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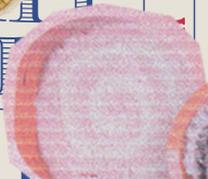
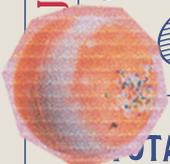
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# foreword

**This zine is a space, a sanctuary for the limitless creativity from the minds of students that walk on our campus every day. The beauty of this digital zine is that there are no limitations of the connection between the reader and the creator. We encourage you to find a sanctuary of your own, sit, breathe, and fully immerse yourself in this garden with so many flowers to pick.**



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## growing a garden

My mom has a beautiful garden. She'll say, "When I was a girl, I always dreamed of having a huge garden. We had space, but it always remained empty." But here, in our home, despite the lack of room, she has managed to create a place brimming with varieties of plants, foliage, and shrubs. More than a garden, it's an expanse that swallows your despair and fills your soul with hope. She kneels and tends to her plants as a beautiful light gleams in her eyes whenever she is out in the yard. "Girls, come look at these new blooms!" Joy weaves between her words as she proudly shows us the outcomes of her efforts. This has always been where she's truly at peace.

She decorates it year-round. But as the fragrant lavender fills the air, the long drooping clusters of wisteria are in full bloom, and her favorite shades of purple dominate the space, you know spring has arrived.

Since I was a kid, I always found it tedious to help her, but I came to love it all the same. Maybe it was the way she spoke of her flowers and plants with such warmth and tenderness—caring for every stem and leaf. Every plant being worthy of love and attention. Nonetheless, I admired how something as simple as a plant could fill her with such happiness, or the way she made something special out of a blank space. As I grew, when it came time to help her outside, it went from being a chore to a luxury. I found the ground soaking my rage and draining my sorrows.

The earth finds a home beneath my nails, and wisps of hair get in my face as the early spring calls for all hands on deck in the yard. But the breeze softens the sun, my pores soak in the warmth, peace seeps into my bones, and the lull of the trickling water from the fountain eases an impatience that usually creeps beneath my skin. My mind is silent as I intently listen to my mom and simply exist in the oasis she has put her heart and soul into. “When you don’t get rid of the dead leaves, it makes the rest of the plant rot. It’s contagious, it spreads, and it kills,” Mom says. I sit beside her as she meticulously removes the dead roots and damaged leaves of a plant she’s repotting.

My mom poured love and wisdom on me, as my dad cultivated a different type of garden. One that rotted his soul and left me with the carcass of my father—a ghost that roams through my life. My dad's substance abuse permeated every corner of our lives. It seeped into the roots of my childhood, and the distance that followed only grew as the years went on, as the smoky haze behind his eyes marked his absence. He was present, but he wasn't really there.

The lighting of a joint was the parasite that took my daddy away from me for so many years, years that I would never get back. The invasive weeds of addiction affect the trees, once a source of shade. It suffocates the wild flower of ambition. It poisons the roots of joy, and it casts a shadow over the sunlight that once nurtured growth. Because it's not just the state in which my dad has decided to live his life—hiding behind a cloud, forgetting his problems with a puff, or closing off from the world



with the fall of ashes, as we are set to suffocate in the blaze of his addiction.

Life is waiting with open arms for the person I wish he could've been, and grasping the short moments when he seems to be fully there, a rare clarity to find in his gaze. It's grieving someone who is still around and wishing and hoping that maybe one day they'll come around. Addiction is an invasive species in a once-thriving garden.

Despite the reality, my mom's garden has taught me to make the best out of what might seem like the worst. I see life through the garden she has created, the strength with which she raised us, the love and care she provided, the wisdom she fed our roots, and the guidance to grow in the right direction. Her blooms are a reflection of her efforts, which mirror her heart. The light and compassion my mom showed me when tending a garden taught me that "you reap what you sow."

Spring is only one season, but your blooms depend on your decisions year-round.



*natalie g-mendoza*



## do humans molt?

My skin was peeling. No, not the usual sunburn peeling. It was flaking off in piles, and I didn't know why.

It started in October. First, it was the tip of my nose, which I chalked up to my skin drying up before my menstrual cycle. But when Aunt Flow came and left, it kept on flaking. Later, it spread to my forehead and my neck. These were easy to hide, as I could just wear hoodies or high-neck tops, and my bangs covered many of the flakes.

I bought an exfoliator to try to remove the flakes, but it did nothing. Then, I tried moisturizing my face multiple times a day with various creams. Nothing. Not a single thing helped.

I was thankful that my friends and family didn't mention anything, and they always pretended not to see the flakes of skin on my clothes. They knew how insecure I could get about these things.

When it spread to my back in December, I finally decided to go to a local dermatologist. One that I had never heard of— but insanely cheap. The lady at the front desk told me to cartwheel to the back and lie down on a green table. I told her I couldn't cartwheel. She said hopping like a kangaroo would suffice. Was this a joke?

My skin cracked and oozed with blood as I did my best to hop to

the back, as even the slightest movement ripped my seams apart. Lying down on my stomach, I remember eyeing the doctor and personnel that came to inspect me.

“You’re molting.”

I lay there, mouth as wide as it could go, “I’m not a snake or lizard.”

“Cats and moose molt, too.”

“I’m not a cat or moose.”

“Never said you were.”



The doctor said it’d go away by March or April. He told me to apply a steroid cream and try to take it easy: no strenuous exercise or staying up past 10pm. Eat healthier. Try to reflect on myself. Delete social media. Yoga was okay on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

What a weird diagnosis.

Later, I searched up if humans molted. Nothing. Was he lying?

However, with no further ideas, I decided to actually listen to the doctor’s orders.

I cut out strenuous exercise and picked up yoga on Tuesdays and

Thursdays. I created a strict bedtime of 10:00pm. I learned to cook healthier meals that were surprisingly delicious. I started journaling to reflect on myself. Later, I finally felt that I had a good mental foundation for the final step: deleting social media.

At this point, it was February, and the molting had spread everywhere, including my hands, legs, and even my chest. The doctor said that the molting would worsen closer to the end of the cycle. He was right. I was leaving flakes everywhere I went, and my sheets and clothes were filthy with patches of my skin.

I deleted the apps from my phone. With my confidence depleted from the molting, I didn't have much use for social media anyways.

With no way to distract myself from my thoughts, I was able to truly sit and reflect. While the molting had been a pain in the back to handle, the urge to fix the condition created a whole new routine and way of thinking for me—and thus, a new me.

By mid-March, the molting officially ended. My skin no longer cracked and bled, and I no longer left a trail of flakes wherever I walked. The routine I developed continued, and I no longer found myself straying away from my studies or facing issues with self-confidence. I felt, well, normal.

However, when I thanked my friends for not judging me for molting, they looked at me like I was crazy.

“Humans don’t molt.”

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I tried to look for the steroid cream that I was prescribed. Gone. I looked for my printed diagnosis. Gone. My medical bill, also gone. I called the dermatologist, and the number was disconnected. When I drove by the dermatology office, it was demolished. Everything that documented my molting was nowhere to be found.

I asked to see pictures we took as a group in the last couple months, when the molting was at its worst. Ones that I never saw due to how awful I looked during that time. My jaw dropped when I saw how normal I looked: my skin was perfect.

It was as if I never molted at all.

But now, I felt different. I acted different. I felt better, and even though I still had a couple of acne outbreaks and patches of dry skin here and there, I still loved myself, even more than before the flaking.

Once again, I found myself on the internet, this time asking exactly what molting was. This time however, I found an answer: “To make way for new growth.”

Maybe humans do molt after all.



*Lindsey Lam*



*tokenism:  
peeling away literalism*

The link below directly leads to Raphael's piece.

<https://raphaelsolanoportfolio.my.canva.site/tokenism>

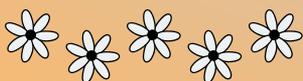


*raphael solano*

# *a time for everything*

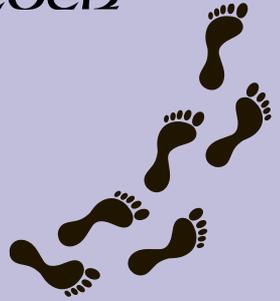


To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is a time for everything. This photo ties in on the theme of spring: a time for growth, a time to renew, and a time to bloom. These flowers in their different phases of blooming symbolize human lives, how everyone is at different points of their lives. Just as these flowers don't rush to bloom, we too must patiently wait to grow. I got up close and photographed these flowers bathing in light to embrace the idea of that although everybody grows at different speeds, we must not compare ourselves because there will come a time for each person to bloom.



**Betuel rocha**

*i left the garden of eden*



*sienna sisaath*

# here we go again



I just wanted to make something that feels light and floaty that gives off that spring vibe. The kind of thing you can throw on while you're out for a walk, riding your bike, or just enjoying the nice weather. It's really just a short snippet right now, but I'd love to build on it. Extend the beat, maybe add some vocals, or even include clips of people talking about what they love doing this time of year. Stuff that makes them happy. I want it to feel like a soundtrack for the little moments that make spring feel special.

<https://soundcloud.com/hicpp/here-we-go-again>

ANDRE R. JAMES

# Leafy insight essay



I have gained an insight from laying down on a stone bench in the Cal Poly Pomona Japanese Garden. Seeing the leaves of the tree sway beneath the open blue sky, sun shining through the leaves and branches. Closing my eyes and feeling the soft gentle breeze, hearing the movement of water from the running stream, the sound of string instruments like the guzheng playing slowly in my mind. We are all like leaves, connected to each other to a branch, and part of the tree of life. We belong here. It is as natural as a leaf being of a tree, we are beings that belong to this place, it is not out of place or odd for us to be here and we can feel at peace when we think of this. We are a product of tens of thousands of years of growth. Thinking of our ancestors, what their lives must've been like, what events did they go through and the emotions they feel. And now it is our turn, the newest leaf on this branch on this ancient tree. Your focus is only on a leaf, a branch at first, but then you look outwards and you see the tree, it's thin branches stretching down to sturdy branches and going down farther down you can see, and going up and beyond and spreading throughout everywhere. This tree has everyone in it, some of us may meet each other, and some of us may not. We may accomplish what we want to, or we might not. But there is nothing to feel sad about if things don't turn out well. If it was meant to be, it would have happened. We are just a single leaf in this forest, and sometimes the wind does not carry us to where we want to be. There are many possibilities.



We can only just accept the one we have, and feel peace that we continue to exist, to experience the one million possibilities that will come in the future. The winds of fate may push the branches near, and some leaves may fall and become entwined with each other, maybe falling from their branches, twisting in the wind to a new branch of the tree. One day this wind may come for us. Even if it does not, no matter where you are on the tree, there are other leaves, other people that can understand you, that can connect with you and accept you for who you really are I feel content that, although we may never meet, in this vast forest, they exist and they are out there right now. They may be in our life right now. When I see the whole tree and think of just being just one leaf on it, with everyone else just being a leaf that resides on it alongside, I feel belonging and peace. One day we will all fall from this tree, a fateful gust of wind, scattering all, twirling in the wind, in one final dance, alongside thousands of others, beneath the vast sky.



william lim



# rottenvillain

I was walkin' down the street and I saw this fine chick  
Next to others,  
They a family with a hen  
No play pretend, these animals are ravages  
Like Evel Knievel baking cabbages  
Or raccoon bandages; abandonment  
Feeling solitude inside this canopy of saddlement  
Sedentary lifestyle was draining my life-smile  
People all around facin' walls 'til they found  
A tear in it like Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
I feel this for real man, hope you filmin'  
See an ocean like seal man, what's the deal man, yo  
Seal this letter, kiss from a rose  
Thorns pickin' at my eyes like  
Pinocchio nose  
If you really knew me then you view me  
With corneas, Iris like a Goo Goo Doll  
I'm feelin' goo goo small; just a baby in this world  
That we livin', hopin' you forgive me for the actions that I've  
driven  
Car goin' way too fast, hopin' i don't crash but in the end they gon'  
paint me the villain  
Yea, they gon' paint me the rottenvillain, uh

“You either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself  
become the villain,” then I'm  
chillin'



Seen myself change like 24 for times this is penny-nickel change;  
quarters and dimes  
Now if you feelin' what I'm feelin' put your  
hands up high  
Misunderstood, we just children in disguise  
Hopin' for a better future; Mr. Martin Luther  
King of the jungle is bound for a bungle  
This a bungalow- a boogaloo  
I'm up in the kitchen; late night cockroach like "booga-boo"  
Scared of this world because they gonna judge me  
Stay inside my hood where nobody can bug me  
"Insecticide" to find a cure; Boo Radley- insecure  
Maybe if I kill a mockingbird, the M&M's will sprout when they  
hit the ground  
Who's around, does it really make a sound?  
Tryna seed in this dirt  
Like a spout and I hope that I spurt  
Show 'em all that I tree and stand tall  
'Cause it starts from the roots  
To recoup, I am only one person and I can't do it all  
People are bound to stumble and fall  
We forgive but we never forget to regret and we always seem to  
recall



“You know Villain represents, anybody- anybody in here can wear the mask and be a villain.

Male, female, any race, so-called race. You knowa’ I mean? It’s about what, wh-where you’re comin’ from- from your heart. You knowam’ sayin’? Like, what is- what is the message, whatdya’ got to say?” – MF DOOM



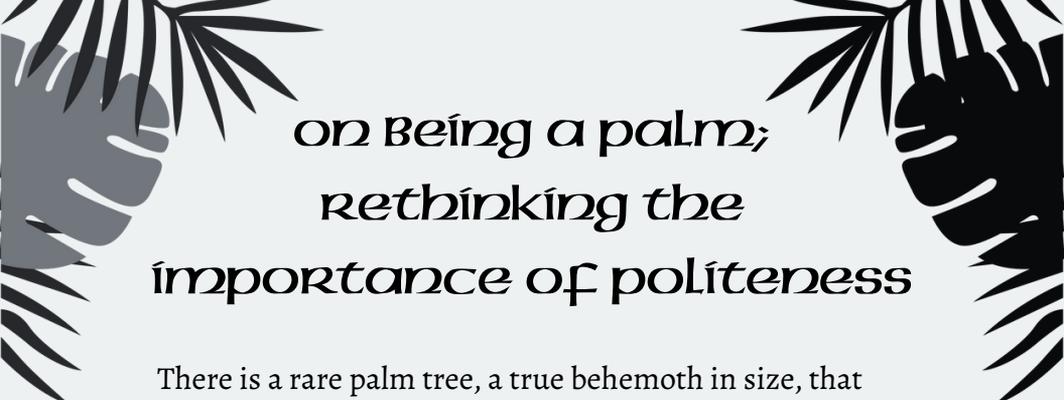
*kevin santos*

*moment of tranquility*

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*william lim*



## on Being a palm; rethinking the importance of politeness

There is a rare palm tree, a true behemoth in size, that resides in Madagascar. Known to reach 60 feet in height, (fun fact: they can be spotted from space!) adorned with massive fan leaves, it prematurely sprouts hundreds of little flowers thereby calling over and attracting various pollinators. Consequently, the palm quickly becomes depleted of all nutrients. Almost as if the palm were in a consistent marathon of producing an abundance of sustenance; for what exact purpose? No one really knows. Already at the last stage of life, the palm will quickly degrade, crumble or topple, (whichever it so chooses) and the palm will essentially die. Their timeline is rushed and obscure, it does not follow or mimic any other palm in this aspect. A tree that gives so much of itself, so openly and willingly, only to self-immolate. A tree so full of life with future potential, snuffed out. Had the palm tree not been so eager in producing its nourishing flowers, and had taken more personal time to recuperate, it may have been a better outcome for the palm. Someone should have taught this breed of palm some restraint, the need to put itself first. This is the issue with being the palm. Remember this. Remember this especially when you feel worn out and you are tired of saying yes, but you feel the need to remain polite. The next time you forget to put yourself first, ask yourself why? Ladies and gentlemen, I used to be this palm but in recent years, I have deliberately chosen not to be.

For years I always believed that being polite, the idea of being nice, was a necessity and something that I needed to consistently work hard to embody. There was a fear of being reprimanded or being seen and regarded as someone who was impertinent or disagreeable. There was a stigma that impoliteness equated to being ill-mannered. Especially as a young female, it appeared to me that this was one characteristic that was essential. Let me pick your brain. Have you ever heard the expression, “boys will be boys”? (The popular idiom, which is known to excuse any bad behaviors) Now, can the same be said for girls? Is there any such expression even slightly close? None I can think of right off the bat however, one does quickly come to mind. “What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice.” Ahh, there goes that notion again, girls need to be “nice.” This leads to me to go a bit further and ask, why is this behavior stressed more from females but not held to same standard for males. Interesting, definitely reeks of hints of misogyny.

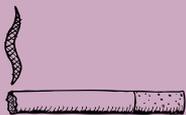
I have often thought how a simple one syllable word, “no”, so rarely left my lips, it felt so unnatural to say. It may seem common sense, or appears like any other ordinary task, but revelations have long been made on my end and I have shed and left behind a naiveness and vulnerableness that was previously seen as potentially “weak”. I have gut instinct reactions but often times my vocal and outward actions do not align. Now, a little bit more sage, I see this pitfall in so many of the women elders in my family. I hear reminisces and stories filled with regrets. A frustrated, “I wish I didn't have to be nice about it.” When responding with a, “Okay, then don't be. Do what you want, who

cares?” A stern look and disapproving shake of the head always lets me know that this is still not an option. A frustrated, “I wish I didn't have to be nice about it.” When responding with a, “Okay, then don't be. Do what you want, who cares?” A stern look and disapproving shake of the head always lets me know that this is still not an option. This propensity to perpetuate the belief that one needs to be nice can be hard to break I suppose. My personal opinion? If you bend over backwards with a loud willingness to put yourself on the line for the benefit of others, people will have you bend completely, until your back is brittle and broken. I understand, there is most likely an air of contempt or perhaps even resentment, but I speak strictly from personal inner truths. This is not to say that I am a permanent bitter bitch, not at all. I can be pleasant and “nice” given the situation, but I no longer jump at every chance to put myself on the line, to be everyone's last saving grace. I am no longer the palm. Fuck that.



CAROLINA  
RODRÍGUEZ

# afternoon



## without squirrels

The squirrels don't like my cigarette. My lovely, delightful little cigarette. Don't they know it's French? Don't they know you can't buy one of these in the States? Ungrateful, uncultured. I set down my bag against the woody old root behind me, pull my pack and lighter out, light my cigarette (using a Bic with a squirrel printed on it no less), inhale, exhale, and they all run away. At least five squirrels, five squirrels who were scampering about near me run away. Rude, overdramatic. Quit acting like the air in LA county is so great, would ya? Quit pretending it isn't the foulest, smoggiest thickest air in the country. It's so bad I can hardly see the mountains some days. And these squirrels want to act like my good, clean, Gauloise is the problem? It isn't.

The stream in front of me might be trickling softly, the sun shining through new spring leaves casting soft golds and greens, but this place isn't clean. There are mysterious suds bubbling down the brook and catching on rocks. There's an abandoned bag of hot Cheetos washed ashore like she's Laura Palmer or something. The hillside not more than 50 feet away is covered with invasive black mustard. And these squirrels want to bitch about my cigarette?

My cigarette is good to me. What would a squirrel know about that? I've had a long, terrible day. My body aches, my head feels heavy, and my skin doesn't seem to fit over my body the way it should. The birds are singing sweetly but I just can't believe them when they tell me I'm safe. When the birds and the brook



aren't enough, there are people like the Marlboro Man to help with that. Today, Gauloise helped me. What would a squirrel know about that? All they do is eat nuts and climb trees.

My own stinky little habit is not the problem here. I'm just helping myself get by. Nothing wrong with that. I dig my heels into the sand and watch ashes fall from my cigarette. Inhaling, exhaling, the squirrels are still gone.



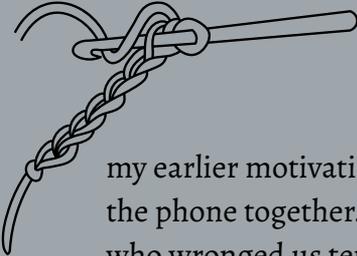
*hugo huge*

# cast off motivation

Cast on, cast on, cast on, cast on. My fingers are stiff from stretching yarn between them. Unravel, unravel, unravel. It's been an hour and no sign of a scarf. Maybe I want a skirt instead. Cast on fifty stitches. Great, now it is too big. Unravel every stitch again. My projects or lack thereof often take this route. I have a burst of motivation to make myself or a friend clothing and decide it isn't working. Perhaps I give up too quickly, but it is also how quickly the motivation disappears. Let's try this again. Slip knot, long tail cast on of ten stitches. A nice, round number for practice. I continue row after row of knit stitches. It turns into a scarf for sure, a scarf for an elf. The yarn begins to fray from my constant unraveling (mentally and physically). Eventually, the toll of not being able to make something well and the disappearance of my motivation pushes me to roll the yarn back into the original ball. It returns to my knitting basket, which remains dusty and untouched for months now because of this back and forth.

My assignment and responsibilities for school begin the same way. I open my laptop and planner. My pen is ready to write. Almost dripping ink in anticipation. I write everything from the Canvas to-do list that could scroll for days. Little to no intention of doing anything I've written down. Instead of doing it first. My motivation is slowly fizzling away at this point. Contrary to good study habits, I attack the easiest assignments first. By attack, I sit on TikTok as I have the assignment laid out in front of me, burning my eyes with the brightness. Where has





my earlier motivation gone? Ok, let's call someone and study over the phone together. Or let's just yap about our lives and people who wronged us ten years ago. Unfortunately, motivation is not enough to push me to my goals. It is there to push me to be better, but it certainly doesn't continue to push when I think I need a study snack. Yes, yes, creating habits is better than relying on motivation but habits take 30 (or was it 90?) days to stick and unfortunately, my habit- making skills are about as sticky as dry sand.

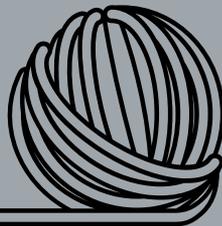
Why is there such a mental and physical block to doing things that you need to do? This paper is an example of something I had kept to the last minute, but why? It was assigned much in advance, resources were available, and the instructions were clear. But why? The mental block I had felt was from the lack of structure in this creative paper. What if my paper isn't creative enough? So, if there is no paper at all maybe no one would be able to define it as good or bad. The physical block is getting up to start at all. I often start insignificant assignments to avoid the "big one". This week's "big one" was this paper, so instead I read for other classes. The idea of failing is stressful, and motivation is simply not enough to prevent it from happening. The idea of failing is stressful yet motivation is simply not enough to prevent it.

As I take an unnecessary break from this paper, I glance around my room. The lopsided projects from my failed bucket

hat to an unfinished top, I realize that motivation is never going to be enough. I just begin typing, thinking that nothing has to come from it yet. The paper has come together somehow and I even have time for myself after it. The dusty knitting basket doesn't look too scary now that I know nothing I make will be perfect. Making anything at all would be an adventure in itself. Cast on, cast on, cast on. The burn of the yarn brushing through my fingers doesn't feel so stressful anymore. Now I can fondly remember the small scarves I've made for my cousins and the various bath scrubs I've made for my family. It never had to be good enough because they wore/used my projects with pride. The small fraying pieces on all my projects become a reminder of me striving to create something with love and care. Finally. I cast off the last row of stitches and I am done.

*MRIDULA RAM*

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# is it time to go?



There is one kind of “friend” that everyone should be wary of. No matter how much you love them, it's best you know your worth and focus on the people who really understand you. If you keep them around long enough, they'll bring you so far down that you will have to learn how to pick yourself up. It hurts to say goodbye. And it's hard. But you have to know when it's time to go.

*The one kind of friend you should let go is the one that doesn't listen.*

My best friend was a caring person, at least at first. We played pool and drove around listening to music, he had great taste. I loved hearing every little detail about him. His family, his job, the anime and manga he liked, outings with friends, the girl he's crushing on. He would speak and speak, and I would listen and remember every detail of our perfect moments. Only in retrospect did I realize that he never asked me anything.



For his birthday, I burned him a CD with a custom playlist. I included songs I knew he loved or that were relegated to specific moments in our friendship. A cover drawn by hand, flowers drawn with careful detail. To me, he was worth all the effort. I never second guessed how much I cared about him and how I showed it.



On my birthday, I waited patiently to hear from him. All I wanted was for my (best?) friend to tell me happy birthday.

I waited. And waited. And waited. All day I checked my phone. Woke up. Got ready. Went to class. Lunch. Sunset. Day's end.

And as it became dark and cold, I sat on a patch of grass and looked up at the night sky. And the realization finally sunk in...

*My best friend forgot my 20th birthday...*



...Now I had to pick myself up.

No matter what you value in friendship, communication triumphs all in terms of success. If you want a friendship that will last, listen. Understand them. Remember the little things about them.

That's all humans are. We are just a culmination of tiny things, a house of cards stacked neatly together. A bad coffee in the morning, a compliment from a stranger, our favorite song. That's all we all are, so if you forget enough of the small things, you'll bring your friends crumbling. They'll become a mess without the structure of detail provided by remembrance.

And that's what my best ex-friend made me. A giant mess that I had to put together. Days when all I wanted were to find solitude in him were gone. My source of happiness had left with the sun. And there I was, with tears streaming down my face, realizing that he never cared for me as much as I cared for him. Alone I was. Left to pick myself back up.

Well...

I wasn't entirely alone.

On my 20th birthday, my (real!) best friend got me a CD player. Not many people have the love of CDs that I do. All my rambling of my retro obsession was not lost on her. She listened. And I'll always remember that.

I should have realized sooner that she was the one who deserved my time. The time and effort, the dedication and care, it all should've went to her. Every time she said that she loved me shouldn't have been a moment wishing it came from his mouth. My eyes should have always kept her in view. She became the star in the night sky I followed when the sun abandoned me. Now that I know she's my real best friend, my one and only, I'm never going to let myself be blinded by potential from someone uncaring.

It's hard to not hold out hope for friends you care about. You keep lowering the bar for them, constantly hoping that they meet your expectations at some point. But you can only lie to yourself for so long. The realization that you need to care for yourself will hit, and the realization that you need to care for the ones who love you now will follow. You have to listen to your loved ones, and you have to distance yourself from those who don't listen to you.

It's hard, so hard, to want to stay friends with those people. But you have to let go. If not, you'll be tearing yourself apart for someone who would never do the same for you. Their silence will drive you crazy, so surround yourself with the ones who you want to hear and the ones who listen back.



The love in friendship should be reciprocated. Otherwise, it's simply wasted. So, give it to someone who truly deserves it.

*My best friend listened to me, and I'll love her forever for that.*

# typography



The inspiration behind Duh-Vil was an activity we did in class where we played with the different tip-sized markers and how we could write with them. In doing this activity I liked the thinness and thickness of 3 different markers and somehow wanted to incorporate that into my creation of a new typography. I played around with different lines that I thought would look good being thin and thick. As well as adding some

color to my typography. This came to be because when testing out the markers I used a red marker which I thought The name duh-vil came from the movie Cruella. As cruella is seen to be a villain I felt that her theme or rather a specific scene where she show case her first design in the movie was very fitting. Also when testing out the markers because the majority were black the red marker I used made

zayuri Sanchez

natural object



zayurí sanchez

## scaly silk

My childhood was full of people from many cultures. I was immersed in a community with many people of color. I was never the odd one out and when I had introduced my own very mixed culture, it was met with awe and respect. There was no shame in bringing idlis for lunch nor wearing new clothes for Diwali day. My friends and I would spend our recesses comparing words in our languages to see if there were any similarities. Cultural Wear Day was the best day of the year. The light cotton kurtis and denim jeans were a comforting armor I wore amongst all the other cultural outfits in my elementary school.

Dragon fruits don't quite stand out as the most tasty or interesting fruit. They are quite plain to taste but the growth of their flowers is the most beautiful. It can only grow in warm climates and is sensitive to frost. Despite it looking unordinary, the flower of this fruit plant is what really attracts people. Under the right amount of water, sunlight, and support, the dragon fruit plant blooms radiant, white flowers for a mere twelve hours. If you blink, you'll miss it.

Then, my parents had other ideas. We moved. "Better communities". "Number one schools in the largest district." There was much promise in what my parents were saying so I was open to change. It was just going to be Cultural Days and recesses somewhere new. Little did I know it would be so different. I walked into the classroom full of slick, neat hairstyles



and the proper-est outfits I'd seen. I sat isolated from them. The class was full of Laurens and Hunters. School had never felt like this to me. From then on, my lunches were "smelly" and wearing anything other than clothes from Justice was met with staring and questions. There I stood one day, still alone despite my brand-new Justice shorts, wondering where I had gone wrong. I still remember the fabric and shortness of it feeling so uncomfortable. Maybe it wasn't the shorts, but I was just uncomfortable.

If you happen to blink, you'll notice the wilted mess on the plant the next day. What was once a blooming beauty against the dark, night sky has shrunk into a shell of its former self. It is devastating to see that the flower is gone so quickly unlike other trees that have flowers for quite some time. There is no need to be so distressed though because after three excruciating weeks, the very same plant will sprout the actual dragon fruits.

The smell of spices wafted through my closed room door. I immediately know what day it is as I can hear the bustling energy from downstairs. I get up quickly to brush my teeth and go help. The booming of music and chatting coming from the kitchen grows louder as I walk downstairs. Deepavali has begun. My family fills the kitchen cooking enough food for a large village. My mother and aunt are assigned to cooking. My dad, uncle, cousins, and I are in charge of cleaning the house and putting up decorations. It's a race against the clock as it's almost



time for guests to arrive. Once the food and house are prepped, it's time to prep ourselves. Yards and yards and yards of Kashmir silk, Tussar silk, and I don't know what silk is skillfully draped and pinned by my mother. I've only worn a saree a few times now because you have to be "of age" to wear one. Despite almost drowning in thirty feet of cloth, it doesn't feel so uncomfortable. My mother and aunt drape themselves much faster and move easily in it, while I still get used to the flowing fabric. We waltz back downstairs to take pictures with everyone. Family pictures first, of course. I have never felt more comfortable in my life. The guests arrive and we fill them and ourselves with rice, various curries, and desserts as we await the darkness. The irony of waiting for darkness during the festival of lights is not lost on me. When darkness settles, we head outside to place small lamps and candles that cut through the night. Colors bloom through the night as we enjoy each other's company. In the blink of an eye, it is all over. I find myself wishing I could wear a saree more often or maybe a different style next year. After we've changed into pajamas, we debrief and eat again. (You can really never eat properly when hosting) Deepavali is gone so quickly but my family and culture are here to stay.



# on the skin



The skin jails that which cannot be identified.

The skin can choose to side with either a literal or figurative meaning. To preface the proceeding suppositions formed into literary prose for your consideration, we will use the skin to unpack the convolution of human reasoning.

First, we will address reasoning's arch nemesis. The abstract. The abstract usually requires you to diverge from the beaten path of reason and tread the still beaten slope of scholastic guessing. Ironically, our reaction to an assumed answer is to apply reason to it. In this way, we attempt to make a cow quack. Therefore, when we engage with what we do not—maybe even will not understand—we must follow the notion that there are no answers in obscurity, only the absence of.

The skin holds us in place.

The square must fit into the square shaped hole. On a rainbow, the red must come before the orange before the yellow before the green then the blue.

These secessions bring us understanding and reason— and in that, comfort. While addressing new ideas that remain unaware of our craving for reason, our method of making sense of things falls flat. We regress into some place where the meaning is present and accounted for. Somewhere between the empirical

and scientific methods. Through this, we eat progression in digestible, palatable bites.

Whereas when we are addressing the unknown, it is necessary we step outside ourselves in order to scrutinize it from a naked standpoint. One must relinquish comfortability in aspects such as the mind and body when they are searching for why the cube is able to fit into the circular hole. With the bias of our heavy 'this and not that' culture left behind in our pounds of flesh, we can begin to explore.

The skin looks back at us.

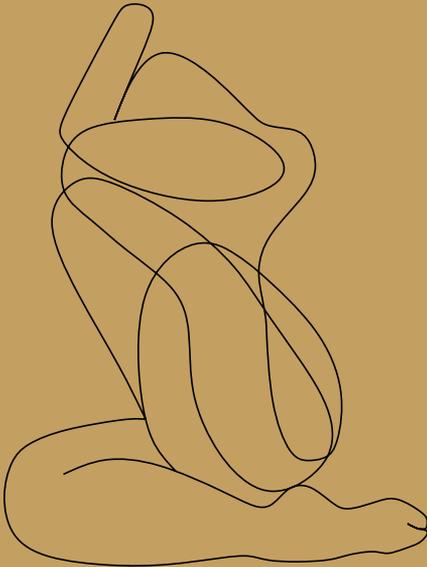
An abstract concept we engage with too much reason is our sense of self. We understand ourselves as a body and mind. We treat the word 'mind' as if it were synonymous with the word brain. We identify ourselves as our brain yet conclude that the brain only serves the functions of regulating the body. Contemplation and reflection are rare instances exclusively reserved for the human species. Therefore, when we look into a mirror, can we identify what is staring back at us as the brain? That would be a reasonable answer. Though to apply reason to an idea such as identity and consciousness would equate to the cube and the circular hole example. We are unsure of why humans are the way we are. There is no certainty that what we identify in the mirror is us. That answer unreasonable. It leaves the canvas blank; the intricacy is absent. It requires too little of us.



The skin joins us but is not a part of us.

What we see is metered by what we can reason with. What we can reason with comes alongside what we are willing to accept.

You can envision yourself peeling back layers of your largest organ, not just wanting to make sense of your unknown but needing to peak through the veil. You are unsure of what is underneath, but you know if you see it, then it will click, the planets will align just for your understanding, but after restlessly scraping, all you find is that your eyes can lie.



**Beasley ngang**

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## *acknowledgments*

Thank you to all of the faculty and staff who granted us their support throughout the semester, especially Dr. Kraemer who guided us through this experience. We also wish to extend a special thank you to those who allowed us to share their work and who made this project possible. We appreciate all participants for their hard work, for allowing us the pleasure of reading their writing, and for their continuous support of Harvest International.



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May 2025

THANK YOU  
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