

nostalgia



Letter from the EICs

Dear Reader,

On any measure, the past few years have been somewhat difficult for all of us. Amidst an unprecedented pandemic, we have been separated from our loved ones, forced to adapt to a myriad of virtual worlds, and advised to stay at home, away from the hustle and bustle of the lives we'd been accustomed to. The treasured moments we as high schoolers took for granted—sports seasons, international trips, and prom—were stripped away from us. And now, we find ourselves anxiously awaiting the breaking news alerts regarding the invasion of Ukraine, watching a potential third world war unfold before our eyes.

With all this has come a collective, uncontrollable yearning for the past—a sentimental homesickness for a time period that is now irrecoverable. Now more than ever, the feeling of nostalgia is found with striking frequency and relatability within our lives. Every day, Snapchat greets us with a reminder of our past selves n years ago today. Y2K and everything vintage is all the craze once again. Remakes of old films dominate our theaters. Yet, this is not to say that these are bad things.

As we navigate through our busy lives, these nostalgic flashbacks give us an opportunity to enjoy a short yet much-needed respite from the harshness of the present. Every individual holds dear a different special moment from the past, each with its distinct endearing story.

With our latest issue of Kaleidoscope, we hope you are able to stop for a moment and find comfort in your very own meaningful memories. Read a *Homines* writer's deep analysis on our friendly neighborhood Spiderman; Indulge in a *Litmag* writer's short story on a woman's eerie date with a familiar stranger; reflect on a *Scientia* writer's inquiry into our love of flowers.

Through the stark reality that envelops us, we implore that you indulge in a momentary escape every once in a while.

Sa Rang Sarah Ju and Yeon-Joon Jordan Kim, Editors-in-Chief



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The Middle of the Mountain



You must make the right decision. In a few minutes, a robber, disguised as a police officer will break through your door, handcuff you, and begin to choke you to death. After what feels like an eternity, he will grab your throat. As you are dying from the man's chokehold, the robber asks your wife where the old pocket watch is. She denies knowing of its existence but breaks down and begins to tell the robber where the watch is. However, before she finishes her sentence, you are killed. But to your amazement, despite dying mere seconds ago, you are suddenly alive again. Just like before, someone posing as a police officer will break down your door, handcuff you, and choke you to death. You realize that you are in a time loop of 12 minutes that will continue to happen over and over again until you solve this situation. For the first few time loops, you feel lucky that you are given a chance to go back and try to save yourself and your wife. However, this loop becomes sickening after hundreds of repetitions.

12 Minutes is a horror-thriller video game created by developer Luis Antonio and launched in August of 2021. The objective of the game is for the player to save his wife from an enigmatic killer while finding out about who he was in the past. When the game is considered to be completed as the player and robber come to an understanding, the player still has the option to go back into the game to discover his own identity. He may choose to ignore this, but the game is designed so that the player comes back out of the curiosity of his father-in-law's uncanny death. All of a sudden, the character witnesses the clock ticking backward seven years.

When the player returns to the past, he immediately sees himself murdering his own father-in-law when he disagrees with his daughter's marriage. A book opens at the end of the cutscene and it says "For it is only by forgetting that we ever really drop the thread of time and approach the experience of living in the present moment, so elusive in the ordinary hours." These words make him realize that he would have much preferred to have stayed in the present compared to knowing this cursed

past: it's the opposite form of nostalgia; instead of yearning for the past, he *loathes* it. However, soon enough, the time loop pulls him back into a new cycle, where he witnesses the same scene over and over again.

When reminiscing about the past, most people tend to look through rose-tinted glasses, remembering things to be much better than the current state. Even at SIS, upperclassmen can be frequently heard talking about how Freshmen year was fun because everyone could explore new topics and try different activities like all the interesting clubs and sports. However, those who have deep scars from their past try to block it out, pretending that it never existed. The game shines a light on the fact that while many people praise and glorify the past, some people dread it.

Nonetheless, despite the glaring differences between the people who desperately want to visit the past and beg to hide away from it, they do have one thing in common: both are consumed by the past and find it hard to move forward once they are sucked back into it. In launching *12 Minutes*, Antonio warns players against having a fanatical zeal toward the past. This game demonstrates how some opportunities are better closed than opened—had the main character not traveled back into the past to know more about what happened to him, he could have had a much happier life with his wife. This raises moral questions: are people happier without knowing certain things? Is knowledge a curse? If so, why do people—including us students—pursue it, even going to the extent of investing thousands of dollars each year?

Of course, it is unrealistic to discourage nostalgia; it allows individuals to sometimes move forward in their lives by understanding the past and is almost an instinctual, innate psychological behavior. However, the game implies that too much curiosity may only trap people inside of a deep rabbit hole. People are constantly at the middle of the mountain, falling downhill when moving too far back in time. The only way to ascend is by striving forward in the present.

Writer: Jinmin Lee
Layout: Dayeon Han

The Star Wars Sequel Trilogy: THE PAST STRIKES BACK



In December 2015, movie theater audiences braced themselves for the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, the first Star Wars film released in 10 years. The film was a massive financial success, grossing \$248 million just from the opening weekend. The immense fanbase was able to drive the newest trilogy of movies, *The Force Awakens*, *The Last Jedi*, and *The Rise of Skywalker* to box office success. However, despite this financial success, many fans were dissatisfied with the direction the films took as they were too similar to previous Star Wars movies. In other words, the sequel trilogy's reliance on nostalgic moments created mixed reactions from fans of the original movies.

The Star Wars franchise is comprised of three trilogies: the original trilogy, which is almost universally well-received, the prequel trilogy, which was divisive and critically panned, and the most recent sequel trilogy.

The first movie in the new trilogy, *The Force Awakens* (2015), received a generally positive reception from audiences and critics, despite some criticisms about its unoriginal elements. The similarities between *The Force Awakens* and the first Star Wars movie, *A New Hope* (1977), are apparent. In both movies, the protagonists are part of rebel groups faced with “an evil empire” equipped with a giant planet-destroying space station with a fatal flaw that the protagonists must exploit. Additionally, new and recurring characters play similar roles between the movies: Han Solo plays the mentor akin to Obi-Wan Kenobi and Kylo Ren is the ominous villain similar to Darth Vader.

The familiarity of the plot and character archetypes makes it easier for older audiences to jump back into the franchise after a drought of Star Wars films. However, it was also perceived to be retreading old ground as it did not advance the narrative in a new direction. Rather than introduce a new status quo, the new trilogy hoped to satisfy nostalgia by returning to a rebellion vs. empire plotline. This was lamented by many fans because it undid the satisfying conclusion of the original trilogy where the rebels were able to win.

The Last Jedi (2017), the second movie in the Sequel trilogy, exemplified how the trilogy utilized its score to evoke nostalgia.

The new trilogy brought back legendary composer John Williams, who composed the score for the original trilogy. In the score for the new films, both familiar and novel themes were used to evoke parallels to the original trilogy and subtly evoke nostalgia from the audience. For example, in the finale of *The Last Jedi*, the Binary Sunset theme from *A New Hope* was used in a similar scene in which Luke looks off into the sunset.

People who enjoyed the nostalgia moments of the newer films believe that they effectively pay tribute to the older films.

The final movie in the sequel trilogy, *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), relied heavily on evoking nostalgia from audiences. From revisiting familiar locations such as Tatooine to rehashing familiar musical themes, the movie was unabashed in relying on nostalgia to create an emotional connection with the audience. However, in doing so, it failed. The final movie grossed the least at the box office out of the entire trilogy and was critically panned. Overall, this constant reliance on nostalgia for emotional beats created a jumbled mess of a film with an unclear identity.

Overall, because nostalgic plot points were what started the trilogy, the entire sequel trilogy failed to provide the audience with a fresh surprise different from the original trilogy. Thus, the trilogy was course-corrected in the final movie with an injection of callbacks and references to previous films in the franchise. However, this failed due to it being too late to revert back to nostalgic plot threads and ultimately created an incoherent trilogy.

Writer: Brandon Choi
Layout: Amy Cha

Castle on the Hill: A Trip Down Memory Lane

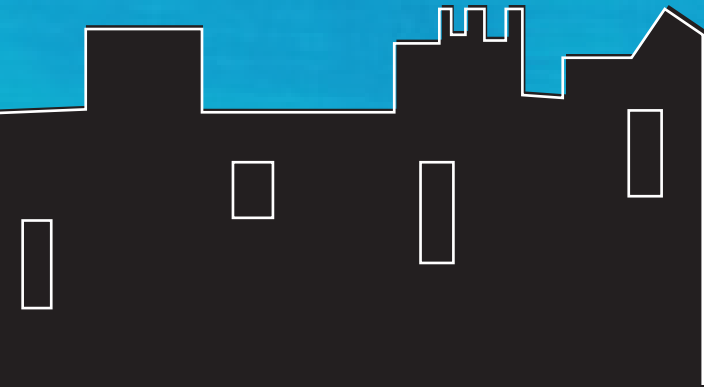


In March 2017, Ed Sheeran's third album, *Divide*, was released and immediately took

the world by storm. Upon its release, all seventeen tracks entered the Top 20 of the UK Singles Chart at once, a miraculous feat in and of itself. The album's lead single, "Shape of You," spent a mammoth 14 weeks at Number 1 on the Official Singles Chart and soon officially became the most-streamed song of all time in the UK. But if it was the pop and groove of "Shape of You" that upturned the music industry, it was the warmth and nostalgia of another track—"Castle on the Hill"—that stole everyone's hearts.

"Castle on the Hill" was written and produced by Ed Sheeran in collaboration with Benny Blanco, a songwriting genius and producer with an incredible 15 Official Singles Chart Number 1 hits under his belt. Released on the same day as the overnight sensation "Shape of You," the song was somewhat overshadowed at first, though it did manage to reach no. 2 in several countries, including the UK, Australia, and Germany.

"Castle on the Hill" is a guitar-driven pop song that pays homage to Ed Sheeran's upbringing in the English countryside town of Framlingham, Suffolk. Throughout the song, it maintains a sentimental feel, and the lyrics depict the life of a man who yearns for the past. However, what separates "Castle on the Hill" from other mawkish and hackneyed songs that reminisce "the good ol' days" is its brutally honest portrayal of childhood and youthful naivety. The song is about smoking awful cigarettes, making terrible decisions, and messing up. It is about breaking the law, getting drunk, and experiencing heartbreak. In essence, the song is about all the misadventures and misfortunes we undertake in our youth and is a simple reflection of our own childhoods.



But as Sheeran notes, we all still long for the past, as strange and contradictory as

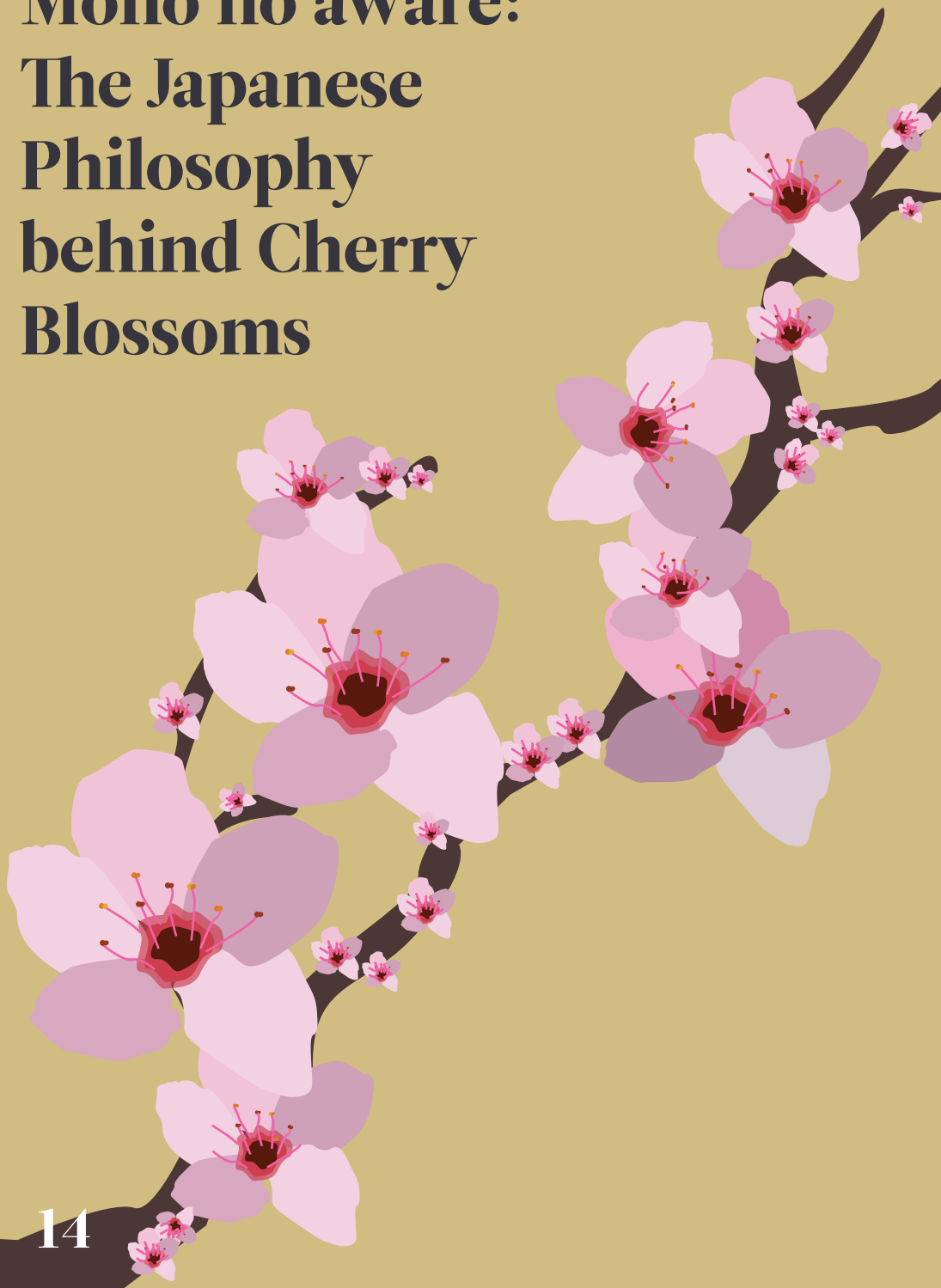
though it may seem. There is something about not knowing what lies ahead, “not [knowing] the answers,” and living life freely and impulsively that makes the past seem so mystical. And for this reason, our childhood homes represent a fantastical dreamland in our imaginations—a place where blissful ignorance trumps any feeling of pain or suffering. And it is also for this reason that Sheeran likens his place of upbringing to a “castle on the hill.”

Sheeran also remarks on the friends he made and lost along the way. In a poignant and reminiscent verse, he describes how “one friend left to sell clothes” and “one had two kids, but lives alone,” while another had a brother who overdosed. The inclusion of such detail serves to emphasize how, as we diverge from our youth and begin to lead separate lives from our childhood companions, we all end up in distinct, yet equally complicated places. However, as Sheeran profoundly notes in the following line, “These people raised me, and I can’t wait to go home,” the people we meet in our childhoods shape who we are today, and we can’t help but crave a return to the past.

Nostalgia is truly a powerful and bittersweet sensation. “Castle on the Hill” reminds us that our childhoods are replete with regrettable memories, experiences, and decisions; however, we maintain an insatiable desire to return to the past because it was the only time in our lives when we had the liberty of making mistakes without having to face the consequences. Still, we must remember that we are making memories right now as well. And we must treasure every last moment of our fleeting youth, for there will eventually come a time when we long for how we were today.

Writer: Daniel Kim
Layout: Dayeon Han

Mono no aware: The Japanese Philosophy behind Cherry Blossoms



Disappreciation and dissatisfaction are prevalent in our current society, and people often compare themselves with one another, ultimately creating permanent wounds of insecurity. This is a byproduct of our technocratic world, where new forms of media have caused people to become heavily invested in the screens of their devices rather than spending time with their friends and family.

But in Japan, every spring when the cherry blossoms bloom, a glimmer of hope arises. What follows is a magical event called the *hanami*, a traditional custom where the Japanese reflect upon their lives by looking at cherry blossoms while examining the transient nature of reality itself. While most find themselves picnicking under the fields of the cherry blossoms, some just simply engage in conversations about the topic itself to increase their perspective. By accepting the inevitability of death, *hanami* helps bring individuals to enjoy the little time we are given. Moreover, the Japanese *hanami* culture teaches us how to properly gain acceptance through the act of nostalgia in our daily lives.

Cherry blossoms evoke nostalgia, for they are, in fact, a beautiful analogy of our fragile lives and a symbolism of morality. Cherry blossoms, like humans, grow, prosper, shine, and then wither away only to be forgotten amongst the pile of other fallen cherry blossom leaves on the ground. Cherry blossoms thus give invaluable insight that things—especially beautiful ones—cannot linger on forever. Because of this, *hanami* culture emphasizes that we should focus on the present and enjoy things as they are before it is too late. We can adopt this in our daily lives by nostalgically looking back on our pasts from time to time and learning to accept that nothing can be changed; thus shifting our focus to the present.

But taking a look philosophically, an observation of the cycle of life can help

us ultimately find happiness and joy in our lives. Doing so involves looking beyond ourselves as individuals and trying to understand events under a macroscopic lens. From a nihilistic standpoint, our lives are meaningless. As all traces of our existence will be forgotten eventually. For example, no one remembers the random peasant who roamed around the streets of 1700s France, and I'm pretty sure that his life was just as valuable as the rest of us. Though humans have a tendency to think that we as individuals are special, in reality, most tend to die without making a distinctive mark on society. Soldiers who died on the battlefield often come to these harsh realizations. One second you are on the battlefield and the next you're dead. Just one second and your entire existence is gone. But is this the lesson that cherry blossoms want to teach us?

Hanami wants us to be a bit more nostalgic than that. As we will eventually, in the midst of our nihilistic chaos, realize that the least we could do is admire the grand and intricate, yet absurd, universe. One day, when we lie in our deathbeds, when we feel nostalgic about our lives, our nihilism would end and all that is left would be pure adulation. At least accepting and smiling by the fact that you contributed something personal to this grand everlasting wonder piece called the universe. That is the depth of thought *hanami* implores us to achieve through the act of nostalgia.

Walt Whitman once said that the point of our living is so that we might contribute a verse to this powerful play called the universe. The Japanese echoed this idea by considering our lives as cherry blossoms. Only when we fulfill these philosophies to its maximum, can we understand to value our lives properly. In practical terms, this means abiding by the words of *carpe diem*. So that we can proudly contribute a verse to this powerful play, and let the universe do its thing.

Writer: Jihoon Shin
Layout: Jiyoon Lee



In the midst of the pandemic, a global calamity that practically dismantled the film industry, Marvel released *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021), a cultural goldmine that has garnered \$1.7 billion internationally in the box office. However, this film should not merely be considered a financial success—instead, it should be appreciated as a remarkable amalgamation of three generations of Spider-Man that thrusts an accumulated fandom of 19 years into a rainfall of cinematic nostalgia.

One primary approach by which *No Way Home* engenders nostalgia is reutilizing previously seen antagonists of *Spider-Man* and *Amazing Spider-Man* series. The adversaries Tom Holland's Spider-Man are pitted against feature the likes of Green Goblin from *Spider-Man 1*, Doctor Octopus from *Spider-Man 2*, Sandman from *Spider-Man 3*, Lizard from *The Amazing Spider-Man 1*, and Electro from *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*. Each distinctive villain plays a unique role that brings the audiences into reliving their respective narratives from previous films, fomenting nostalgia in its truest form. Several of the villains also make allusions to past films, remarking on their previous events and encounters with Spider-Man.

However, the film truly hit its pinnacle in nostalgia midway through when the creative team makes the decision to resuscitate the previous two Spider-Men from their respective universes. This occurs when an associate of Tom Holland's Spider-Man portals in two different Spider-Men played by their original actors Tobey Maguire (2002-2007) and Andrew Garfield (2012-2014). Their mere presence on screen is enough nostalgia for millions of Spider-Man fans across the globe. Tobey Maguire especially evokes a sense of longing among numerous Rami trilogy fans of the days when comic book films were less formulaic and campier in nature. Furthermore, the film design is approached

No Way Home: Spinning a Web of Nostalgia

with meticulous attention to detail to honor the legacy of these Spider-Men by depicting them in their most natural form. Their costume design, the “thwip” sound of their web-shooters, their respective scores, and finally, their individual narratives are all included in the plot, allowing viewers to recollect the development that has shaped the character of Spider-Man across the span of nearly two decades.

These previously seen characters also prove to be most effective in instigating nostalgia while they interact with Tom Holland’s Peter Parker; this consequently procures a feeling that two different worlds we know are harmoniously clashing. This is because Spider-Man is the only Marvel character to have undergone so many manifestations from different actors, directors, and studios. An example of such an interaction occurs in the film’s most tragic sequence where the Green Goblin executes Tom Holland’s Peter Parker’s Aunt May. When the three Spider-Men unite to talk Peter into continuing his battle and circumvent quitting, they collectively recall their singular shared experience, that being a soon-to-die mentor uttering the iconic phrase “With great power comes great responsibility.” The three Spider-Men reminiscing in an identical memory spanning across three generations immediately plunges viewers into a web of nostalgia.

There are some that claim that with nostalgia always comes fan service. And while fan service may seem like a positive feature of a film, many disagree, claiming that it is often done at the expense of creative storytelling or effective filmmaking decisions. However, in the case of *No Way Home*, fan service is executed with such precision that allows us as viewers to revel in the glory and importance behind this character. And most importantly, it allows us to relive the nostalgia behind the truly spectacular, generational Spider-Man.

Writer: Brian Cho
Layout: Rachel Yoon

Litmag







The Meeting

Mia walked along the same street she always walked in. It was the only thing she remembered after she first woke up, other than her name. Brain trauma, her doctor had concluded. It was almost peculiar how she was able to live somewhat normally with the exception of almost twenty years of her memory being missing.

Suddenly sensing a pair of eyes searing into the back of her skull, Mia twisted her head around to face the cause. To her surprise, the culprit was a young woman, perhaps a few years older than Mia herself. As their gazes met, the woman waved at the younger girl, tilting her yellow oversized sun hat.

“Can I...help you?” Mia asked, approaching the unfamiliar woman.

The woman smiled sharply. “You’re Mia, right? We used to be best friends in high school! We should catch up over a cup of coffee.”

Mia froze, her thoughts consuming her head. This was the first time anyone had recognized her. How does this stranger know me? Does she know about my past? Could this be my chance to finally get to know myself?

Before she could reply, the woman grabbed her hand and whisked her away, leading her inside a café that she had never noticed before, which was strange considering how many times she had roamed the street. “Come on! We have so much to talk about, especially considering how you went M.I.A. after you graduated,” the stranger laughed.


It was difficult to maintain a conversation with someone who remembered her while she didn’t. The stranger remembered high school Mia, which she had no recollection of. Yet, Mia knew this was a chance she had to take.

“So, how’s it been? You practically disappeared off the face of the earth.”

“It’s just that graduation and everything has been hard on me,” Mia rambled, hoping she sounded convincing enough. The other woman seemed to buy it, humming in agreement. The conversation continued similarly, with the woman recalling memories while Mia reacted accordingly.

“So, Mia,” the woman’s smile fell for a sec-





ond, before coming back, “You haven’t called me by my name once! Have you forgotten your dear friend’s name already?” Her teasing words obscured an almost threatening tone.

Mia’s breath caught in her throat. “I have no idea what you’re talking about!” Mia waved her hands around, attempting to defend herself. “I remember everything!”

“Then say my name, Mia.” Her smile was long gone and replaced by something more bitter.

The bustling café became abnormally silent. Mia blinked quickly, inspecting the other woman, searching for a clue to help her figure out her name, but nothing came to her mind.

“So you don’t remember.” Mia stayed quiet, confirming the woman’s suspicions. The woman sighed, standing up from her spot in the café. “It’s a surprise that none of your memories are coming back to you, especially considering the location of our meeting.”

“Don’t leave yet! I...” Mia trailed off, distracted by the sudden familiarity of her location. Where has she seen this place before? Mia looked up, feeling lightheaded. The gate holding her forgotten memories flew open. The long hours staring out the window, sitting at the same exact table, in a café she had never talked about to anyone. “Who are you?” she rasped, looking into the stranger’s obscured eyes. The more she stared, the more the woman began to fit into the puzzle, with an oddly familiar facial structure that she was too well acquainted with. She had to be—

“My name is Mia,” the woman replied simply, turning on her heel to walk out the door.

Mia adjusted her hat as she stepped into the street. She twisted her head around to see her past self frozen in place, looking shell shocked. The older Mia held back a scoff as she brought out a complex-looking device from her bag before inspecting it curiously.

“I can’t believe that worked,” she muttered, fiddling with the knobs and wires. “Hopefully that would be enough to stop the later events, I hope?” she grinned, somewhat regretfully.



Writer: Hannah Yi
Layout: Amy Cha

A Perfect Goodbye

Beep... Beep... Beep...

The heart monitor beeps continuously, each heartbeat marking representing the passing of another precious second passing by. The man looks at his mother, serenely laying down on the hospital bed, her eyes closed. He strongly clasps grasps onto his mother's cold, skeletal hands with all his might, wishing his touch would give her strength to endure the pain a little longer. Her eyes open slightly as she looks towards her son and offers him gives a wrinkled smile. As he holds tightly onto her hands, the beeps of the heart monitor's beeps slow, the distance between each one beep grows longer, and the man loses his grasp on reality.

When the man was eight, he lived in a small house with his mother. As the only two members of the family, they relied heavily on each other. It was just them against the world. Every weekend, he would venture into the park near their house, holding his mother's youthful hands and walking down the park's beautiful trail of trees.

In the spring, cherry blossoms lined up the trail with a magical shade color of pink and small petals would slowly fall to await a breeze of new beginnings, and when the heat would start to settle in, the screaming sounds of cicadas would annoy him. In During autumn, the trees would turn a brilliant, fiery hue of carnelian. He remembers laughing with his mother the one time he stepped on a yellow foul-smelling fruit of the maidenhair tree which let out a toxic aroma. The wintertime would bring a biting cold, and he and his mother would stay cozy and warm, bundled up by the fireplace to enjoy a movie together.

Even today, the man visits the park once a week to clear his mind as he reminisces about these his fond great memories.

But he grew up, and gradually spent time away from his mother. One day, he went out with his friends. While his worried mother constantly called him, the boy did not respond. He checked his phone, once, then twice, refusing to pick up. The clock struck eleven, and the loud sound of the front door alarmed his mother as she furiously marched towards her son.

"Why didn't you pick up," his mother shouted; her body shaking with fury.

The son cried helplessly, "I'm sorry, I just had to--"

"Do you have any idea what time it is? I told you to come home by 8 o'clock." She glances at the clock. "You're three hours late. Are you out of your mind? No wonder you're failing your classes in school. You don't listen to others."

The boy stared at her. Infuriated by her comment, he ignored his mother and stomped upstairs.

Looking back at that memory, he knew that his mother's screams and yells were just because she wanted him to be safe. She cared, and she loved him; but, at that time, the anger had consumed him.

Now an adult, after a busy day from work, the man came home after a busy day

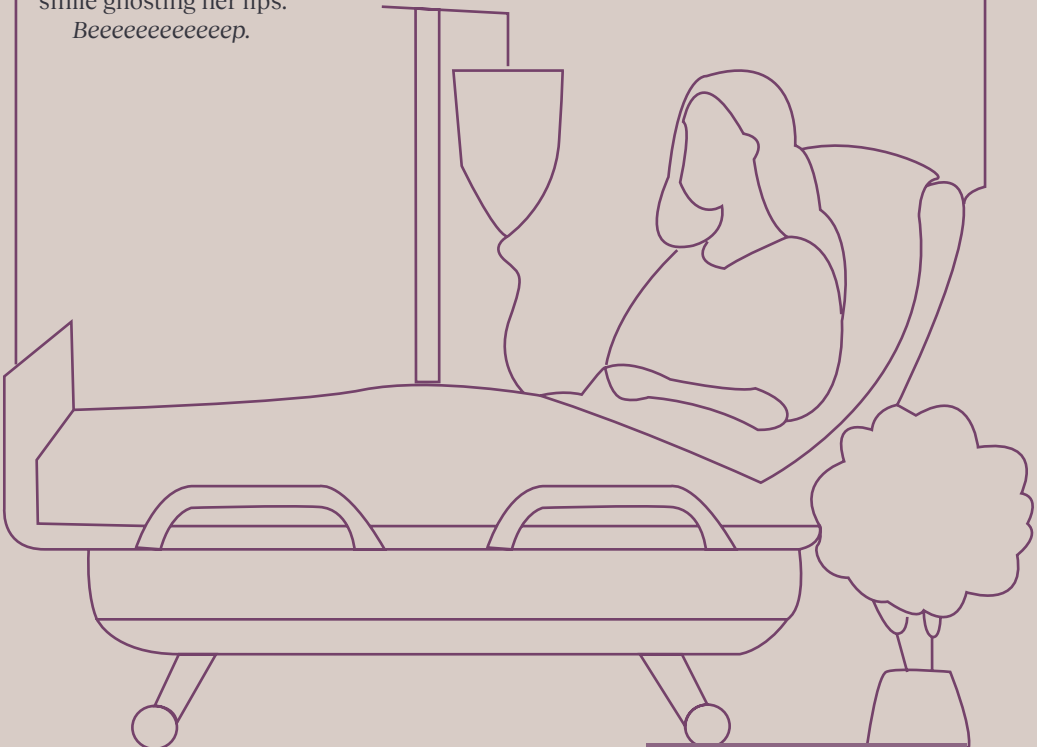
from work to find that the lights had been turned off, an unusual sight because his mother usually slept late. He wandered around the house. Emptiness filled the house as an unsettling silence choked him. Where was his mother? His slow steps turned into nervously hasty ones as he ran across the house, peering through each door. His mother was nowhere to be found. Back then, the man did not know about the troubles following him.

"Jack... Jack... Jack." The man shakes his head and looks around the hospital room, the bright lights of the lamp shining brightly on the ceiling. The soft whispers of his mother have woken him up from his trip through memory lane. The beeps of the heart monitors continue to slow down, each beep tearing away a fragment of his soul. Tears form near his eyes until the man is not able to see his surroundings properly. Noticing the tears, his mother says, "Don't be too stuck in the past, son. You have to know how to move on."

The tears around his eyes finally give in as they tumble down his cheeks. "Mom, I'm so sorry. I wish I could have been better to you."

The mother quietly says, "You were perfect for me," as she closed her eyes with a smile ghosting her lips.

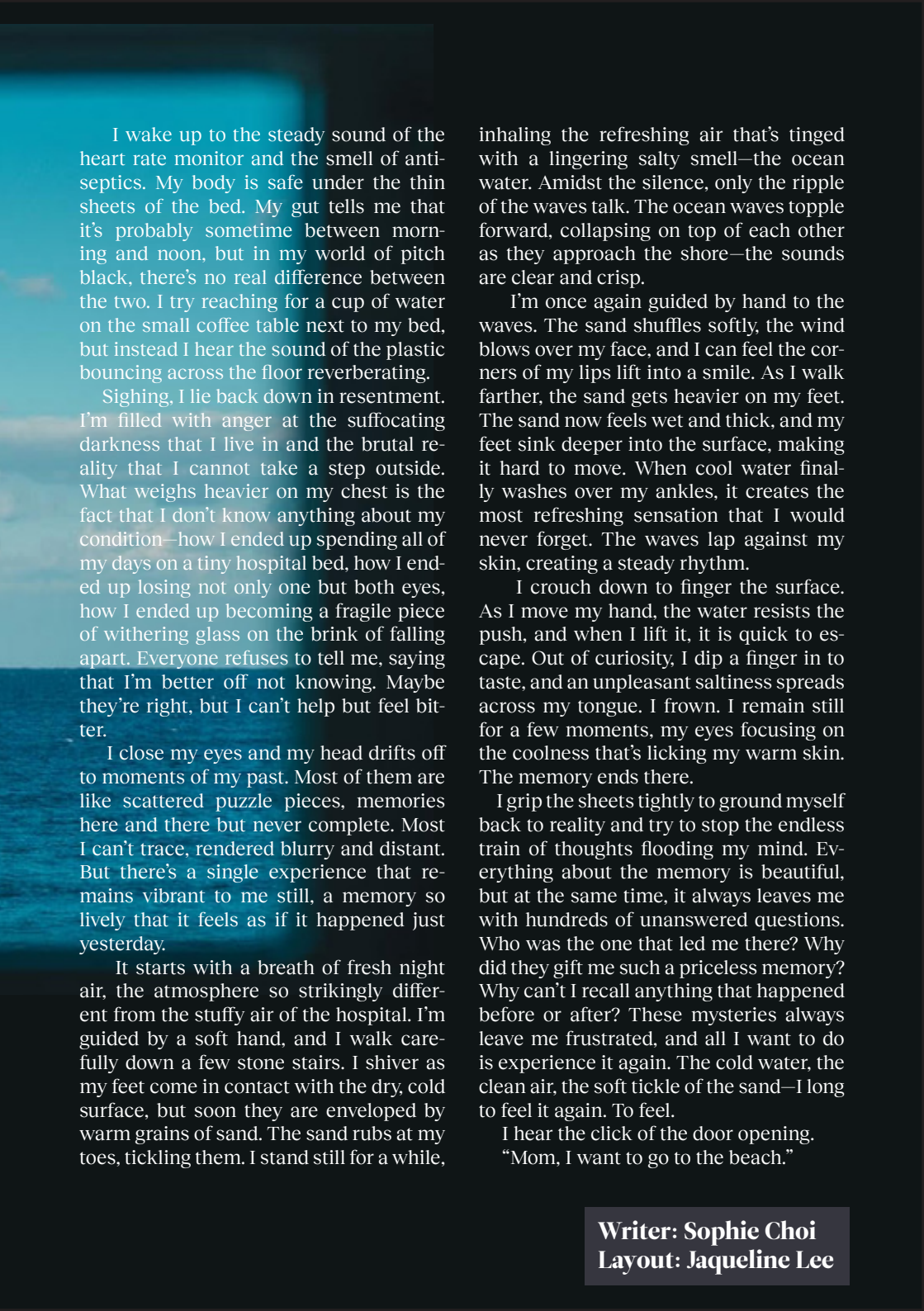
Beeeeeeeeeeep.



Writer: Jeffrey You
Layout: Andrew Ro

A photograph of a vast blue ocean under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The scene is viewed through a window frame, with a dark vertical bar on the left side. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

**Oh,
To See Without
My Eyes**



I wake up to the steady sound of the heart rate monitor and the smell of anti-septics. My body is safe under the thin sheets of the bed. My gut tells me that it's probably sometime between morning and noon, but in my world of pitch black, there's no real difference between the two. I try reaching for a cup of water on the small coffee table next to my bed, but instead I hear the sound of the plastic bouncing across the floor reverberating.

Sighing, I lie back down in resentment. I'm filled with anger at the suffocating darkness that I live in and the brutal reality that I cannot take a step outside. What weighs heavier on my chest is the fact that I don't know anything about my condition—how I ended up spending all of my days on a tiny hospital bed, how I ended up losing not only one but both eyes, how I ended up becoming a fragile piece of withering glass on the brink of falling apart. Everyone refuses to tell me, saying that I'm better off not knowing. Maybe they're right, but I can't help but feel bitter.

I close my eyes and my head drifts off to moments of my past. Most of them are like scattered puzzle pieces, memories here and there but never complete. Most I can't trace, rendered blurry and distant. But there's a single experience that remains vibrant to me still, a memory so lively that it feels as if it happened just yesterday.

It starts with a breath of fresh night air, the atmosphere so strikingly different from the stuffy air of the hospital. I'm guided by a soft hand, and I walk carefully down a few stone stairs. I shiver as my feet come in contact with the dry, cold surface, but soon they are enveloped by warm grains of sand. The sand rubs at my toes, tickling them. I stand still for a while,

inhaling the refreshing air that's tinged with a lingering salty smell—the ocean water. Amidst the silence, only the ripple of the waves talk. The ocean waves topple forward, collapsing on top of each other as they approach the shore—the sounds are clear and crisp.

I'm once again guided by hand to the waves. The sand shuffles softly, the wind blows over my face, and I can feel the corners of my lips lift into a smile. As I walk farther, the sand gets heavier on my feet. The sand now feels wet and thick, and my feet sink deeper into the surface, making it hard to move. When cool water finally washes over my ankles, it creates the most refreshing sensation that I would never forget. The waves lap against my skin, creating a steady rhythm.

I crouch down to finger the surface. As I move my hand, the water resists the push, and when I lift it, it is quick to escape. Out of curiosity, I dip a finger in to taste, and an unpleasant saltiness spreads across my tongue. I frown. I remain still for a few moments, my eyes focusing on the coolness that's licking my warm skin. The memory ends there.

I grip the sheets tightly to ground myself back to reality and try to stop the endless train of thoughts flooding my mind. Everything about the memory is beautiful, but at the same time, it always leaves me with hundreds of unanswered questions. Who was the one that led me there? Why did they gift me such a priceless memory? Why can't I recall anything that happened before or after? These mysteries always leave me frustrated, and all I want to do is experience it again. The cold water, the clean air, the soft tickle of the sand—I long to feel it again. To feel.

I hear the click of the door opening.
“Mom, I want to go to the beach.”

Writer: Sophie Choi
Layout: Jaqueline Lee

Penitence

“Mr. Spencer, you have a visitor,” the secretary said, entering the room before respectfully bowing to him. Colin Spencer had accumulated an abundance of wealth while also working relentlessly over the years. At the young age of 32, he had risen to be the head of the company, with his intense determination and distinguishable intelligence. As a workaholic, he had no time for his personal life. Some would say that he was married to work.

“I’m busy.” He snapped without hesitation before returning back to signing piles and piles of paperwork. His packed schedule did not allow him to take a break.

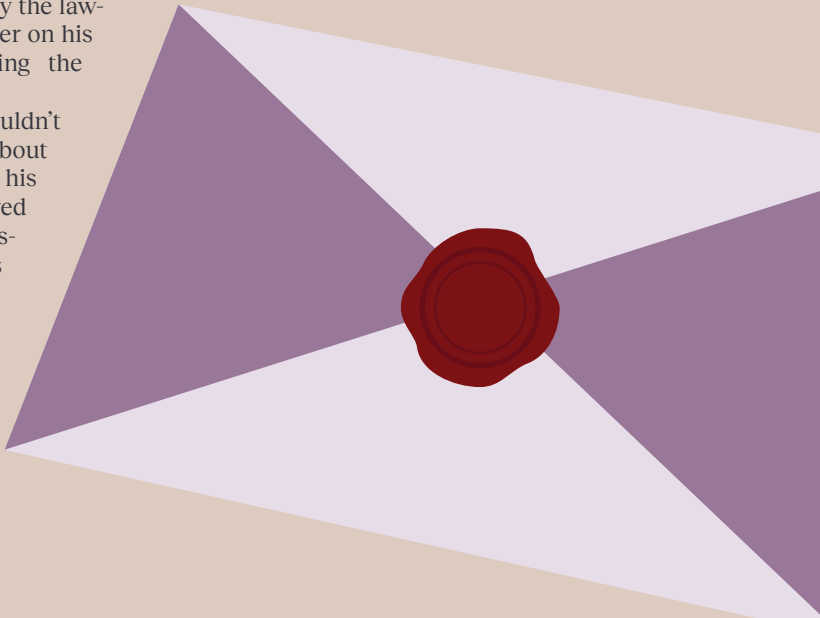
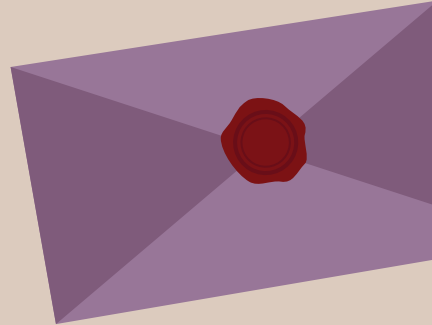
The secretary nervously replied, “I think this is important, sir. It concerns your parents.”

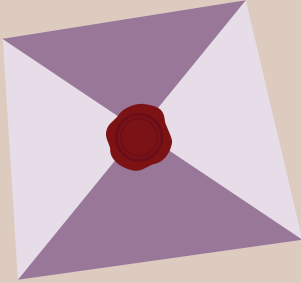
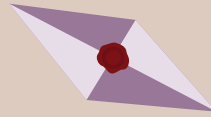
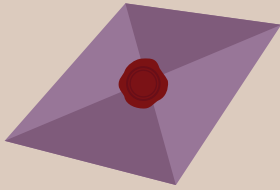
Colin froze abruptly at the mention of his parents. Noting that the visitor may have some significance, he allowed him in. “What is this about?” Colin asked, putting on a cold facade yet internally breaking down; nervous about the nature of the subject matter. Although he wouldn’t show it, his heart-beat drummed loudly and his hands shook terribly. The visitor introduced himself as his parent’s lawyer with a grief-ridden face.

“I’m sorry to inform you that your parents passed away yesterday from a car accident. I’m here to give you this will along with this letter.”

The lawyer continued on rambling about the contents of the will, but Colin felt his surroundings blank out. His parents were dead? He sat completely frozen, unable to grasp the extent of the situation. His thoughts were interrupted by the lawyer leaving the letter on his desk before closing the door shut.

All day, he couldn’t stop thinking about his parents. With his thoughts scattered and so deeply distracted by thoughts of his parents, he couldn’t get anything done. Even after all





the workers left, he just sat there limp, contemplating whether to read the letter that lay on the corner of his desk. Were they disappointed that he hadn't contacted them for years? Did they miss him? The curiosity of the letter was consuming him. And soon enough, this urge got the better of him.

The letter began with his parents describing his childhood. From his first steps, illustrating in detail how proud of him they were. Although being young at the time, he still remembered how his parents cheered for him as he walked across the room. He remembered the warmth and love he felt.

To his first day of Kindergarten: with him bawling his eyes out, not wanting to go. He had arrived at an strange, unfamiliar environment, yet his parents comforted him with a hug. And his high school graduation. After his graduation, they congratulated him for his hard work and dedication, throwing a party for him. Although the family lived in a poor household, they had surprised him with a brand new car. Colin felt immense gratitude and happiness back then.

The letter contained a myriad of memories in one letter. And at the end of the letter, his mom signed, with her familiar signature: "We love you and are so proud of you."

And with that sentence, his emotions finally unraveled. He felt a tightening of his throat and shortness of breath, as his guilty conscience almost choked him. A sob escaped from him, before he could cover his face with his trembling hands.

After he moved out, his life had been consumed by his own work—to the point where they lost communication with him. Blinded by his desire for success, he had lost sight of what was truly important to him. His parents loved him so much, yet he had never bothered to visit or give them a simple call.

He would do anything just to go back in time, to when he was truly content. When he had nothing but his family to rely on; his parents helped him through every step in life.

With a pen in hand, he wrote letters. Each letter recalled a specific memory. He described them in detail, to compensate for not talking to them when they were alive. Although this wouldn't make up for the time lost, Colin found comfort in pretending. He pretended that they still communicated and that they brought each other up to speed on everything. Piles of letters, with no postal address stacked up on his desk.

Writer: Emma Sayoon Kim
Layout: Dayeon Han

Take a Step Back

Mr. Brumble was ambivalent to exclaim that the life he lived was perfectly normal. Mr. Brumble lives comfortably in Wartburg Street with his wife. His two kids used to live with him in the bright yellow house surrounded by a vivid carpet of grass that he cuts every morose Wednesday morning before going to work.

This life is exactly what Mr. Brumble had envisioned when he was younger: one with little to no surprises. So what was that burning craving that exasperated him so much? He found that his once vivacious life had slowly transmuted into a monotonous one.

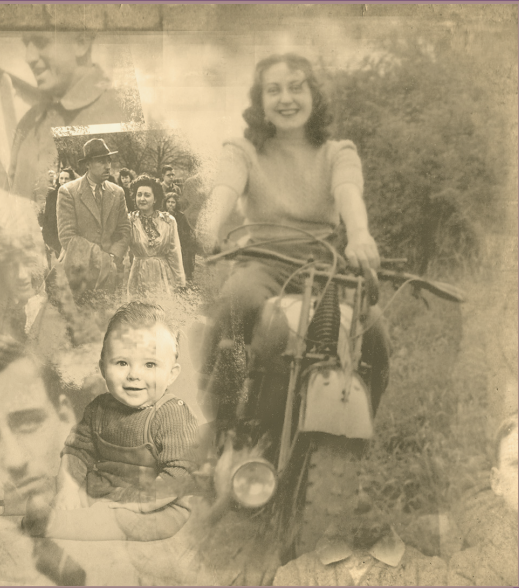
Every morning, from the moment he would wake up, every muscle in his body would scream for help. To make matters worse, his wife's lively calls pained his sensitive ears. Still, he would slouch onto the kitchen counter and proceed to demand his usual breakfast of bacon and eggs. Even after the hearty meal, the empty void would remain unfilled.

He walked the dreadful pavements to the glassy office building. Once he arrived, he displayed his identification card, took the elevator humming his favorite tune, and reluctantly made his way to his small desk. With a big sigh, he sat down in his squeaky office chair, mentally preparing himself for the stacks and stacks of paperwork that would await him.

His mind sometimes wandered, but his hands were always in constant motion. However, as he was doing his same old paperwork, an event interrupted the usual schedule he had expected for the day: a power outage. *Humph, a slight change for once.*

When Mr. Brumble left the office, he was greeted by an unusual occurrence. Large gray clouds loomed over the lucid blue sky, blocking any sunlight from spilling onto Wartburg Street. Soon after, heavy rain followed. Mr. Brumble, who did not bring an umbrella, Red and yellow stripes all around, posters of movie advertisements, a small popcorn counter—a movie theater. He felt his eyes weigh down heavily, and he was looking around to find a place to sit when a small white sign caught his eye.





“Take a step back.”

Befuddled but curious, Mr. Brumble made his way to a room with a small screen and a single, vacant seat.

As soon as he sat down, his eyes were immediately glued to the screen. The story began with a baby born in a hospital with a woman who seemed very familiar but couldn't quite recall. Weird, he thought. Soon after the screen turned to a scene of the baby in front of a house, he realized that it was also very familiar. *Why does it look so recognizable*—that's when it hit him. He was, quite literally, looking into his past. He couldn't help but stare at the screen in awe with his mouth agape. It was nice, watching through as scenes of his childhood made him smile and reminisce. Both were things he hadn't done in years. Then he saw his marriage with his wife.

She had introduced colors to his monochrome life. He relived the jolt of happiness that he had experienced at his marriage. It evoked that feeling, that same feeling of relief rushing over him when he dipped his body in the warm sauna after hiking for days on end in the cold mountains. He

smiled as he saw his own excitement after receiving the news that he was having his first child.

But then, he saw his first tax fund. He watched his bursts of anger at his wife when he had felt that he couldn't keep things bottled up anymore. His wife crying in the corner of the room, trying to conceal her tears with trembling fingers as he slouched in front of the television. The scenes repeated until he finally reached the scene of him at the entrance of the movie theater. Then, there was light.

He had been dreaming this whole time. The white poster was nowhere in sight. When he exited the theatre, the dark gray clouds occupying his head had dissipated, and a sense of relief washed over him.

He walked home, not slouching with his usual grumpy face, but greeting the world with a bright smile. And when the door opened, he gave his wife a big, warm hug.

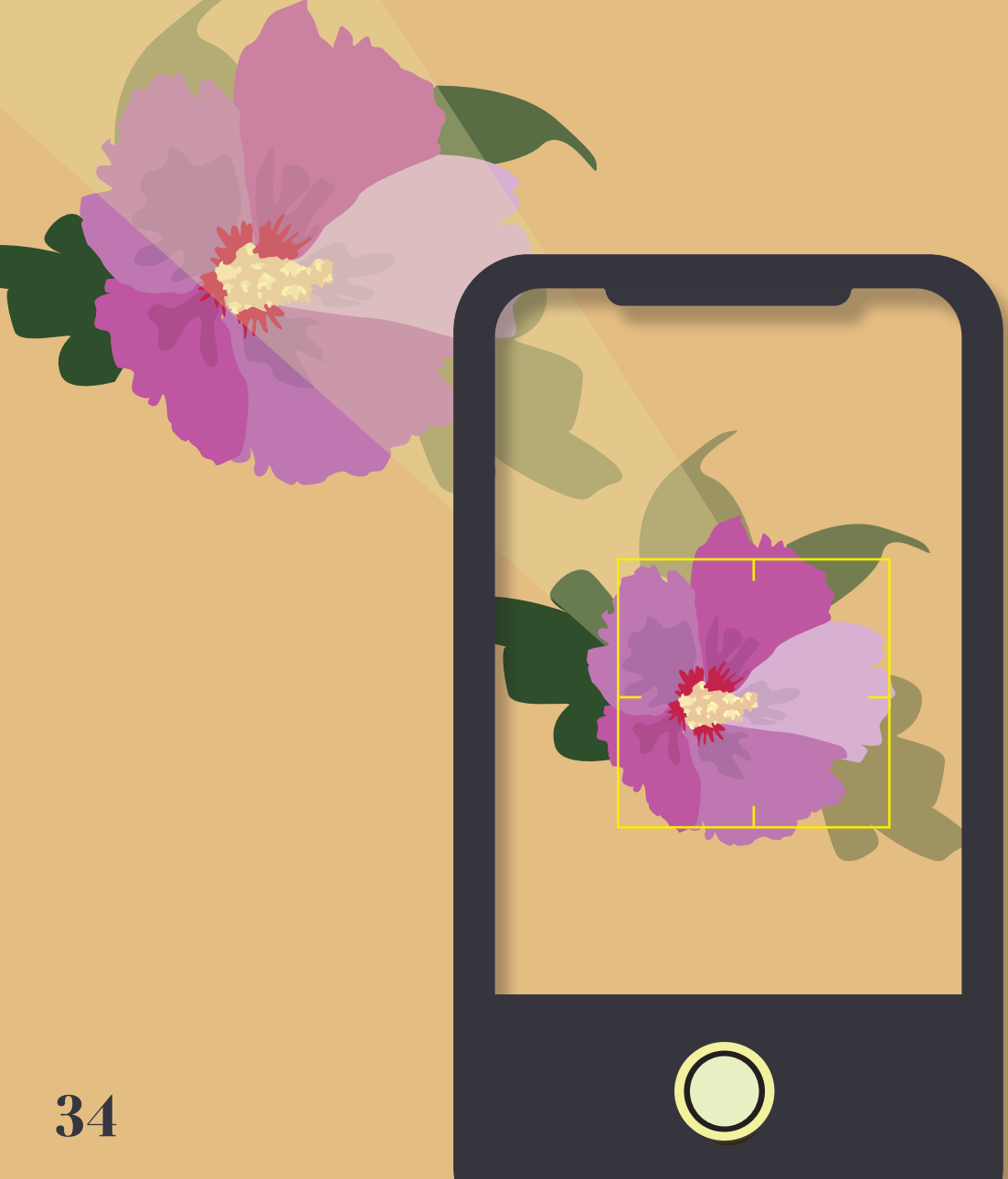
Writer: Andrew Park
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Scientia





The Reason We Take Photos of Flowers



Our family hikes always end up becoming a time for my grandmother's photoshoot. Pictures of yellow, orange, and purple flowers pepper every corner of her photo gallery. In a similar light, the ubiquity of the "garden in grandma's house" trope is not a coincidence. Flowers host a sense of nostalgia, and this blooms feelings of comfort and love among the elderly. Bringing back memories of visiting various places, flowers—and taking photos of them—evoke emotion and triggers psychological effects.

Nostalgia triggers familiarity through smell, looks, sound, and conversation. Experiencing nostalgia affects parts of your brain—specifically, the prefrontal cortex, limbic, paralimbic, and midbrain areas. The prefrontal cortex deals with complex behaviors, including planning for personality development. The limbic handles memories and learning. The paralimbic correlates with behavioral and emotional responses. Lastly, midbrain areas are responsible for eyesight. People who listen to music can experience nostalgia that triggers emotional responses in the brain's nucleus accumbens, amygdala, and cerebellum. This concept can be shown through two elements: the regions of the brain linked to the memory and the reward system. Working together, these systems allow people to reflect and evoke nostalgia.

Taking photos of flowers allows you to look back and remember the time you

actually perceived the elements of nature. This release not only rewards memories and emotions but also links your current life to the past. According to *The New York Times*, nostalgia provides texture to life, gives strength to move forward, ignites motivation, and serves as a source of confidence. It allows people to stray away from loneliness, anxiety, and boredom and, instead, fosters generosity and tolerance. This is what our grandmothers feel when they look back at their flower photos. As stated by neurologist Alan R. Hirsch flowers prompt an olfactory-evoked recall of childhood and, thus, nostalgia.

Different flowers elicit different emotions. To name a few, yellow flowers promote joy and lightheartedness, pink flowers are associated with femininity, and orange flowers represent warmth and enjoyment. This demonstrates how taking photos of these flowers can mentally support people and translate into real sentiments.

Looking back at the past to what was enjoyable and good, triggers parts of ourselves that give out positive emotions. Taking photos of flowers is one of several methods in which people one day look back and remember the beautiful sight. There are many more ways nostalgia takes part in our lives through the actions we take and our routines. Occurring in even the most unexpected places and occasions, nostalgia is deeply rooted in our lives.

Writer: Yoon Kang
Layout: Jiyeon Lee

America's

Ted Bundy was once a child like any other, with innocence, purity, and a bright future in front of him. However, the key difference between Ted, America's infamous serial killer, and others was the presence of traumatic childhood experiences that shaped his crooked personality and, in turn, his identity.

Bundy's childhood was quite disturbing; he never developed a loving relationship—even with his mother and was physically abused by many of his family members. Neglected by his family, his tendency to break rules steadily increased, eventually spiralling into a mass murder spree.

The stories of millions of other criminals like Ted Bundy clearly point to a direct correlation between childhood experiences and lives after childhood. Brain development during young ages is the foundation of future development. During this period, the brain rapidly forms neural connections according to the repetition of personal experiences. This means the more experiences a child has, the more he or she is affected by that memory. For example, if a child is exposed to more violent relationships, the child will have the assumption that all relationships end up in a bad way, thus not being able to develop the ability to form trust and faith in others. This cognitive part of teenagers' brains does not fully develop until the age of 25, indicating that their brains lack certain abilities such as the ability to think about the consequences of actions. Therefore, childhood experiences play a vital role in molding people into acquiring such social skills.

During childhood, people develop cognition over four stages: the sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage. Children store memories, create imagination and formulate logic throughout these stages, and they tend to change after being exposed to nostalgic events during these development stages. Deeply intertwined with one another, this pathway to emotional and social development affects the way children express their emotions and thoughts in various ways. Ted Bundy was stripped of genuine relationships during his childhood, and this prevented him from building the social skills necessary to empathize with the people around him, thus resulting in such cruel crimes for which he did not feel morally reprehensible. The lack of nostalgic experiences shows the significance of how the ability to live life happily does indeed correlate with our childhood.

Biggest

The different stages of childhood also impact the way people act. The overdevelopment or underdevelopment of certain neural pathways, such as the one that contributed to Bundy's lack of social skills, can lead to more cognitive impairments over time. Brain development during the teenage years has everlasting impacts on adulthood, as teenagers undergo accelerated development. While the traumatic experiences acquired at young ages lead to more internalizing behaviors such as depression and withdrawal, later traumas result in children's externalizing behaviors where they act out. Disruptions during the teenage years affect the brain's ability to efficiently communicate with other systems in our bodies, leading to increased criminal activities, impulsivity, and abuse.

On the other hand, building a healthy mentality during childhood provides a strong emotional and mental foundation for people, leading to more positive outcomes. This foundation allows individuals to have a more emotional connection with others and be able to be more positive. Research at Duke University Medical School in 2010 found that babies with more attentive and affectionate mothers were more successful and happy in the future. Nostalgic memories play a significant role in building one's identity because of a chemical called oxytocin.

All people release this chemical in their brain when they feel loved and connected to someone else, and have a sense of belonging. In the short term, oxytocin lowers anxiety levels, lowers stress, and increases calmness in one's behavior. The reason why Ted Bundy committed murders was due to the lack of sources of oxytocins in his life; Bundy clearly did not have any significant relationships with others, and therefore it allowed murder to replace that. To Bundy, committing crimes released large amounts of oxytocins, thus allowing him to feel excitement while doing so.

Hence, with the young brain's great capacity to change, it is important that children are exposed to appropriate experiences and opportunities to form meaningful relationships with others. Whether it be a pleasant memory for nostalgia or daunting trauma, childhood memories certainly have a hand in later life.

Writer: Waan Choi
Layout: Andrew Ro

Pavlov's Dog



It is a common conception that animals are sentient beings: they can feel emotions, remember, and think. This belief was the basis of Pavlov's experiment; it proved classical conditioning by creating a correlation between a sensory stimulus, such as a sound, and biological stimulus, such as drooling. By ringing a bell immediately before providing food to dogs, Pavlov established a connection between bell sound and food. Thereafter, the dogs thought that ringing a bell meant food would arrive and thus salivated.

A clear distinction must be made between classical and operant conditioning. While operant conditioning, a form of conditioning using pain and punishments, is merely an instinctive, biological reaction to pain, classical conditioning is rather associated with nostalgia, as it attempts to reenact situations as best as possible. In the classical conditioning experiment, dogs eventually realize that there is a correlation between bell sounds and receiving food. Although we do not exactly know what is going on in the dogs' heads, we can infer that they think of the past, recall the correlation between bell ringing and food, and recognize a pattern. Therefore, it is evident that classical conditioning achieved via nostalgic measures exerts powerful influence on animals.

One may argue that classical conditioning is synonymous with operant conditioning or a mere hedonic instinct based on memorization. One may even go

further to say there is barely a difference between rote memorization and nostalgia. At the end of the day, everything is driven by our instincts, and the only distinction is that some are more blatantly displayed. Whimpering and cowering in pain is far more instinctive than simply recognizing the correlation between bell sound and food. According to Christopher Lasch, a history professor at the University of Rochester, "Nostalgia does not entail the exercise of memory at all, since the past it idealizes stands outside time, frozen in unchanging perfection. Memory too may idealize the past, but not in order to condemn the present."

Upon answering these questions, an entirely new domain of understanding arises: everything we do to domesticated animals is a form of classical conditioning. When we want them to sit, we give them treats. When we want them to dance, we give them treats. When we want them to twirl, we give them treats. We give them treats until they are brainwashed by our materialistic provisions.

And this is where an ethical question arises: why do we raise pets in the first place? We all raise pets because they are cute and give us joy. After all, our desire for happiness is why we exploit their nostalgic sentience. But what do these pets get in return? We seem to justify such actions by saying they would be better off under our care than in the wild. Whether or not this is true, it is evident that this question is worth consideration.

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