

# (Un)directed Reading

**Selected Students' Work  
Directed Reading 2020/21  
University of Saint Joseph, Macao, China**

*Edited by Sandra Olga NG Ka Man  
Installation programmed by Gérald Estadieu  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Illustrated by June Iec, a young local painter*

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聖若瑟大學  
UNIVERSITY OF  
SAINT JOSEPH

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(Un)directed Reading

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# Introduction

These days, we rarely find youth engaged in reading or writing books. Yet, the joy in these activities is inevitable. When first exposed to reading, the new reader may find themselves drawn into new worlds of excitement, amazement, emotion, philosophy, and adventure. And I have, indeed, been amazed, excited, and touched by the writings of students in only two months this year.

This compilation of short stories includes work written by students from different degree programmes at the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), Macao, China, in 2021. Students involved in this project include students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities' Bachelor of Architectural Studies, Bachelor of Communication and Media, Bachelor of Design and Bachelor of Fashion Design.

Another part of this project was an installation around the Ilha Verde Campus, an interactive text printing system, introduced in the Summer of 2021. Projects from different years and modules often being overlooked are also worth the attention. With that said,

this short compilation and installation have become a part of the project.

“(Un)directed Reading” is an installation designed to randomly generate extracts from the selected work edited below. It aims to get the general public and interested individuals to come to the front of the kiosk and be surprised. To read the story, the public, by pressing a button, prints a small extract of one of the stories and a QR code, with a receipt printer, while the QR code directs readers to a website with the complete text and original illustrations.

Acknowledgement and dedication to all students who contributed to this project which would not have succeeded without their ideas, and interest. Contributions of professors: Álvaro Barbosa (Vice Rector of USJ), and Carlos Cena Caires (Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities), whose enthusiastic support and input were integral to the success of the project; Professors Gérald Estadieu and Filipe Farinha for their devotion to the computer coding for their devotion to code day in and out; Ms June Iec, for her wonderful and detailed illustrations.

Sandra Olga Ng Ka Man  
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

I had the wonderful opportunity to help to draw the illustrations for (Un)directed Reading. In order to match the vast array of themes and concepts this compilation included, it was quite a task to figure out a style that would work with each story.

I took inspiration from a range of sources, from children's book illustrations such as ones from Disney to the edgier visuals of mediums such as noir films and graphic novels. The hardest part of creating my illustrations was when I had to draw ones for more conceptual stories - translating an idea or a thought into a dynamic image without repetition, was challenging to say the very least. Oftentimes, stories with these sorts of content had little to no illustrations. Therefore finding references or inspiration was also a challenge.

Nevertheless, it was an absolute joy to read every single one of these stories and explore their visual components. I hope you all have as much fun as I did reading them, and I hope my illustrations bring an even more enjoyable experience.

June Iec  
Local Painter  
Instagram @jummiess

Inspired by the book (Un)Directed Reading 2021, this interactive installation is a kiosk proposed as a companion of the book and will be placed at several locations on campus.

Upon pushing the button in the front of the kiosk, a thermal printer will offer the reader a receipt paper to take away on, which is printed as an extract of one of the book's stories. This extract is followed by a QR Code that redirects the reader to the complete text and original illustrations on a dedicated website.

We hope to encourage the visitors to read these stories and be surprised by the talent of our students!



*[Kiosk rendering and sample of a receipt]*

## The Last Fight in the Coliseum

Henri Racells Goh

-Bachelor of Architectural Studies-

### Chapter 1



In the year 2807, a dystopian society is born due to the world wars that ravaged the world for hundreds of years, which also destroyed most of the world we know today.



The beautiful society we know today has come to an end. The world is driven back to the Dark Ages as oil and coal were eventually used up in the hundred years of wars. The machines that powered the world were left unusable. Civilised society came to an end as the surviving men killed each other to fend for themselves.



*[Screenshots of the website]*

All texts are also available online directly at <https://gestadiou.github.io/UndirectedReading/>

The kiosk is made of plywood sheets in a simple and elegant black-painted cuboid shape. The use of the kiosk has to be intuitive and straightforward for any visitor. There is no need for specific information. The front has only two parts: a push button and an embedded thermal printer. Therefore, the only option for a visitor is to push the button and get a ticket!

At USJ, we are supportive of open-source software and hardware. This project is a perfect example of this

project. We used a Raspberry Pi with the Raspberry Pi OS Lite and Node JS as our development framework. All our source code has been made available under an open-source license at <https://github.com/gestadieu/UndirectedReading>.

This kiosk can be seen as a step towards transforming the traditional media of short stories towards a blended media, mixing digital and traditional media towards creating a sustainable. It could be a sustainable installation on the campus with updated proposed work overtime. The initial model as a kiosk is a standalone application. However, a second iteration of this project is planned using this platform, and regular updates have been proposed for future projects and proposed regular updates to the content. We will continue developing this application with an administration panel, metrics and more features.

Gérald Vincent Estadiou  
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts and Humanities



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# Chapter 1

## *100 Great Short Stories*

At the beginning of the module, students were required to practice a DRTA, Directed Reading Thinking Activity. This technique guides students to question, predict, and analyse written materials throughout the process of reading. Of course, it is not only about reading. It is a practice to develop critical thinking and, correspondingly, to be able to write and compose texts that are understandable, sensible and engaging.

This exercise was intended to start with an existing short story that students found online. By answering procedural questions, they were guided through the DRTA process and read the stories. At the end of the practice, students were assigned to take the title of their choice and create an original story.

Thirteen pieces were selected. Students have stepped into the universe of writing, creating works that ranged from the heartfelt down-to-earth description of a mother's love to

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beyond-imaginable discussions and negotiations with God  
and the Emperors. And this is only the beginning...

# The Last Fight in the Coliseum

*Henri Racelis Goh*  
*Bachelor of Architectural Studies*



In the year 2807, a dystopian society is born from the world wars that have ravaged the world for hundreds of years, destroying the world as we know it today.

The beautiful society we know today has ended. The world is driven back to the Dark Ages as oil and coal were eventually used up in the hundred years of wars. The machines that powered the world were left unusable. Civilised society came to an end as the surviving men killed each other to fend for themselves.

However, men came together to form war tribes that ran parts of ravaged cities into small towns and eventually turned into small towns and villages.

Eventually, these small towns developed a hierarchy for their inhabitants. The working class was born as societies started to mature once again. As the working class became bored with their daily lives, they pushed for entertainment, resulting in prizefighting. The Roman Coliseum, which existed thousands of years ago, was brought back to life.

For decades, as tribes still continued to battle over land, the surviving losers of those wars were enslaved as gladiators for the victor's coliseum. These coliseums became a symbol of wealth and power for the growing towns and cities that

displayed the prowess of their tribes. As their societies matured, the coliseum fights became more and more violent as well. Crowds were only pleased by the brutal display and roaring as they watched men and women get torn apart by wild beasts or fierce gladiator duels.

However, this would all come to change when a young gladiator named Aprilia was born into those cages. Fighting was all he knew as he was born to a gladiator mother and was trained in combat from the age he could swing a sword.

At the young age of 6, he saw his very own mother torn apart by wild beasts in the Coliseum. This fuelled his ambition to end this barbaric practice and the barbaric way of life that people lived at that time.



A young Aprilia trained day in and day out. He outworked all the young warriors. Every day when he slept, he remembered his slain mother and a fire inside him burnt.

Eventually, at the age of 10, he was already better than all of the other kids. He even started defeating the older warriors in the camp. At the age of 12, he became the youngest gladiator to win fights inside the arena.

He moved so gracefully with the sword and often mesmerised the crowd with his flashy style. The crowd looked at him as the pinnacle of the gladiator fighting they had loved so much over the years, but little did they know that this young boy would also be the end of it.

Young Aprilia despised killing fellow gladiators. After slaying them, he often kept a memento of the fighter, promising to remember them when he accomplished his ultimate goal of eradicating the brutal gladiator business and bringing peace to society.

At the age of 16, the tribal generals realised his potential as a warrior on their frontlines. The young man was undefeated in man-to-man combat, and there they were right. Aprilia slew every man before him without a sweat. All the tribe's troops came to respect Aprilia.



With Aprilia by their side, all the tribes came to respect their troops in battle, and Aprilia made his way up into a war general. Their tribe became the strongest and biggest tribe as they were undefeated in their conquests. The tribal leaders became jealous of Aprilia and his legendary war stories, which the working class loved.

Everyone in the city loved Aprilia. People built statues of him and sang about him in songs and ballads. The legends of Aprilia were born, and Tribe's leaders feared losing their respect and being overshadowed by Aprilia's success. The tribe's leaders stripped Aprilia of all of his titles and threw him back into the fighting pits. Tribe Leaders were plotting to kill off Aprilia but failed every time. They challenged him with impossible odds against impossible odds, such as matching Aprilia with a thousand Lions and a thousand young mercenaries, but Aprilia slew them all.

People started worshipping Aprilia as they thought he was a demi-God as he was untouched in battles. This angered the Tribe's leaders even more, knowing now that just killing Aprilia was impossible, so they decided to sway the public affection away from Aprilia and to put Aprilia against women and tie up their children to watch their mothers die.

Aprilia remembered who he was. He used to be one of those kids. He refused to fight. He evaded the attacks but did not fight back. This act left the crowd silent, and they watched the skies darken as the humour of the day faded. Aprilia and all the women fighters stopped fighting and looked up to see a meteor unravelling in the clouds. Aprilia closed his eyes and clenched his fist as he felt some sort of magical feeling building up in the palm of his hand. The meteor darkening hit the Coliseum's ground, crashing everything in its path, and sending shockwaves across the Earth.

There came an end the human civilisation, and so did Aprilia's dreams and all of the tribe leaders and everything on Earth. And that was the very last fight in the Coliseum ever, as no one is left on this Earth.

*Moral of the story: Aprilia got to fulfil the wish he so desired his whole life, but not in the form he expected. Humans will never take part in violence ever again as we ceased to exist. True peace is achieved. LOL :)*

# Regret

*Henry, Lap Hong Tam*  
*Bachelor of Architectural Studies*



In my life, there is an emotion. It has bitterness and joy, pain and happiness. And that is regret.

I once regretted not studying hard in peacetime and before the exam. I didn't realise until the exam that I still had a lot of knowledge that should be integrated, but I failed to master it. The problem that needed to be solved was done incorrectly, so I decided in the future to be studious and immersed in my studies, but then my ambitions were left behind.

I once regretted that I didn't do exercises seriously on weekdays, and I didn't exercise persistently. When I was lying in the hospital bed, I realised that my health was getting worse and worse. So I started to draw up an exercise plan and schedule. But when I left the bed again, being forgetful as always, I had left it for tomorrow. As a result, the half-drawn form was discarded again.

My regret is very short-lived, it is like a spark across the sky, and the momentary regret disappears without a trace in the universe. My regrets are ridiculous, and sometimes I regret that I made a wrong pronunciation in a chat with my friends, "What a shame!" My regret is more poetic. It will not bring me unhappiness. On the contrary, sometimes the things I regret will even become my good companions in life, the

happy fruit when I am alone. My regret is colourful and different. It is a sign of beauty, loveliness and success in my mind. It again gives me a new understanding of regret.

As the saying goes, "There is no medicine for regret." But I don't take it seriously. When you miss a good opportunity, you may regret it, regret your own mistakes, regret your momentary confusion, and regret everything.

But at the same time, have you ever thought about getting back together and creating a second opportunity? Perhaps, just as you regret, chances pass by you, again and again, so you might be immersed in regret forever. Instead of this, it is better to seize the opportunity and make regrets invisible.

In my understanding, regret and failure are the necessary stages to success. As long as I learn a lesson, regret can motivate me to succeed. It can encourage me to brew an amazing miracle. Regret is an important and indispensable word in my life. It enriches my life and enriches my experience. Every success makes me know more, and every bit of regret makes me achieve something.

On a chill night, looking at the sky in a daze, thinking about the things I regret. Although sometimes it makes me feel regretful, the breeze that follows blows away my

unhappiness and makes me easily welcome the dawn of tomorrow, laughing at the ups and downs of the world. Life is not a smooth road. It is fabricated into a beautiful life from sadness, joy, cheer, pain, and regret... If there is a flat road and a twisty trail spread in front of you at the same time, which one would you choose? It must be the latter, as it has various tastes in life; even if there is regret, it also has its importance!

"Knowhow" contains many regrets that are beyond our reach. A lot of wisdom in handling matters or interpersonal relationships does not have to be met before figuring out a solution.

Youth is precious because it cannot be looked back. To avoid regret, you should understand what you should know in advance. It turns out that every event or interpersonal relationship in life can be mastered through a review. Even a novice can handle it with ease, like a veteran. "I knew it, but I failed" is the most critical "know-how". If you still can't do it, you waste all of the "know-how".

Moreover, you may not be able to forgive yourself. If you fail to do it because you don't know, the big deal is learning from the beginning and passing the level successfully next time. On the contrary, if you "know" but fail to do it, you

will be in a loop of regret, and you will miss all opportunities.

From "knowing" to "doing", it is the furthest distance in the world. Most people think that just knowing is enough. This is a kind of arrogance, which will inevitably bring regret. As long as you are willing to accept the figure of "knowing" ultimately when you are young and learn humbly and down-to-earth, you can quickly reach the state of "doing". And develop a natural habit of "doing it" so that the heart will not be bothered by it. In conclusion, don't regret what you are now because the road is chosen by you. If you want to change your life, start now.





# A Pair of Silk Stockings

*Zoe, Sok Wai Lei*  
*Bachelor of Fashion Design*

A lady was wearing a creamy cami crop top with indigo high waist jeans, red ballet flats with sheer ankle socks, holding a bunch of red-orange flowers wrapped in tissue paper with her right hand. She walked into a traditional Parisian coffee shop to order a coffee and sat on the terrace.

The weather was bright, and the sky was clear beneath a burning sun. There was a slight breeze which made the heat bearable to some extent. The clouds were floating in the sky, and as the sun started shining, I was wearing stockings. Initially, the weather was dull in the morning, and I had thought it would rain and be windy, but I was wrong. I was planning to remove the stockings when I arrived at my friend's house.

Suddenly, I remembered my mother had talked about fashion when I was a little girl. She told me how the invention of stockings had changed the world. In the old time, people wrapped thin strips of animal skin around their legs as

coverings. After decades, Europeans were the first to start using animal hair to create fibre instead of animal skin, and then Egyptians invented knitted socks. After hundreds of years, woven socks developed with the invention of horizontal looms and vertical looms, which allowed manufacturers to warp. They created that typical diamond and chevron pattern of this era.



From this point, girls and women all over Europe began to wear various colours of tights with patterns, such as stripes. However, the church did not allow women to wear tights because they showed every muscle and tendon of the wearer's legs, as socks were only acceptable for men these days.

In the 1500s, the knitting machine was invented for knitting stockings. Therefore, factories were able to use cotton, linen, wool or silk for tights. My mom told me, Queen Elisabeth I, wore the first pair of knitted silk stockings globally. After that day, she did not want to wear anything else again. Silk stockings became a symbol of wealth and fashion.

Men started stop wearing, and stockings became considered women's apparel. The beginning of the industrial production of stockings made them widely available to reach the needs of people. Years later, the first stockings made from artificial fibres appeared, which were made from rayon; the price of stockings decreased as synthetic fibres were cheaper than silk.

When Nylon was invented, it changed everything. It was the first synthetic fibre, that combined extraordinary strength with elasticity. Even though I was wearing a pair of nylon stockings, if I had chosen the silk pair that morning, I might not feel boiled.

My mother also told me about grandma; she loved wearing stockings as well, from the design of lace and fishnet to dark or see-through black; those were the trends at the time.

Stockings led to a massive change in the fashion industry. I have seen many people wear mini-skirts paired with skin-coloured tights or hosiery in the winter. Even different kinds of printed logos have become a trend.

**Trends change over time, but history never changes.**

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# The Child's Story

*Grania, Weng Chim Cheong  
Bachelor of Design*

“You are fired!” Robert calmly takes his stuff and leaves the office. He glances at his coworkers and sees everyone whispering. Eventually, he hands in his badge and walks to the street. Frustrated, he doesn't even know how he left the building.

Robert arrives home very late, yet his wife is still waiting for him to dine. Fortunately, he has a beautiful, generous, caring wife and a smart and lovely daughter. Even though he had an unhappy career, he still seems to have a perfect family.

“Oh, darling, come and join the meal.” his wife says. He sits by her and starts to eat the meal. He wonders about how to tell her that he lost his job. But right now, it just doesn't seem like such a big deal as he sees his beautiful, caring wife. “Just find another job,” he says to himself. The next day, with beautiful weather, he leaves for his house just like he is going to work. Instead, he goes to the flower shop to buy some flowers for his wife because he thinks that he may have

neglected his wife over the last few days. But he sees his wife hugging and kissing another man. He immediately stops and gets out of the car, trying to question her. But he pauses. He doesn't want to make a drama. When he returns home, he sees his daughter doing her homework, and she is so surprised that her dad has come home so early. She runs to hug her dad and tells him she misses him. He suddenly thinks that he still has a daughter even though his wife has cheated on him, and he has been fired. Later at night, when his wife returns home, she acts like she has done nothing wrong and prepares the family a delicious meal. After dinner, their daughter goes to sleep, and Robert asks his wife to talk. He asks her where she went this afternoon and tells her what he saw. She admits her liaison but cries so much and feels so sorry for him and the family. She is crying and asking forgiveness from Robert as she didn't know things would go like this, and she could not control herself. She tells Robert that she still loves him, but she also loves the other man. This is why she doesn't know what to do and feels so ashamed. Robert says he needs some time to think about it and goes to sleep, leaving his wife in the living room.

Times pass. Robert is working on another job and puts all his focus on his daughter. He spends more time with his daughter and involves more in her activities. As for his wife, they do not get divorced, but they cannot get along well with

each other like in the old days. It seems Robert's life is getting better, but it may be just the peace before a storm. 20 June is the big day for their daughter. This is the day their daughter graduated from college. Their beautiful, smart daughter finally becomes an independent woman. After the ceremony, their daughter goes partying with her friends till late. She is shocked to find out that her boyfriend cheated on her and that her mother is not what she thinks of, and she is so sad and runs out of the bar. She runs so fast and has a car accident. She has a severe injury. The doctor tells Robert and his wife that their daughter is dying. They are so sad that they cannot accept this. Robert starts to blame his wife as he thinks that his wife doesn't care enough about their daughter and that she is the one that makes the family not as happy as before. Again, he leaves his wife alone in the corridor.

On the day of their daughter's funeral, Robert tells his wife he wants to divorce her.

One day, a strange old lady appears in front of the door. Robert asks if there is anything he can help with. The old lady just gives him an old treasure box, Robert doesn't want to take it, but the lady insists. So, he takes the box and goes back into his house. After many days, he almost forgets the box's existence as he is so busy at work. He needs to take care of himself because he has no wife right now. One night the box starts to glow, and he opens it. Some photos appear

in front of him, so he picks them up and stares at them. He cannot believe what he's seeing. Those pictures are the happiest memories of his life till now, and below the images, there is a clock. He picks it up, and the clock starts ticking.

“Bibi, bibi...” Robert gets up from his bed. He is a bit confused and looks carefully at the surroundings, doubting whether he is drunk. All of the things he sees right now do not make sense: the paint, the setting, or the decorations. None of them does he know or is he familiar with. He goes downstairs and calls out if there is anybody. But no one answers him. He gets out of the house and onto the street. Outfits of people are back in the old days. As if he is a kid, so terrified and wonders what's happening. He doesn't know if this is real or not. He panics so much and finds the house when he was little. He knocks on the door, and his parents open the door. He's a bit shocked and happy, but he cannot say a word when he faces them. The couple asks, “what can we help?” He suddenly realised that his parents don't know him. He looks at the window and sees that he is not their boy anymore. He is just a stranger to them, so he says goodbye and goes back to his house.

He starts to think that maybe he could use this body to become friends with himself and change what happened. So he starts to greet and make friends with his parents and



himself in this world. When the little himself plays a lot instead of studying, he pushes him to study more because he knows he will need to get a better job in the future; when he first meets his wife, he tells him to try to know more about her and gives her more time that she may not be too lonely before finding another man to seek comfort; when they get married, he tells himself to get more involved with his daughter, to bring her more joy, and the family more happiness. He is thinking so perfectly, but the truth is that he cannot change anything. Terrible things still happen again, which makes him realise that even if he has another chance, what should happen will still happen. This may be the laws of nature and the laws of the universe.

There is no regret in the world. People need to take responsibility for what they do, learn from their mistakes, and sometimes only grow with regrets.

“Bibi, bibi...” He gets up from his bed again. He goes back to his world. He walks in front of the table and opens the box, picking the pictures up again. Finally, he sees the most beautiful, beautiful things. He knows that no one is perfect, but what happened to him is very unique, even if some are bad. Still, those are the things and experiences that he has, and he should accept them instead of denying them. Eventually, he goes back to his wife, opens his own

company, and later has a miracle. They have a little angel who is going to be born. This time, he is ready enough to do what he needs to do because he has already learnt plenty of lessons.

# About Love

*Wendy, Yiu Chi Si*  
*Bachelor of Design*



Family is very close to you. No matter what happens, this will not change.

Kinship is a special feeling between people who are related by blood. No matter how one will love each other. Poor or rich, no healthy or sick, even good or evil.

A family needs to care for each other, and treat each other with tolerance and understanding; as close relatives, they should cherish and maintain the family.

Sometimes a family may quarrel, but it doesn't matter. As long as the family continues, these little storms will not damage the family.

Families are sometimes very helpless, one cannot choose his father and mother, but parents will always love their children.

I walk on the road of growth. The roadside is full of colourful flowers. The head of the warm sun is waving golden light, leaving no sign of birds in the air on the branches. The melodious bird sings to the earth, sending a movement. I close my eyes. My mother's love comes to me is the beauty of all this.

My mother is the most important person in my life. I have a good mother. With her every day, I grew up happily. I want to say, "thank you, mom. You have brought me into this world. You taught me how to do things and how to learn. Every time I encounter difficulties, you are the first to help me. You taught me to be honest, how to overcome challenges and to be strong."

When I began to learn to walk, my mother held my waist with both hands. In a photo album at home, there is a picture of that moment. Because of this photo, I have my first memory of childhood. Now I can imagine the warm light shining on my mother at that time. When she released the hand holding my waist and watched me stagger and walk like a model, her face was covered with the brightest smile. On my first day of primary school, my mother took my little hand. The sun was very encouraging, the sky was so blue, and those white clouds were pure. The campus was so beautiful that day, but it meant that I had to be separated from my mother for a while every day. I have grown up and spent a lot of time on campus.

My mother has become a nagging person. Her words are endless. So many times, I was scared by her complaints. I must confess, some comments may disgust certain people. In the face of those endless words, I finally exploded. Suddenly

standing up, turning around, commanding my mother, "Do not quarrel". But my mother was still nagging, so I turned my face around.

My mother is a conscientious person. Whether the family conditions are good or not, she will look after my health. She is very responsible. Even the iron black cloth socks can be washed white. She is very hardworking. Even when she is busy during the day, she will spare time to clean up the house. She respects the elderly very much. No matter how mean they are to her, she never complains.

My eyes focussed on my mother's red hands. Father once held these hands and asked, "just wash the clothes with the washing machine. Why must you do it yourself?" Mother shook her head and turned away. After a while, she said, "washing machines are not as good as hand washing after all." it seems to me that she gave up her youth for me.

Family love is one of the most beautiful feelings in the world. I am surrounded by strong family love and gradually melted by love.

One evening, I lay on the bed, and suddenly I coughed fiercely. I couldn't sleep, and my throat hurt like I had swallowed thousands of needles. My coughing woke my

mother up. She got up, put on a thin sweater, and rushed over. My mother asked anxiously, "are you ok?" I shook my head, "don't worry." But she stroked my head and said, "I'll sleep with you tonight." she said and lay down beside me.

In the morning, when I opened my eyes, it was already 6:30 in the evening. I was surprised that my mother didn't wake me up when it was so late. My mother seemed to understand and said with an apology, "I saw you didn't sleep last night. I wanted you to sleep longer. Don't blame me, OK? My mother looked like a child who had done something wrong. I suddenly felt a stream of warm affection pouring into my heart.

Family affection surrounds me tightly. No matter what happens, my family is protecting me. I really want to melt into this wealthy family affection.

- (Un)directed Reading -





# An Aged Mother

*Wilson, Chak Man Kam*

*Bachelor of Communication and Media*

Long, long ago, in the State of Wuji, there lived a poor man. He came from a large family with lots of children, as the parents were very old. Because the family was so poor and always needed more food and clothing, life got more complicated. So, the man dug a hole, burying the old parents alive and taking care of the children. His neighbour saw this act and was shocked, asking why he did this. The man replied, "The parents were getting older, they were going to die anyway, the children are still young, they have to go on living. By burning my parents, I saved enough food to feed the children. The neighbour thought this was reasonable and went home to do the same. The idea spread like pollen on the wind, and soon everybody was burying their parents. Over time, this became a custom: after the elderly lost the ability to work, they would be buried alive by their children.

Later, a son came from Boronai. He felt that the custom of burying his parents alive was inhumane. However, he did not have the strength to fight this custom. When his parents grew

older, he decided instead of digging a hole to bury his parents to instead build a house in the hole and let his parents live secretly, sending food and drink. He let his parents live there secretly, sending all kinds of food and drinks every day. This dutiful son thought every day, "If only I could figure out a way to get everyone to abolish this custom of not being dutiful to their parents." His piety moved god, "let me help him." Then He came down to earth. God went to the king and said, "Please weigh this elephant, or I will destroy your country." The king did not know what to do and was very worried. He called for his lords and ministers, but none of them could do anything. A minister suggested that it would be better for him to recruit talent. Maybe someone in China could answer this question. The king had no choice but to publish the recruitment list. When the news came out, people all over the country talked about it in succession. When the filial son told his mother about this, his mother thought it over and came up with a good idea. He said to God and the king, "Please take the elephant to the ship, mark the waterline, and put a big stone on it. When the ship sinks to the same line, weigh the stone on the ship, which will be the elephant's weight. God quickly gave another problem, conjured up two horses and asked the king which one was male and which one was female. Kings and ministers couldn't come out of the way. The last son came back home and asked his mother. His mother told him the method. Hold

the tender grass in his hands. Ran to the front of the two horses and put the grass down. "I see a horse pushed the grass to another with the mouth in the front of the group, and then itself is eating," the son said, "that the horse is the mother and the other is a male because a mother loves her son, so she pushes the grass to eat first."

God nodded and said, "Right." God turned to the king and said, "Your country has such a wise man, really good! I will protect you." Then he disappeared. The king was overjoyed and offered to give the son a reward. "My mother told me all this," he said, "I did not bury my parents alive but hid them. My mother is smart and capable. We do not know how much parents are suffering and how fatigued they are. I today am the parents of credit, but I also hope that the king can abolish the order of burying parents alive." After hearing this, the king was very moved and then issued an order, "From now on, no one can bury their parents alive. Any violation will lead to prison." From then on, the filial son and his parents lived a happy life.



# The Man on the Moon

*Anthony, Hoi Wong*

*Bachelor of Communication and Media*

God created a place called Eden. It was very peaceful, with no evil. There were many animal species like birds, mammals, fish, and reptiles. And there was plenty of food and water for all of them. Everything was beautiful. Eden had just been created, but only one man lived there. The man lived alone in Eden. His life was simple but happy. He enjoyed playing with the animals, swimming in the river, and climbing mountains. Small things like this could make his day. One day, God thought that he could improve Eden.

God asked the man, “What do you need? I can give you anything.”

The man said, “Everything in here is good. I don’t need anything.”

God nodded and left.

The man continued his life, as usual. He tamed all the animals and talked to them every day. Yet, there's always no reply from the animals. Gradually, he felt lonely and bored.

One day, God came again and asked him, "What do you need?"

The man answered, "I feel lonely staying here because there is no one to talk with."

God says, "I will enable the animals and trees to talk with you". God clapped his hands, and the animals and trees started to talk. The man started talking with the animals and trees and felt more connected with them. He kept trying new things in Eden with the animals accompanying him. Nevertheless, he felt bored after a while because he did not think these creatures truly understood.

He approached God and said, "Can you create something interesting for me?"

God realised that the man would not be satisfied with whatever he was going to create for him. Human emotions are more complicated than he thought. People will quickly feel bored and ask for more. God replied, "I can bring you to

a place where you have other people to meet, you can talk with them, and they might understand you more deeply.”

The man nodded and said, “Please take me there, I feel lonely, and no one understands me. I think these other people will understand me better, and I will learn more.”

God agreed and brought him to Earth. One thing that was different between the Earth and Eden is that there are many rules and rules on Earth, and Eden is a place where a man could do everything he wished

The man could not adapt to the Earth’s culture of living at first, but as time passed, he enjoyed his life on Earth much more than his life in Eden because he encountered different kinds of people, the good ones and bad ones, trying out different things, skiing, archery and even playing ball games. He gradually understood why there were so many rules and regulations on Earth to protect himself and other people. And, of course, he was a kind-hearted person and was thankful for God bringing him to the Earth. He soon found his true love with a woman who was beautiful both inside and out. They got married and formed their own family of four on Earth, raising both a son and a daughter. He lived a stable life and started his own business. However, he was deceived by his business partner and lost all his money. They

could only afford to live in a small wooden house. He started to blame everything and kept muttering to himself, wishing to go back to Eden and be able to enjoy his life again. His son asked him, “Father, where is Eden?”. The man answered, “A place where I come from, it is a paradise.” His wife, daughter, and son were confused because they had never heard of Eden. The man explained, “Eden is a good place. Everything is good there. You do not need to worry about anything. No stress, no pressure, only pleasure.” His family did not believe what he had said, so he decided to show his family the truth, by bringing them to Eden.

The man came to the door of Eden. Suddenly, God appeared and stops him.

God announced, “You are not welcome anymore.”

The man asked, “Why?”

God said, “You chose to live your life on Earth. Now that you face some challenges and you want to escape the challenges and come back. Everyone must be responsible for their own choices. Eden is not the place where people can randomly enter or leave.”



The man left and returned to Earth. He was angry with what God had said. All he wanted was to leave the Earth and take his family to Eden for a new life. He was losing his mind to his anger. By that time, his evil side had taken over him. He started to plan his revenge on God. He gathered an army and started fighting. God was angry with what the man was doing. God tried to eliminate the man and the military. The entire military is destroyed, and only kept the man alive. God talked to him, trying to make a deal with the man.

God said, “I can let you go back to Eden, but you will have to agree that the world will be destroyed in return. Your family will be among the victims if you wish to do so.”

The rational side of the man suddenly woke up. He refused God’s offer, “No, I would not want anyone on Earth to die because of me. I would not be happy if I were alone in Eden. I have learnt a lot on Earth. Everything happens for a reason, whether it is good or bad. I am sorry for what I did, bringing an army trying to kill you. I would do everything to remedy my faults.” God forgave him and gave him a second chance, letting him restart his life on Earth. He was thankful and began to work hard for his family. He then became the Earth’s most influential leader and wrote a book about his whole life, titled “The Man on the Moon”.



# Witches' Loaves

*Hugo, Ka Hou Chu*

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Miss Martha's appearance had been scarred by a fire when she was young, so, her parents never let her leave the bakery. No one had ever seen her since the accident. Her father even redesigned the shop, leaving only one doorway. The other four walls were sealed, and one of the walls had a small window that let the shopkeeper contact the customers. She grew up in the store slowly until her parents passed away. She kept the business running and obeyed her father so that she would never leave the bakery. So she let the delivery man leave the goods outside the store.

Ten years passed, and business for the bakery plunged because new and delicious types of bread debuted on the market. She had never walked out of the bakery, leaving her ignorant of the changes in the market. Having only a few customers per day, not to mention they were also poor people. They came to buy the loaves because the price had never changed. Miss Martha knew through them that there were many new bakeries. The bread was so soft and

delicious, and no one would eat the hard loaves now. Except for them, poor people. Hearing this, Miss Martha wanted to close her bakery. But she didn't like the poor to go hungry. So, she continued to operate even though her daily turnover was minimal. She also tried to make a new bread to make the bread softer with more nutritious. She wanted to have more business. Miss Martha tried to put fruits in the bread, more milk, and eggs in the bread powder. The effect was, however, not very good. She tried several times but still did not succeed. She tried to ask several customers about how others made the bread, but they had no idea how it was made. They thought that as long as a loaf of bread was made with love, others would taste it.

Miss Martha tried and tried, but still, failure chased her. One night, she saw her parents in a dream. Her father told her why she was not successful because she had forgotten the original purpose of making bread. The bread she was making was more bitter and harder than before. She used to be very happy with the idea of making bread for the rest of her life. "Now that you are sad, your tears are mixing into the flour. This makes the bread taste bitter. You make the loaves for the poor, so you don't want them to go on being hungry. But, you've lost focus on your original purpose, and you've focused on being successful instead. You just want to have

more business. Like this, you will never succeed.” Miss Martha slowly remembered the time she used to make loaves with her father. They were delighted whenever they sold bread to the customers.

They would imagine how the customers would enjoy the bread. They would set the table for eating the bread like they had a banquet. She understood her mistake and woke up from her dream. She immediately went to the bakery and rediscovered her original purpose. She was thrilled that her father had corrected her mistake.

The next day, the store opened as usual, but the difference was that the aroma of bread wandered out into the street. Attracting a lot of customers, they bought the bread and tried it. It was soft and delicious. Although there was only one style of bread, the taste was different for everyone’s taste buds. The taste of kindness was sweet, but the taste of selfishness was bitter.

More and more people came to buy bread, changing the bread’s name to “Witches’ loaves”. She got busier, and she really needed someone to help her. She found a poor person to help her; it was the first time she had shown her face in public. She was encouraged by others not to care about what others thought of her. So, she renovated the bakery. The

walls were changed to glass, from floor to ceiling. People could see how she made the bread. In fact, people did not care about her face. She invited many more poor people to work in her bakery. That interested many people. She did not only make delicious bread, but she was also a kind person. She spent all the money she earned to help the poor.

The bakery became an attraction in the town. She even changed the name of the bakery to “Witches' Loaves”. Upon her death, the bakery became a museum to allow visitors. To commemorate her, the people cast a bronze statue of her. Sometimes people would hear the sound of someone making bread at night. Of course, there was no one inside. So, the people believed that, perhaps, the spirit of Miss Martha still haunted the bakery. She had never left the bakery. Just as her father told her.

# The Necklace

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She is walking in a hurry as she is going to be late for her flight. She needs to walk faster to the bus station, to catch the bus that will take her to the airport. The street is very crowded, and other people block her way. Her luggage is heavy, and she can't walk faster. Because it is a hot summer

day, and she is sweating. As she begins to wipe the sweat on her neck with a handkerchief when she notices something is not right. She stops walking and touches her neck; she can feel her neck is sticky and realises her necklace is missing. She is in shock and starts looking for it in her clothes, her pockets and on the floor. When she realises, it is gone, and she stands still in the middle of the busy street.

“What should I do?” Mie asks herself. She has a flight to catch and a necklace to look for. She decides she needs to look for the chain. Mie starts to retrace her steps along the route, along the route she walks with her heavy luggage. On the way, she keeps looking at the floor to see if her necklace is on the ground. The streets are very crowded, and it is challenging to clearly see the floor with all the pedestrians’ feet walking. After one hour of careful searching, she reaches the hotel she has just checked out of. And she immediately goes to the front desk to ask about the room she has just left and if she has left a necklace in the room. The front desk assistant tells Mie to take a seat and wait for the update from housekeeping while they check the room.

Mie is sitting in the lobby of the hotel. She is distraught; she keeps blaming herself for being so careless about losing her necklace. “Where did I leave it? I wore it every morning! Did I wear it this morning, or did I forget? It must have been



in the hotel room. I have looked everywhere in the streets, all along the way.” Mie is very upset, and her eyes are starting to be filled with tears.

One month ago, on Mie’s 50th birthday, the necklace was gifted to her by her son, who was just accepted into college. Her son left town the week after to stay at the college campus. This was the last birthday celebration together. Mie is a single mother, and she has to work two jobs to support her son and herself. The bond between Mie and her son is solid, for they have a very close relationship. They share every secret and every detail of their lives. They both know they are going to miss each other. “Mom, I will be going to college, and I will work part-time, so you won’t have to take two jobs. And after I graduate, I will make sure I will become a successful doctor, and very soon, I will buy us a big house”. Mie was emotional as she looked at her son, who had turned into a young adult and felt glad that son had grown so much. At that moment, her son gave her a box, “Mother, this is a birthday gift for you.” Mie took the box from her son and opened it; it was a gold-coloured necklace. It was a simple chain, but it sparkled under the lights of the house. “I will buy you a real gold necklace after I graduate,” Mie knew at that moment that his son was the best gift from God.

Only one month after her 50th birthday celebration, she received a phone call from her son's school. Bad news came from the phone call. Mie was told that her son had been killed in a car accident. It was a hit-and-run. The driver drove away and is still not caught. It was suspected to be a drunk driver. But the police still do not have the suspect. Mie was told to visit the school to collect her son's belongings. Mie hung up the phone and immediately booked her flight to the city of her son's school. Mie lives in the countryside, and multiple flights are needed to reach the province of her son's school.

The fastest available flight was the next day, and I needed a layover in another city for another flight to the destination. So she booked a cheap city hotel for that night.

Mie is now sitting in that cheap city hotel lobby, waiting for the front desk to call her. She hopes that housekeeping has found her necklace, the necklace her son gave her on her birthday. She recalls memories of her birthday, the moment when her son gave her the chain, and suddenly now her son is gone, killed by someone who has not been arrested.

Moments go by, and there is still no news from the front desk. Mie's phone rings. It is from an unknown number. "Hello?" a familiar voice says, "Mom! It's me. I'm not

killed. The school has mistaken me for another student.”, Mie is confused and lost. Her son then tells her that he was seriously injured in the hospital with his classmate. His classmate has passed away, but he is fine.

Mie is happy and upset at the same time. She is so pleased that her son did not die but very upset that she has missed her flight because she is stubborn enough to find the necklace when she could have just made a phone call to the hotel. Upset that she has spent a fortune on the aeroplane tickets and accommodation, but happy that someone else’s son died instead of her son. She feels awful and complicated. She does not know what to think anymore.

Mie thinks finding the necklace represents finding her son back. But now, she realises that nothing is essential as long as her son is alive.



# Hearts and Hands

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“Code five, go ahead.” The brown-haired young policewoman spoke to the radio as she parked her car, “I got a warrant on Fifth Avenue. It’s Salvador. You know the drill.” The police on the other end of the line continued on as the young lady dazed off, staring at the other side of the road as the description of the wanted criminal imprinted on her head. “That’s him.” She muttered under her breath. An image of a man smiling at her, in his black hooded leather jacket and black trousers. She remembered the adrenaline, the fastening of her heartbeat when he was finally close to her, when the back of his fingers was grazing the side of her cheek. She closed her eyes and let him talk. When she opened her eyes, he turned his back and parkoured his way out of my sight. “Harris!” She snapped back to reality when the officer yelled through the radio, “copy.” She responded before immediately driving to the said location at high speed.

“What are you waiting for? We got what we came here for, come on!” A seemingly nervous man muffled through his ski

mask. He slung a bagful of jewellery and cash shakily to his shoulder while half of his body was on the other side of the broken window. “Don’t mind him, Markus. He does this every time.” Another man chirped in as he let out a soft chuckle, “isn’t that right, Noel?” Noel Salvador, an infamous thief whom the cops have been chasing non-stop for years, manages to escape every single time. Even the best cop in town was not able to take him to prison. He knows their weakness, more specifically, her weakness. “We have to go, man. I don’t want to get caught on my first time.” Markus looked back and forth at the men and at the ledge he had to jump to. “Go on, Markus, you know the drill.” Noel roamed around and picked up a ring. He smiled to himself before turning his body to face his partners, “Markus, Klause, I’ll catch up, as per usual.” He confidently waves at them, signalling for them to leave. Klause patted his shoulder before rushing Markus to jump as he squeezed his body out the window.

Harris was always two steps ahead of everyone in the precinct. She’s been trying to take Salvador down for the many times they’ve come vis-à-vis. Then why is he not in jail already if that’s the case? Well, a forbidden liaison. Harris parked her car and hurried to a specific rooftop. It was Salvador’s usual spot, a little far from the location the policeman told her. “I won’t let him get away this time.” She

mumbled under her breath silently before she started running to her destination, patting her gun in the holster around her waist every now and then.

“Hands where I can see them.” Harris busted the door open and readied her revolver in her hands, pointing at the young man who had his back facing her. “Took you a while, officer Harris.” She knew he was smiling, even without looking at his face. She could tell he was happy that they were in this god-awful situation again, knowing it would lead to her having a mental debate about whether to cuff him or let him go. “Noel, I’m not letting you get away this time.” He turned around to face the officer with a big smile on his face as he heard his name flow out of her mouth. “I missed you too, Jessica.” He chuckled while he walked towards her. The younger lady took a small step forward, her hands almost trembling from gripping the revolver too tight, but she kept her steady stance. “You’re stubborn.”

She let out a small laugh but held the gun at him. Salvador walked slowly before the tip of the gun was resting against his chest, “says you.” His eyes glued to her shimmering green ones, “you’re the one who keeps chasing me.” He smirked, making the officer roll her eyes, “you like being chased.” She



mirrored his smirk, pushing the gun more to his chest, letting him feel the pressure. “I really don’t... It gets exhausting.” He shrugged his shoulders, but his eyes never left hers, “then why keep running?” Her eyebrows furrowed, and she stared at him in confusion, “it’s the only way I can see you. Come on. I thought you were smart?” He teased. She pulled the gun away from him and put it back in her holster, “I am a few steps ahead of other people.” Salvador moved closer to her, as she didn’t budge, “but I’ll always be ahead of you.” He smiled softly before giving her a gentle yet slow kiss. The

officer held his hand as the two kissed passionately. Click. Salvador raised his hand to cup her cheek only to realise his hand was cuffed to hers. “Hearts or hands.” Their usual beckoning question in their little game, “ah.” He chuckled, making the other girl laugh with him, “I told you I wasn’t letting you get away.” She pecked his lips, making the thief roll his eyes playfully. “One more kiss before you take me in?” He kindly requested. The officer cheekily nodded before leaning in as she tiptoed. They kissed lovingly, making Salvador chuckle in the kiss, “I choose both.” He pulled away slowly as Jessica followed his lips, craving for more.





“What?” She asked, still in a haze from the kiss. He showed his hand still cuffed but no longer linked to hers, “hearts and hands.” he stood at the edge of the rooftop, he looked down to see a trash truck moving, “here... I promise we won’t have to meet like this, not in this situation.” He flicked the ring to her as she caught it, “hasta luego mi amor.” He saluted before letting himself fall off the edge, “Noel!” Jessica panicked as she ran to the edge. She looked down and saw him landing on the bin truck, making her sigh, but later on, she smiled. “Hasta luego, mi amor.”



# The Hand

*Ricardo Salvador Andrade Soares*  
*Bachelor of Communication and Media*

This morning Rufus woke up with a large bump on his hand the size of half an orange. At first, he found it strange, “Is it a boil? Or maybe it's just swollen?”, he asked himself. Before he could make much sense of it, his alarm went off.

“Oh, crap, I’m going to be late!”

Rufus rushed to put his clothes on and brush his teeth. He also took a slice of bread with him before leaving his house and grabbing his keys. When he swung his hand out to pick up his keys, everything on the counter vanished as if nothing existed on that counter in the first place.

Rufus walked to the train station sleepily. He scratched his head, and with the motion of his hand, causing a bird on the nearby railing to vanish. Still oblivious to what was happening, Rufus kept walking, and he greeted one of his neighbours as they passed, and as Rufus put his hands down,

the pants of the neighbour disappeared, and so did his bicycle. The neighbour fell on the ground on his butt.

The day went on like this, with Rufus not noticing the things he was doing, making things disappear at work. Finally, he arrived home, and as he went to open his door, his doorknob vanished.

“Huh. That is strange. What happened? Did someone break in?”

Rufus reached for his keys, but they vanished at the touch of his hand.

“What happened? What is going on?”

Rufus got flustered and waved his hand to his left, and it pulled him to the left. He tried to hold on to the railing, but as soon as his hand touched it, part of the railing disappeared.

Rufus collected himself and sat down.

“When did this happen? was it this weird bump on my hand?”

Rufus noticed a bottle of milk on his neighbours' doorstep and waved at it. The bottle came flying at him, and he caught it with his other hand. Out of curiosity, he touched the bottle with his rough hand, and the bottle vanished.

“So, my hand erases anything that I touch...”

Soon Rufus was seen in the air swinging his arm, erasing the space in the air and swishing all over the place until he stopped at the top of a large construction building overseeing the city. The wind rushed over his face, and in the distance, he noticed a woman being robbed.

“This is so cliché, but I guess it's hero time.”

Rufus ripped off part of his shirt and poked two holes in it for his eyes to create a makeshift mask; he swooped down and erased the robber's shoes, causing him to fall down and hit his head on a nearby fire hydrant.

“Thank you so much.” The woman smiled.

“Oh, it's nothing, just your friendly neighbourhood masked man going for a walk,” Rufus replied nervously.

“How can I repay you? What's your name?”

“Well, does she... You can call me the Masked Hand!!”  
Rufus flew away like a superhero. After all, he was nervous because he had never talked to a girl before in his life.

“This city is full of freaks” The girl mumbled to herself.

Soon standing on top of the Tokyo tower, Rufus wondered what to do. So, he has this little secret to himself. Does he keep living his humble life, or does he turn into a superhero? He is left with these thoughts in mind as the sun sets, finishing another day in Japan.

# Regret

*Mitch, Ruth Millicent Gonzales Ongkiko*  
*Bachelor of Communication and Media*



While sitting with the other applicants, she saw the white office where she would be interviewed for her chance to be accepted into Harvard Medical School. Only one of the ten students would be chosen, the chance of a lifetime. Hours went by, and the old lady who wore a blue skirt and fitted white sleeves along with round golden edge glasses called her and said,

“Athena Linsangan, you’re next. Please proceed to the office with a wooden maple door.”

Athena immediately straightened her black skirt, pulled on her white striped coat, and headed toward the office as she nodded to the lady. Walking past two office doors, she knocked on the door, and Mr Reyes greeted her with a smile and welcomed her to sit in the soft leather chair. As Athena settled down on the chair, she immediately smelled the aroma of coffee beans spreading through the office. Her hands started to sweat, from her nervousness could not be controlled. She knew after she walked out through the door, her life could be different.

Mr Reyes sat down on his chair and said, “Hello, Athena! It is nice to see you again! I could never be more pleased with the news I have for you!” The Harvard Medical School has



chosen you for the scholar position after graduating from your pre-medical course here at the University of Cagayan.

With her eyes wide open and knees shaking, Athena could not express how grateful she was at the time. Mr Reyes continued to explain to her the detailed information. After half an hour, she shook hands with Mr Reyes and left the office without saying a word.

A year went by, and Athena had been accepted into Harvard Medical School and would be pursuing a residency as a paediatrician. One morning, she came from her graveyard shift. She retrieved her mail from the door and noticed an unexpected letter from her hometown. As she put down her things in the living room, she sat down on her couch and opened the letter.

Opening the letter made her call her sister Amelia in the Philippines. She asked why she had received this letter about their father's will. Amelia explained that their father passed away a week ago, which she hadn't noticed because she had been working a seven-day straight shift at the hospital.

After talking to Amelia, she took a shower and contemplated how she was living her life. While the water flowed down the drain, she felt the scars on her shoulders and legs.

Shivering from the trauma she suffered, her memories of her father came flooding back.

“Papa!” Athena shouted happily, coming home from school. “I excelled again in school, Papa!”

Her father just nodded and said, “You could do better.” With the high standard of her father, Athena felt exhausted from trying to please him. While her mother comforted and encouraged her about her achievements. Her mother was with whom she got her strength and hoped to hide her from the whole family.

One day coming home from the university, which was the same day that she received the news about her scholarship to Harvard, she immediately went to her parent’s room, where she always found her mother. She found her lying in bed as Athena went to hug her since she thought she was just sleeping. She felt her body was cold and found blood on a white linen handkerchief hidden under the pillow next to her mother’s head.

Athena screamed and quickly called Amelia and her father. During her mother's funeral, her father did not show any emotion or grief, which made her hate him more.

With grief in her heart, she left for Harvard without saying goodbye to his father.

After showering, she went to bed, and Amelia called her in the middle of the night. She answered the phone and said, “Hello? What is happening? Why are you crying? “

Amelia replied, “I just read a letter from Papa’s journal, and he wrote it for you. He wrote down all the things that had happened and the reason why you got the scars from your shoulders and legs.”

After calming Amelia down, Athena hung up the phone and tried to go back to sleep, yet the news from Amelia broke her heart. She realised that the hatred she had for her father was useless. She found out that her father had saved her life from a car accident that had given Athena amnesia and left her in a coma for three years. Her mother almost lost hope of having her back, but her father persisted in his hope for her recovery because he knew how strong she was.

Her father had left nothing for his other children, no financial inheritance except for the house which he gave Amelia and the journal he gave to Athena.

Athena went down to the kitchen and made coffee. She sat beside the window where the sun was rising and said to herself, “All along, I was mad at the wrong person.”

# The Fly

*Vitória Lourenço Caxias dos Santos*  
*Bachelor of Communication and Media*



*Ouch! Buzz - Come on! I can't take it anymore! And believe it or not... I've been here before. It's a rainy Tuesday, and I'm down on 9th Street in Chino's Bodega. I've been in here for a while, in my own plastic prison. Before this, I was chilling by the unwanted fruit on the stand outside, ironically enjoying the sun before the storm. I buzzed my way inside, settled by the sink, and enjoyed dipping my back legs in water droplets, getting a little bathed in. Outta of nowhere, my world was surrounded by a blurry white wall. I panicked, I buzzed, I pushed and shoved. I was stuck! I buzzed as hard as I could, but my own noise fell back on me as the cup resisted my attempts at escape. I looked up, and a young kid was washing dishes by the sink, bobbing his head to street beats. Without even noticing me, he plonked another clean cup on top of the one holding me captive. Again and again, he carried on stacking cups, barely lifting his sleepy little eyes to see me fighting for my life in the cup! This schmuck!*

It's now dawn, and I can hear the streets of New York waking up. Finally, a guy steps into the store and starts pulling the covers from the windows, letting the early morning sunlight in. He is huge! Very tall and built big, this guy would crush at football. A few people come in from time to time, and he'd stop the moment as they walk in and make his way behind the cashier. Barely making eye contact with anyone and standing very still. I don't think I heard this kid

say anything. He took the chance when the store emptied and ran into the side room to grab a glass of water from the sink.

I am about to start struggling in the cup again, hoping he'd notice me, but before I can do anything. He simply lifts the stack of cups and arranges them on the shelves on top of the sink. One by one, I sit there, frozen. I have to be careful about my next move. I am free. My wings are ready to buzz, but the guy towers over me. I wish I could thank the fella for saving my life, but I am afraid he would look down and swat me. We flies have a lifespan of 28 days for a reason... we're not the most popular of insects. He keeps the last cup in his hand and leans down to fill it with tap water, grabbing himself a drink.

I instinctively dodge the droplets of water that ricochets off the sink and turn to check on the guy to find him staring at me. I think about playing dead, but he would just swipe me into the trash can. Maybe this is the time to fly away, but I wait. He waits, and we sit very still for a while until he finishes his drink. Once he is done, he turns around and opens the small window of the side room that leads out into the streets. Is that for me? My escape! What a kind soul! He doesn't say a word, just gently puts his cup down in the sink and walks back into the store.

You'd think I'd buzz my ass right out through that top window, but I don't. I stay, watching the kid work for a little while. I just think maybe I should keep an eye on him. The least I can do to thank him for saving me is to keep other pests off him and stop any other flies from buzzing around his food. And I have a strong enough reputation with the mosquitos to tell them to get lost. After a while, a short woman in a caftan and head wrap walks in. She comes in singing a soulful hymn and walks straight into the back room before a distinctive grave voice stops her.

“Morning, Mrs P,” says the boy from behind the cashier. The woman turns to face him with a startled yet warm smile, coming closer to pat him on his high shoulders, barely reaching.

“Morning, my son! Listen, I was able to get you that suit jacket you asked for. I talked to Ginnie from the Dry Cleaner down the street, and she said the man didn't come to pick it up after three weeks, so don't bother bringing it back to me, alright? Alright.” She doesn't give him time to say anything before she pulls out the dark grey suit jacket that was dangling from the hanger. She presses it against his chest, checking the size. “You won't know till you have it on. Go on.” She orders. He takes the hanger in his hand and switches places with her, letting her take the cashier position.



“You don’t want to be late for the job interview.” She says when he just stands there.

I follow him as he leaves the store and stops in front of a glass window, catching his reflection. He is careful putting on the jacket, unsure if it would fit him, but, fit him, it does. It doesn’t match his basketball shorts or his slippers, and the concern shows on his face. He buttons up a bit to hide the stains on the T-Shirt beneath the jacket. This kid is as dirty as a fly; trust me, I would know! That doesn’t seem to stop him. I watch him until he turns the street corner. I don’t know if I’d fly into him again. He’ll probably nail that job interview and move up in the world, but he is the boy who didn’t smack a grubby fly.



# Chapter 2

## *In Praise of...*

To strengthen their skills, students were assigned a book called “In Praise of Shadows” by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki. This book is about the author’s fascination with Japanese architecture and their passion for the use of shadows compared to other cultures. Students were to read the book and learn from Tanizaki to write about their own passion. It was an opportunity to take a further step into the area of their professions.

Observing and describing the characteristics of one’s passion to others is a practical approach to understanding what the student still has to learn and what the student has to improve upon during the writing process. We are always thinking about what is sufficient to learn and where does providing too much information overload the student. Sometimes, during our time as a student, we experience exhaustion and settle for just passing. However, it is not enough!

Writing is the same as reading, as one has to process the information, re-read the ideas and refine the ideas. Then, the

- (Un)directed Reading -

cycle starts again, until satisfaction has been achieved and our ideas have been communicated...

# In Praise of Video Games

*John Edward Atiwag Pagsibigan*  
*Bachelor of Communication and Media*



People always say, ‘You’re wasting your time doing that every day.’ or ‘You could have done something more productive instead of doing that all day.’ Well, I see the point that they are making. It’s true that even if you’re good at gaming, the gaming skills that you have learned or trained for countless hours won’t help you get a good job, they won’t help you defend yourself when you’re getting mugged, and it certainly wouldn’t help you swim if you are drowning. Video games have a terrible transition to real-life skills. You can’t learn how to swim in a video game and then suddenly learn it in real life, so it is entirely understandable that some people say gaming is a waste of time. Then why do people still play them? Are there any benefits to playing video games?

I love playing video games. I play video games almost every day. I started playing video games when I was very young. I remember having a second-hand computer that my dad bought for me. It was kind of slow, and the cooling fans were noisy. It felt like it was gonna blow up every time I turned it on. But I didn’t care at all. All I cared about was what I could do every day with my online video game character and how to level up as quickly as possible. It was the most blissful time of my life. I was excited to play video games every day. After school, I would rush back home to quickly finish my homework. After I was done, I would call my friend, Joseph,

to go online and play together. Joseph is my childhood friend. Our interests were quite similar. We were basically like brothers. We did things together, like playing video games and basketball. In this video game, we would introduce each other to different kinds of games and play each one. One of those games was called Runescape.

Runescape is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, a game where many people worldwide enter a fantasy world called Gielinor, where they can go on quests: killing monsters and doing various kinds of activities like fishing and woodcutting. It is a typical online role-playing game but with a complex concept. The game gives a lot of freedom to the players. This is also the reason why my friend Joseph and I loved it. Because we could do whatever we wanted as long as the game supported it. I have many memories of playing this game. I would explore the world of Runescape and make friends on the journey. We would share techniques and skills that we learned, but the most memorable conversations with my friends were about their culture. We would share our names and what we had been doing that day. It was entertaining and eye-opening to understand different cultures from around the world. I had an online friend from the Philippines, and we would talk about the differences and similarities between our lifestyles. We would relate to each other about how we Filipinos eat rice for breakfast in the

morning, and the differences we had commuting to school. My friend had to wake up at 6 A.M. because going to his school took 2 hours. While me, living in Macau, only took around thirty minutes to get to school. When we talked about our similarities and differences, I found out that talking to other people could be fun, and this realisation has helped me in the real world.

I'm, otherwise, a timid person. You can say that I am an introvert. Sometimes I find it hard to talk to my classmates or other strangers. I was too nervous while talking to other people in person. I would always think of topics to talk about with my friends and prolong the conversation. I was overthinking a lot, and my brain would stop functioning when I finally dared to speak with my classmates. And I didn't know how to begin the conversation. It was frustrating and embarrassing, so I actually stayed up all night thinking about how to improve my social skills. When I remembered how I could communicate with my online friends. It was smooth and not awkward, at all. I realised that communication doesn't need to be that complicated. All you need to do is flow with it. Overthinking conversations would only make them more awkward. After that night, I stopped overthinking and began enjoying the moment. Although I sometimes still have trouble keeping up with some conversations, it's far better than before.



There are countless people having trouble with social communication skills. It is a common problem for children and teens who are usually shy and introverted. Gaming could help them improve their social skills. Playing cooperative games or “co-op” games could help children to work together and communicate about objectives they have to complete and work together to achieve their goals. This can also improve their teamwork skills and help them be a team player. This is an important skill to have in a working environment. Workers usually work in teams. It is essential to constantly communicate with team members to help progress work faster and avoid time wasted on work already being handled. Playing co-op games doesn’t only help ordinary children and teens to improve their social skills. It can also help children who have autism. Playing co-op games in a group setting can help develop their communication skills and other critical social skills, which autistic children have trouble with.

When I was studying at primary school, my favourite time of the year was summer, obviously. It was the best time of the year because I had a lot of free time for myself. And free time means a lot of gaming! I remember one summer when I played games all day with my best friend, Joseph. By all day, I told the whole day. We were kind of obsessed with gaming. We would play the same game every day. We would talk to

each other while playing Runescape. We would share what happened on that day, laugh and prank each other. I am glad that I had Joseph as a friend. One day, while I was playing games, my father rushed into my room and started yelling at me, “All you do is stay in this room and use that computer all day. Shut that computer off, and don’t open it until I say so!” I then started to tear up and slowly moved my mouse to the shutdown button. After I shut my computer down, my father then went out and slammed the door.

I had mixed emotions when I heard what my father said that day. At first, I was a bit scared. In an Asian family household, it is pretty common to get smacked with a belt. I was expecting to get slapped on my butt cheeks. Fortunately, my father didn’t pull his belt out. Secondly, I was angry because I was in the middle of a game, and all my progress was lost. The feeling of getting interrupted while gaming kind of sucked, but it was understandable. Playing games all day and every day is quite extreme, and if the behaviour is prolonged, it can become an addiction. So understanding that it was my fault, I decided to apologise to my father the day after. Tomorrow came. I woke up and sat down at the dining room table with my father. When I was about to apologise, my father asked me calmly, “What was the game you were playing yesterday?” I was surprised because I thought he was still angry about what had happened the day before. Now he

was trying to know what game it was. I introduced the game I was playing and got carried away. I was babbling about what we could do at the game and how fun it was. After I finished talking, my father said, “Show me how to play next time.” I immediately smiled and showed him that afternoon. Although he only played for a short while, the effort put into playing a video game together with your own son was more than enough. The relationship between my father and me was definitely more potent than before.

This incident also made me realise how vital a relationship with your parents and friends is. Games can be pretty fun, but playing too much can turn into an addiction. It can blind you by not caring about the people that are close to you in real life. It is crucial to build relationships with your parents and friends because time really flies. You don't know what could happen to your close friends and families. One day they may be here. The next day they may not. And this happened to my close friend Joseph. I just minded my own business when my friend Joseph suddenly messaged me and told me that he had to leave Macau in two weeks for good. I was shocked. I thought he was joking at first. But when he told me it was real, I felt pretty sad. I immediately called him and asked to hang out. We spent basically two weeks hanging out and playing games together. After being inseparable for two weeks, I went to the airport with him to

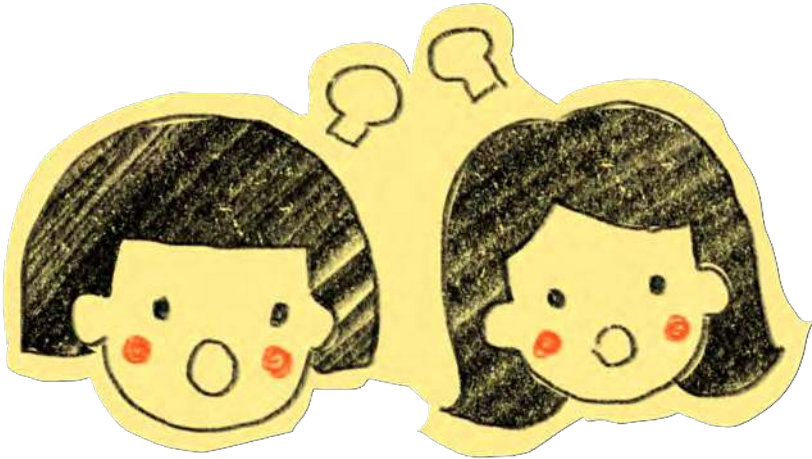
see him off. We were still joking when we were going to the airport, but we both knew that we were sad deep down. The flight had arrived, and it was time to say goodbye. We did our little handshake, hugged each other, and said our goodbyes. Both of us were about to cry as our voices were cracking left and right. I waved him a final goodbye, and he was gone. Although we can communicate with each other online, it's definitely not the same when you can share stories and hang out in person.

Gaming can be quite addictive and harmful when not managed well, but gaming can be quite beneficial through careful guidance. It can help children who are having trouble with communication and teamwork skills, both of which are beneficial to the real-world environment. Gaming can also help parents build stronger relationships with their children. In this modern age, smartphones and computers are unavoidable. Instead of thinking negatively about smartphones and computer games, future parents can try to connect with their children by playing video games with them and using video games as a gateway to building stronger relationships with their children.

# In Praise of Argument

*Mayumi Hamamoto*

*Bachelor of Communication and Media*



### *Dedication*

This is dedicated to those who introduced me to the importance of arguments. I have been very fortunate to have been born into a loving family, I was raised in a traditional Japanese household, and arguments were uncommon at home. Women tend to have a lower position at home and in society. However, when I really learned the art of argument, I was gifted with my son. His presence has taught me the meaning of the constructive side of arguing and unconditional love.

To all those who have previously had constructive and non-constructive verbal arguments with me, some of which unfortunately had turned physical, leading me to break my nail. All of you have helped me grow into a better person. Every argument we had was a learning experience for me.

### *Argument*

Arguments are commonly understood as expressing opposite opinions and are usually associated with heated conflicting words exchanged.

Conflicts are unavoidable in human nature and the society we live in. Sometimes we tend to stay silent to avoid arguments because it is considered impolite and inconvenient, especially in the traditional Japanese culture in which I was brought up. We were taught it is disrespectful to directly show your opposite comments and ideas. We had to agree with each other to show respect. If you disagree with the other person, it is a common courtesy to avoid telling the other person how you think. It is considered rude and impolite if you directly tell them they are wrong or disagree with the person. It is common practice to always give compliments and agree with the other person. This is to show respect and maintain harmony. When we have to offer our opposing opinions, it is expected to agree with the other person and express our opposite opinions indirectly. However, this is uncommon because speaking negative comments is somehow considered to disturb harmony or hurt the other person's feelings.

When people directly disagree with the other person, it is deemed to be rude and ill-mannered. My parents are traditional Japanese. I was brought up to understand the beauty of Japanese communication culture, avoid conflicts, and stay silent to maintain a harmonious environment. But attending school in Macau and frequently visiting the U.S. because I have family and friends living there, I was deeply

influenced by the Macau culture and American culture. It has been confusing while getting to understand myself and other people who were raised in other cultures. Handling conflicts and arguments are something that is confusing, yet it helps me grow and have a better understanding of myself.

### *Growing up*

Growing up, I was taught to be obedient and respectful to others. Talking back or expressing your opinions is considered to be rude and ill-mannered. I remember learning to avoid conflicts at a very young age. Controlling our thoughts, emotions, and temper was supposed to be well-educated and classy.

As I started developing my own thoughts and having friends from different cultures. I began to feel confused as my friends spoke very differently and straightforwardly. They would directly say “no” and openly express their opposing ideas, which would be defined as rude and blunt in Japanese culture. Expressing your feelings was being celebrated in western culture, and in modern society, it was interpreted as being confident and self-love. This was especially interesting to me because I have always had different ideas and strong opinions. Suppressing my own thoughts and behaviour has been uneasy. It has led to self-doubt and other issues.



Avoiding arguments completely to maintain a peaceful environment can result in misunderstandings and may have disastrous consequences. For a healthy relationship, expressing your own views and thoughts are vital. However, it often leads to conflicts when mishandled. Learning to handle conflict and arguments is an art in human relationships.

### *Early Arguments begin*

During my teenage years, I started to believe that it is necessary to stand up for ourselves in certain situations. And very often, I would bluntly express my opinions which resulted in significant conflicts. Teachers at school would find me troubling because I would share my thoughts when it was unnecessary, expressing opposing ideas and pointing out when the teacher had made mistakes. Most of the time, the teacher will get defensive, resulting in heated arguments. I had no problem standing up for myself and my beliefs. Sometimes I would provide supportive scientific evidence to support my statements. Unfortunately, teachers never admit their mistakes and are upset that they are misbehaving by not staying quiet. Arguments happened very often between teachers and me, I was labelled rebellious, but I was only trying to prove a point. Interestingly, frequently classmates

would come to thank me for voicing out, for they did not dare to.

### *Arguments between peers and me*

In contrast, It was uncommon for me to have massive conflicts with my friends. My best friend, who has a similar personality, has extreme views and visions. We often have healthy arguments, exchanging different ideas and sharing opinions. We analyse different perspectives on a matter. This does not necessarily result in both of us agreeing on the same idea. Most of the time, agree to disagree. From a very early time, we developed healthy arguments, got to know each other better and gained a broader vision.

### *Arguments between my partners and me*

Conflicts were common between one previous partner with whom I had a romantic relationship. Coming from a culture where compliments are politeness and maintaining harmonious communication is necessary. It was very contradictory for me to balance the culture I was brought up in and the new culture I was exposed to modern western culture. Modern society encourages females to stand their ground and express their own opinions, which is the exact opposite of the culture I was raised in. Arguments happened

between him and me, conversations will sometimes get heated, and things were thrown and broken. There was physical contact in a few heated arguments, and on one occasion, one of my pretty well-manicured nails was broken. Hurtful words were used by both parties, and it was chaotic. It was hard adapting to accepting and giving blunt and straightforward conversations.

### *Arguments between my son and me*

I was gifted with a son at the age of 25. As he started developing his verbal skills, we started having arguments. I find it amazing because he was able to defend himself while being respectful to his mother from a very young age. I am glad that he is an obedient child, and at the same time, he tries to stand his ground and tell me what he thinks. We would have arguments over tiny things, such as the time for showering, whether he could have ice cream for dinner, watch television programmes instead of doing homework, or if the music volume was

too loud. There were times when we both got emotional, and voices were raised. But no matter how heated our conversation got, we would both express our



thoughts without saying hurtful things to each other. All our arguments ended with both of us apologising, a kiss and “I love you”. We always managed to make peace right after our arguments. Every night we go to bed knowing we love each other doubtlessly.

Our bond grows more potent after each argument. We learn more about each other. Sometimes we sit down and analyse our previous conversations and come up with better solutions. Interestingly, we have come up with fun facts about why sometimes we end up in huge arguments: we were usually hungry or sleepy.

We have compromised and agreed on specific rules in our mother-and-son relationship. One of which is when it is early in the morning, we will not have long conversations before we both have eaten our breakfast. Another rule is when we sense that one of us is starting to get emotional and starts raising our voice, we would verbally say we need to pause and not say a word. Because we will only get more upset if we continue, and it is not helpful to the stressful situation we are already in.

We have developed a strong bond with respect and understanding because we trust and love each other unconditionally. We try our best to compromise and learn to

improve our communication because we do not want repeated, stressful arguments.

### *Growing from Arguments*

Motherhood has helped me understand that arguments do not necessarily have to be heated or completely avoided to maintain peace and harmony. Arguments can help improve a relationship, a situation or a project. It can help us better understand other people's perspectives, and there is no absolute right or wrong in opinions.

Arguments mainly occur because “we care” about something. It could be the other person, a situation or a project. But sometimes, it is because we feel that we are being maltreated and that there is a need to express ourselves. But no matter the reason behind the arguments, we can always choose to control our emotions and have construction arguments.

I do not regret having arguments with my teacher in middle school. I have gained insight and learnt how not to



approach a conversation. I have learned the consequences of standing up for yourself in different environments, the result worth it, and how petty sometimes adults can get. I now understand that not everyone is open-minded and welcomes other ideas or is pointed out for making mistakes. We can continually evaluate a situation and decide to stay quiet or let our voices be heard. It is a choice of our own.

Having been involved in a fiery past relationship, it is amazing how my communication skills with the opposite sex have matured. Both of us did exactly what not to do in a relationship. I have realised that the key was to avoid repeating anything we have said or done.

Having had all the previous arguing experiences made me realise that every argument counts. There is always something I can learn from how to avoid repeating the same situation and improve and maintain a solid and healthy relationship with other people. Learning to balance my deeply rooted Japanese cultural background and the right to express myself in modern society.

The society we live in today is flooded with different voices and opinions. Arguments happen all the time, especially in this new era with social media spreading different voices. We

can all learn to respect each other's views and better understand different people from different backgrounds.





# In Praise of Music

*Noah, Nicole Angela Zabayle Villanueva  
Bachelor of Communication and Media*

When I was a child, music had my heart from the very beginning. When I was in my mother's womb, my mother told me that she used to put headphones on her belly for me to listen to music. She played classical piano pieces and popular songs of her time, and she did this every night when she came home from work. I grew up in a household where karaoke was an every weekend activity. After all, we are Filipinos and known to be very passionate about singing and playing musical instruments. My mother tells me that I started singing when I was two years old. Like every parent would say, she thought I had a gift for music, but music became a part of me because of how it makes me feel. I recall singing my lungs out whenever I could, we were all once very carefree as children, and I was one of those children who would sing just because it gave me so much joy.

One Christmas, when I was around five or six-ish, I woke up to a drum kit sitting in my living room, which my parents

had bought me as a present. I leapt for joy, and without hesitation, I sat on the chair and grabbed my drumsticks and started hammering to the songs playing on the cassette player. Thankfully the neighbours were kind enough not to stop me from being too loud banging on the drums. I remember pretending that I was playing for a band and performing like I was on a stage.

Some years later, my father bought a guitar and started playing alone in his room. I was captivated by the sound of the acoustic strings and how well it resonated with his voice as he sang while strumming the guitar. That led the young me to peek at his door because I was mesmerised by his smooth duet with the guitar. He noticed me right away and asked me to sit with him while he taught me how to play. I listened while he explained the basic chords and how to press the fingertips to the strings to create a clean sound. When he let me try, I remember the rush of excitement the first moment I held the guitar. It was difficult for me to put pressure on the strings. As a beginner, it was painful to learn to play the guitar. But the pain did not stop me. I was determined to play smoothly and create beautiful melodies from the instrument.

My dad wasn't the only one who inspired me to learn how to play the guitar. As a child, I used to go to my godparents' house because they babysat me a lot when my parents were

at work. My godfather is an artist, a painter, and plays the guitar. I remember just sitting there and listening to him play or watching him draw. I was always drawn to art and was always in awe of how it has different forms of expression. When I find it hard to express myself with words, I always try to communicate through music.

Verbal communication was never my forte. I was always the quiet kid at the back of the classroom. During their teen years, high school is where kids think they know their place in the world. I was just finding my place, and in the most bottomless pits of despair, music was the light at the end of the tunnel. For me, expressing my emotions through music is such a phenomenal process. From creating a soulful layering of instruments to representing a story or an emotion, to the poetry of lyrics that express ideas, I could not express with words otherwise. Music is storytelling, a language that translates my inner self.

I was in 4th grade when I started to take an interest in writing my own songs. I tend to write the most cliched lyrics never written. But somehow, the process of writing felt therapeutic. There was a sense of euphoria every time I found the right melody that expressed whatever I was feeling. Most artists say that writing a song and giving it to the audience is like passing their story to another person. From my perspective,

writing a song helps me express myself and process my emotions. It feels like having a best friend but in the sense of just having a conversation with myself and making peace with whatever conflicts I encounter within myself.

During high school, I met some of my greatest friends through music. We were already close, to begin with, but music brought people together in our little circle of friends. We used to sit on the bench, pull out our guitars and just sing whatever came to mind. Life was simple back then, raw and simple. Music created a bond that we didn't know was possible. Music brought our dreams together and made us think we could be whomever we wanted to be.

Even though I must admit that now, my passion for music is fading, becoming blurred lines. But just listening to certain reminds me how influential and inspiring the piece is. That even if I lost my path, or myself, music paves the path to finding a brighter picture.

You don't even need to know how to sing or play an instrument to know that music is a tool that helps us get through the days. Some may take it as a form of art. Some take it as a form of therapy. At the end of the day, music can build bridges and make connections with each other.

I conclude that music is a powerful beautiful language. Through music, we can better understand each other, even if we do not speak the same language. The music itself is a powerful instrument that can deliver an affecting message and tell a compelling story.



# **Animalia**

## **In praise of kids, believing everything is possible.**

*Mitch, Ruth Millicent Gonzales Ongkiko*  
*Bachelor of Communication and Media*

In the town of Hexapoda, the first-ever school called Animalia opens. As the cock crows and the bird sings, the young bugs from their home get up excitedly from their beds. The butterfly bus arrives at their homes, picks them up and goes to Animalia. In the cornfields, the first one to be picked up is Benny, the ant who is thrilled to see what school is. Next in the Narra tree is Miles the bee. After a few stops and, the butterfly bus is full of curious young bugs. One stop later, they see the sign for Animalia, and the young bugs cannot contain their excitement and emotions. Willy, the fly, is nervous and cannot stop moving inside the bus. So, they land and form a line, and as soon as the cricket stridulate, the minor bugs run off to the classroom where Mr Caterpillar awaits them. These minor curious bugs look around as if they see a new wide world. Fascinated with what they see,

especially Nora, the wasp, she encounters an image that looks like her pinned on the styrofoam wall.

“Okay! Little kiddos! Sit down and find your place behind the little red bottle caps.” Says Mr Caterpillar. He cheerfully welcomes each of the little bugs and lets them know how historic the day is for the town of Hexapoda. Mr Caterpillar is wearing a pair of hexagonal glasses and puts a black rubber around it, for he has trouble with his eyesight. Seeing them is a bit blurry to him. He calls cricket, his assistant, to wipe his glasses. Cricket runs off to him and wipes them thoroughly.

“Welcome to Animalia! We are here to create history in our town. All I want you to do here at school is to have fun learning.” Addresses Mr Caterpillar.

Ms Grasshopper will be the teacher for the first batch of students in Animalia. She hops and says, “Hello, my dear fellas! I am Ms Grasshopper. I’m pleased to meet you all, and I look forward to having fun with you. I will be your teacher and friend here in Animalia.”

The students make noises with their distinct sounds as responses to Ms Grasshopper.



The cricket chirps again, which signals it is time to begin their Animalia journey. Ms Grasshopper starts the first class by asking students to introduce themselves.

As she starts the drill, she says, “I am Ms Grasshopper. I am 4 months old and live in Caelifira with my swarm. Alright! Who wants to go next?” With a cheerful high-pitched voice.

The students look at each other. Ms Grasshopper encourages them not to be shy. Then Nora, the wasp, buzzes her way off to Ms Grasshopper and starts to introduce herself. The other students admire her courage a lot when Nora dares to break the wall of nervousness. Then, Benny, the ant, follows through and says, “I am Benny. I live in Formicidae, next to the town of Ms Grasshopper. I am 14 days old. Thank you!” Then he calls out Willy, the fly. “Yow, Willy! It’s your time!” Willy is startled because he has never thought that speaking in front of people is substantially scarier than riding the butterfly bus.

Ms Grasshopper smiles and says, “Come on, Willy, you can do this.” Then Willy freezes. It seems nothing is around him, and he is being overpowered by anxiety. Miles, the bee, excuses himself as Willy blocks his way and goes to the front of the class. Miles is the most confident among them. He likes to boast about how famous he is in his town of Buzz.

The city of Buzz finds Miles a charming kid for his unique birthmark of a strip of different shades of yellow gold near his tail.

Ms Grasshopper kindly assists Willy in getting back to his seat after he freezes. After that, she starts to teach the first five letters of the alphabet to her four incredible students. She begins to sing in tune to the Jack and Jill nursery rhyme, “A is for Ants, B is for Bugs, C is for caterpillar, D is for dragonfly, E is for earwig” She repeats this line a couple of times. While she sings, the students are amused by Ms Grasshopper’s fantastic voice. After hearing it a few more times, they begin to sing with her. Mr Caterpillar hears them with their different tones from his Panda Express box office; tears fall from his eyes, and his heart sings with such great joy.

The cricket buzzes his legs to inform everyone it’s time to go home.

Ms Grasshopper says, “Time flies so fast! I hope you all had fun today and learned something new. Alright, form a line as we head out to our Amazon box classroom and will catch the butterfly bus.”

The students follow Ms Grasshopper, yet Willy is still having trouble coping with the school thing. He chooses to stay in the corner of their classroom. Ms Grasshopper approaches him and guides him out of the school. Eventually, everyone is on the bus and goes home safely.

As Willy arrives home, he goes straight to his room. His aunt knocks on his door, which is a matchbox, and asks, “Are you okay, Willy?”

Willy opens the door and tells her aunt what happened to him. His aunt is the one who raised him up since his parents both died when he was still a larva. His aunt is the only person he can trust. Willy does not know how to make friends with his speech disorder. He stutters when he speaks. His aunt comforts him and says, “You were born to be different because you were born to stand out.”

When the next day arrives, the rooster crows, and the birds chirp. The butterfly bus honks in front of Willy’s, Miles’, Nora’s, and Benny’s houses. As they are on their way to Animalia, everyone except Willy is humming the song they learned yesterday.

Mr Caterpillar meets them in front of their classroom as Ms Grasshopper is preparing an activity for today’s class. Then

the cricket buzzes to let them know it's time to start the lesson.

Ms Grasshopper shows them something - it is a piece of glass that reflects what they look like. She says, "This is called a mirror. As you can see, the mirror only reflects what is in front of it."

The students feel in awe together, "oooooh."

Nora asks her, "Why does the mirror move as I move?"

Ms Caterpillar replies, "My dear, it is because when the light bounces off, it will show an image of whatever is in front of it."

Nora nods and begins to do movements in front of the mirror. Ms Grasshopper calls everyone's attention and says, "Why don't we play a game called 'Mirror Me.' So for the game to work, just do what I do. We are going to pretend to be a mirror."

Everyone stands up from their seats and moves like Ms Grasshopper. All of them are having a great time. Then, she calls Benny to lead them. Benny walks in front of them. Unnoticed, he has no other leg but walks like a regular ant.

Even though Willy is still nervous about his speech problem, he cannot contain his joy in his ommatidium. After Benny, Nora is the next one to lead; she does not hesitate to act crazy even though she has no sting at the end of her body.

Knowing that everyone has already had their turn, Willy tries to think whether he can do it. When he realises that he doesn't need to speak, he joins the activity and dances creatively.

After the activity, Ms Caterpillar is happy to see them bond together and start to have fun in class. Later, she leaves a phrase to them, "Be a mirror."

The cricket stridulates, and the little students are a bit sad because they are all enjoying their time in Animalia.

After returning home, they can still not forget what Ms Caterpillar said to them. They become curious about the meaning of 'Be a mirror.'

Nora is trying to imagine the mirror again and starts chanting, "mirror, mirror."

Miles asks his parents and tries to work out the meaning of 'be a mirror'. At the same time, Benny draws to his leaf the



mirror's shape and tries to figure out how to become a mirror. "Will I wear it?" He says.

As the night passes, everyone is asleep except for Willy. He cannot sleep; he is trying to understand what Ms Grasshopper said to them. He flies out to the pond near their house. He stops near the edge of a leaf where the moon is reflected on the water. He looks down and sees himself and recognises how similar it is to a mirror. It gives a reflection

of what I am. Suddenly, the cricket spots him staring at the water and asks, “Why are you still awake, my dear?”

“I co...co...ould not sl...slee. Sleep,” he replies.

“Why are you staring at the water?” cricket asks.

“Ms Grass... Ho...ho..hopper said, Be a mirror.”

“I see... You are trying to understand what Ms Grasshopper said, but you cannot figure it out. What she meant by being a mirror is to accept who you are, and the light of acceptance that bounces off you, allows you to influence others. As you know, your purpose is to be the mirror. You will be a reflection of others.” The cricket said with such an old voice. The next day, Ms Grasshopper notices something different from Willy. Willy seems to be more relaxed because now he understands that everyone is.

Ms Grasshopper tells them a story about a girl who was afraid of being who she was because of her high-pitched voice. She tried to be like the others in their swarm. One day she ran off out of their multitude and ended up in a garden where she saw someone who looked like her. She approached her. Then, she got furious because the other girl kept copying what she did until she passed her by. A man

noticed her and asked, “ My dear, what are you doing with the mirror?” The girl looked at him and asked, “why is this thing copying me?”

The man replied, “Because it is its purpose. It's the light within that mirror that makes itself reflect.”

The girl realised that she was born to be like a mirror. To be who you are is what makes you a reflection of yourself and others. “And that girl is in front of you now. My dear fellas, do not be afraid that you are different, be afraid when you can no longer reflect who you are.” Ms Grasshopper says.

The students have learnt an important lesson that they can remember for the rest of their days.



# Chapter 3

## *A Story to Tell*

A project can be well-designed and perfectly manufactured. Still, in order to succeed, the designer needs to go through the process of empathising as the first step of the entire design thinking process. Needless to say, for motion graphics projects, there are always scripts.

In this exercise, students were asked to create a story related to their final projects. These stories do not necessarily need to be the direct script of their products or the designs. More importantly, they are to transmit their initial idea and be the root of their work.

Some pieces are stories about the inspirations, while some are evolved from the product. Either way, they were originally created by the students who hope to use them to communicate with external parties.

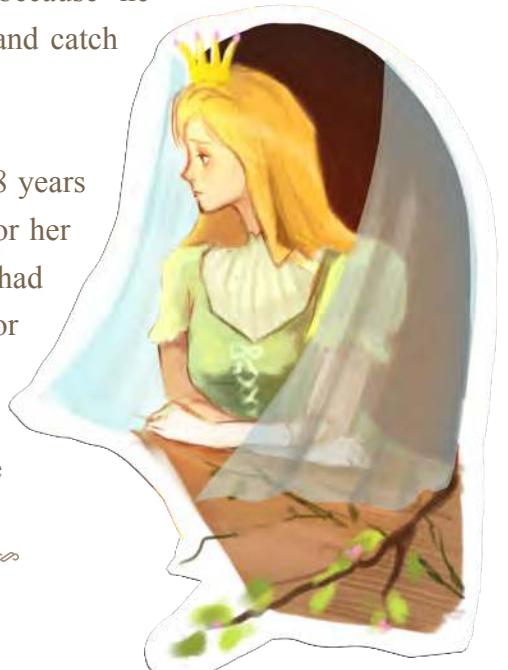


# HEA (Happy Ever After)

## *Skylar, Tin Wai Tai* *Bachelor of Design*

Once upon a time, there was a vivacious and lovely little princess. She knew from fairy tales that a princess would be caught by a dragon and taken back to the castle one day. The king would then summon warriors to defeat the dragon to save the princess, usually. At the end of the story, the princess and the warrior would live a happy life together. Therefore, this little beautiful princess waited every day for that day to come. She was so eager to know what kind of person her prince would be because he waited for the dragon to come and catch her.

Until the princess was almost 18 years old, the king began to arrange for her marriage. The little princess had been waiting for the dragon for too long, and she decided not to wait any longer. She wanted to take the initiative to find the



dragon and let the dragon catch her. She quietly ran away from the city to a forest to look for the dragon.

In the dragon city, there was a tradition that every juvenile dragon needed to capture a princess to be considered as an adult. However, in recent years, the kingdom's defence system has become more robust, and the dragons had little chance of capturing the princess. One day, a juvenile dragon came to the forest for training. Suddenly, he heard a voice from the forest. He quietly crawled to the neighbourhood and found a beautiful maiden there. The maiden's signature blonde hair showed that she was the princess of the neighbouring country.

Before he knew what to do, the little princess came running up to him. She jumped up and said, "I know that you are the dragon. I am the princess of the kingdom. Now I want you to take me back to the castle." The dragon was surprised and stood in a place where he did not know what to do. He did not think it would be so simple to kidnap a princess who was only 17. The dragon told the princess that he also needed to find a lost chair in the world to complete the task.

Hearing this, the princess happily told the dragon that she would help him find the chair. Since the princess was proficient in various languages, it was easy for her to collect information from different countries. The dragon seized the

opportunity and took the princess to find the chair. First, they went to a kingdom nearby, the Kingdom of the Dwarfs. The dragon used his magic to shrink the two of them, so they successfully sneaked in. They inquired about the chair's whereabouts, and a wise old man told them that this chair had been lost for a very long time. Plenty of collectors were also looking for this chair because the man who found it could become the most powerful man on this planet.

The princess and the dragon came to a cave. The cave was full of murals and frescoes about the production date, manufacturing process, and the owner of this chair. They found that the chair should now be in a giant's kingdom. Suddenly, a huge black panther appeared, and he told the dragon, "This chair is now split into three parts. One is the ground. They must first find a blue rabbit to help find this missing piece."

The blue rabbit lived in a tree, he hid in the field of blueberries, so the princess and the dragon came up with an idea: they would eat all the blueberries on the tree, which took them a total of three days and three nights. Before they ate the last three blueberries, the blue rabbit finally appeared. The blue rabbit was so angry that the princess and the dragon ate all the fruits. However, the princess threatened the blue rabbit that she would eat him too, which made the blue rabbit

panic. He agreed to hand over the chair. The blue rabbit led them to a place where he hid the chair. The dragon took the chair after the blue rabbit dug it out and left the Kingdom of Dwarves with the princess afterwards.

When they arrived at the Land of Giants, the panther appeared again. The panther told them that the second piece of the chair was in a palace. They needed to pass through the guards and go to the highest place of the palace to find the chair. They went to the castle and visited the king. The king told them that the queen lived in the highest place of the palace and didn't like visitors. In fact, the queen was locked up in a tower because she was insane. The queen saw the princess from the building and excitedly told her that the king was mad. Just when she wanted to seize the throne, the king locked her up in the tower. The dragon and the princess decided to help the queen regain her throne. The dragon summoned all the dragons to defeat the king, and the queen decided to give her part of the chair to the dragon.

The quest told the dragon and the princess that the last part of the chair was in the kingdom that the princess belonged to. The princess was very scared that the king would catch her back and force her to marry. She quietly dressed up as the dragon's wife, hoping the king would not be able to identify her. When she returned to her kingdom, she realised the king

had been looking for her. The whole street was covered by posters about her. The dragon saw a soldier, and he told the soldier that he had found the princess. The dragon was hoping that he could return the princess to the king in exchange for the chair's last missing part. The princess felt outraged that the dragon had taken advantage of her. She told the king that she had been married to a dragon, so she couldn't marry princes from other countries. The king could not believe that the princess was already married to a dragon. He arranged and ordered that the wedding be held in the castle. After they were married, the dragon could get the chair back.

When they got married, the king took out the last part of the chair. Happily, the dragon successfully found all the missing pieces. The chairs suddenly combined into one together, and it turned into a handsome knight. The knight, then, killed the dragon and fell in love with the princess. At the end of the story, they were living Happily Ever After.

- (Un)directed Reading -





# A Loving Park

*Grania, Weng Chim Cheong*  
*Bachelor of Design*

“Yes, more. Right hand on your shoulder.” “Good, keep going.” Travis is an intelligent photographer. He takes photos for a famous magazine with the beauties; he always has his unique thoughts and turns ordinary things into something special.

“Bib, bib...” Travis opens his eyes, still in the same bed and setting. Yes, he had a good dream. He is not that famous yet, and he is just an assistant to a renowned photographer. “Just another day! Come on! You can do it!” Travis always encourages himself because he believes that someday he will become a famous photographer.

“Fix this and give it back to me as soon as possible.” Says Travis’s boss. The duties are more than just taking photos being a photographer; they also need to use different software to retouch or edit the photos. However, this is not what Travis wants to do. He simply wants to take photos but has to do all the other assignments when he is just an

assistant. Travis is exhausted and wants to have some new ideas for his work. He decides to go to a park for lunch today. Travis buys a sandwich and sits on a “chair” beside a “climbing wall”. He always thinks that talking, playing, and interacting with people is fascinating. Usually, he would take pictures of these people. Also, the senses of people interacting.

“Excuse me, can I sit here?” Travis freezes for a moment because the girl has a pair of stunning eyes.

Travis replies, “Sure, make yourself comfortable.” They sit together for a while, and Travis continuously reads his book. Suddenly, Travis breaks the silence, “Are you a fan of vintage clothes?”

Scarlett puzzles, “What? This is my daily outfit. What’s wrong? Why does everyone dress up so differently? And you as well...” “ Is today a festival?”

Travis replies: “Ha, ha, not really. What’s your name?”

Scarlett: “ I’m Scarlett, and you are?”

Travis: “Nice to meet you. I’m Travis.” “ You live nearby?”

Scarlett: “ No, I work nearby.”

Travis: “What a coincidence, me too. I’m a photographer.”

Scarlett: “I’m a cable girl.”

Travis: “Really? What a waste.”

Scarlett: “Why?”

Travis: “I think you can be a model.”

Scarlett: “Thank you! I will take this as a compliment.”

Travis: “I’m serious. Your eyes are beautiful.”

Scarlett: “I think I need to go now. Nice to meet you.”

Travis: “Oh. Okay. I hope to see you again. Scarlett.”

When Travis goes back to the office, he has got Scarlett all on his mind. Travis doesn't know if he can see Scarlett again, but he really wants to meet this girl at least one more time. Nevertheless, he needs to get his work in hand done as quickly as possible.

As days go by, Travis goes to the park once, where he used to meet Scarlett every day, hoping that he could meet her once again. Finally, she is there today, on the same “chair”. Scarlett is wearing the same outfit.

Travis: “Why didn't I see you these days?”

Scarlett: “But I came here every day.”

Travis: “Maybe we missed each other.”

Travis: “Listen. I know that sounds abrupt, but can I ask you to be my model?”

Scarlett: “Right now?”

Travis: “Sure, why not.”

Scarlett: “OK.”

Kids are asking Scarlett questions because of her outfit. She is so patient with the kids and plays with them in the “climbing wall”, “rolling sits” and running around. Travis takes out his camera and takes some photos of these moments and beautiful scenes. People may think that these photos are too ordinary as photographs, but these are the

most precious pictures in Travis's mind. The park, the chair, or the wall are daily things where people would interact and communicate with each other.

When Travis goes back to his office, he takes out the camera film and develops the film. When his boss sees the photos, he asks Travis to take the pictures for a competition.

Travis is very excited and thrilled to tell Scarlett that his work is being seen. He runs to the park to find Scarlett, but this time he sees Scarlett getting entangled with a man.

Scarlett: "Let me go."

The man: "Please give me one more chance. I still love you."

Scarlett: "You've betrayed me."

The man lets go of Scarlett. She sits on the "chair" and cries.

Travis: "Are you ok?"

Scarlett wiped her tears and said: "Yes."

Travis: "Our work may have a chance to win a competition."

Scarlett: "Really? That's great. Congratulations!"

Travis: “I told you that you have the talent of being a model.”

Scarlett smiles through her tears and says: “ You... Thank you.”

Travis: “Are you free right now? Want to grab a drink?”

Travis takes Scarlett to a bar. They talk about a lot of things and find that they are fascinated with each other. When Travis walks Scarlett home, she kisses his cheeks and says good night.

“Ring, ring...” “Mr Travis, please.” “Your work has been shortlisted for the competition and will be displayed.” “Thank you very much!” Travis is delightful. His dream has finally come true, and he can become a great photographer. They are busy preparing materials and photos for the display, and Travis just wants to see Scarlett as soon as possible. Travis goes to the park again and tries to find Scarlett; he walks around the whole park but still cannot find her. He gets tired and sits on the “chair”, he sees there is one sentence engraved on the “chair” --- “I might need to leave for a while. Miss you! Scarlett”. Travis is so disappointed, but there is no other way to find out Scarlett, so he walks back to the gallery.

“Please welcome Mr Travis.”

“Thank you! I’m so glad that I could come here today and bring my work to everyone. As a photographer, I always think that it is important to see things differently. Even ordinary things can become something unique, and the most precious thing is the connection between people. So, I hope I can pass this message to the world through my work.”

Travis’s work really spreads to the world, and many different people come to see his work. There is one old man who sees Travis’s work and cries suddenly. Travis walks close to the man and notices the man is watching the picture of Scarlett. Travis asks the man why he is crying, and the man says, “She was my love!”

Travis: “Sir, you know her?”

The old man: “That's a long time ago.”

Travis: “Long time ago?”

The old man: “ Yes, she passed away 50 years ago.”

Travis: “Sir, I think you must have mistaken her for another girl. I just saw her several days ago; these photos were taken a month ago.”

The old man: “That is impossible. She had cancer when she was 25. I saw her dead in person.”

The old man's conversation confuses Travis, and he doesn't know whether the old man is telling the truth. Travis wants to find Scarlett, but he can't. He is so helpless; he doesn't know what to do.

A month passes by, and Travis goes to the same park with his camera to begin his new project. He has already become a famous photographer this time, and he decided to take pictures by following the same concept. He sits on the same “chair” and accidentally drops his book. When he leans down, he sees a lot of engraved words under the “chair”. That is a letter from Scarlett.

“To Travis:

I don't know if you can see this or not. I'm so glad that I met you here. You always brought me joy when I was sad; you told me to see things differently, even if it was ordinary. Knowing you were the best part of my life, I could forget my



pain for a while when I was with you. I know we are people of different ages, so I am writing you this letter to let you know I appreciate what you did and adore you very much. And thank you for all the things you've done for me; I believe you will become a great photographer one day.”

Till the end, Travis is having tears fall like rain. He knows that the old man is telling the truth, but he hasn't thought they would have a sad ending. He likes Scarlett and wants to see her again, and his tears drip on his camera and the shutter. There is light coming out from the camera, and Travis drops it on the ground, and this time, Travis sees Scarlett again.

The chair, the climbing wall, and the rolling device are very ordinary things in a park. These are normal things, but the important part is that they provide a platform for people to interact and communicate with each other. People are used to using technology these days, and this will make us closer and more convenient. In fact, technology is keeping us apart and is eliminating our physical interaction. Within communication, physical communication is critical, and it includes the tones of our speech, body language, and eye contact. These are the essentials of communication. I want people to go a bit backward and notice there are many more than phones or the internet. And so, I have created a park.

- (Un)directed Reading -



# Feng Shui Master

*Anthony, Hoi Wong*

*Bachelor of Communication and Media*

This incident happened in a small town in 2000. Decades after the liberation of New China, the country developed rapidly, and the construction industry was prosperous. Many contractors became wealthy in this period; there was no such thing as losing.

In a village, there lived one famous Feng Shui master, and the name was Cheong. People in the town called him Master Cheong; they liked to come and seek information from Cheong about their life and future. Sometimes, people cried to Cheong and asked for more hints about their fate, but Cheong could not reveal too much. God would cut his life short if he spoke too much.

Master Cheong was a significant figure in the village; he was good at fortune-telling and Feng Shui. All people who had seen him had praised him for his ability to foresee upcoming unfortunate events. He gradually became famous in the town,

and very soon, his fame was spread forthwith into the whole country. Others started calling him “God Cheong”.

One day, Cheong set up a stall early in the morning, and it did not take long for people to find it. People who came to meet him were either a person with a son who wanted to get married or a couple quarrelling over a divorce. Cheong had a good reputation in the town; he would not charge expensively, just 5 to 10 dollars.

After a busy morning, he took a break for lunch. At this time, he heard a horn-like noise outside the door. At that moment, cars were rare in rural areas. Cheong did not know what to make of it. He thought it was someone who was blowing a trumpet.

After a while, a middle-aged man opened the door and walked to Cheong; Cheong glanced at him and knew that this man was not a farmer, and the man asked proudly, “Are you the almighty fortune-teller?”

Cheong opened his eyes wide when he heard the words and raised his head up to look at the man; Cheong said inside his heart, “This man has an ashen complexion; he looks like a wealthy person, but his eyes are bloodshot, and his hair is uneven.” Cheong probably had a number in his heart; this

man sounded arrogant, and Cheong did not want to offer him any fortune-telling service and said, “They were all praises from the neighbours.”

The man waved his hand impatiently; he said, “Let’s cut to the chase. I asked if you could see my future accurately, and I heard that you are also a Feng Shui expert?”

Cheong said, “I understand a little bit of it.”

The man said, “Okay, then you can show it to me.”

Cheong asked him to take his hand out and stretch it; he also asked about his age. The man was thirty-eight years old and was born in the year of Rabbit. The fleeting luck appeared in his eyes; his eyes were bloodshot and dark, which was a bad omen. Cheong looked at his palms again. This man used to commit homicide; it should be five years ago when he was thirty-three. Cheong, coupled with the man’s face, knew that the man was not good and cruel.

In order not to imply right or wrong, Cheong told the man, “You have to face up to the facts. You have not had much luck over the past two years, and you have lost a lot of money. It is not peaceful now.” There was something Cheong did not say – this person lived in a strange

department, surrounded by black air. He was very vicious, and something unclean followed him from home

The man remained silent, and obviously, Cheong said it right. Then, the man asked him, “If it came with me, could you help me?” After that, he took out a thousand dollars and put it on the table. Cheong had never seen such a large amount of money in his life, but he did not dare to accept it and said, “This is a destined calamity and cannot be solved.”

The man sneered and then said, “If you help me get rid of this filthiness, these thousand dollars are yours. I have something to do, and I have to leave now.” The man left his business card to Cheong. Cheong was stunned for a while and held his business card. Cheong took a glance at the card and saw “Contracting for Building Architectural Design Projects,” The man’s last name was “Wong”.

Later, Cheong’s wife brought back a basket of food; she looked at the card that was left on the table and asked, “Who is this person? Is he rich?”

Cheong told his wife, “I don’t know him; he came for a Feng Shui consultation.”

His wife asked, “Why is there so much money on the table?”

Cheong said, “Don’t touch them; they are not ours.” Cheong shouted hurriedly and told his wife the whole story.

Cheong thought for a while and said, “I will give the money to others.” Cheong smoothly picked up the hexagonal bucket on the table, and after a moment of thought, he started to do some calculations. His expression became even uglier.

In the afternoon of the next day, there was not much business, Cheong decided to go to Wong’s house. He estimated that he would be able to get there in about three hours.

Cheong asked people for directions when riding down the road to the countryside. One person looked at the business card and asked about his relationship with Wong in surprise. Cheong briefed him about the matter. The man smiled and said that Wong was very famous and had a good reputation in this country; he was a contractor.

Cheong thanked him and drank some water. He had been riding for almost two hours, and now he had to carry on his journey.

Seeing that it had already been dark before he arrived, he was supposed to have arrived much earlier. Cheong looked

up at the moon – it was big and bright. He started to suspect what was happening because it took too long to arrive at Wong’s house.

Suddenly, there was a ghost blindfolding Cheong’s eyes, and it kept Cheong spinning around. Cheong thought about yesterday’s hexagrams and today’s encounters. He felt sinking in bad luck.

These things were unavoidable for those who did their job. Initially, Cheong took a red rope out of his bag, and it was used to determine the compass's direction by Feng Shui.

He got out of his car. It was about eight or nine o’clock in the evening. After walking for about a mile or two, he finally arrived at a villa. It was Wong’s house.

When Cheong was ready to knock on the big iron door, he felt something push him, and he almost fell before touching the iron door. He saw something with a dark shadow. It was squatting at the big iron door. Cheong was shocked, then he looked at the big house and walked around. He probably had a number in his heart. This house was haunted. Cheong left immediately.



A few days later, Wong rushed in angrily and asked, “Old man, have you quit? I waited for you for several days, but you did not come. I can give you two thousand more if one thousand is not enough, but I can’t pay you if you don’t do anything.” Cheong glanced at Wong. He did not say much but gave his money back to him. He said, “Boss Wong, I wish I could help you, but this disaster is related to what you did when you were thirty-three.....” At this point, Wong turned pale, and his body was trembling; suddenly, he lifted up his head and looked at Cheong poorly.

Cheong said, “Gods are watching you. Your current house is haunted. There are always unclean things appearing. You will have nightmares at night.”

Cheong went on, “Now, go! I will pretend I have never seen you and cannot help you. I believe doing more good deeds might be a remedy.” After saying this, Cheong did not say anything; he sat down and read.

Wong did not look good this time. After a long silence, he turned around and left. Before leaving, he said coldly, “Don’t say anything nonsense from now on....”

This matter should have stopped here, but two years went by, and a newspaper reported that the police arrested a contractor

on suspicion of murder. The body of the victim was cemented in the wall by the murderer. When people moved into the house, there was a foul smell, and some oily liquid was constantly leaking through the wall. Therefore, the police were called. They knocked down the wall and found a male's body. Finally, the contractor was tracked down.

And this person was Wong.

# At the Theme Park

*Mayumi Hamamoto*

*Bachelor of Communication and Media*



At Universal Studios in Hollywood, there used to be a Back to the Future ride, which was open in 1993, but it was shut down in 2007 due to its unpopularity with tourists. There was a corner dedicated to the famous trilogy at a

souvenir store inside the theme park. They had a lot of merchandise, ranging from clothing, posters, keychains, and toys. One specific toy car caught a little boy's eye. The toy car was a 1985 DMC De Lorean, the time machine in the movie. Whenever the car speeded up to 88 miles per hour, it would be able to time travel. The boy loved the movie and immediately fell in love with this toy. He decided to purchase the toy car with his own money. Right after he stepped out of the store, he had already been unboxing the new toy. He threw the packaging into a trashcan nearby and held the toy in his hand while walking.

It was getting darker, and the temperature started to drop during the Christmas season; the theme park was still packed with people at nighttime. The boy's family and friends decided to leave the theme park and have dinner at a restaurant outside the park before driving back home. As they were waiting in line for their table at a Japanese restaurant, the boy played with the De Lorean toy car. He switched the car to 'fly mode', and the De Lorean tires began to turn sideways, exactly like in the movie. The boy began to hold the car and fly it in the air while the adults were discussing what food to order and who would be the driver for their trip back home. The adult's conversation was boring, and the boy couldn't care less. Everything sounded meaningless to him.

As De Lorean was soaring through the air, the boy noticed something. The lights inside the car began to flash; the Flux capacitor, where fuel for time travelling was stored inside the car, was flashing too. “Look! Look! The lights inside are flashing!”, he shouted to his parents, pointing to the car. The adults were busy looking at the menu and discussing what to order with the server. The boy tried to catch the attention of the adults by swinging the car with the flashing lights in the faces of the adults, but no one bothered to even respond or look at the boy. The boy eventually gave up and just sat down and looked at the car, “the inside of the car is flashing, but no one cares.” he thought to himself. After a full day of playing at the theme park, he felt exhausted and hungry. He started to have blurred vision. His eyelids were getting heavier and heavier while he was having dinner. He didn’t even know what he was putting in his mouth, but he kept eating because he was hungry. He finally felt that he no longer needed to eat, so he just sat down and rested his head on the dining table. All the conversations between the adults began to fade out, and he was just enjoying the rest. He fell asleep.

The boy felt something moving. He was moving. He thought he was. He slightly opened his eyes to see what was going on. He noticed that he was being carried by his mother, and his mother was walking. He felt the warmth of his mother’s

body, so he felt safe. He slowly closed his eyes and allowed himself to rest his head on his mother's shoulder while she was walking.

He felt her mother stop walking. He heard the sound of a car being unlocked by a remote control. His mother settled him into a child seat inside the car. He was unhappy that the warmth was gone and that he was being placed in a cold seat. He frowned. He then felt he was being strapped to the seat. He was upset and made a distressed sound. The boy was too tired to speak and just sat on the child seat with the seat belts buckled by his mother. He heard the engines turn on, and the car was speeding up. He felt warm from the car heater. The boy dozed off when his mother was driving on the 101 freeway back home.

It was late midnight. There were very few cars on the freeway compared to the usual peak hours in Los Angeles. His mother was speeding up, and she also turned up the volume of the music. Her son was fast asleep at the back in his child seat. There were only two of them in the car. Only the music playing in the car and the engine sounds can be heard.

“Still one more hour to home,” the mother thought to herself. She was exhausted and decided to speed up. Worrying about

getting a speeding ticket, she decided to turn on the radar detector, which she had recently bought from Amazon, claiming to be able to detect any police speed traps. After turning it on, she started to ignore the freeway's speed limit and drive fast at her own pace.

The boy was fast asleep in the backseat holding the De Lorean toy car in his hands. He was totally unaware that the inside of the car was starting to flash again. As his mother drove up to 80 miles per hour, the lights inside the De Lorean toy car blinked even faster. The boy suddenly woke up. He felt the heat in his hands, the toy car was heating up, and the lights kept flashing. He was shocked and almost jumped up, but he was in his seat belt. “Mom! Look! My CAR!! The lights are flashing, and it’s burning!”, the boy shouted. His mother looked through the rearview mirror and told the boy to put the car aside. She was worried that its malfunction might cause a fire in the car when she was driving. She was concerned and thought she needed to get home faster, so she pressed the accelerator harder. The dashboard showed 85 miles per hour, and 87 miles per hour, and when it hit 88 miles per hour, the whole car shook, and a loud noise could be heard. The car was hit by lightning, and everything went bright white.



When the white light slowly began to dim, they realised the car was floating and flying in the sky! The mother and son were both wide awake now. The boy unbuckled his seatbelts, climbed to the front seat, and sat beside his mother. They were both shocked silence, and then the boy broke the silence, “Mom, I think we are time travelling... I’ve been trying to tell you, that the flux capacitor in the De Lorean was flashing.” They both looked outside the windows of the car. The car was flying slowly in the sky. From a distance, they saw the Venetian, the MGM, the Wynn Palace,



and other significant buildings with lights too. “No, I think we are just flying from L.A. to Vegas.” the mother replied.

They were both amazed and in disbelief when they were gazing out the window. The boy shouted, “MOM! I can see the Parisian and an airport!” His mother was busy looking in another direction and replied to his son that they were near the Parisian and the Las Vegas airport. But soon, the mother noticed something strange. She could not see the pyramid-shaped hotel Luxor and the Statue of Liberty of New York hotel. After floating in the sky for a while, the car started to move forward slowly. The mother started to step on the accelerator, and the car flew even faster.

The mother had no idea what she was doing, but somehow the car was flying by following the direction of the steering wheel. “How do I land this thing?” the mother said to herself. At that moment, they both noticed a landmark turn up in the dark, and the mother said, “That’s the Ruins of Saint Paul, son. We’re in Macao, what?”

The brake was suddenly slammed, the boy felt all motions stop, and everything turned quiet. There was no engine sound, no music from the radio, just silence. Everything went dark. The boy was screaming, but no responses were given. When he could see again, he opened his eyes. He was

back with his seatbelts in the child seat of the car. His mom opened the car door beside him from outside. “Babe, we’re home. Can you walk by yourself?” Since he looked extremely exhausted, his mother decided to hold him in her arms and take him upstairs. He wanted to grab his Delorean car with him, but it was burning hot. He threw it back into the car and just lay comfortably in his mother’s arms.

# Erasmus' Blues

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“Are you listening to me, son?” Erasmios snaps himself out of his thoughts when his father, Apollo, is trying to give the young half-God a lecture about his escape to the land of the Mortals. “Yes, father, I’m listening...” Erasmios chuckles before hopping off the line, “where do you think you’re going?” his father raises his eyebrows, making the young man groan at him, “play something for you.” He leans against the throne chair as Erasmios complies and grabs the kithara. His fingers pluck the strings, and the instrument plays a melodic tune. Apollo hums in satisfaction and closes his eyes. Erasmios looks at his father’s reaction to his music and finds it rewarding. He smiles and closes his eyes to get lost in the music.

“What is she like?” Erasmios breaks the comfortable silence when he finishes playing his song. Apollo opens his eyes slowly and turns away from his son, “Erasmios, you know we don’t talk about her.” The old man faces his son as empathy is shown on his face. “I deserve to know. She’s my mother.” Sadness and anger linger in Erasmios’ voice. Apollo stays quiet and then looks the other way, not wanting to see his son upset, “you’re a painter, but I have never seen her in your paintings. Not even a song, a poem was about her!” Erasmios gets impatient, raising his voice to his father. “Erasmios.” Apollo speaks, but his son interrupts him, “if you’re not going to tell me about mother, I’m going to find her out

myself.” Apollo panics as soon as he hears these words come out of his son. “You are not going back to the land of the Mortals.” Erasmos stands in front of his father and stares at him angrily, “watch me.”

Erasmos disappears in front of his father and flies down to the land of Mortals. He walks around and finds a small, seemingly abandoned farmhouse. He uses it as his shelter and makes himself comfortable. The sun starts to set, and the sky dims. Erasmos is about to rest, getting ready to search for his mother the next day. As Erasmos slumbers through the night, Apollo comes down to find his son. He sees the abandoned farmhouse and sneaks into Erasmos’ bedroom. “I’m sorry,” Apollo whispers to his son before ripping Erasmos’ tongue out. This causes the young man to wake up from his deep slumber and scream in pain. “If you wish to stay here, you shall not speak. You’ll understand why, my son.” Apollo steps back while Erasmos covers his mouth to muffle his screams. “You shall have this back when you’ve returned home.” Apollo puts Erasmos’ tongue in a box before disappearing into thin air and returning to Mount Olympus. Erasmos continues to cry with his hands over his mouth. He wails until he becomes tired and soon passes out.

When he wakes up the following day and reminisces about the event from the previous night. His fist glows as he

clenches it hard, but he soon calms himself down. "So be it." He thinks to himself before packing his essentials. It takes him days to arrive in Thebes. At this point, Erasmos is drained from the trip and is starving. He sits in a corner and rests for a little while. He then hears someone sing next to him, a young man with a lyre. "Do you want to play my lyre? You look like you know how to." Erasmos opens his mouth but remembers that he is not able to speak. He then nods at the young man and takes the lyre. "Demetrios." The green-eyed man says, Erasmos smiles politely before playing a tune on the lyre as Demetrios sings along. The duo performs so beautifully that a crowd of the audience begins to form in front of them. One amongst the group catches young Erasmos striking blue eyes. Imani, an ordinary mortal with sepia-glowing skin and a captivating smile. Her beauty is so charming and alluring. Erasmos falls in love instantly. He starts to strum the lyre, with a different tune that catches Demetrios off guard and causes him to stop singing. Demetrios allows him to have his moment to play a loving melody dedicated to this certain young lady. His passion becomes overwhelming. It causes his melody to hum words. Imani cannot keep her eyes off Erasmos when she hears the softly sung song.

"Tell me your name, and I shall show you the wonders of the world, of which you should be a part."

Erasmus hears the words from his lyre and is surprised that he has such an ability. Still, Demetrios is unaware, as the only ones who can hear the singing melody are Erasmus, and the person to this song was dedicated to, Imani. When Demetrios sees Imani's ravishing beauty, his jaw hangs, and then he starts to sing with his deep, strong voice, which overpowers the lyre.





# Finding You

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## *Chapter 1: The Letter*

Dear Luke,

You have been my compass in life. You have shown me that even if I do not know where I am heading, you will always be my light to guide me. I will always find you. Without you, I am lost.

Sincerely,  
Selah Moriah

The night before the high school graduation, Selah wrote a letter to Luke to confess her feelings. She put the letter inside a present which she planned to give him during dinner.

The following day, Selah woke up with joy in her heart. She went straight to take a shower and prepared for the

special day. With her dark curly hair, she rubbed some moisturiser to make sure it stayed soft and shiny. Then, she proceeded to pluck her thick black eyebrows and put make-up on her round-shaped face. Two hours passed by, and she was still figuring out which dress fitted her skinny body.

“Selah!” called mother. “You have to get down now, or there will be no graduation for you.”

“I’m coming, Momma,” replied Selah.

After hearing her momma, she instinctively picked the yellow dress, perfectly fit for her warm skin tone and grabbed her favourite white sneakers to pair it.

Selah went downstairs and grabbed her graduation gown. She and her momma hurried to the school, as they were already running late. Then, she ran inside the gymnasium to join the rest of the graduating class.

A few hours after the ceremony, Selah and her momma went home because they invited the Evans to celebrate. The Moriah and the Evans have known each other since their child went to kindergarten. After the death of Selah’s father, her momma decided to move back to her hometown, which is the city of Amsterdam.

As Selah's momma was preparing the food, the Evans family arrived. Selah suddenly felt her heart beat so fast, like she was running on a track. Despite the anxiety, she welcomed them with cheerfulness. Mrs Evans went straight to the kitchen to help Mrs Moriah while Mr Evans went to the backyard to chill for a while. Selah asked Luke, Evans's only son, to go to her bedroom so she could give him the present. Selah's palms started to sweat like a river; she could not contain her nervousness.

“Close your eyes and give me your hands.” said Selah, “I have something to give to you.”

Luke closed his eyes and felt a box put in his hands.

“Open your eyes now!” Selah said.

He saw a small blue-wrapped box in his hands with his charming green eyes, and he immediately unboxed it and looked at her dazzling hazelnut eyes.

## *Chapter 2: Hidden Feelings*

The night before the graduation, Luke could not sleep. He has been tossing and turning on his bed because something in his mind has been annoying him for quite some time.

“What if I get rejected?” frustrated Luke said.

He had closed his eyes and calmed himself down before his alarm rang. On the day of graduation, his eyes were puffy as clouds because he wasn't able to sleep properly. He got up from his bed and went straight to shower his toned body since he was a student-athlete. He brushed his brunette wavy hair and sprinkled his favourite beach-scented perfume on his white long sleeves. Getting out of his room, his proud parents had been waiting for him downstairs to take a picture of him. Evans was a punctual person; they arrived at the ceremony 30 minutes earlier.

As Luke entered the waiting room, his football teammates greeted him, and the girls were captured by their charismatic masculinity. The principal started to speak, and the graduates began to form a line outside the auditorium. Luke kept looking at the back of the line until Selah arrived, squeezing into the line. When Luke saw Selah, he was stunned by her yellow dress. While he was standing in the line, one thing

was on his mind: he had to confess his feelings to Selah. As soon as the ceremony finished, Luke tried to find Selah to have a conversation with her, but she had left early with her mother.

Heading to the car, Mrs Evans mentioned that they were going to have dinner at Moriah's, which restructured Luke's excitement of his confession.

That night, the Evans family arrived on time. Selah opened the door and welcomed them.

“Luke!” Selah said.

Luke had to calm himself down every time he saw Selah. His heart could not stop pumping fast. He quickly followed Selah to her bedroom.

At the back of his head, “This is it, my man! You can do it! Be brave!”

The moment he opened his eyes, a gift appeared in front of him, and a letter fell down. He picked up the letter and read it.

Luke said, “Selah, I was supposed to tell you how you have been bothering me at night because I could not stop thinking about you.”

Luke hugged Selah and whispered in her ears, “I love you.”

As the full moon bloomed, Luke and Selah became a pair of lovebirds.

### *Chapter 3: Selah Moriah*

A decade went by, and Luke and Selah were still together. They both decided to live under one roof in the same city where they had met.

After graduating from college, Selah immediately got a job in business marketing. Ever since she started to work in the company, she gradually became more professional and more knowledgeable in her career. Everything changed from the moment she graduated from university. When she reached the peak in her career, her mother died. Throughout her ups and downs, Luke had been with her infallibly.

She was a strong-willed woman who kept striving for what she wanted and succeeded. With all the rays of success in her life, her relationship seemed to reach the status of blurred lines. Selah had a hard time trusting Luke even though he had never left her. The love she had for him has been fading away since her parents left her alone. She did not see a brighter future herself. She always thought that every person she loved would leave her. The wall of emptiness and grievance in her heart made her push Luke away from her life.

### *Chapter 4: Luke Evans*

Luke Evans had become a coach at his old middle school. Inspiring and training more young athletes had been his drive in life. After every training session, he went home as quickly as possible. Therefore, when Selah arrived home, dinner had already been prepared. He supported Selah's career out of love. Even though most nights he fell asleep waiting for her, he insisted on expressing his love to Selah with actions. Luke did not complain about the instability in his career, because he felt content in life. One day, he went home and found himself lonely and depressed. He wondered why.

Over the years, their relationship has been fading away. They focused on different things in life. He felt drained and exhausted after all the outpouring of his love and spoiling for Selah. He forgot to take care of himself. He forgot who he was. Sitting on his brown leather couch, he looked at the wall above the furnace, where Selah framed the first letter to him. Contemplating what had happened to them, he recognised they had grown apart and not together.

He pulled out the drawer near the couch and grabbed a pen and a piece of paper, and wrote,

Dear Selah,



I have been your compass even though I am lost.  
I have been your light even though I am in the dark.  
I have found you, but I have lost myself.  
Growth has been a change in our lives.  
Yet growth has told us that there are two paths.  
We wander through the journey,  
We strive hard in the journey,  
We succeed in the journey,  
We grow but not together,  
I love you until the end of our different journeys.

Love,  
Luke

