



# ***COLLECTIVE*** *thoughts.*



"Honestly, I would love to know the answer to these questions, but that's the fun thing about time: everything is uncertain."



"Your brain comes for the rescue,

when the heart decides to take risks"



"Sometimes I close my eyes to search for silence among the noises in my head. Before opening them, I ask myself, 'in which illusion will I wake up?'"

# C.

THE HAGUE



# Note From the Editor



Third year in existence and ninth time publishing. Bigger than we've ever been while still feeling as small as when we started. Our own little community where some of us have been residing for multiple years and others have just started to make their mark. A place of inclusivity and acceptance, where everyone is welcomed, and where you can tell your story in your own way. This is where writers, creatives, dreamers, realists and everyone in between come to grow individually and end up growing together. And with that, Collective grows as well. With two new editions, one of Collective Reporter and one of Collective Thoughts, our people again share the ins and outs of the world and offer to take you with them into their own. We are thrilled that more and more people are joining us on this journey and we hope to stay with you for many more editions to come.

I wish you a happy read,

*Handi van Vliet*

COLLECTIVE CHAIR  
& EDITOR



Welcome to Collective Thoughts, our space for self-exploration, personal expression and creative writing. Creating this first edition marked the beginning of a new academic year and with it, the consolidation of a new team. We are grateful to all the people that built Collective so far, the ones that have been with us for a few editions already and those for which this edition was their first.

As we approach the year and the holidays, our team has adopted the reflective mood that this season brings. It was an opportunity for us to look back at this past year -or maybe the last few years. We were embraced by the nostalgia of our past experiences and relationships, but also with a curious approach to a future that seems uncertain.

Through this edition, we explored lost loves, painful moments and insecurities with the hope of closing a chapter and bringing only our learnings to the new year.

We hope you get a chance to reflect upon these past few months with us and hopefully, start 2023 with a clean slate and a warm heart. Now that this issue is assembled and ready to be published, we want to thank every single person that made this issue possible, from our managers and marketing specialists to our writers and designers. We hope you enjoy the result of our work.

Wishing you a happy read,

*Ju Laclau Massaglia*

C. THOUGHTS MANAGER,  
EDITOR, AND WRITER



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# Carpe diem

Carpe diem! Live your life, they say. Enjoy new experiences, they say. But how can we do all of this in such a short time? Are we afraid of the future or of the events that time brings?

One day has 24 hours which means 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. All of us wonder if that is enough, don't we? Is that enough to do all the things we want to do in order to have unforgettable memories and no regrets?

**1st** were those the questions that Kronos, the god of time, asked himself? Probably not. Back then, the gods were too busy getting involved in the mortals' drama and creating their own series of *The Bachelor* or *Love is Blind*. I have to admit that I am a geek when it comes to ancient mythology.

For my readers who enjoy other fields of history: I am sure no one asked the astronomer Pope he ever thought about what he was doing with his time on a Friday night when he made the calendar. Neither to Caesar or Sosigenes of Alexandria when the General was too busy to conquer and expand his empire. I mean, it was pretty obvious he could be found on the weekends with a bunch of Greek soldiers at the first tavern that allowed "*only friendly meetings*".



**"We should take a moment for ourselves and look around because if we trully look around us, we can see that this society is becoming more and more dull."**

**2nd** I am sure we all want to live our life to the fullest, so we tend to focus on our future. Still, we should take a moment for ourselves and look around because if we trully look around us, we can see that this society is becoming more and more dull.

Conduct this experiment: go to a café in your own and take a look at your surroundings. You'll notice that everyone around you is focused on their own laptop, on their own business, on their own bad day because in this society everyone is concerned about recognition. That's fine because that's human nature, that's all humans will ever be.

"Why?" you may ask. Because we want to be remembered. "But what about the time?" Is time spent on a dream worth it? life-long What is the real meaning of leaving your life to the fullest?



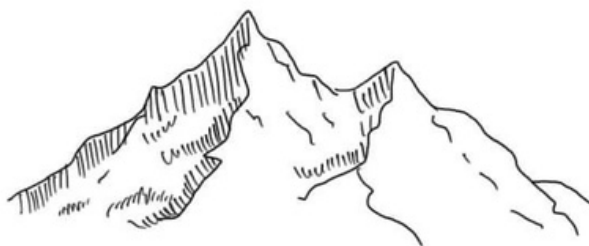
Honestly, I would love to know the answer to these questions, but that's the fun thing about time: everything is uncertain. It would be amazing to be able to travel back and forth in time, wouldn't it? Imagine all the things we could do: join one of king Arthur's quests, have a beer with Napoleon and go for a boys night out with Hitler and Lenin.

Still, would it be enough to have all the Infinity Stones in your hand? Not even the Time Stone could change the fact that Stephen Strange wasn't ready to face the future. However, as the Ancient One said, "No one ever is. We don't get to choose our time."

**"We are never ready to face the future, we only adapt to the circumstances"**

We are never ready to face the future, we only adapt to the circumstances, some faster than the others. When we understand that, we'll finally accept that there is no deadline, no rush, no time limit to start doing certain things. Everyone lives in their own time.

Now we are getting closer to my point. We travelled through the past and future, but we never tackled the present, which leads me to my third point: *vive in momento*. That's the secret! We should live in the present, live every experience to the fullest and enjoy the time that we have. If you ever thought of painting a masterpiece, then do that! Did you ever want to climb Mount Everest? Then make time for it!



It might look challenging at first. You might start doubting yourself. You might wonder if you have all the skills you need or whether you are good enough. However, with time and practice these thoughts will fade. I know how much of a struggle it is to find the present unbearable. That's why instead of fearing the future, we should focus on the abilities we can improve now, on the version of us that exists in this moment. So let's stop thinking about the top of the mountain and focus on each step on our path to get there.

**"Let's stop thinking about the top of the mountain and focus on each step on our path to get there."**

To conclude, my last words would be for me: Live the moment, live exactly how you want and let time be a loyal companion in your journey.

*Theodora-Maria Mrejeru*



**Theodora is a second year Law Student at THUAS. Besides playing as Lady Justice so when she is not writing academic papers she actually enjoys writing about what inspires her and from time to time decides to see the word from a creative perspective.**



# a letter to a reality

*Dear you know who,*

I want to confess: it is easy to talk to you as I do not need to try to find the perfect combination of words. The complicated part comes when I let the words out and I hear them myself, because the person I am most afraid of is me.

I keep thinking about what is right and wrong, and sometimes I am caught between the illusions of who I want to be and who I am. Unfortunately, I do not have a clear image of myself. There is always this uncertainty when I look at myself in the mirror. I am wondering, "which life am I currently living?". Sometimes I close my eyes to search for silence among the noises in my head. Before opening them, I ask myself, "in which illusion will I wake up?"

**"I am afraid that if I look back at my memories, I will lose myself in them and I will not find a way back."**

Sometimes I just open a book in order to crawl inside a world that I consciously choose. I am afraid that if I look back at my memories, I will lose myself in them and I will not find a way back. That is a moment in which I want to reach your hand and not think about anything but the present

Sometimes I hear, "when will you be back?" and it breaks my soul that there could be a moment when I will have to say that I will not be back. I always have to choose how to spend my time, which is limited, unfortunately. I am afraid of losing time and opportunities to hug people. I wish I could break into a million pieces and be present everywhere. I again have the stupid ambition of having everything without losing anything. It feels like standing in front of a closed door with the key next to me, but I

cannot pull myself together to unlock it.

I am the one who always has something to lose. My mind cannot focus on living one thing because I am thinking about the next one. Everything is happening in parallel and I am trying to keep up. Even my thoughts break, unable to follow a certain flow. I am writing them as they jump from one idea to the other, from one illusion to the next. When I said that I lost most of the capabilities that I had, including expressing my feelings, this is what I mean. There is no shape, no context, no flow, no present, no future and no clarity.

Welcome to my process is all I can say. I hope this letter will give you an insight into how I am living my life currently and my thoughts -or better said, the thoughts I managed to gather.



We like to think that we can delay certain moments, to pretend that we have control over what the future holds. How many times did you delay a burnout? How many times have you said, „I can resist a bit longer“ and just continued walking? When transitions are painful, you might think „I cannot deal with it now. I need to keep myself in one piece and finish this. Then, I can go through changes“. You keep denying it, but the transition is already happening. You keep fighting against the flow instead of going with it. People are the happiest when they get to live in this illusion of control.

Then there is the illusion of almost. Some people that we held once are now only present in pictures and videos. It might almost be as if we could feel the warmth of their skin again, but that is far from being true. We can only recreate the memories now. We can only relive what we felt in the past because our reality now exists without them. We smile with tears in our eyes, close them and move our hands towards a blurry image in our mind as if we could touch them. There is a silent pain in our chest that is always going to be there. It is not going to diminish. But the world around it becomes bigger and the pain becomes tolerable. Still, sometimes it only takes one word, one smell, or one feeling to rub salt into that little wound. We are almost sure that it exists only in our heads until something reminds us of it.

One of the illusions that I live in the most are that I am not able to hurt people because I am so gentle with their hearts. But the truth is that within this softness there is a brutal side that can hit unexpectedly. A gesture made a fraction of a second too late or an the explanation was given the wrong way can seem like a hidden sword waiting to fall.

I know that I should just take a step back. I can heal and give the feeling of safety from afar. Once I come closer, I might bring pain and situations that you have to get used to. I do not talk about what I feel because I have no idea how to use words and I freeze every time. Maybe I should have told you this sooner. Maybe I did, but back then all of this was insignificant because I was still far enough.

The moment when „I do not know“ is the full truth, I can hear my voice breaking because I want to say or do something, but I do not know what. I have been feeling emptiness for a long time, so I became one with it. Maybe I can talk about memories because I know how to weave phrases together to explain them. However, when I realise that I can hurt someone, I go back to that empty place. I never understand how I manage to do it.

Every choice reminds me of its consequences. What if I am not the type of person that can be loved? What if I cannot offer enough? What if everyone ends up suffering?

I am all over the place because I want everything and I am not good at finding balance. I hate to drag someone into this with me. I am not asking for any favours. I have been told that I do not want to settle somewhere, but not for someone either. That is not true. I am afraid time will leave a scar, because sooner or later, there is always a part of me that is pushing everyone away or tiring them with the consequences of my actions. So, if I am just moving around, I will not let time catch me; or

at least this is how I am fooling myself. Still, I do not want to move around in a certain direction anymore.

I live under the illusion of time. Sometimes I start spiralling really fast because seconds are passing by and turning into minutes, then hours, then days, then weeks. It crushes me that I am reacting so slow. I look at you and see how time works for you. I see how my illusion is affecting you.

At some point, my absence becomes more present than my presence, but I am lost in this game of minutes and I cannot pull myself out of it. I feel that every decision that I make is wrong. I am constantly waiting for the next blow. I waste time trying to figure out if I am living an illusion or if this is my reality. I constantly feel like I am in a dream in which I am fighting my nightmares because I am tired of being terrified of them.

You might be wondering why I am doing this by myself when I am not alone anymore. It is because I have the constant feeling that people are trying to hide certain





aspects from me to protect me. From there, my mind jumps into a sea of thoughts. Every wave that breaks on the shore is whispering „you are not able to handle it“, „you are too fragile“ or „you need protection from everything“. I try to swim away from them, but I can still hear every noise they make.

Every time it feels like I am carrying everything I can on my shoulders to distract myself until I find a bench in the middle of the sea. Even though I do not need protection and I do not want help, I must admit that if I find that bench again, I hope I will find you there. Among all of this amalgam of thoughts that are swirling inside my head, it is your smile that reminds me to breathe.

There is a quote that we shared that says, „Do I love her? Of course not. Or better said, not yet.“ I feel like these words explain in a nutshell the idea of delaying the moment when all the feelings hit. It is a matter of what tone the speaker is giving to the words. They can show pain, love, nostalgia or the desire to fall at the right time, when one is ready to feel everything. There is one more detail hiding behind these words: humans unconsciously think that faith spoils them by giving them the power to choose what will happen, what they will feel and when. This desire to delay things might come from old wounds. Since feeling safe is so rare and precious, everyone is trying to hold on to it before that “not yet” becomes “yes”.

But nothing waits. Waiting until we are ready is just a concept made up to give us an imaginary power over what we cannot control. We delay a „goodbye“ or a “hello“ until it hurts too much and it creates new wounds. We think that we can keep together two paths that are meant to go apart. We think we can avoid two roads that will cross at a predestined point. \

It is waiting outside the train station to see someone because that was the last spot you met. You are waiting and scanning the crowd. Your mind plays games, making you believe that it is possible. Everyone looks like that person and at the same time they are not. But the illusion keeps you there when you should be somewhere

else. What are you waiting for? Are you sure it is not only a memory that you are looking for? How can you be sure that they did not pass already? I can tell you that you are looking for a person that exists in your imagination, but who is not accurate anymore.

I have done that multiple times. I traded trains that I wish I caught. Still, I found you on one of the trains. I sat next to you and accepted the new journey. I took your hand into mine. I smiled and looked directly into your eyes. You see right through me. You see the battlefield that lies between reality and illusions that are still happening in my mind. I can get lost so easily, but I believe that this is real. Finally, I am not delaying the truth: I already fell and there is no way back. We met before, maybe in another reality, but this time I can keep you in my present and give shape to the future. „The end is another definition for the beginning“, as I told you multiple times, in multiple languages. I am still picking the one that vibrates the most with my soul. There is one more thing that I would like to ask, confess, explain or whatever word fits: “attraversiamo?”

Flavia Ioana Tofan ❄️



**Flavia wants to build a life of freedom and spontaneity. She craves experiences out of her comfort zone and letting herself get lost, both in the real world and in fictional universe. She wants to explore herself to be able to live her life to the fullest. Collective is one of the ways in which she is currently managing to better understand the world and her place in it.**

# Would You Be kinder To yourself?

Would you be kinder to yourself if you knew that every time you thought you weren't good enough or pretty enough or smart enough, you broke your heart just a little bit?

Have you ever thought of how unkind it is to say or do hurtful things to others? Have you thought about how it impacts you when you do it to yourself? When we are constantly reminded by the world that we don't measure up to a certain standard or that we haven't achieved what is expected of us, we can start to believe we deserve ridicule and scorn. That's not true.

For a long time, I found it hard to compliment myself, give myself a break when I needed one or congratulate myself when I achieved something I had been working hard on. If I could do it, then surely anyone else could. It must not have been hard, right? I always thought everyone else was exceptional, while I was just exceptionally average. Other people must have it harder than me, therefore they deserve praise and rest when they get tired. I never stopped to think that maybe I deserved it too.



***"Something I've learnt along the journey of learning to love myself is that I should try to give the same love to myself as I give to others."***



Why can't we love ourselves the way we love others? We find ourselves loving our friends and families easily because they bring us joy and comfort. They are a part of us and we care for them. Why don't we find the same joy and comfort in ourselves? Why do we feel that we are undeserving beings?

We sometimes forget that where we are today might have been the place in which we wished to be two or five or even ten years ago. Our past or present mistakes and failures do not mean we are undeserving or that we have no value. A life is a journey that has many ups and downs, bumps and detours. We are bound to make the wrong choices sometimes but that doesn't take away our inherent value.



Something I've learnt along the journey of learning to love myself is that I should try to give the same love to myself as I give to others. At some point, I got tired of always being mean to myself. It only got me doubting myself and everyone who ever complimented me or enjoyed spending time with me. I always assumed that everyone was just being kind or polite when they say nice things about me. It never occurred to me that they meant it.



Sometimes the lifeline we need is ourselves. An act of kindness can be taking that trip you've wanted for a long time but didn't take because you felt it wasn't earned. Even patting yourself on the back for achieving the goal you worried yourself about for weeks or simply stopping everything and resting can be enough. We sometimes find ourselves accommodating others and making exceptions for them that we can't imagine making for ourselves. It's time to change that.



I've realised that it's not enough to give others the love I never received, I need to also give it to myself because some changes have to come from within. At some point, I have to look at myself and realise that only I can change my story, change the narrative that goes on in my mind. A friend recently told me that I am doing enough and that I am good at what I do. It was something so small, but it made my day in a way that I never thought it could. I actually took it to heart and believed it instead of arguing or finding ways to disprove it.

***"So you should be kinder to yourself, because you deserve it, and because why not? What harm could come from believing in yourself?"***

So you should be kinder to yourself, because you deserve it, and because why not? What harm could come from believing in yourself? What damage could be done if you stopped doubting yourself for a second? Would it be better to go through life not loving yourself or appreciating all the things you can do, not giving yourself grace and understanding?

I don't think so. So I ask: will you be kinder to yourself?

*Rumbidzai Mudzongo*

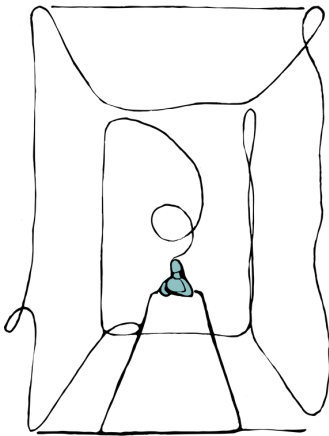


**Rumbi is a third year law student. She loves reading and writing but spends most of her time now watching movies and documentaries. She's trying to write and explore deeper more creative ideas.**



# WHAT HIDES BEHIND MY mask

I am sitting at the end of a long wooden table. White walls stretch around me as far as the eye can see. Cold artificial lights are hanging from the ceiling, illuminating the immutable expressions of the other people sitting around the table. All of them are immaculately dressed and groomed, clearly older than me, and also more experienced. They have lived their lives, accomplished things I can only dream of, and still, they are sitting there, around that table, staring at me.



The lights flicker slightly as I swallow my lack of words away. Who decided I should be seated at this table? Why would I be put in an equal position to these other people that have lived so much more than me? Why would people, who have accomplished more things than I could even dare dream of, be waiting to hear my opinions? It does not make sense. It never does.

My friends and the people with whom I have spoken about this keep saying that I was chosen to take on the roles I have because I am qualified enough.

They go on about the traits of my personality that make me a competent candidate for whatever role we are talking about. They explore things that I have done before and reasons why I might have been seen fit to perform those tasks.

***"They have lived their lives, accomplished things I can only dream of, and still, they are sitting there, around that table, staring at me."***

Still, as I sit at an endless string of work meetings, second-year lectures, editorial meetings and internship research discussions, I can not help but feel like a little child sitting at the end of that imposing table. I feel like I am being stared at, judged, analysed. That my every move is under scrutiny at all times.



At first, I was convinced these gazes were my colleagues', my teachers', my friends'. That it was the pressure of wanting their validation and support that I felt hanging over my head. It took me some time to realise that the only eyes on me are my own. It is only my gaze that is following my every move: criticising me when I am behind,

pushing me to do more, punishing any attempt at rest or self-care.

It took me some time to realise that everyone else sitting at that table was just fulfilling a role for which they also felt unprepared. They -like me- were trying their best to play the part they were assigned to, carrying their own insecurities and baggage along the way. They -like me- were scared to have their masks torn away to reveal the small little child that was sitting at that very table once, scared of being called on to give the answer. They -like me- had felt inadequate, not good enough.

Owning the spaces I occupy and taking pride in my accomplishments is not something that I think I will ever achieve. Not because I feel like I will be terribly unsuccessful or because I assume that I will always feel too young or too inexperienced compared to those around me, but because these are the labels I have identified with my whole life. Thus they are the labels I am struggling the most to part with.

I still have no idea of who I want to be and no way to foresee who I will end up becoming. But if there is one thing I realised this new academic year, it is that I will always look for places and opportunities that make me feel too young and too inexperienced.

The challenge of learning from those around me and growing into the space I am given is exactly what motivates me to keep going. The truth is that as scary as that intimidating room and the inexpressive faces may be, they are not a match for the feeling of entrapment and terror I would experience knowing that I have reached my peak and that, what I have right then, is everything that my life will ever have to offer.



*Ju Laclau Massaglia*

**Ju is a second year Communication student with a big passion for books and writing. She is a work in progress that is continuously trying to be a verb instead of a noun.**



# Collection

of thoughts, pains & loves

## “the butterfly”

soft red cheeks,  
hiding behind beautiful chestnut hair.  
she familiarised herself with harsh comments  
and continuous resentment of her body.  
as much as the girl wanted to enjoy little  
moments,  
people frightened her.  
the embarrassment and pain she was hiding,  
should not be sensed by girls her age,  
or any age.  
society broke her,  
just for her future self  
to discover her wings.  
to fly to the skies with her head held high.  
but this time,  
with her hair tucked  
behind her ears,  
to show the world  
the mesmerising beauty she is.



## “never enough”

she does everything she's told,  
just for others  
to prove her wrong.  
she's the dream of all parents,  
an enemy to the successful.  
yet in her eyes,  
she's a fraction of what matters.

she covers her body in dark clothes,  
to appear skinnier,  
fit into those norms.

make-up covers the dark circles,  
proof of wasted nights,  
of calming down her thoughts.  
they all shout at the same time:  
“you will never be enough!”

starved to near death,  
with straight A's on the paper,  
she never felt more tired,  
less herself,  
with no triumph to declare.

that's when the calmness finally came,  
no longer a need to endure pain,  
she was at peace,  
but in another world.



### “good old friend”

yet another day  
that feels like a perfect moment,  
creeps in the good old friend,  
anxiety.  
she makes you experience moments  
quite intensively strong,  
only to later rob you of them all.

happiness and joy?  
oh, she certainly favours those,  
yet makes you think through  
them twice more.

one day she's high,  
on the next, too low,  
that's when anxiety waits,  
till you wave the joy goodbye,  
to indulge the body,  
in wholesome sorrow

### size”

one day  
you'll eat more,  
the other a bit more less,  
fighting the thoughts  
of who's the best.  
is it the girl,  
light as a feather,  
with no signs of joy  
in her empty eyes?  
or rather a girl,  
with belly full and content.  
her face all smiles.  
my head plays games with me  
all the time,  
just for my heart,  
to show me,  
there's no reason to cry.  
remember,  
I love you all size.

### “(un)loved”

cozy in the embrace  
of my own arms,  
I thought of the girl,  
who used to hate us so much.  
she would measure every inch,  
weigh every pound,  
just to appeal to the clowns,  
ignoring the fact,  
her bones started making  
alarming sounds.  
later,  
she covered the bones  
with clothes loose enough,  
thinking no one would notice,  
how deep we felt unloved.



### **“the day he left”**

cold January night,  
the snow not falling  
yet everything covered in white blanket.  
that was the day you told me you chose her.  
years of ups and downs  
did not stop me from fighting  
but your single choice of words  
made me stop at once.  
in the break of a moment,  
I have realised  
you gave up on us.  
with a fake smile and broken heart in my hands,  
I was standing in front of you,  
watching you stump on the future we could have  
had.  
could have had.  
but never will.

I wonder how many more years  
it will take  
for my stomach not to sink  
at the sound of your name.  
I wonder how much more pretence it will take,  
not to look your way  
when I see you embracing her body,  
living a life I could never give you.  
sometimes,  
it pains me to think  
that might be the reason  
why you chose her:  
the life she offers you.



### **“dark haired boy”**



dark haired boy,  
with the eyes of ocean,  
bringing me back to the shore,  
choking on the salty water  
with no air to breathe.  
that's what looking at him feels like.  
the power his eye gaze has over me,  
the power his smile holds.  
it scares me to the bones.  
a girl so independent and strong,  
swayed by a boy whose intentions  
are unknown.  
his touch sending chills all over my body,  
from head to toes, from chest to back.  
was it all a lie?  
was it all pretence?

### **“something wrong with me”**

the dates they go on,  
telling me all about  
how fun and loving they are.  
I wish I could say the same.  
fear creeps in with a thought,  
to go out,  
to share my time with someone  
I know nothing about.  
intimidation is what I feel,  
stomach turning upside down,  
with the possibility,  
of having to listen to someone  
who's not you.  
someone who doesn't make it as easy,  
just looking,  
no words needed,  
reading my mind in the most gentle way,  
as you used to.

### **“have it all”**

is it possible,  
that after all,  
we really can't have it all?  
career, passion and love?  
I always thought  
they go hand in hand.  
in that way,  
it makes sense.  
things don't have to be perfect,  
let alone logical.  
the heart won't explain,  
why it yearns for someone,  
despite the brain telling otherwise.  
because it always ends up being love,  
without any further explanation,  
just love.





### **“the crossroads”**

one day you say yes,  
the other a quick no.  
is it your heart  
speaking from it all?  
your brain comes for the rescue,  
when the heart decides to take risks.  
only for you,  
to confuse us both.

### **“the toxic friend”**

they treat you as an equal,  
act as if they care,  
yet still you find  
there’s no genuine reason behind.  
is it a hunch telling you  
to stay away?

body screaming  
“there are red flags ahead!”  
though there’s no courage  
to step away.

their heart might be warm,  
maybe their reasons even true,  
that does not mean,  
together you are destined to bloom.

### **“the night fall”**

when the night has fallen  
upon the city,  
and their souls finally found peace,  
still there was mine,  
rowing in the darkness  
under the light of the stars.  
there wasn’t much serenity in my mind.  
in an effort to soothe the storm,  
I wished for clarity,  
begged my senses to ease the pain.  
yet again,  
no answer from my brain.  
with impatience boiling through my veins,  
leaving the body uneasy,  
the rest still out of sight.  
I called “enough!”

### **“love is love”**

for love  
we die,  
for love  
we kill.  
is one type of love  
different from the other?  
what makes one love  
appreciated, praised  
yet the other loathed,  
condemned?

### **“big hearts”**

it’s not always so pink,  
black and white,  
or any other colour you prefer.  
life happens simultaneously,  
with happiness, joy,  
but also hardship and pain.  
one can escort the other,  
though sometimes they might  
visit alone.  
it can be hard to feel both,  
to still carry on with life  
when there’s a hole in your heart,  
and cloud above your mind.  
but to choose to feel it all,  
to open your palms,  
accept your share,  
is to feel alive.  
big hearts love the most,  
and, inevitably, cry the most.



“23”

another rotation around the sun,  
that’s what the number means,  
yet with age and more wisdom,  
different emotions creep in this year.  
she closed some chapters,  
opened new ones to enter,  
no longer looking for perfection.  
“the only wish,  
to endure endless happiness and health”  
she asked for this year.  
calmness swept her feet,  
bringing peace into her home,  
you’re fine child,  
23 is here to make you glow.



*Kristina Capova*

**Kristina is a Communication student who loves to travel, read and enjoys a good cup of coffee. In her writing, she focuses on self-growth, women empowerment and mental health struggle.**



# returning from Saturn

Have you ever heard of Saturn's return? Some time ago, Rada, a friend from Bulgaria, told me about Saturn's hole. This happens 30 days before your birthday and it marks a cycle of completion; it is our very own New Year. From an astrological point of view, planets return to the same position as when you were born, meaning a cycle is being closed, and a new one begins. During this time it is normal to fall into a certain state of mind. It can appear as a feeling of tiredness and introspectiveness. Then, two weeks after your birthday, you move into a time of motivation and illusion for the future.



If there is anything I learnt throughout these 25 years, it is how small we are in this world and how lucky we are to meet so many people. Since coming from Colombia, I've made good friends from places that once felt so far away, like Japan, Poland, Germany, Latvia and even Iceland. It feels surreal to have these experiences.

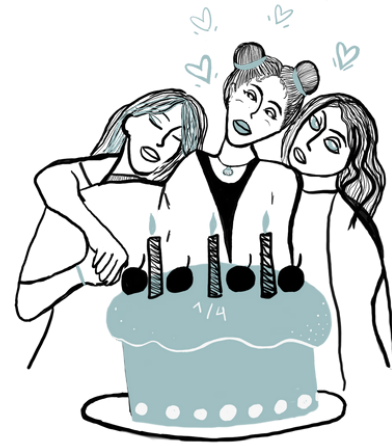
***"I think of all those friends I met on the way and how much I learnt about myself through my relationships with them. It's special to build these connections, so saying goodbye never gets easy."***

I think of all those friends I've met on the way and how much I learnt about myself through my relationships with them. It's special to build these connections, so saying goodbye never gets easy. Life goes by very fast and everything that is going on, those moments that feel like they will last forever, will soon become memories.

This November I turned 25 years old and, though I am still very young, it felt like a milestone. On this special birthday, I was flooded with nostalgia and couldn't get out of the introspective bubble. A decade has passed since I was a quinceañera, and the first time I moved away from home was already 8 years ago. Since then, I have lived in multiple places and recently moved to The Hague, where I met incredible people and also lived through some of the strangest moments of my life, like the global lockdown. Right now, I am in my last year of university. Soon, this chapter will be over and it will make way for new experiences.



When university students leave their homes, their friends become family and they must learn to find comfort and a home within themselves. This phase of life can be isolating and filled with doubt and introspection, but it is also a time where we get to know a different side of ourselves, where we choose new friends and realise the ways in which we have changed. As we get older, we get to know ourselves better and Saturn's return gets more profound. A piece of advice I carry with me everywhere I go, is to savour the moment and not let it be ruined by the little things. This Saturn's return felt like a trip through all the instants that made me feel happy and those I wish I had managed differently, to perhaps listen to my mum's advice and pay less attention to those little things, as moments can't come back so we better enjoy them.



***“A piece of advice I carry with me everywhere I go, is to savour the moment and don't let it be ruined by the little things.”***

If there is anything I learnt throughout these 25 years, it is how small we are in this world and how lucky we are to meet so many people. Since coming from Colombia, I've made good friends from places that once felt so far away, like Japan, Poland, Germany, Latvia and even Iceland. It feels surreal to have these experiences. I think of all those friends I've met on the way and how much I learnt about myself through my relationships with them. It's special to build these connections, so saying goodbye never gets easy. Life goes by very fast and everything that is going on, those moments that feel like they will last forever, will soon become memories.

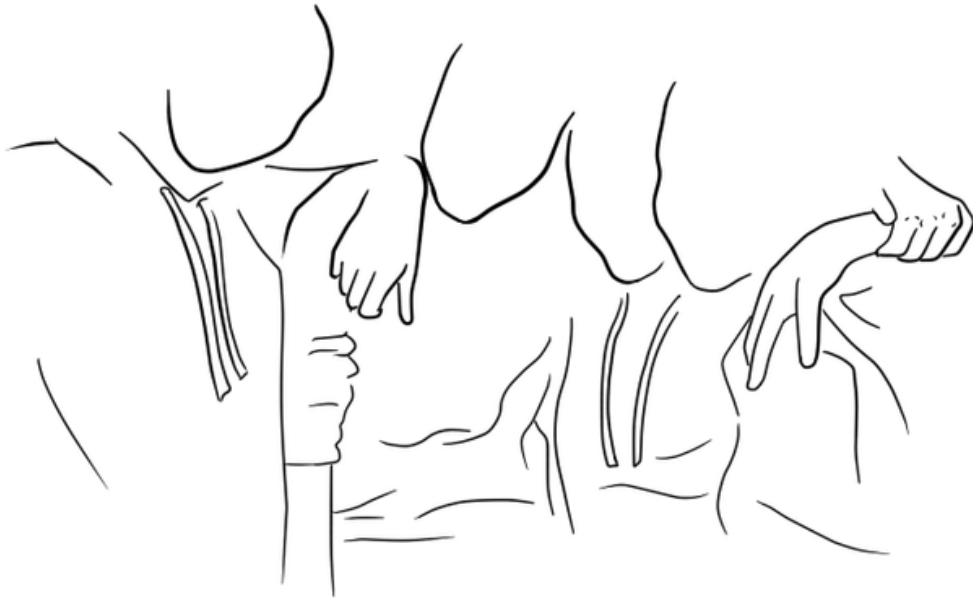
So next time, those 30 days before your birthday, think of Saturn's return as an opportunity to slowly tune in with yourself, find balance, and spend time with the people that make you feel happy and grateful with life. Hopefully, you'll end up eating your favourite cake and celebrating one of the longest relationships you'll ever have: the one with yourself.

*Ana Maria Avila*

**Ana is a third-year ICM student from Colombia who likes to be creative and to try out new things.**

**She is passionate about sustainability, loves to drink bubble tea, and the oliebollen season.**





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