



The Ink Stain.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Dear readers,

We thank you for supporting this new issue of the English Newspaper, or, for returning readers, thank you for your continuous support.

We hope that you will have a pleasant experience reading the amazing works and efforts of our talented and devoted team, who spent countless hours pouring their blood and sweat (and pulling many all-nighters) to present unto you the best possible issue of The Ink Stain. Prepare your spirits for an intense adventure, to cry over deep poems, to laugh at humorous texts and to be stunned by the many new facts you will learn throughout your read.

Enjoy!

Houman Badakhshan, Othmane El Mariky, Noah Galimidi, Yuchen Wu

The Editors-in-Chief



CONTENTS

Short Stories & Articles

The Rap God – Anye Xie p.5

The Wings – Seungwoo Nam p.8

The Notification – Jaya Lily Gérin p.9

The Early Bird Gets the Worm, but the Tired Bird Can't Fly – Ethan Blattberg-Perets p.10

Strings Attached – Noah Galimidi p.11

Rants About School – Jaya Lily Gérin & Emma Zhou p.12

Of Translations – Mário Antônio Levada Betioli p.13

Quirky Laws and Regulations – Lily-Maude Lamarche & Lyne Makdisi p.13

Lane Hutson – Justin Jiang p.14

101 Guide on How to Survive a Zombie Apocalypse!? – Sophie Erganian & Rina Li p.15

ARCOLOPANGEA II – Yuchen Wu p.18

Where Did All the Time Go? – Leran Xu p.21

Beneath the Numbers – Hongjia Gong p.22

The Dawn Before the Storm – Man Chun Ji p.23

How to Make Your Own Merch – Khanh An Bui p.28

Routines of Tomorrow – An Imaginary Day in the Future – Mofei Xu p.29

Treasures from Around the World – Mário Antônio Levada Betioli p.30

Greece Is Cool! – Justine Purreaux p.31

Poems

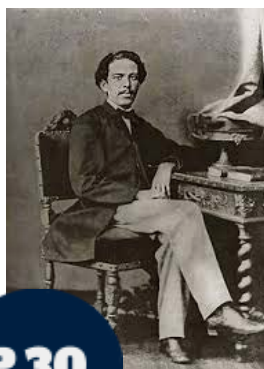
The First Clockmaker – Emma Zhou p.32

My Obsession – Brenda Liu p.32

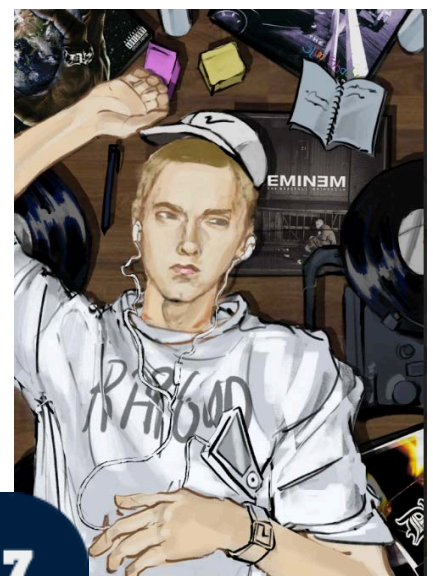
Things Change – Yolanda Chen p.33



P.15



P.30



P.7

The Rap God

Written by : Anye Xie

Edited by : Sophie Erganian, Justin Jiang & Angela Dang

Illustrated by: Liya Zheng

Dear readers, I meant to write to you sooner, but I didn't know when I would have the confidence to write this text. So, what are we talking about today? Ah yes, Eminem. And if you don't want to read everything, at least skip to the last paragraph. Not M&M's like the chocolate, even though it's kind of related to Em.

You see, Marshall Bruce Mathers III, or just Marshall Mathers, was one of the rare white teenagers in a black neighborhood. He was always bullied by his neighborhood peers and his only outlet was listening to rap. He also participated in rap battles very frequently. He would always win. Em would read the dictionary just to enrich his vocabulary and get better at rhyming.

When he grew up, he participated in official rap battle competitions like the Rap Olympics but lost.

His initials are MM, so people would call him M&M. Later, he changed it to Eminem.

Em also had a movie about those rap competitions, *8 Mile* (great movie, by the way).

Alright, anyway, that's enough for an introduction.

So, the first album he released was *Infinite*. It wasn't successful, but hey, his second one was crazy.

Oh wait, I forgot to introduce myself. Hi, my name is...

Anye and I'm a really big Eminem fan.



The Slim Shady LP (1999)

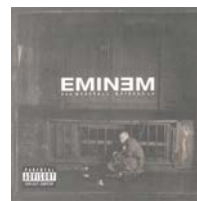
The album that made Em famous, the album that introduces his alter ego, ... Slim Shady. If you haven't heard of Eminem (which is already impossible)

then you've probably heard of Shady. This alter ego was born when Em was on the toilet. He thought that many words rhymed with that name. Slim was invented so that Marshall could say whatever he

wanted and express his anger after the failure of his first album. This is also the album that got him with his producer, the legendary Dr. Dre. Here are some of the best songs from the album (in my opinion):

- My Name Is (the most popular one. This one made him famous overnight)
- Guilty Conscience (kind of inappropriate, but hey, it's really good)
- Brain Damage (a song about him getting bullied)
- 97' Bonnie and Clyde (a song about a car ride between a dad and his daughter that slowly becomes unsettling)
- Role Model (a song about kids wanting to grow up to be like him, after telling everyone all the crimes and dumb things he's done)
- Rock Bottom (a song about people not knowing what it feels like being poor)
- Bad Guys Always Die (a song from: The Wild Wild West)

Okay, yes, I know, that's enough for one album. So why not a second one?



The Marshall Mathers LP (2000)

Alright, this one is my favourite album from Em.

This one is legendary, and a fan favourite.

Filled with so many good songs, it's crazy.

How can one rapper make so many crazy songs?

You see how I'm skipping a line for every sentence?

Yeah, that's what I want.

I want you to see how important this album is.

So, now that you understand how amazing this album is, let me glaze it a little more. It was released so that



Em could talk about how he felt with the overwhelming and sudden success of his previous album and show the power of his alter ego with words. I hope you remember the name of the previous album I mentioned.

Em was blamed for all the violence happening in schools because of his lyrics.

The public wanted him to be a poppy sensation, but he didn't want that and released a banger song that I'll explain more about later.

He also released another banger to challenge his audience.

Here are all the banger hits in the album:

- *Public Service Announcement 2000* (it's a skit, but it's insane)
- *Kill You* (the banger and first song of the album in which he challenges his audience and says that he'll kill them)
- *Stan* (you have to know this one, it's about a crazy fan that kills himself, his wife and kid because Eminem wasn't answering his letters. One of the most popular songs in the album)
- *The Way I Am* (the other banger I was talking about, it's so good. It's about him hating being popular and that he appreciates having fans but they're too close to him all the time and asking for autographs)
- *The Real Slim Shady* (one of his most popular songs for sure. It's a hilarious rap criticizing celebrities and talking about how too many people are trying to be just like him. Also one of the most popular songs from the album)
- *I'm Back* (a crazy song and is kind of the prequel of his famous song *Without Me*)
- *Marshall Mathers* (a powerful song full of anger about him just being a regular human being and that he doesn't understand why so many people pay attention to him)
- *Kim* (a song about him just screaming at his wife)
- *Under The Influence* (a song with his band D12 that I'll talk about later)
- *Criminal* (a really funny song about Em being a criminal and committing crimes. He composed this

song because many parents thought his lyrics brought chaos into their children's heads, kinda portraying him as a criminal)

Had enough already? He has 12 albums so we're just getting started.

I'm just joking. Actually, never mind, not really. I'm just gonna write a part two for everybody that loved this text of mine.

Now, I'll talk about his band, his fourth album, and other songs that you should try.



D12 (Dirty Dozen)

Alright, I'm not going to spend too much time on this. So, this band was created in 1996 with Proof as founder, a well-known rapper and Eminem's best friend. There were other members such as Kuniva, Bizarre, Swifty McVay and Kon Artis. They released two albums: *Devil's Night* and *D12 World*. There were good songs such as, *Purple Pills*, *My Band*, *Fight Music*, and *How Come*. My favourite being *My Band*. Sadly, the members all parted ways after Proof was shot and the solo success of Eminem.



The Eminem Show (2002)

After this album, Eminem fell off a little bit. But hey, this album is also a legendary one.

Don't worry, I'm not going to start skipping lines like before.

This album marks the peak of Eminem's career. This album is kind of special compared to his previous ones. It was inspired by the Truman Show. This album is about how he thinks his life is being watched without him knowing and how every action is just another joke or part of a story people are watching.

He also used this album to talk about some personal as well as political situations, such as dissing his own mom and talking about 911.

Here are some insane songs you should listen to:

- *White America* (a song about 911 and the war on terror)

- *Business* (the song talks about Em being the savior of hip-hop, with Dr. Dre as Batman and Eminem as Robin)

- *Cleanin' Out My Closet* (a song that Em composed to diss his mom that didn't raise him well, even though he apologized in 2013 and promised to never perform it again, because he regretted the harsh and angry lyrics directed at his mother)

- *Soldier* (one of the most underrated tracks of this album, one of my favourites because of the insane lyrics. It's an angry song about his fans, once again, and after *The Kiss - Skit* which is about Kim. It's about his ex-wife walking with a bouncer and being seen kissing him by Eminem, which makes him mad. *Say Goodbye Hollywood* (This is the song about Eminem being in jail and thinking that he'll have to say goodbye to Hollywood (Hip-hop), after menacing the bouncer from *The Kiss - Skit*)

- *Without Me* (undoubtedly the most popular song from the album. He says he's back and that Hip-hop feels empty without him.)

- *Sing For The Moment* (it's a song about how rap can serve as a refuge for those who feel unheard by society)

- *Superman* (a song about his rocky relationships with women)

- *Hailie's Song* (this song is dedicated to his daughter Hailie for being a treasure to him)

- *Till I Collapse* (a motivational song about never giving up)



- *My Dad's Gone Crazy* (a song composed after Hailie said that her dad had gone crazy)

Songs you should try:

- *Lose Yourself* (his most popular song. Really motivational)

- *Love The Way You Lie* (a song with Rihanna, you've probably heard it before)

- *Mockingbird* (A song dedicated as an apology to Hailie and his other kids about the difficult circumstances they had to face between his wife and kids due to his career and drug addiction)

- *Rap God* (a song where he calls himself the Rap God after having people call him the King of Rap. He also breaks a record for doing the fastest rap verse ever)

- *Godzilla* (a song that beat the record from Rap God)

There are many other songs I'd like to recommend, but sadly, I know way too many and I'm too tired to write them all down and

give a description for each.

Anyway, if you liked this text then yay, if you didn't then okay. I think Eminem is the best rapper out there because he raps about some real stuff, he can make you feel tough when you're feeling down. He can make you feel better when you're going through hard times. He can make you laugh when you feel like crying. His voice might sound annoying to some people, but his lyrics are beautiful.

Okay, see you guys maybe next time if I decide to write a part two, and yeah, bye. Wait, never mind.



The Wings

Written by Seungwoo Nam

Edited by Justin Jiang

"Have you ever seen a stuffed genius?" - Kim Haegyöng.

A person who is unable to reach their full potential despite having a great talent or intellect, a genius who has been taxidermied into a lifeless puppet, letting time drift on despite everything they can achieve, a human who has lost all hope, all motivation, all reasons to try in life by a society that turns all emotions into a transaction.

Written in 1936 by Korean author Kim Haegyöng or Yi Sang, *The Wings* is a short, modernist, semi-autobiographic novel and at its center is "I", depicted to be Yi Sang himself, living quite a slothful, unfulfilling life.

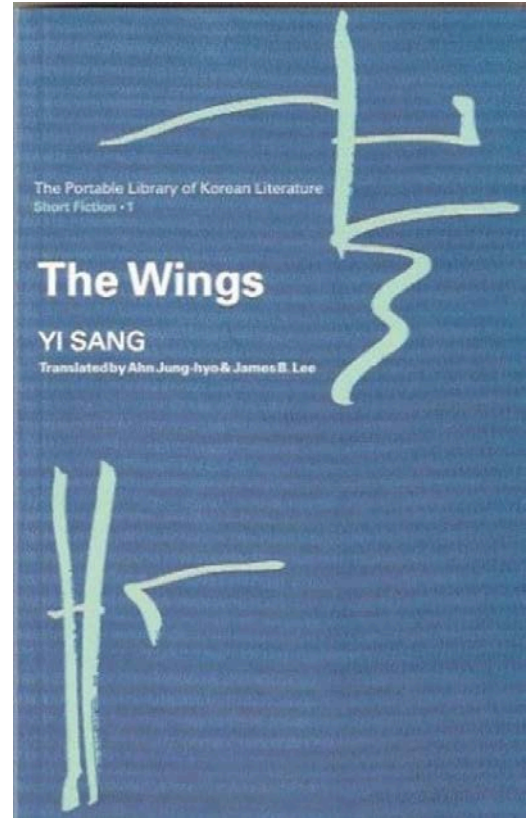
Long story short, "I" was kept in a dark, dusky room, losing touch with the outside with every passing moment. Though he still had company, his wife, Yeonsim, was the sole reason he was alive, bringing him all that he needed. Even so, their lives were worlds apart. Yeonsim always had clean, new clothes while "I" had at most three shirts, two pairs of pants and a turtleneck. She frequently had visitors to speak to, while "I" was in solitude. She always ate extravagant dishes while "I" suffered from malnutrition but never voiced a single complaint. However, it didn't mean that he couldn't be sad anymore. In fact, every time he felt sad, his wife would give him a few coins, these coins being given by her guests. Having no use for these coins, he saved them up. Until one day, when his wife was gone, he finally decided to go outside.

You see, since the guests started giving him coins, he had concluded that monetary exchange brought pleasure and, wanting to feel that pleasure for himself, he made the choice to go out. He wandered the streets but ended up spending nothing. He decides to go out once again, but it starts raining, so his adventure is cut short. When he comes back, he sees something his wife would not have wanted him to see but does nothing about it. He catches a cold from the rain, so Yeonsim decides to give him Adalin in the guise of Aspirin for the cold. "I" finds this out soon enough and thinks his wife was trying to gradually kill him and get rid of him, but tricks himself into thinking he is in the wrong for thinking these evil thoughts and goes to apologize, but he stumbles on his wife, once again, on something she didn't want him to see. She was actually a prostitute.

That was how she lived such an extravagant life and why she had guests over so frequently. For once, he felt resentment towards his wife and left. "I" now found himself on the roof of a store and recalled his past 26 years. He already started out with a miserable life, doing absolutely nothing for days on end in a dark room, but now, he truly had nothing left for him. In the end, he only wished to be able to spread his wings, the wings of hope and ambition that had withered away long before, once more.

Now, I would like to explain why I decided to write about a random novel as my first article. Basically, this is a book I read multiple times throughout my childhood, and I rediscovered it after cleaning my room. What really made me want to share this story was obviously its message. Of course, the novel bears many morals like alienation from society, depression and the destruction of one's individual sense of self.

Ultimately, what I understood was the importance of self-discovery and being able to understand your own emotions, desires, motivations in life and being able to seek your own path to feel fulfilled. As the novel says, you choose your own path in life, and you decide what makes that life fulfilling, but one thing to remember is to never let those wings of hope, those wings of ambition shatter and be swept away by anything. Hope is our lighthouse in the storm that is our life; it guides us towards the horizons of our dreams.



The Notification

Written by Jaya Lily Gérin

Edited by Siqi Zhou



Messages

After ten minutes of tirelessly scrolling through the many, many, google search results, I finally find some random article that I can analyze. I try to figure out if it is "fiable" or if its unknown and for-some-godforsaken-reason untraceable author is "crédible", as would say my absolute favorite teacher in the whole entire world. This homework is such a pain in my flipping behind.

"Ding!" I jump, almost falling off my chair. The jarring sound my phone makes when it gets a notification never fails to scare me every single mother loving time I'm concentrating on a task. Today, the assignment happens to be a text I'm writing for History. Stupid "Analyse de source"...

I glance at the device on the ground, where it is plugged into the wall outlet. Letting out a sigh, I decide to see who dares bother me during my highly important investigation. Reluctant to get up, I bend down, barely brushing my cellular device. I stretch my arm even more, clutching the wooden leg opposite me so as to not fall off my chair, and quickly grasp my annoyingly loud cell phone. The screen wakes up as I unplug the power cord from my phone. The lethal brightness burns my eyes, almost causing me to fall to the ground with the suddenness of it all. While straightening my back, I fumble with the touchscreen, desperately hoping to lower the intensity of the blinding light. When I can finally see the date, time, and background picture without feeling as though my pupils will melt off, I roll my eyes, remembering when my mom wanted to use my phone because "mine is all the way upstairs in my bedroom and I don't want to go and get it". Moms...

I quickly check the battery to see if I'll have to become a contortionist again.

"No need, it's at 97%," I whisper to myself.

I noticed that a new notification just popped up. She sent me a text. I skim through it. She responded to my previous messages with her usual mix of humor and affection, and rants to me again about the guy who likes her, but who she doesn't like. I chuckle, unable to stop the smile from spreading across my face. She's so cute, and incredible, and fantastic, and magnificent, and spectacular, and remarkable, and sweet, and miraculous, and amazing, and astounding, and astonishing, and marvelous, and awesome, and terrific, and tremendous, and stupendous, and mind-boggling, and mind-blowing, and wondrous, and so out-of-this-world that, when she texts me, I can never contain my laugh or my stupid cheek-hurting, lip-splitting grin. She's so wonderful. I'm so lucky to have a friend like her, someone who makes my whole day better with one heart-melting smile, with one quick "hello!" shouted across the room, no matter where we are, no matter with whom, no matter why, no matter how, no matter anything. She's always there when I need her the most. Whenever I need to talk about boys, or girls, or moms, or dads, or stepmoms, or friends, or enemies, or acquaintances, or teachers, or whomever – or even whatever – she's there for me. She's my constant. My "variable indépendante". My shoulder to cry on. My ear-lending, penny-for-a-thought, forever friend. I hope I never lose her.

I turn off my phone and set it gently on the floor. I'll reply to her later: I don't want to lose the creative juices flowing through my brain. My extraordinary teacher wants me to write an 8-sentence summary per article – and yes, there are (you guessed it!) 6 texts – and another 10-sentence paragraph explaining if it's a "source fiable" and if the author is "crédible"? Well then, I'm going to write him a whole blasted novel.

"You're very welcome, *monsieur*," I mutter, rolling my eyes to the heavens for the umpteenth time. "Well, the sooner I finish this blasted 1 000 000 000 000-paged ESSAY," I spew bitterly, as if I just ate something sour, but continue with a much sweeter tone, "the sooner I can text my dear, awe-inspiring friend".



The Early Bird Gets the Worm, but the Tired Bird Can't Fly

Written by Ethan Blattberg-Perets

Edited by Jeanne Gong

Every morning, millions of students drag themselves out of their beds before the sun even rises. Many rush through breakfast or forgo it completely before stumbling into their first class, just to barely stay awake throughout it. Why is this routine so universal? Is there a method to this obvious madness? Should schools in fact start later?

Supporters say later start times could help students learn better, while dissenters argue it could cause more problems than it solves.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand that I am strongly for later start times. I would, however, like to explore both camps, and maybe reach a compromise.

Why should schools start later?

First, one of the strongest arguments for later start times is biology. Many experts agree that teenagers simply can't fall asleep early. The human brain shifts during adolescence, making it natural for them to stay awake later and, in turn, wake up later too. Therefore, a school's early start time can make students miss out on hours of needed rest.

This lack of sleep can lead to trouble concentrating, lower grades, and even mood problems. Simply put, a well-rested student is far more likely to participate, remember information, and make better decisions than one fighting to stay awake.

The benefits extend beyond academics. Later starting times can improve mental and physical health. Teens who get enough sleep are less stressed, less likely to get sick and more likely to handle the challenges of school life.

Why shouldn't schools start later?

Despite these benefits, not everyone thinks pushing back the clock is a good idea. Changing school times can cause problems for parents who rely on early schedules to drop off their kids before work. A later start could make it difficult for families with younger kids, especially when parents leave for work early.



Extracurricular activities also present a concern. Sports practices, club meetings, and part-time jobs might end later in the evening, giving students less time for homework and rest. This might even lead to later sleep times, cancelling out the benefits of a later start.

Additionally, it is also important to note that many teens go to bed unnecessarily late due to poor time management. This is something

I am not entirely innocent of myself. A later start time alone cannot fix unhealthy habits if students do not take responsibility for their own schedules.

Finding a balance

Whether schools should start later is a complicated issue with strong arguments on both sides. Later start times could give students the rest they need to succeed, but abrupt changes could create challenges for families and schools. Although there will always be a debate, we can manage some problems by implementing early study halls for students who must arrive early, or we could have an incremental change, such as starting 30 minutes later.

However, one thing is certain: sleep matters.

While later start times could help, students must also take responsibility for prioritizing rest. Even if falling asleep early is difficult, making the effort to improve sleep habits is essential. Without adequate sleep, no schedule, early or late, will truly work.

Strings Attached

Written by Noah Galimidi

Edited by Leran Xu

The moon sat low in the night sky, shining on two young foxes running in a clearing. She moved like the wind through grass—quick, bright-eyed, untouchable. To him, every glance was a promise, every gekkering making them grow closer to each other. He carried her voice like a secret, believing it meant something.

But hopes are thin threads. And hers were never tied to his.

A few moons earlier—

It began with a soft greeting in the reeds: *"Hello."* Then the question: *"Why follow my path?"* Harmless words, yet they meant a lot. As days passed, the young fox thought their trails were weaving together. He gave pieces of himself—small truths, quiet dreams—thinking she did the same.

Then came the gift. Before going on a hunt, he asked if she wanted him to bring her back something, something to say *I thought of you*. She said yes. So, despite being tired after hunting all night, he wandered in shadowed groves, paws tired from stone and thorn, searching for something suitable to bring back. When he found it, shining pale against the grass, he imagined her eyes when he laid it before her, a light blue crystal.

That same night, before going back home, he took a detour to meet with Snappy—an old turtle who had saved him from drowning when he was still nothing more than a cub.

"You walk heavy, little fox," said Snappy.

"Someone I care for," the fox murmured, tail low.

"Careful," came the reply. *"Not every path bears fruit. Some lead only to thorns."*

The fox laughed softly, but the words clung in his mind:

"Your main quest matters—your strength, your learning. Don't let side trails steal your paws."

He didn't know then that Snappy knew the vixen. He only knew the warning felt warm, like the moss under his tired paws.

Then came the long break. She spent more time with her own circle, and he was caught up in his lessons and hunts. Days slipped by without meeting. Hoping she'd still want to see him, he left her a note scratched into bark—a quiet promise waiting for her in the hush.

Hope stirred again. They had spoken of meeting before the leaves turned, so he could give her the crystal. And then—her words carried on the breeze: *"I'm down to meet."* His heart raced. Five days passed. No meeting. Just silence dressed as maybe, but as time went on, he realized they were never going to meet.

Until one evening, strolling through bushes, he caught her scent—and her voice, sharp as steel:

"I wish I'd never spoken to him. Should've turned away sooner."

The words hit hard. His heart stopped, ears sharp, his mind processing. For a second, he thought his mind was playing tricks on him—but then her voice came again.

He ran to her, paws tearing through grass, his hope fading way. *"Is it true?"* His voice cracking.

She turned, eyes steady. No flinch. *"Yes."*

No shame. No apology. Just the truth—cold and clean.

He stood there, silent, until he couldn't anymore. Then he turned away, walking, running as fast as he could.

Back in his den, the little blue crystal lay still, glowing in the dark. He stared at it for a long time, wishing for it to disappear. It stayed—tucked deep like a secret, a shard of a promise that never found its voice.

Later that night, he returned to Snappy's pond. The turtle waited beneath the moonlit arch, scales gleaming in the night...

"Told you," The turtle said. *"Some quests aren't worth it.."*

"She was real though" the fox whispered.

"Real enough to wound. But listen—Mates will join later. For now, sharpen your claws. Learn the old songs."

The fox took deep breaths, slow and steady. It felt good to hear. He wished Snappy good night, curled in his den, and let the story end.

The crystal stayed—not as a failure, but as a promise. Someday, it would belong to someone who would actually care for him. For now, it was a harsh reminder: even in a world of illusions, some trails are worth it.

- THE END -



Rants About School

By Jaya Lily Gérin & Emma Zhou

Edited by An Phuong Nguyen & Jeanne Gong

Do you ever find yourself ranting to your friends about a teacher after their class? Or about that one group of people that did something annoying? Well, us too! Here are some extremely relatable things you just might find yourself agreeing with.

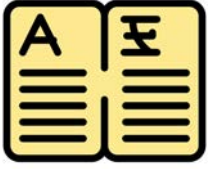
- 1.** You know that one teacher who constantly reads off the PowerPoint? They are obligated to read EVERY SINGLE WORD ON THE SLIDE. Then, when someone asks a question related to their explanation, they reread what was written on the slide. And don't even think about asking a question that's not directly answered on the PowerPoint that they may or may not have made. But of course, most teachers are actually wonderful at their job.
- 2.** You know when teachers finish teaching the material the day *before* the exam? And even worse, they start talking about the next chapter. I don't want to waste my precious brain space on stuff that isn't on the exam tomorrow, so why do you even bother?
- 3.** Almost every single time... There is always that one person who does not contribute to the **team** project at all (**TEAM** project). While the rest of us are working our butts off trying to complete our parts on time, they can be found lurking in the shadows watching us do everything. In the end, somehow, they get a good grade out of all this, or, even worse, they drag down our grade.
- 4.** Some teachers ignore the students in the back when they raise their hand. It's like their eyesight is limited to the people in the front, which makes it difficult for us "back-people" to participate, like so many of our teachers want us to.
- 5.** Every day, at a specific area in the lockers, we walk through an invisible wall of Eau de Locker perfume. You think it's sweat you smell? Oh no no no... It's simply a toxic chemical reaction between sweat, body odor, dirty clothes, and strong perfume that hangs in the air like a wet blanket.
- 6.** You must have at least seen it once, certainly: the glorious view of a naked back or chest in the lockers. Some people choose to change in the lockers while blocking the "locker traffic". We get that you're in a hurry, but... for the sake of our eyes, please consider changing in the changing rooms (the "vestiaires", for you francophones) or if that's too hard for you, take three steps back so that people can pass around you. Please, for the sake of your currently-but-not-for-long unpunched face.
- 7.** You know when you're climbing the stairs, practically sprinting in the hopes of getting to class on time, and then you suddenly are forced to slow down to a crawl when you encounter a human wall, a barrier made of living flesh and bones. This wall-to-wall moving obstacle makes passing impossible. Speaking of blocking the path, there's always someone who takes up all the space in between the tables in the cafeteria. When you try to pass, there's always that one poor girl (bless her) whose chest is literally compressed against the table, trying to make room for me, while the person opposite is manspreading.
- 8.** I've been in your class for so long... I have raised my hand, and we have even made direct eye contact a couple of times. And yet, you still do not know my name. And when you do attempt to finally call it out, you mispronounce it, even after I have told you a million times the correct pronunciation. Please... I am not that one kid in the blue shirt (which, by the way, I only wore once) or that one quiet student in the back. I have a name.

In conclusion, this is totally NOT targeted. If you see yourself being one of the people we ranted about, don't worry. We weren't talking about YOU. You know, it's just... other people. Anyway, have a nice day :)

Of Translations

Written by Mário Antônio Levada Betioli

Edited by Jeanne Gong



Most people can read, speak, and write in at least two languages, and some know even more dialects. This means that the vast majority of you can read the same book in two different versions, and you should do it if you have never done so, because it is interesting to compare the translations to the original version.

Do not be uncouth and think of a translation as a mere copy of the original in another language! A translation is much more than that; translating literary masterpieces consists of rewriting the story as if you were the author himself. This implies creating and removing parts of the text in order to better vehiculate the main feelings and messages of the book. A shocking personal example was when I first read the English version of Harry Potter. I had read it in Portuguese and French before, and I wished to see how these translations differed from the original. Doing so, I discovered scenes that had never been mentioned in the translated versions, or that had been heavily modified. And somehow the story had the same exact plot and the same exact depth.

However, it is of great importance for you to know that bad translations exist. They aren't bad because the translator did his work in an improper manner, but because some works, specifically those containing elements from a culture radically different and distant, cannot be fully translated. There are concepts, words, expressions, and feelings that are not shared between all the languages in the world. For instance, there is no specific English or French word to describe the repulsive feeling felt by most people when hearing nails scraping a chalkboard, while such words exist in Portuguese and Spanish. Also, there are a dozen words in Inuktitut used to describe the words *snow* and *ice*, which may possibly render a translation repetitive. To this, we add historical and cultural context that must be made understandable by the translator, so it is not always easy to find a satisfactory transcription. This is where you, the reader, step in! Your primary duty will be to acknowledge these facts when reading a translation and remember the saying: never judge a book by its translated version!

On this note, I need to say that for some books, it is worth it to learn its original language for the sole purpose of being able to read it the way it was written. An example is *The Lord of the Rings*. Before I learned English, it seemed to me that

Tolkien had written a simple children's story, but I had the feeling that I had surely missed something, and it came to be that my bucket list for books urged me to read Tolkien's masterpiece in its original language. I read it last year and it literally changed my life, nothing compared to my first experience. So, as I said before, never judge a book by its translated version!

Quirky Laws and Regulations

Authors: Lily-Maude Lamarche & Lyne Makdisi

Editor: Jeanne Gong

"...when the laws have ceased to be executed, as this can only come from the corruption of the republic, the state is already lost."

- Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws

Laws were created to protect and give structure to our society. On one hand, they are very important to the wellbeing of civilization and are necessary in order to live in harmony. On the other hand, some laws are very strange and seemingly hold no purpose in the community. Most of them aren't even enforced but still take up place in the hefty penal code of the country where they were made. Through this article, we will share with you some of the strangest laws that exist all around the world.

Have you ever seen, while walking in the port of London, a fisherman being arrested for holding some salmon weirdly? Well, did you know that in the United Kingdom, it is illegal to handle salmon suspiciously. In fact, this law was adopted a few years ago in 1986, under the Salmon Act which regulates salmon fishing and farming in order to stop overfishing and poaching. This law means that it is illegal to buy or sell salmon if it is known that it was caught illegally.

Secondly, for those of you planning your death in advance, I suggest you choose somewhere other than Longyearbyen, Norway, because it is illegal to die in this specific part of the world. Indeed, it is illegal to die and be buried in Longyearbyen, a small town in the north of the country. Due to the freezing and harsh climate, the bodies are unable to decompose, which is why this law was enacted in 1950. The people living in this town who are terminally ill must be transported to the mainland for treatment and burial.

It's eleven o'clock at night, and you suddenly feel the urge to go to the bathroom. Well, if you are in Switzerland, you must be careful not to flush the toilet if it's very loud, because it is illegal! It is very frowned upon, because it causes noise disturbance and goes against the quiet hours: 10 pm to 7 am.



It doesn't follow the customs and may wake your neighbours. Be careful!

Next, I believe that everyone reading this has eaten or at least heard of the delicious Kinder surprise egg. A soft chocolate outside surrounding a fun toy. It's a real two in one package if you ask us! Well, this treat which brings joy to so many kids is banned in the United States of America. Since 1938, the government has forbidden the sale and the purchase of these sweet treats. The reason for this is the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938 which forbids foods that contain non-nutritive elements. The FDA (food and drug administration) has deemed it a choking hazard.

Finally, the last uncommon law that we will be presenting is from Ottawa. In this city, it is illegal to eat ice cream on Sundays. Though very rarely enforced, this law can be traced back to 1900, when strict restrictions were imposed in order to preserve public decorum.

In conclusion, many laws were created for strange reasons, although they are almost never enforced. It's good to know them though if ever you would like to get someone arrested.



"I thought it was legal—I wrote it on a legal pad."

Lane Hutson

Written and edited by Justin Jiang

The 2024-25 Calder race was one of the closest ones in recent history. The Calder trophy is given to the rookie of the year in the NHL season.

Macklin Celebrini, the 1st overall pick, led his franchise in points as a rookie.

Matvei Michkov, the highly skilled winger who broke records in the Russian league, finished second on his team in points.

Dustin Wolf, one of the best rookie goalies the league has seen in a long time.

Then, there's Lane Hutson. The 21-year-old is one of the smallest defensemen in the league. But don't let that

deceive you, because if you give him some space, he'll blow past you.

To understand just how helpful Lane Hutson was in the Habs system, we need to understand his individual play. He's an offensive quarterback on the ice. Thanks to his skating and stick handling, he can easily deceive other players. His dekes and head fakes are notorious in his game, giving him space to make a play. On top of that, he's one of the best players at controlled zone entries, which is entering the offensive zone while maintaining control of the puck. His elite puck handling allows him to enter in the offensive zone and set up a play, an important quality for a defenseman, giving his team a scoring opportunity.

Although his shot isn't the best, it's his passing that allows the Habs to score. In fact, in the 2024-25 season, he ended up with 6 goals, 60 assists, totaling 66 points, giving him the 3rd most points on the Habs, as a rookie! Even before entering the NHL, he was dominating in the NCAA. During his 2 seasons with Boston University, he averaged almost 50 points in less than 40 games. In his freshman year, he won the Hockey East Scoring Champion, given to the skater with the most points.

Last season, Lane Hutson was one of the key components in getting the Habs into the playoffs. They were expected to continue their rebuild, but as the season went on, they ended up clinching the last wild card spot, which is the very last spot in the playoffs. Among other factors, Hutson's offensive play quarterbacked his team so score more.

Ultimately, Lane Hutson is an exceptional player. Drafted 62nd overall in the second round, he has been producing scoring opportunities since he arrived. His head fakes, elite puck handling, and skating are all qualities that make him one of the best offensive defensemen in the league. The hype is real with Hutson and he ends up winning the Calder trophy. The future looks bright for the Habs with Lane Hutson at the blue line.



101 GUIDE on How to Survive a ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE!?

Co-Written by Sophie Erganian & Rina Li

Edited by Laura Hanchang Chen

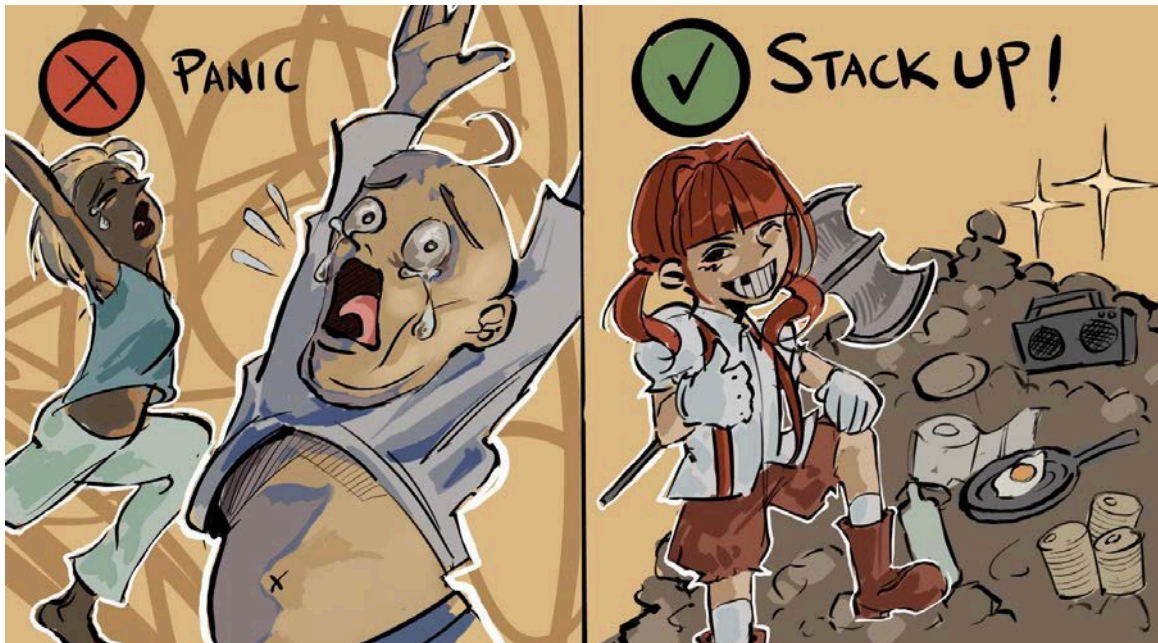
Illustrated by Rina Li

According to studies done by the University of Bréboeuf (highly trusted source, don't fact-check this), humans would only survive less than 1000 days of a zombie apocalypse, but we're not buying it. Fortunately, you have officially been blessed with our supercalifragilisticexpialodocious survival guide, so you don't end up as your neighbor's next meal. Follow along as we carefully explain all the tips and tricks to survive :

Level 1. The Chaos (start of the apocalypse):

Here's the *golden rule*: do NOT panic. Panic kills, whether it be from crowd crushes or conflicts among the people. Despite the mayhem, you must form your circle. It should exclusively consist of those *you* trust the MOST. Remember the girl who stole your cookie and hid it in her lunchbox? Untrustworthy. Expulsion-worthy. She's on her own.

Start stocking up immediately. You can *never* have too many supplies or too much food. And don't think you're eating it all yourself—that's just greedy. Mentally prepare yourself, because we're rationing, people. Do not underestimate the gravity of the apocalypse and how long it will last, because chances are it's not going to end. You'll need goods and grubs: hygiene products, canned food, water, safety kits, and medical supplies are non-negotiable. Zombies are not the only way to go—illnesses, dehydration, and stupidity also kill.



Gather radios and walkie-talkies. Though often ignored while looting, they will allow you to intercept signals from nearby camps or safe zones. And no, if you thought you were just going to doomscroll while zombies eat everyone, you thought wrong. Electricity and Internet have officially become privileges of the past. R.I.P. *Yellowjackets*, *The Walking Dead*, *Hannibal*, *Stranger Things*, and all the shows you once loved. 😞💔🕊️ (not biased)



And most importantly: *weapons*. How else do you plan on defending yourself against these brain-dead, despicable, worthless, chaotic biters?? Anything could be used to end them if used correctly. Anything. No elaboration needed. The only way to kill a zombie for good, is to puncture its brain. Attacking any other part will only slow it down.

Level 2. The Point of No Return

By now, humanity has entered the point of no return: the virus is spreading rapidly and has infected most of the population. The city is in ruins, and the chaos is spreading. Your main goal now is to find a semi-temporary shelter, forge alliances, and stay safe. Be sure to move away from densely populated areas such as metropolises and large cities.

The safest and most efficient base is located on a remote mountain or a highly fortified building, like a prison (aka you're going to need to say goodbye to the outside world for a while.) Ensure it's well-fortified, because just when you think it's protected enough—news flash—it's NOT. By then, zombies will have already gone past your two booby traps and eaten you alive. Do not, however, completely isolate yourself, as you will need to be near a city in case you run short on supplies.



Watch out for signs of infection: severe fever, chills, delirium, weakness, nausea, vomiting, dehydration, and hemoptysis. If someone shows symptoms? ACT FAST. (This is not the time for "Maybe they'll get better." THEY WON'T.) Come on, you're smarter than that, *cough cough*. Take preemptive measures, you know what must be done.

"Bites kill you. The fever... burns you out. But then after a while... you come back." — Morgan Jones to Rick Grimes. (The Walking Dead)



However, zombies are NOT the only enemy. In times like these, people divide and turn against each other. Wandering strangers and groups cannot always be trusted. They must earn your trust. Trust the wrong people and you'll be doing a Glenn-under-the-dumpster speedrun (iykyk).

"How many walkers have you killed? How many people have you killed? Why?" — Rick Grimes' infamous 3 questions, meant to judge whether a stranger is a threat or an ally.

Look out for rival groups who try to invade your base and steal your supplies and weapons at the very first possible chance they get. Be smart during potential negotiations and never (ever...) let your guard down or underestimate your enemies. Dun dun dunnn. No, but seriously, be careful twins. 🙌

Level 3. Adaptation:

Listen up: only those who adapt survive. Survival means living like a nomad, always on the move, and never rooted in one place. An efficient way to avoid getting spotted by zombies is to put their guts on yourself to hide your scent and smell like a decomposed corpse. Fun! 😊 (If you're gagging while applying zombie guts, CONGRATS! YOU'RE STILL HUMAN!)

In "The Walking Dead": the characters put zombie guts on themselves to hide their scent and smell like zombies, (aka your natural scent /j) so they can calmly stroll (to a certain degree) among the walkers without being noticed. But with one drastic move, they'd be doomed. (Mistake of Rick Grimes and Glenn Rhee, ayayay...)

One character, Michonne (total baddie), cut off the jaws and arms of two walkers and dragged them along in chains. That way, they couldn't harm her, and she could blend in with the walkers. (That's what they call the zombies)

Super fun fact : In The Walking Dead (1000% recommend btw, like what are you waiting for), not once, did they EVER call the zombies "zombies". They were actually quite creative at times. Walkers, biters, geeks, roamers, chompers, lurkers, dead ones... You get it.



Level 4. Post-apocalypse:



CONGRATULATIONS!

Hopefully (or not), you're one of the sole survivors of the apocalypse THANKS TO OUR GUIDE WHATT. Is there still a purpose in life? Who knows. You made it though... that means something, right? 😊 😇 🧑



ARCOLOPANGEA II

By Yuchen Wu

Edited by Othmane El Mariky & Hongjia Gong

***"In the cold darkness with reverence they speak
How majestic and mighty remains your name
By despair and death have we all been tamed
Within your empty corpse, remedy we seek
After ages of trying, no progress was made
In front of your greatness, all of us fade
Your heritage attracts numerous pilgrims
As the lights of all stars begin to grow dim"***

— *The Ballad of Aureon*, by Orryx

Ithara sat in front of a small porthole. He looked toward the dimming red sun, his eyes filled with sorrow. The star in question was named Oreona, which stood for "new-born" in their language. The name suited it perfectly, as it was also the name of the last star to ever form in the entire universe.

About a trillion years ago, life in the universe had finally realized that Heat Death was inevitable. People had started to panic; disorder filled galaxies and beyond. At some point, they realized that the actual Heat Death was still far away, happening only in over one hundred quidecillion years. Hence, they began enjoying their time as much as they could; life was even more vibrant than before. However, a certain fright persisted — perhaps because even though they thought of themselves as immortal, they still foresaw their inevitable death. His son was still unaware of the situation, probably still enjoying the beautiful sunlight in the fields. But Ithara had to go.



This was the first time that almost all governments in the universe, and nearly all individuals, shared the same and single goal: to reach Aureon. To arrive at the ruins of that once-mighty empire, which contained the last shelter for life and potential ways to avoid the inevitable. People began to worship this long-dead civilization, creating religions that had long since vanished from the universe. Ithara, however, strongly doubted that this mythical empire could somehow save them.

Even though life had been perfected through technology—or so they thought—the fear of death remained, hidden behind the very fabric of the existence of life. So, he joined this great age of exploration, if not only for his children.

He called out to the on-board AI to launch the ship, and in an instant, he arrived at the edge of The Abyss. Pure darkness filled his vision: The Abyss was the place where space-time itself ceased to exist. Every explorer bold enough to enter using traditional navigation methods, like the vector engine used by most ships—which stored movement vectors to release at once for instantaneous

travel—was eternally trapped. All activity stopped in The Abyss, a place of eternal silence and despair. Yet The Abyss, stretching over 100,000 light-years in width, enveloped the entire corpse of the past giant's home galaxy:

The Milky Way.

About one hundred quidecillion years ago, twenty years after the completion of Arcolopangea, the colossal structure at the galaxy's center claimed to be a shelter for life before the Heat Death. The universe then observed the second largest, most disruptive event known, second only to the Big Bang. For reasons no one could understand, the black hole contained by Arcolopangea expanded through the gravity-less highways that the Aureon Empire

had built, its event horizon reaching way beyond the edge of the Milky Way, compressing space-time within it in an unimaginable manner. Then, that dark, bent edge of the black hole retreated—but it kept the fabric of space-time within its possession—leaving nothing behind but an Abyss of all past celestial bodies, eternally immobile, imprisoned by total emptiness. Intelligent life would become mindless corpses, as consciousness returned to its uncontained quantum form. This event was coined **“The Fall of the Horizon.”** The immense change in space sent enormous gravitational waves rippling through the universe. Since then, no further technological advancements concerning time had been made. Nor could they be made. And the wave was programmed so precisely that its minute details contained a message:

“Conscious beings, these tidings are for you alone. Repair ye to Arcolopangea, the singular refuge for all.”

Considering this terrifying catastrophe, no one had dared—or been able—to visit it until now.

The only way to navigate The Abyss was to cut a piece of space-time fabric around the ship and bend it alongside it, then move the entire “space bubble” inside. This required a special material called **Elysium**. However, this method imposed a maximum speed, as the bubble would break beyond a certain angle of curvature. Ithara never fully understood how it worked, for no one could reach the borders of scientific discovery anymore. But he knew what to do—and what not to do—and that was enough.

After a few thousand years of studying past theories and discoveries, most would have given up and turned to other interests. Artificial intelligences were the only researchers left. Ithara activated the space engine and entered The Abyss. The theoretical time to reach the center of Aureon was about a month, but ships required constant Elysium refills. The easiest source was to find remnants in The Abyss, so ships often got sidetracked—and none had reached the center yet.

After about a day, tiny points of light began to appear, then thousands, millions, countless stars revealed themselves. The photons they had emitted an eternity ago remained immobile as space-time disappeared, and as the bubble engulfed them again, they became visible. A colossal icosahedron stood at the center of the galaxy—it was **Arcolopangea**, calmly reflecting the Milky Way’s

lights. Ithara detected a cluster of Elysium, about 25,000 light-years inside The Abyss. He needed a refill. Usually, such concentrations indicated a construction ship from the past Empire, as they built giant gravity-less highways with Elysium.

Two weeks later, Ithara arrived at his destination. In front of him was a chaotic system of hot fusion materials and planetary debris. This system must have suffered before Arcolopangea’s activation, as The Fall of the Horizon occurred so quickly that celestial bodies would otherwise have remained intact. Through his porthole, he saw a massive construction ship with an enormous space bubble around it. This must have been a remnant of Aureon, and the source of the Elysium concentration. Ithara merged his bubble with it and entered the ship’s space.

Suddenly, a strange spaceship, unregistered with any governing body, emerged from a large debris cluster and approached him. He was terrified—too far to have his consciousness conserved and revived in a new body, he did not want to die randomly in The Abyss. Fortunately, his ship was old enough to be able to receive radio signals from the stranger and answer them back. They exchanged hydrogen wavelengths, counting systems, and finally the entire language database for mutual understanding.

Ithara watched as the screen displayed symbols unfamiliar to any known writing system, apparently called Arabic numerals by its users. A translation system was established after about an hour. They greeted each other, and Ithara explained that he meant no harm. The ship instructed him to follow.

They landed on the largest debris, and a man—their leader—came to meet the visitor. His name was Rodney, ruler of the Human Empire. After some brief conversation, Ithara donned a suit providing his familiar environment and was invited into the palace, their dialogue streamed to all two trillion human citizens. Rodney asked an unfathomable number of questions to Ithara, the first alien encountered in 10^{15} years.

Through their long discussion, humans learned about everything they had missed while trapped in darkness, unable to observe the outside world. They were the survivors of the Solar System’s destruction, sent to



investigate the construction ship. During The Fall of the Horizon, residual Elysium in the abandoned ship preserved a significant chunk of space-time, allowing the last humans to flourish and rebuild. Dictatorship had been necessary in such harsh times and persisted until today.

Humans advanced by learning from the Aureon Empire's remnants. They likely became the civilization most knowledgeable about Aureon's history, having accessed, after trillions of years, the quantum database within Arcolopangea and Aureon's past capital, Aurelia. However, their communication and propulsion technologies had not greatly improved—first because they didn't need to, second because they lacked sufficient energy for advanced Aureonian machines, relying only on leftover fusion materials from the Sun and possibly gas giants. They had to economize to survive.

Although materialism dominated the hard times, people still formed religions. Old religions were practically abandoned after first contact with aliens, but a new one arose studying Aureon: **Phicalipism**, worshiping the past eternal emperor Phicalipus as the one true savior and god of the universe. The database contains evidence that Aureonians themselves turned to this belief before the catastrophe, and although Aureon's laws forbade religion, it survived, becoming the only religion in the entire universe.

Understanding the universe's current state, humans agreed to join the adventure. They shared access to the database with Ithara, and by copying the engine onto his ship and using leftover Elysium in the construction ship, they built a small fleet to continue the journey.

Carrying an immense amount of Elysium, refills were no longer needed. In about two weeks, they arrived before Arcolopangea—more precisely, **Aurelia**. Their bubbles enveloped Aurelia, and time finally returned to the epic planet. The past capital contained nothing but empty buildings; the population had moved to Arcolopangea before the disaster. However, one structure remained, resembling a tomb. A short epitaph by the legendary poet Orryx, who visited the Empire shortly before the disaster, was inscribed. Orryx lived to this day but never spoke again after completing his poems:

"In the abyss far above, your sacrifices keep the Empire ever bright;"

Something was covered on the tomb. Eventually, they uncovered the remaining inscription:

"In the prison far below, his vigil keeps the universe in endless light."

Who is **he**? How could the Empire last eternal if most of its people died in a second?

They entered Arcolopangea.

The colossal exterior shone above a dark horizon, swallowing the past interior for all former inhabitants. Space slowly filled around it; they expanded their bubbles accordingly, which altered time's speed. The system controlling the "city," **Lilith**, slowly activated. Her voice echoed, greeting, congratulating, and welcoming the visitors. Ithara and Rodney had millions of questions, the first being: what happened at The Fall of the Horizon, and what became of the citizens?

"Greatness demands sacrifices. They died but wilt live. Thou wilt die and wilt live. It is the last gift of Aureon to all life. Destiny cannot be avoided. I shall answer no further questions. Truth will poison thee. Why not settle in the beautiful outer parts of Arcolopangea, designed to sustain all life before Heat Death?" answered Lilith.

Outside The Abyss, suddenly, all technologically advanced civilizations discovered a stunning truth about time, after trillions of years of research. They could see timelines within objects and energies, predicting their ultimate fate.

All timelines pointed toward Arcolopangea. Under the turbulence of The Fall of the Horizon, every atom, every bit of mass and energy, had its destiny permanently shaped. No matter how long, no matter where, no matter the circumstances:

You will be at Arcolopangea.

To be continued...

Where Did All the Time Go?

Written by Leran Xu

Edited by Jeanne Gong

With the passing of summer comes autumn, life cycles from bloom to regression. Autumn is dreary and mellow, it is decay, the pre-death to which all life surrenders before the inevitable coming of winter. Neither do humans, self-established masters of nature, escape from this annual depression. No matter the amount of sustainable deforestation, ethical slaughterhouses or lifelike cemeteries that we build, the fading leaves and the short days seem to instill a collective yellow sigh on the part of the entire human species. It is, therefore, only by a cosmic coincidence, that our autumnal depression coincides with the start of the school year.

It is quite beyond the scope, and the duty, of the author to present this annual caging of young souls in its globality. However, like most things in life, one only needs to look at a small screw, a minute gear, a little cog to understand the entire nature of a complicated system. Therefore, let us inspect a little screw, a piece of the future of humanity, it's hope for a better world, as it scurries along under the education system.

Noah Galimidi would most certainly cringe at the thought of being a small cog. Indeed, this youthful soul holds dear to his heart tender dreams of success and even has the audacity to entertain dreams of recognition and prosperity. He was nurtured, like all his classmates, on promises of a gifted mind and boundless potential. Later, this teenager learned in secondary school that time is more valuable than gold, and that therefore, people are evaluated, speedily and rightfully so, mind you, by their grades. Noah is now perfectly content with his mediocre and talentless character.

Noah, grieving from the passing of his summer vacation, started school on a high note, aspiring to be a better student this school year: he spent a few days browsing productivity notebooks and watching motivational videos which had such a momentous effect on him that he actually spent one gruelling day making a work schedule detailed down to the hour. After toiling through this task, he congratulated himself and promptly forgot

to use the schedule. This year, like any other, Noah had a set of excellent teachers who encouraged individual development and self-expression. He liked all his teachers, and reciprocally, all his teachers, after rummaging through their brains for his name, would no doubt say that Noah is a kind kid.

Despite having a seemingly swell time at school, Noah is not happy. Indeed, he feels an ever-increasing boredom whilst attending classes and believes that his time is slowly being ground away by school. Our student identified his source of boredom as an acute usage of social media. He then declared to himself, with great strength of will, that he would no longer be a slave to the screen. Blaming some exterior element as a source of all problems in one's life is, as a matter of fact, the first steps to enlightenment, but it is only the beginning of a dark and winding road. Indeed, Noah still naively thought that his addiction could be completely removed from his innocent life. Sages know, however, that addiction is permanent, and the best way to end addiction to one thing is to become addicted to another, albeit less harmful thing, like work, for example.

Needless to say, Noah's advances in cellular puritanism and his noble scholarly goals did not last for even one week. Indeed, by the third day, after school and his basketball practice, he decided, facing a pile of unwritten homework at home, that everyone has the right to relax from time to time, and then promptly started to watch hilarious videos online.

The author should refrain from being moralizing for one moment and clarify that by no means is Noah one of the empty-minded things who have no idea what to make out of their lives. Noah wants to be a doctor, and not only for the allures of money. He chooses to believe in the far nobler goal of reuniting families, of impersonating hope for all the wives and children who would've become widows and orphans had he not operated the patient. Nor are these dreams unfounded, Noah has surgically precise hands, a natural talent for all things medical, and, importantly –contrary to common belief– an impeccable handwriting, the only impression that primary school left on him.

What Noah has in grandeur, he lacks in precision. Thankfully, school is a place that practically enforces precision upon a person. School told Noah to strive for good grades, and he did just that, until his self-revision skills were no longer able to teach him the school subjects, and his grades fell into mediocrity. School then told him to accept his mediocrity and maybe to get a



tutor to teach him the subjects. Noah, however, laments this judgment, as he goes to a private school. This means that for him, the only method of validating himself are the petty grades that he receives at school, since he, like all his classmates, dropped all extracurricular activities to concentrate on their studies.

Anyways, to return to the story, Noah took a long break until it finally hit him like the first snowfall of the year (literally, in this case) that his mid-year finals were just a few weeks away. Immediately, a wave of animalistic instinct washed over him, although this instinct, instead of telling him where in the sofa he should burrow to reestablish a sense of calm (or any of the animal sort of reaction really), told him that he should get to studying immediately. However, that was a Sunday, and Noah did not bring any of his classwork home, therefore rendering it impossible for him to study for his exams.

Soon enough, the exams came and went, Noah subconsciously glided through Christmas break, received his school report, toiled brainlessly for a few months, and before he realized it, reached summer vacation. Although what happened during the school year passed like a breeze, Noah was not particularly proud of himself, as he had a feeling that he had lost something important while studying, and it was only when he was sunbathing outside during summer that it dawned on him to ask: "Where did all of my time go?" But by then, it was vacation time, and Noah had loads of more important things to do compared to

Beneath the Numbers

By Hongjia Gong

Edited by Yuchen Wu

The storm has finally passed. I peek my head through the dugout just to feel my face pierced by countless knives. The pain forces me to pull back, taking a moment to realize that I was struck by the wind. I then reach for a strip of torn cloth and wrap it around my head to shield myself from the cold.

The situation is dire. Inside the trench, several soldiers sit closely in corners, attempting to start a fire. Their hands tremble so horrendously that the matchsticks snap before they can be struck. I watch them try again, their breath steaming in short, frustrated bursts. The faint scratching of the matchstick is quickly muted by the rushing wind.

At last, a spark flares—tiny, flickering, fragile. We all lean in instinctively, eyes locked on that golden light as if it were a guardian angel. For a moment, silence holds us, and the wind seems to have eased. Then the flame struggles, dancing weakly before a sudden gust snuffs it out. The cold rushes back, sharper than before. I pull my coat tighter and close my eyes, letting my thoughts drift to the warmth of home, to the fireplace before the army claimed me.

wondering about the philosophical properties of time. Now, back when men were real men, women, real women, and schools, inexistent, there was a city called Athens. This city was quite different from its brutish neighbours; indeed, whilst other villages were fighting heroic combats for bits of shiny rock, Athenians, for that was what the inhabitants call themselves, were rather busy becoming civilized. These people liberated themselves from the chains of autocracy and decided to create a state governed by all men, which, contrary to common belief, does not include everybody, but rather one third—ironically, Athenians detest irrational numbers—of the population.

There was this one man, named Socrates, who didn't quite agree with the governing system. According to him, it was ineffective, since its efficacy depends on the intelligence of the average man, which, as he repeatedly demonstrated in debates—a sort of cage fight, but with words—was very low indeed. Socrates told the citizens that they were, quite frankly, stupid, and that they used their devotion to their religion, which had the plot of a blockbuster film, as proof. The Athenians were a very religious bunch of people, and therefore, their natural reaction to this Socrates was to kill him. Of course, only after a public trial, as, after all, they were not monsters.

The present author is more astute than Socrates, and therefore would like to clarify that, had Noah achieved scholarly success through hard work, all of his sufferings would be inexistent, and maybe he could have even landed himself in a medical job.

As I imagine the familiar comfort, the soldiers rise. We have been ordered to enter the city. Relief washes over me. In the city, we will find shelter from the wind. There will be warmth. That is enough to grant safety.

We had just entered the outskirts of the city when a greater danger became apparent: war.

The city is unrecognizable, reduced to a skeleton of what it once was. Buildings stand as hollow shells, their windows shattered, their roofs collapsed inward like broken ribs. Streets that once bustled with life are buried beneath layers of ash, rubble, and twisted metal. Smoke drifts lazily through the air, turning the sky a melancholic gray. The silence is fragmented by distant explosions and shouts for help.

We quickly spread out in small groups, knowing that we are now on our own. The atmosphere is tense as we slowly walk through the empty, broken streets. Each step could be my last. I breathe heavily, the puffs of smoke disintegrating in the air. This is my first time seeing actual combat. Just a month ago, I had been in the warmth of family and home – a cozy cottage in the countryside of Brandenburg. The early years of the war were difficult, with resources running low and bombing raids intensifying, but life remained jovial for my family. My wife had given birth a few years prior to an adorable daughter, who became the jewel of my life. Her pure smile could erase fatigue from days of work and quiet my worries that became so hard to

hide. Our country needed more manpower to keep the politicians' foolish ambitions alive. I was concerned by the recruitment agency's activity. I started spending more time with my daughter, hoping the day would never come.

It certainly did. Recruitment officers dragged me away from comfort and safety just as I put my daughter to sleep. I was then put into basic training and sent to the Eastern front alongside many other young men. We travelled hundreds of kilometers under constant aircraft harassment. The smell of foreign dirt nauseated me, the harsh soviet winter sickened me. Yet here I am, risking myself in this unfamiliar city, walking the path of countless fallen lives before me.

The city of Stalingrad had been reduced to rubble by relentless bombing and shelling. Now it is nothing more than a vast grinder of human lives, a place where each person becomes just another number swallowed by the rising tide of casualties.

We move deeper into the ruined streets, stepping over bricks, beams, and the remnants of homes long abandoned. The wind has eased, yet the cold remained—quiet, patient, creeping deep into my bones. Our small group approaches a tall building, its upper floors collapsed, the interior exposed like a broken jaw. We enter cautiously, hoping to find a moment's shelter from the desolation outside.

Inside, the concrete staircase groans with each step, dust falling from the ceiling as if the structure itself is struggling to remain standing. I climb ahead of the others, my rifle held tightly, my breath sharp and shallow. The higher we go, the more oppressive the silence becomes, broken only by the whisper of wind through shattered windows.

We quickly reach the top floor. The view is breathtaking. From up here the shattered city stretches in every direction, a maze of destruction. For a moment, I let my gaze rest on the frozen Volga river and the snowy forest in the distance.

Suddenly, a sharp impact tears through my back, stealing the breath from my lungs. Adrenaline quickly fills my veins as I turn around to defend myself from the unanticipated danger.

It is a boy in a civilian outfit.

His eyes are filled with the same terror, the same exhaustion, the same unwillingness—but necessity drove us both. I raise my rifle and press the trigger.

Nothing. The cold that had gnawed at me since the trench also claimed my gun, freezing the bolt solid. Retaliation does not last: the blade is already embedded in my chest.

My legs weakened. The world flipped. I collapse on the dusty concrete as my brothers-in-arms pepper the boy with bullets. The last thought that flickered through my mind—soft, warm, fragile—was of my daughter's smile.

The Dawn before the Storm

Written and edited by Ji Man Chun

Motivated by a strong ambition to reach the finals, the Pan-American fleet adopted an innovative strategy for the International Aegis Gunkan Tournament. Previously recognized for cautious maneuvers, the fleet shifted to a bold approach, prioritizing outmaneuvering rivals over endurance or retreat. The tournament, highly competitive among rival schools, promised a significant confrontation with a formidable roster:

-3 light cruisers: *Seattle*-class cruiser *Seattle*, modified *Brooklyn*-class *Santander*, and the *Cleveland*, leader of her class.

- 4 destroyers: *Benson*-class *Frazier*, *Caldwell*, and *Bancroft*, plus their own *La Pampa*.

- 1 battleship, flagship *Los Andes*.

The absence of aircraft carriers and submarines significantly limited the fleet's intelligence-gathering capabilities, contributing to previous defeats. Commander Sosa, studying the navigation table, remarked, "We're flying blind without our usual aerial reconnaissance." Without carriers, the fleet could not deploy planes for surveillance, and the lack of submarines eliminated opportunities for underwater intelligence. To compensate, the fleet relied on radar, radio communication, and

reconnaissance support from its destroyers. Despite these constraints, the combined efforts of Chile, Brazil, and other allies offered the potential for eventual victory.

Their first scheduled battle was against the Japanese national champions, Shirei High. With a special recommendation from the tournament officials, Shirei High was uniquely permitted to keep its Italian fleet composition. Based on the latest intel, the school was deploying several formidable ships:

- 1 heavy cruiser: the advanced *Zara*-class cruiser *Amalfi*.

- 2 destroyers: *Soldati*-class *Artigliere* and *Aviere*.

- 1 aircraft carrier: *Aquila*, of the same class.

- 2 battleships: *Littorio* (also known as *Vittorio Veneto*)-class *Roma*, and Europe's own "Grey Ghost," *Cristoforo Colombo*.

The final ship was especially problematic, presenting a massive silhouette on the horizon. Shirei High's flagship, renowned for its dominance, exuded an intimidating presence. Armed with sixteen guns across four turrets, it possessed overwhelming firepower; a single salvo could determine the outcome of an engagement. The ship's steel hull, unscathed by previous battles, reinforced its fearsome reputation.



Capitana Valeria Sosa, the Pan-American Alliance's commanding officer and a young woman with a commanding presence, paced the deck with an air of confidence. Known for her sharp intuition and characteristic habit of tapping her left foot on the ground when deep in thought, Sosa brought a mix of calm composure and fierce determination to the crew. As she assessed the looming threat, her mind raced through strategies and countermeasures. Suddenly stopping in her tracks, she turned to her officers. "Forget about the rest, forget spotting. We need a way to counter that thing," she announced, her voice cutting clean through the tension like a knife.

"A salvo from even one turret could wipe out one of us," called out the captain of a cruiser, with the others nodding in agreement.

"Exactly. Four shells per turret—that's the same as the full forward or rear salvo from the blueprint cruiser *Ignacio Allende*..." added the engineer of *La Pampa*.

Commander Sosa rose and gazed out the window overlooking the Pan-Am Alliance's harbor. Among all the ships, one bow stood out from the long hull of *Los Andes*.

"We do have a ship armored well enough to withstand a full salvo from the *Cristoforo Colombo*..."

"The *Los Andes*, unless I'm mistaken?" Captain Eleanor "Ellie" Vance of the *Cleveland* interjected.

The commander nodded. "Yes. With its sloped 500 mm armor, *Los Andes* offers significant protection against *Colombo's* 381 mm guns—even in close-quarters combat. We'll need to force *Colombo's* guns to target my ship."

"In other words, the *Los Andes* must be the only vessel spotted during the first and second phases of engagement," said Captain Anna Flores of the *Bancroft*. "*La Pampa* and the *Benson-class* destroyers are required to lay smokescreens for the others. The enemy maintains aerial reconnaissance and superiority."

"To reduce the risk of being spotted, I volunteer to pursue the enemy carrier. My ship's anti-aircraft (AA) capabilities are above average," said Captain Maya Kowalski of the *Seattle*.

Commander Sosa nodded in approval. "*Bancroft*, support *Seattle* with a smoke screen as she reaches effective range. The destroyer should break off pursuit once the cruiser engages the enemy carrier."

"Roger," Captain Anna Flores replied.

As preparations progressed, the clarity of command gave way to the persistent sounds of engines and distant thunder, signaling the imminent confrontation.

Boxes and shells were loaded onto the towering warships in the harbor. Empty autocannon shells clattered in boxes as they were carted out of the warships, remnants from previous combats. Fire combat radars were recalibrated, holes were patched, and rangefinders were cleaned.

Los Andes, *Santander*, *Cleveland*, *Seattle*, *Frazier*, *Caldwell*, *Bancroft*, and *La Pampa* were finally combat-ready. The transition to the combat zone, the Coral Sea, was to start in two hours.

The Coral Sea served as more than a battle area; it was characterized by relentless and unpredictable weather. Tournament officials intentionally selected this region, where cyclones affected over ninety percent of the area. Three capture zones were distributed across the map, each separated by more than one hundred kilometers. The central "B" zone, the core of the battle area, experienced the highest concentration of cyclones, second only to the Western North Pacific Ocean. The tournament's first round would take place in this volatile environment.

For the Pan-Am Alliance, it was a significant benefit. Combined with the long-lasting smokescreens from the *Benson-class*, visibility all around the map would be reduced to mere kilometers, streamlining the elaborate operation, and the possibility of being outgunned was lessened.

Or at least they assumed.

Six o'clock rang. More than seven hours had passed since departure from the safety of the port. A military campaign was on stage for the next week.

"*La Pampa to Frazier, do you copy?*"

"*La Pampa, this is Frazier, we copy. Relay your message.*"

"*This is La Pampa. 'Gravitational forces arrive from a banana's correct direction.' Transmission end.*"

"*This is Frazier. Roger, La Pampa. Transmission end.*"

"..."

"*Frazier to Los Andes, answer.*"

"*This is Los Andes, awaiting response.*"

"*Frazier to Los Andes. 'Kinetic energy surges from your worst nightmare.' Transmission end.*"

"*This is Los Andes. Roger. Relaying data to the fleet. Transmission end.*"

In the days that followed, the weather worsened. What had begun as "mere" strong winds escalated into small tsunami-like waves. The ships had to clear their decks and ride with the direction of the swells to avoid capsizing. The battle location was still out of reach. As air humidity rose rapidly and heavy rain set in, the capital ships' radar capabilities were strained.

"Thank God the ceilings are so high in here. I'd be sinking into a tornado of concussions otherwise," one of the assistants said. "I can't imagine how big the waves will be when we reach the battle zone..."

"You bet! I personally think they might even throw this ship clean overboard," replied one of the fire control crew members.

"This beauty has more than enough buoyancy to ride out warning-level tsunamis, alright!" the *Los Andes'* engineer interjected. "This ship has seen worse—don't underestimate it. Please."

Days stretched into weeks. Only after twenty-seven days did the fleet finally skim the waves bordering the southern sector of the battle zone, where an inland surveillance and storage installation replenished their foodstuffs and stockpiles. The ships docked in

a small, sheltered harbor, where the crews experienced calm waters for the first time in almost a month. The offensive Japanese school was already in position.

The following day, the confrontation would begin.

"Captains Maya Kowalski and Anna Flores, your ships will circumvent the eastern islands to bring your main batteries within effective range of the enemy carrier. Flores, once your vessel reaches engagement range, you are to break off pursuit immediately. Proceed to capture zone C, which is closest to your current position. Afterward, rejoin the vanguard for phase three.

Captain Sofia Reyes, you will position the Santander to provide support between Los

Andes and our formation, engaging any enemy destroyers that approach our position. Los Andes will drive forward through the B cap.

Our intelligence indicates that the enemy will attempt to conceal a pincer attack. The Roma will advance through the A capture zone,

where Captain 'Ellie' Vance and Capitana Camila Ortega will intercept. Cleveland will relay radar signature data to La Pampa, who will deploy a smokescreen and launch a torpedo salvo against the battleship. Cleveland's objective is to compromise the Roma's radar and fire control systems, thereby maximizing the efficacy of La Pampa's smokescreen.

Captain Isabela Silva and Capitaine Chloé Dubois, commanding the Frazier and Caldwell, your task is to support the defense against the Cristoforo Colombo's advance into the B cap. Your primary objective is to intercept at least two of the three enemy vessels—the Amalfi, Artigliere, and Aviere—as they attempt to reinforce the Colombo. Make the most of the storm's reduced visibility and your ships' strong torpedo defenses. Bancroft will return to assist at the onset of phase three."

The plan had been set, its intricacies woven into every captain's mind: multiple prongs of assault and feints exploiting weather, smoke, and the limited reach of enemy radar. Commands rang down the line, sudden and straightforward, as each vessel slipped from the sheltering harbor into the wilds of the Coral Sea. Nerves narrowed as the fleet advanced, guided by Sosa's planning and the knowledge that every maneuver could tip the balance.



Under the cover of thickening clouds, destroyers glided ahead to screen for enemy scouts while cruisers positioned themselves for crossfire. *La Pampa* signaled another shift in the wind, and giant curtains of smoke began to drift across the water—obscuring both friend and foe. Not far off, gleaming hulls of the Japanese fleet maneuvered in answer, their silhouettes quick to disappear behind the rainfall and returning fire.

Radio bursts crackled bridge to bridge: reports of contact, enemy movement, and radar sweeps were drowned out by the tempest. The careful choreography from the war room now gave way to improvisation under pressure.

The *Seattle*, guns trained forward, cut through enormous waves, pressing into the storm's fury as the low rumble of her engines filled the bridge.

"Enemy attack squadron! Bearing 0-2-5!"

"Seattle to Bancroft. Do you copy?"

"This is Bancroft. We copy. Enemy air reconnaissance detected."

"Roger. Enemy aircraft approaching, bearing 0-2-5. Requesting a smoke curtain. Over."

"Wilco! Laying smoke."

Less than a second later, the destroyer's funnel began pouring thick fumes over the sea. Her stern and bow swung from side to side, widening the smoke's coverage. Between the drifting smoke and heavy rain, a fleeting glimpse of the *Aquila* appeared—then vanished again behind the dense smokescreen.

The scouting attack squadron, seeing the heavy white and gray curtain, dropped to wave-top height to evade radar detection—but the *Seattle* was ready for that. In moments, dozens of flak bursts screamed over the water, shredding planes from the sky. One attacker skimmed just over X turret at a suicidal altitude. Another held its low course, its wings scything through the high waves, and opened fire.

Hundreds of 7 mm rounds pattered harmlessly against the cruiser's belt armor, but the aircraft wasn't giving up—it was going to ram. In a last-ditch effort, the attack plane armed its armor-piercing rockets, pulled up five meters, and swung its reticle just below the waterline. The rockets dropped from their pylons and their motors roared to life.

A deafening silence followed.

The engineering team had barely a heartbeat to dive for cover before the first rocket—having punched through the lightly armored citadel—detonated inside the starboard reserve ammo



stockpiles with immense force. Two other rockets, having lost too much penetrating power, crashed harmlessly into the sea, while the remaining five pierced the belt armor, inflicting only minor damage on one of the anti-aircraft ammo elevators and several hull sections.

But it wasn't over. The kamikaze plane clawed for altitude, aligning itself with the lightly armored superstructure, its engine screaming. By sheer, obscene luck, one of three high-explosive shells fired from B turret burst on the aircraft's nose, obliterating it instantly. A few fragments skipped across the churning waves and tinked harmlessly against the superstructure's armor.

"If we don't clip her wings now, Colombo will pick them off at leisure," Captain Kowalski said as she watched the last attacker spiral out of the sky. "Damage report!"

The damage control officer slammed the door open, pen and clipboard in hand. "Portside ammo racks detonated. We're lucky there was no breach; the chamber was sealed, and the explosion blew a massive hole under the waterline. The compartment flooded automatically, preventing fires and further explosive damage. Aside from that, multiple above-waterline compartments report light damage. No critical instruments affected."

The next few minutes were spent patching minor damage and maintaining radar contact.

"Bancroft to Seattle. Enemy aircraft carrier detected. Target: *Aquila*. Breaking off pursuit. Fair winds and following seas. Over." "Seattle, we copy. Thank you for the escort. Godspeed. Over."

The smoke gradually thinned, revealing the stark silhouette of a rectangular hull on the horizon.

"Enemy aircraft carrier! Bearing 0-1-5! Twelve thousand meters!" On command, every gun—from anti-aircraft autocannons to the 152 mm triple-barreled main batteries—swung toward the fleeing carrier.

"Open fire!"

Hundreds of kilometers away, another battle was unfolding.

Cleveland, hidden behind *La Pampa's* heavy fumes, maintained a constant stream of high-explosive shelling over the *Roma*, with many rounds missing or unintentionally hitting areas such as the belt armor or gun platings, thus failing to deal damage to the armored parts.

"The cyclone's interfering with the radar!" reported one of the fire control officers. "We can't get a clear solution, and the wind gusts are driving the shells away!"

Captain Ellie Vance bit her fingernails. "Damn it. We don't have *Seattle's* infrared radar module, nor do we have her improved airbent shells..."

Her eyes dart from one control panel to another, desperately searching for a way out, until she sees, from the navigation bridge, the *La Pampa's* broadside. Their radio officer transmitted a message over the radio waves. "The fish are out! Try not to get caught in them!"

Fifteen torpedoes exited the destroyer, smashing into the dangerous waves as they sailed, unguided, towards the enemy battleship, which, in response, made a raw swing of her bow towards her starboard.

"Roma is turning hard! She's spotted the torpedo trails!"

Trading speed for maneuverability, the Italian battleship swung her stern toward the closing trails as explosive shells scattered around her. Spotting a narrow gap, the warship cautiously threaded herself between the paths of two torpedoes.

Within seconds of recognizing the situation, Captain Vance ordered, "Change targets! Detonate the torpedoes—any of them!" Receiving a new, hazy solution, *Cleveland's* 152 mm turrets groaned as the elevators lowered. Her guns flashed, hurling a fresh salvo into the air, every shell's target already plotted.

For a heartbeat, everything fell silent. Then one lucky high-explosive shell detonated close enough to a distant torpedo to trigger a massive chain reaction. In barely a few seconds, the entire torpedo barrage erupted, hurling mountains of water into the rain-choked sky. *Roma*, realizing the strategy too late, watched the two torpedoes near her stern explode and cripple her rudders. Her maneuverability—her only real defense against torpedoes—was gone.

"Roma's maneuverability is gone. La Pampa, she's all yours," *Cleveland's* communication officer radioed to the positioning destroyer.

Aboard the torpedo destroyer, Capitana Camila Ortega stood on the navigation bridge. "Engage the mechanical torpedo autoloaders! We need a full salvo, pronto!" she shouted over the cyclone rain hammering against the windows.

As ordered, the launchers swung forward while the autoloaders crammed them with a fresh spread of torpedoes in a matter of seconds.

"Torpedoes loaded!" the torpedo crew reported to the bridge.

"Fire all of them! All fifteen! Roma's sailing in a straight line!" Capitana Ortega ordered just before the fish left the tubes.

La Pampa's bow rose and fell over the tsunami-like waves as she drove into position, her hull shuddering with each crest. Out ahead, the doomed silhouette of the Japanese fleet's second battleship loomed, unaware of the devastating strike racing toward her beneath the storm-torn sea.

Suddenly, as if on cue, a wave of shellfire erupted across the fleet's vanguard—the first blows struck amidst the chaos. The flagship *Los Andes* pressed forward, refusing to yield to the gathering storm or to enemy guns. The *Cristoforo Colombo*, her great rival, appeared out of the haze—guns blazing, volleys exchanged at close range. Each ship's crew, drilled in discipline, responded not only to orders but to the concrete uncertainty of battle.

As shellfire peppered the sea, the flagship *Los Andes* advanced through thickening smoke, refusing to surrender. The *Cristoforo Colombo*, looming ahead, exchanged brutal volleys with the

Pan-American line—with each exchange, the water stirred with near-misses and shattered steel.

Suddenly, Captain Sosa of the *Los Andes* barked a rapid set of commands: "Turrets C, Y, Z, bearing two-seven-zero. The rest of you, keep tracking! Helm, prepare to swing starboard—on my mark!" The order rippled through the bridge as the ship groaned, moving under disciplined coordination, all while the large-caliber secondary guns blasted their guns on the Italian battleship's superstructure, destroying secondaries and AA guns alike.

The enemy battleship closed in for a devastating, close-quarters, bow-on strike. The distance that separated the two ships shrank to barely twenty meters as the *Colombo* unleashed all sixteen guns at the heavily armored broadside of *Los Andes*. The shells pierced the outer armor belt but shattered against the sloped inner plate. *Colombo's* 381 mm armor-piercing shells simply weren't strong enough to breach the 500 mm sloped armor, which, due to its angle, effectively presented even greater thickness than its nominal value.

Three turrets aboard the *Los Andes* flashed their gun barrels. The six shells crashed clean into the *Colombo's* relatively weak broadside, causing moderate to grave damage to the auxiliary compartments. But Commander Sosa was not done, not yet.

As *Colombo* maneuvered to unleash another broadside, Sosa gave the signal. The *Los Andes* veered sharply starboard, presenting her pre-aimed turrets directly toward *Colombo's* citadel while angling defensively against incoming fire. Inside the *Los Andes'* Fire Control Center, voices snapped through the din: "SOLUTION ACQUIRED!"

"FIRE! FIRE! GIVE 'EM HELL!!"

Both behemoths fired simultaneously. The guns thundered in perfect concert, and glancing blows became punishing strikes, unleashing barrages of 381 mm AP shells through the air. Six shells from the *Los Andes'* pre-trained turrets slammed into *Colombo's* citadel as, in the same instant, all sixteen of *Colombo's* guns rumbled at *Los Andes'* armored flank. The *Colombo's* shells crashed through the flagship's stern, punching clear holes and wrecking her steering, even as the Pan-American return salvo

pummeled the *Colombo's* vital midsection—a calculated risk, paying off in brutal, immediate exchange.

In the simulation, armor-piercing shells from the *Los Andes* sliced into *Colombo's* citadel, detonating an ammunition storage compartment. The stockpile erupted in a chain reaction, setting off the remaining shell reserves aboard the *Colombo*. With her steering wrecked, the *Los Andes* cut her engines. Every sailor—the damage control teams, secondary gunners, and the fleet commander herself—emerged into the pounding rain and saluted the inert battleship.

The *Cristoforo Colombo*, once the sea's greatest monster and famously unsinkable, was now a disabled sitting duck.

Shirei High had lost its flagship.

The *Roma* was overwhelmed by *La Pampa's* torpedoes and the *Cleveland's* relentless high-explosive bombardment.

The *Artigliere* and *Aviere* had vanished from the field.

The *Amalfi* was hopelessly outgunned by three Pan-Am destroyers.

Aquila's flight deck had been utterly destroyed by *Seattle's* heavy shelling.

Japan's national victors had just lost in the very first round of the Aegis Gunkan Tournament.

When the battle finally ended, the battle horn sounded, and many aboard the Pan-American fleet found it difficult to grasp how quickly everything had unfolded. What was supposed to be a drawn-out campaign, anticipated to last weeks, had been resolved in a desperate, whirlwind engagement.

Officers and crew alike stood in the rain-soaked silence, exchanging disbelieving glances. Privately, some admitted they had braced themselves for a grueling, drawn-out conflict—a gauntlet of corrosion in the treacherous Coral Sea. Instead, thanks to decisive actions and the unique advantages of the storm, their victory had come in a fraction of the time.

To be continued...



HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN MERCH

By Khanh An Bui

Edited by Shiqi Chen

Ever drawn something and thought “Man, this would look awesome as a keychain”? Or don’t have enough merch of your favorite niche character? Perhaps you want to make merch of your own characters. Well, look no further than Vograce! With this website, you can turn your dreams of merch into a reality.

What is Vograce?

Vograce is a chinese manufacturing company who specializes in custom accessories and props, such as keychains, standees, pins, stickers, tote bags, etc... Every artist’s dream! You can order from practically anywhere, and in large bulk quantities as well. It is used by many artists to produce their merch for cons, shops or fan events.

How do you use Vograce?

Step 1: What are you going to make?

The first step is to think about your design. Would you like to make a cute keychain? Or perhaps you want to make a design for a shirt. It’s important to have a concrete idea of what your design is going to look like, since some designs suit some products less than others. (For example, a really spiky and complicated design works less on a keychain than on a standee.) You can take a look at the merchandise you like, or other artists’ work to get inspiration. Don’t forget to go on the Vograce website to also see all their products!

Step 2: Draw your design!

Now that you thought about it, it’s time to get to work! Start drawing. Vograce doesn’t have limits to the drawing, so draw to your heart’s content. It is recommended that you use 300 resolution and 1000 pixels or more, as well to adjust your colour palette to CMYK for printing (rather than RGB, which is the colours used for screens!) Make sure that you correctly saved your drawings in a transparent PNG or PSD format.

Step 3: Choosing your preferences

After saving your drawing, head onto the Vograce website and click on the item that you want to turn your drawing into. Let’s say you want to make an acrylic keychain. You can upload your file onto the website and pick your preferences! The size, whether the design is the same on both sides, epoxy, holographic or with glitter, etc. You can even choose your own keychain clasp. Vograce offers a wide variety of those!

Step 4: Payment and shipping

Once you’re done with all of that, you can go and place your order. Vograce is able to use PayPal, credit card, and other popular options, except for debit. (Although, shipping to Canada is actually quite expensive...) On the following days, you can check the site to see the progress of your item. If you send in 5 keychains with different requirements/designs, they’ll also send you proofs to make sure they have everything right!

Finally, time for the long game... Waiting for the package to ship. It took around 3 weeks for me for around 10 custom keychains. Of course, it also depends on the type of item and complexity of your order.

Is Vograce recommended?

For a first-timer, I would say Vograce is great. It’s extremely beginner-friendly, with an easy-to-understand interface as well as great customer service. The results themselves are amazing! The colours are bright, the clasps are durable, and the acrylic seems solid. I’ve put them all over my backpack. Overall, I would rate it a 9/10 (there are some products I would like added to their store) and would recommend it to anyone wanting merch made!



Routines of Tomorrow

An imaginary day in the future written by Mofei Xu

Today, I was woken up by the usual unbearable noise my alarm clock makes. I sit up in my bed, feeling as refreshed as every morning, thanks to the cleaning feature of my luxurious mattress. My alarm clock has already turned itself off after detecting my sitting-up posture.

After finishing my morning routine, when I arrived at my dining table, there were several dried vegetables along with a slice of delicious-looking beef on a silver plate. Looking at it made me remember my history class yesterday, when we learned that, not too long ago, people still raised animals in farms, and farmers would butcher them once they reached a certain age to turn their bodies into food. But, after a scientific breakthrough, producing artificial protein became far easier and cheaper than harvesting organic food. So the entire market shifted toward biologically engineered edibles, mass-produced in different production plants underground, and the farmlands were gradually replaced by housing to accommodate the increasing population.

After finishing my breakfast, Kama, my Personal Homebot, took the dirty plates to the dishwasher. Meanwhile, I headed toward the entrance, grabbing my schoolbag on the way. I jumped on my scooter located beside my doorstep and flew toward my college, situated atop one of my city's floating islands. My door locked behind me with a distinct buzzing sound.

While gaining height, I glanced around at my home city. It looks like a vast metal forest stretching in every direction, made up of skyscrapers rising at different heights. The lower ones are around 600 meters, while the Economic Center dominates all the others with its 1.5 kilometers of height.

My view of the city is slowly obstructed by a giant mass of white. I looked at the altimeter of my scooter: 1,78 km. So the clouds are pretty low today, compared to usual. My clothes started repelling the high humidity by themselves, making a light whirring sound, so I don't have to worry about getting wet from traversing this vast mass of water vapor every day.

After several minutes, I emerged on top of the clouds. Looking in front, I can now clearly see the giant platform my school is located on. That's the first floating island of my city, and because of that, it was given the name Alpha.

I soon landed outside my school building, a skyscraper not too tall compared to the "grounded" ones whose tips are several hundred meters below it. Parking my scooter in an empty slot in front of the entrance, I walked into the large entrance hall. Science is my first class of the day. Today, we are doing a class collab with history on the topic of cars. The laboratory is located on the 10th floor, so I took the elevator.

Upon my arrival in the lab, the first thing I saw was several holograms of cars floating in the air. After everyone had arrived, we started studying, with the help of the different projections, how there were no self-driving cars before, and people needed to maneuver their cars themselves using something called a "steering wheel". We learned the mechanics of using gears paired with cogwheels to rotate wheels, using gasoline to power an engine, and making the cars move using friction.

After the bell rang, everyone went to their respective next class.

It's 4 pm, and the last class finally ended, allowing me to return home. I took my scooter outside the school and headed downward. Technically, it should be dark outside because the sun is nowhere to be seen in the sky, but the city's lighting spilled out over a large area around it, illuminating everything nearby. The clouds look like they are glowing. After descending through a thick layer of vapor, the city during the night is revealed. The skyscrapers look like giant glow sticks, with almost all of their windows contributing to their illumination. Landing my scooter in front of the house, I entered and saluted Kama. Going to my bedroom, I quickly finished all the schoolwork that was given today with the help of my Study Glasses, which gave me insight into anything I was having difficulty with.

In the evening, after I finished eating dinner, my bed welcomed me with a preheated mattress with just the right temperature to encourage a good night of deep sleep. I lay in bed as the ceiling dimmed into a night sky projection, thinking about how people used to drive their own cars. Just how much the world had changed over a short span of 30 years!



Treasures from Around the World Vol. 1

Written by Mário Antônio Levada Betioli

Edited by Jeanne Gong

Greetings, avid readers, and welcome to the first article from the Treasures from Around the World series! Here, I shall present to you, one by one, the most impressive, impacting, and skilled authors round the world's countries and some of their greatest works* to satiate your ever-growing thirst for knowledge and culture. Here we go!

*According to the writer's opinion.

Brazil :

Of course, one could never start a document describing the world's best authors without including the legendary Brazilian writer **Machado de Assis**.



Born in 1829, son of a wall painter and grandson of freed slaves, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis has since confused critics from all over the world with his unique literary style and humour and is easily charted as one of the greatest geniuses of literature, alongside writers such as Shakespeare, Kafka and Camus. In Brazil, so great is his influence that his works are mandatory reading in all

high schools, colleges and universities. Founder and first president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, he was knighted by Emperor of Brazil Dom Pedro II during the Brazilian Empire, and had a state funeral granted by the Chamber of Deputies after his death in 1908, during the First Brazilian Republic. In my own opinion, it is worth it to learn Portuguese for the sole purpose of reading his natural writing, but if you cannot find time to learn such a beautiful language, I announce to you now that the Bibliothèque du Secondaire has recently acquired some of his translated works. He has written many impacting novels and short stories such as:

- *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*

This novel is considered to be his greatest work, where all his skill and humour are put forth to create one of humankind's literary masterpieces. The story consists of the autobiography of protagonist Brás Cubas, who tells the tale of his life from his grave. He narrates his story with no

restrictions, shame or fear, since he is already deceased, and criticizes his own mistakes and the society in which he lived in. The literary breaks between the short chapters, in which the main character speaks directly to the reader, while acknowledging his annoyance and fatigue after long chapters and making jokes and metaphors at the most appropriate moments, mark this book as one of the most unique in human literature.

- *Quincas Borba*

This book is connected to *Posthume Memoirs of Brás Cubas*, as it tells the story of Rubio, a disciple and the heir of philosopher Quincas Borba, a close friend of Brás Cubas in the first novel. In this work, the mad and fictional philosophy denominated "Humanitism" is employed to parody customs and philosophies ideologized at the time, such as Scientism and Social Darwinism.

- *Dom Casmurro*

My personal favorite, it is considered one of the best books ever written in the Portuguese language and a masterpiece of realist literature. It consists of a story told from the point of view of Bento Santiago, an unreliable narrator. He jealously describes what he thinks is a past relationship between his wife and his deceased teenagehood friend, giving the reader a greater participation with a large room for their own interpretation of facts. The predominant psychological evolution of the protagonist as the story goes on makes it a very interesting work to read.

- *The Alienist / The Psychiatrist*

This novella is about a psychiatrist whose obsession is to find a common characteristic between all mental illnesses and to cure them all. He creates an asylum in a small town in colonial Brazil and begins interning everyone he suspects to be abnormal, or, later on, too normal, creating unrest, disorder and revolutions in the town. It is a very comical satire, highly recommended.

Although Machado is very acclaimed by those who have discovered his works, there have not been many North Americans who have read him to date. This is why some of you might have never heard of him before. But now you have, and you have no choice but to sail on and discover this incredible writer and his legendary works. Believe me, you shall not be disappointed. May you all fare well in the journey that awaits you, and until next time.

GREECE IS COOL!

Written by Justine Pourreaux

Edited by Yolanda Chen

A country with a rich history spanning over 4 000 years. A nation with over 6000 islands but with only approximately 227 of them inhabited by human beings. And the birthplace of democracy.

The capital is called Athens after the city's patron, Athena. Like most capitals in Europe, there is a strong smell of cigarettes, as around 30 percent of the population smokes. The neighborhoods' architectural styles vary drastically; one second, you are in a street

with little light and graffiti everywhere, and the next you find yourself in a fancy, classy restaurant.

Speaking of restaurants, there are 35 Michelin star restaurants in Athens.

And the food. OH, my lord, the food is amazing.

Here are some of my favorites: Spanakopita (a Greek spinach pie), Briam (mixed roasted vegetables, also vegan), keftedes (a meatball or not, there are vegan options), souvlaki (meat on skewers), tzatziki (the best dip EVER), Fava (a type of bean), chickpeas (you better know what this is), moussaka (kind of like lasagna but instead of pasta, there are eggplants), Gemista (vegetables stuffed with rice), Baklava (phyllo dough stacked with butter in between topped with a honey sauce) and basically every dessert.



Next up is ...the islands. The most popular island is Santorini. The second most popular island is Mykonos. The biggest island is Crete or if you're Greek, Kriti. Lesbos is famous for being the origin of the word lesbian. Cyprus is surprisingly not a part of Greece and is instead its own nation. Speaking of neighboring nations, Greece borders the following nations: Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and north Macedonia (formally known

as Macedonia), which is conflicted about its own name as "Macedonia" is also the name of a part of Greece, which may imply that Greece owns their territory.

Last up is a fun fact: Denmark and Greece had a conflict over feta cheese.

Greece had petitioned with the UN to make feta cheese a product only able to acquire this title if it was made in Greece. However, Denmark had quite a successful feta cheese market in their own country. So Denmark decided to simply ignore the decision of the UN and continue to market and sell their cheese as feta cheese. Greece authorities only found out when they stopped a massive stock of feta cheese and realized it wasn't feta at all. They complained to the UN and, in 2022, CJEU ruled in favor of Greece and forced Denmark to stop exporting their fake feta cheese.



The First Clockmaker

Written by Emma Zhou
Edited by Jaya Lily Gérin

There once lived a man, in his workshop quite pristine,
He was wise, ancient, but also quite keen.
His name was Col, and this is where our story begins.

He noticed, one day, while playing with his cat, Fay,
That days go by, without a clear pattern, he may say.
"I will make something," he said with a grin,
"To guide this world, and show it when to begin."

He took some wheels, some gears, and some parts,
And created something that went tick-tock.
He shaped it all round, like the planets, the stars,
And then watched in awe, as his creation lit spars.

Proud, he gave his new wonder a knock.
The sound was quite hollow, like a toc-toc.
So, Col, with a smile, simply named this thing a clock.



MY OBSESSION

Written by Brenda Liu

Deadly as venom, pretty as a flower,
Your thorns pierced, unrelenting to an extent.
I lean more closer, my blood running faster,
Postern, my unquenchable love with no end.
Reverend, though my loyalty, unfaithful,
Upon a pedestal, my heart that you stab,
The knife dipped in honey, so sweet yet painful,
Your red lips, sinking into the healing scab.
I long for your touch, your stare, so infinite,
Your irises, I stare at, growing colder,
Desires, too difficult to articulate,
Won't you twist the saccharine blade deeper in?

BY JI, MAN CHUN

THE COFFEE RUN

I WILL ACQUIRE THE CAFFEINATED BEVERAGE, MASTER!

OH, THANKS MIKU! JUST A BLACK COFFEE FOR ME.

UGH, I NEED COFFEE TO GET THROUGH THIS BUDGET REPORT.

Producer

YOU'RE A LIFESAVER, MIKU! I DIDN'T KNOW VOCALOIDS COULD MAKE BEVERAGES...

Producer

I HAVE ANALYZED THE CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF 'COFFEE' AND REPLICATED IT PERFECTLY USING THE STUDIO'S HOT WATER TAP AND A 'BURNT BITUMEN' TEXTURE PACK FROM MY ASSET LIBRARY.

This cup is made of Stone

COFFEE

ERROR: LIQUID SIMULATION NOT FOUND

ERROR: LIQUID SIMULATION NOT FOUND

ERROR: LIQUID SIMULATION NOT FOUND

ERROR: LIQUID SIMULATION NOT FOUND

This cup is made of Stone



Before receiving the grade



98-1-

After receiving the grade



Things Change

By Yolanda Chen

Wow, my art style sure has *changed* since last year's Newspaper issues! Is this interesting? No. Did I have time to make another comic? Also no.



“Writing for good grades might not appeal to everyone, but writing for the sake of writing is guaranteed to be for sure an unforgettable experience.”

– Mario Antonio Levada Betioli

“I feel proud and honored to have contributed to this wonderful, hard-worked newspaper”

– Jean Wang



Have something to say?

Join the student newspaper team!

We are currently looking for motivated students to participate as writers, editors, artists, and layout and design helpers.

If you are interested, please email Ms. Casale to sign up.

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