productive and destructive capabilities of an adult surrounded by equivalent peers. It's no wonder that an emotionally charged, often horrendously caricatured vision of this environment frequently indwells people's heads before, during, and after their experience of it.

In an age of increasingly prevalent childhood social media infatuation and the growth of content produced by teens for teens, the average high schooler need not struggle to acquire such over- and underestimations of their environment. Presently equipped with fledgling perceptions of the world, it can be very difficult to discern the golden mean between two extremes of decision-making and lifestyle. Whichever path one chooses, the spectre of "missing out" or "being behind" in life often appears in the corner of one's vision, enticing you to act in a manner that lives out your expectations of high school (which invariably become excuses for irresponsibility) rather than an honest identity.

By being a freshman, I have a mere few months' experience in high school. Therefore, I cannot speak authoritatively, but in so brief a time of listening to lectures, pressing through bustling halls, sharing life with peers, staying on top of work, and exploring fascinating opportunities, one truth has become evident: this is what you decide it will be. No piece of media, no story from a friend, nor spiteful decry or shilling endorsement has made any pronouncement on your high school experience. When you walk through those halls, hold your head high, treat others well no matter what, and regard every moment as an opportunity to better your, and everyone else's, high school experience.

PHOTO BY RYAN YEE



Solitaire by Alice Oseman

A REVIEW BY MIKAYLA GIRARD

It feels impossible to encapsulate *Solitaire* by Alice Oseman in a couple of hundred words, but I'll try. This novel follows Tori Spring, a self-described "maniacally depressed psychopath," as a mysterious entity called 'Solitaire' plays pranks on her school, all with odd connections to Tori herself. Tori is not a copy-pasted, stereotypical teen character from every YA book; instead, she is blunt, socially inept and, quite frankly, awful to everyone who tries to care about her. Despite this, it's difficult not to root for her, even as she begins to take turns for the worse. It's rare for a female character, especially a teenage girl, to be allowed to have emotions other than inexplicable glee or lust, so I appreciate the complexity of Tori's character. Oseman has a unique writing style that captures every detail of a scene without dragging it out, simultaneously portraying Tori's thoughts in a way that it's impossible not to relate to her. Even if you're a fan of *Heartstopper*, another of Oseman's works, this book contains heavier themes than the show or comic, including detailed accounts of eating disorders, depression, suicidal thoughts and more, so it's worth checking out the content warnings before reading. Overall, this book was a bit of a difficult read, but I would recommend it to anyone willing to handle some difficult emotions.



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