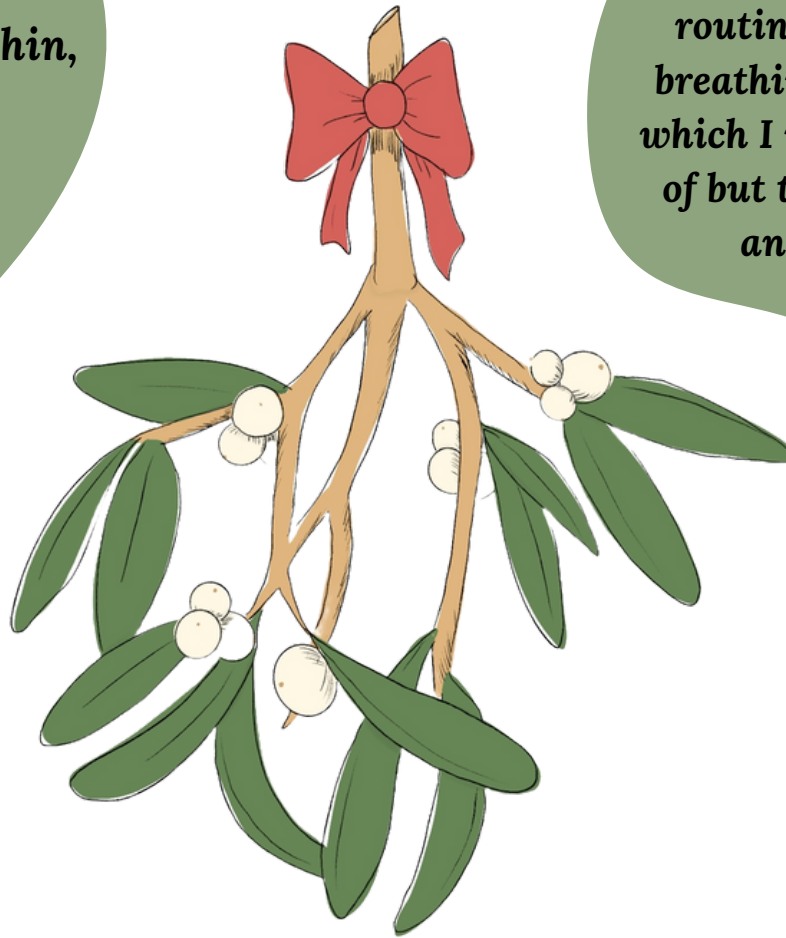


# **COLLECTIVE** *thoughts.*

“It used to be a simple trick; my mom squeezing the tube for me, gently holding my chin, tucking my plain straight hair behind my ear.”

“Music is as much a part of my daily routine as sleeping or breathing, the former of which I rarely get enough of but that’s a story for another time.”



“Do you cherry pick your sins when you enter the garden of Eden?”

Do you always end up reaching for me in the end?”



## *Calling all writers!*

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# Note From the Editors

Welcome to Collective Thoughts, our magazine focused on providing a safe, creative environment for writers and artists to express their talents through personal writing and eye-catching designs.

With our first edition of the academic year 2023, we come back renewed and empowered thanks to our new members across various teams. It is magical to see that the magazine continuously attracts people with the same mindsets and grand hearts, that together establish a type of sanctuary for creative souls. Collective Thoughts has always been a space full of equality and acceptance and we strive to continue delivering our promises.

During this time of the year, with the cold weather and shorter days, we hope our magazine will accompany you through and towards better days.

I would like to thank each member of our Collective family for bringing this issue into the light for readers. You have all done a wonderful job and handled it with such grace and patience. Thank you a million times.

To all our readers, I hope you will enjoy our new, special edition.  
I wish you a lovely, cosy read!

*Kristina Capova*

**COLLECTIVE CHAIR  
& EDITOR**

As the leaves fell and the days became short and cold, our writers worked on this new edition of Collective Thoughts. I want to thank all of them -as well as the members of the design and marketing teams- for all the effort and time they have put into creating this magazine.

As Kristina mentioned above, we aim to be a safe place for anyone who wants to explore themselves and share a piece of their souls with our readers, and I feel truly honoured to be the one helping them shape their thoughts into the amazing articles that follow these notes. I hope our readers find understanding, the safety to be themselves and some new, beautiful ideas within the pages of this magazine.

Now, the only thing left to do is wish everyone a joyful holiday season, a prosperous New Year and an enjoyable time reading the new Collective Thoughts. Hopefully we will meet again when the flowers start to bloom and the sun shines a bit brighter.

All the best,

*Ju Laclau Massaglia*

**C.THOUGHTS MANAGER,  
EDITOR, AND WRITER**





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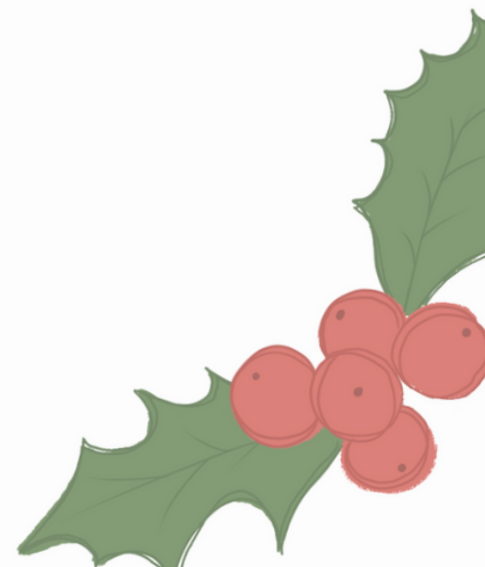
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Are You Ready To Be a Chameleon?

By Shilpa Nelson Aka Annabellez



# My Summer Playlist

Whenever I think of summer, I think of the heat and the endlessly long sunny days and the freedom to travel and explore new places and things, to hang out with friends who have been hunkered down the whole year with school and work. However, summer is also the end of the academic year, the end of another stressful but exciting chapter in my life that up until that point, I didn't think would come. It is the endless possibilities of what lies ahead of me both in my personal life and in my school life. It may sound dramatic and maybe even a bit pessimistic, but summer is when I get to reflect. The time to feel the full range of emotions that I didn't have much time to feel when I was stressing about exams, my extracurriculars, what the next step of my academic journey would be like, my family and friends, and everything else in between.

Although I have been a writer for the last 3 years, expressing my emotions is still something I struggle with. The easiest way for me to articulate my feelings and thoughts is music, something I'm sure many people can relate to. Music is as much a part of my daily routine as sleeping or breathing -the former of which I rarely get enough of, but that's a story for another time. Over the summer there have been a few songs I've had on repeat. These songs not only helped me reflect on my feelings and thoughts, but they are also just excellent songs to listen to! Each song holds a special place in my heart for a different reason. While I can't put every thought or emotion I get when I listen to these songs on paper, I hope maybe they'll help you and, if not, maybe they'll feature in your summer playlist.

## **"Ghosting" by Cat Burns**



*"I promise I'm not ghosting you  
There's just a couple of things I'm going through,  
'ing through  
And I don't wanna be a Debbie Downer on your life  
So I'll wait 'til I'm alright before I call you, call  
you"*

If you were to ask any of my friends, they'd probably (hopefully) tell you that I would move a mountain for them. Still, they don't expect me to respond to their messages in a timely manner at times. One of the things I've always struggled with when it comes to my mental health is reaching out to others for help. As much as I love being there for my family and friends when they need me, I don't always make it easy for them to do the same for me. I think something that many people can relate to is not wanting to be a burden on other people, so we deal with our issues on our own to prove that we are OK and can handle them. As someone who is very introverted and prefers to recharge by myself, it can often seem like I'm ghosting my friends and family when I'm actually just taking some time to deal with my emotions. This song perfectly encapsulates this sentiment. It feels like the words leapt out of my mind and into the melody!

**"Music is as much a part of my daily routine as sleeping or breathing, the former of which I rarely get enough of but that's a story for another time."**

## “Fat Funny Friend” by Maddie Zahm



*“It’s funny when I think a guy likes me  
And it’s funny when I’m the one who says, “Let’s  
go to eat”  
It’s funny when I’m asked to go out on Halloween  
Dresses and thigh highs, while I hide my body”*

Two years ago I wrote an article about body positivity and that was largely inspired by my issues with my body image. It was one of the first articles that I wrote that was a little more personal and definitely left me feeling vulnerable as to how other people would receive it. The feelings and thoughts I had back then are largely still the same now. I think (or at least hope) that everyone’s relationship with their body fluctuates depending on lots of things. I can certainly attest to that. When I first heard this song, I have to admit I cried a little. Although I don’t relate to every aspect of it, it’s still one of the few songs to which I have memorised the lyrics and which I hold very close to my heart. One of the things I am always very passionate about and try to advocate for in whatever space I am in is the representation of all types of people and bodies. Growing up and never seeing yourself reflected in the singers and actors you look up to can have a profound effect on a person. So having a song articulate some of the things I have sometimes felt was really cathartic.

**“I also look at my piercings, my many multi-coloured bandannas, the different colours I choose for my braids, and my cosy sweaters and cardigans, they are what make up the tapestry of who I am.”**

When I think of all the things that make up who I am, I look at my tattoos. They don’t have a very deep meaning or some subliminal message behind them. They aren’t particularly interesting either. They’re just a way for me to

take control of the image I have of my body. I also look at my piercings, my many multi-coloured bandannas, the different colours I choose for my braids and my cosy sweaters and cardigans. They are what make up the tapestry of who I am. This song spoke to some of the anxieties I have around summer: the idea of having a summer body and dressing up in cute flowery dresses and just how more prominent our bodies become during these three to four months of the year. This song, whilst not always on repeat, definitely features a lot of what I think of body positivity.



## “Falling Behind” by Laufey



*“Cause the sun’s engaged to the sky  
And my best friend’s found a new guy  
I’m only getting older  
I’ve never had a shoulder to cry on  
Someone to call mine  
Everybody’s falling in love and I’m falling  
behind”*

Now that I am in my last year of university, the question of ‘what’s next?’ has started coming up more frequently. A year or two ago, that question would have stressed me a bit, but eventually fallen to the back of my mind. However, now it is the question I’ve started asking myself. When I look at my life

and how far I've come from the anxious-but-excited first-year student I was in 2020 to the still-anxious-and-slightly-less-excited fourth-year student I am now, I can't help but wonder if there's more I could be or should have done. Everyone tells me to take my time, and that the right things will happen at the right time, but what if they don't? What if I am falling behind and will never reach the finish line? A finish line which I'm not entirely sure I know what it looks like. This is perhaps too pessimistic an outlook on life, but I think it is fitting to the contrast between the lyrics and how upbeat -and even romantic- this song is. When I first heard it, I immediately thought of the song that plays in every rom-com set with Europe in summer as its backdrop. It took me to the scene when the main character finally realizes they've met the love of their life. However, the lyrics promptly brought me out of that image. I think many students can relate to the feeling of falling behind no matter in which stage of their university experience they are at.

***“When I look at my life and how far I've come from the anxious but excited first-year student I was in 2020 to the still anxious and slightly less excited fourth-year student I am now in 2023”***

When I look at other people my age drinking Aperol Spritz in front of the Trevi Fountain, swimming in the clear waters of Mykonos and eating macarons in front of the Eiffel Tower, I know that everyone has their own stories. We all have our memories of lives lived, of experiences had, of places visited, of things done, of people loved. It makes me wonder what memories and

experiences I'll look back on whether or not I managed to make the most of my time here and the opportunities I had.

As I wrap up this reflection on my summer and the songs that have entwined themselves into my journey (and Spotify Wrapped), I can't help but feel a sense of gratitude for the journey I've travelled so far. As I face the uncertainties of the future ahead, I am reminded that just like these songs on repeat, life has its rhythms and beats, highs and lows. While I may question if I'm falling behind, I also recognize that every note, every pause, contributes to the unique composition that is life. As I look ahead, I do so with the hope of new memories, experiences, and perhaps even a few more songs to add to my playlist. So, cheers to summer's reflections and the sweet harmonies that guide us through the seasons of our lives!



*Rumbidzai Mudzongo*

**Rumbi is a 4th year International and European Law student. She loves reading historical fiction novels, writing of course and recently exploring her baking skills by baking her friends' birthday cakes!**



# Setting Free

## "Women"

They say we're  
the naive ones,  
yet they run marathons  
to burn nonexistent  
witches.

They say we're  
too sensitive,  
yet yearn to be  
loved by one of us.

They say we're  
too weak  
to rule the government,  
yet beg us  
to carry their children.

We might be as beautiful  
as flowers,  
we might be as kind  
and caring as mothers,

but they are  
yet to discover,  
the flame burning  
inside of us,  
from which they might  
never recover.



## "Atlas"

In a world full of people  
who try to sush her down,  
she pushes away the hands  
that cover her mouth.

Her boundaries, before non-  
existent  
and unidentified,  
now stand strong as walls,  
guarding the treasure she  
owns in her heart.

A sudden realisation  
crosses her face,  
about how  
she used to be her own jailer,  
holding herself a prisoner  
in society's space.

With a faint smile,  
a painting on her canvas,  
she makes promise  
to her younger self,  
that she will do her best,  
to find their long lost atlas.

## "Passenger"

Just like that,  
she moves on again.  
and like all those times  
before,

it doesn't catch her breath  
anymore.

With a stone cold face,  
and a heart chipped on the  
edges,

She reminds herself  
they haven't established  
official pledges.

Naively though,  
one side of her still longs.  
Longs for explanations  
and excuses,  
hoping their behaviour wasn't just  
empty actions and false praises.

Fantasy.  
to be a believer,  
in a world full of clowns,  
without a single word-keeper.

And just like that,  
she continues her search,  
with the flame growing smaller,  
though her heart,  
remains open for the next caller.



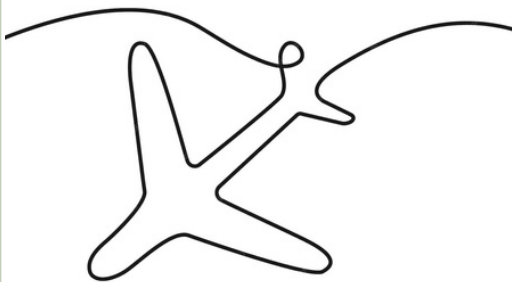
## "Growing up"

She was smiling  
in the picture.  
wearing those funny  
tights;  
Long heavy ponytails  
swinging by her sides.

Only if she knew  
what was waiting for her,  
in a future  
not so bright.

Where did all the fun go?

She took life too seriously,  
leaving magic behind,  
though with her soul still  
kind,  
she returns  
to the fantasies,  
in books she can't put  
aside.



## "Flight"

We think we can't do anything,  
because they told us so,  
yet we dream of those days  
when there won't be any  
boundaries  
to our fantasies.

With the wings broadly spread  
ready to take the leap,  
ready to risk it all,  
we wait for the last call to  
board.  
The sparks flying  
from synapse to synapse,  
transporting neural energy

## "Social anxiety"

In a room full of people,  
surrounded by crowds,  
she never felt more lonely,  
more distant,  
to where her soul grovels.  
To the people she loves,  
to the people she trusts.

Is it possible,  
to have a cup so full,  
that a single drop of a person  
makes her body crumble?

She encountered  
many people  
on her journey,  
many of whom  
she never saw again.  
And only a few,  
for whom she'd travel to,  
back then.

Now,  
when she tries to interact,  
all of her muscles,  
simply contract.  
Especially her tongue.  
Rejecting  
to let out a single sound,  
her eyes screaming  
for a familiar face near to  
be found.

In these moments,  
she realised,  
a body needs a home,  
with real roots,  
no more values compromised.

## "ED"

Every now and then  
she checks in on me.  
Just like all the previous exes  
creeping into our lives,  
she does the same,  
subtly and wise.  
It starts with tiniest signs  
to thoughts that grow in their  
size.



Size,  
that's exactly what she cares  
about.  
About the size of my thighs  
to the size of my meal bites.  
She was successful,  
So many times before.  
Telling me there's nothing for  
me  
to be grateful for,  
unless the scales  
showed perfect sight.  
Thankfully, i know better  
now,  
than to let her eat me up,  
whispering the words of  
perfect crime.

Crime,  
designed against my spark,  
against the very core  
that makes me thrive.  
Thankfully, i know better  
now,  
loving all the imperfections  
that make my body  
Mine.

Making our stomach turn  
upside down,  
with the anticipation of  
stepping out of the crowd.  
To curve our own way,  
in a world dictated to us,  
is to believe unthinkable  
can turn into a new must.

## "Booklover"



What if the only reason  
she reads so much,  
is the fear of what reality  
offers?

Of never experiencing  
true book powers.  
Afraid of knowing exactly  
what she deserves,  
without the ability of meeting  
a person  
who would provide,  
instead of feeding on her  
morals.

Her selflessness and kindness  
are mistaken for products,  
showcased in stores,  
while capitalism exchanges  
the currency for their souls.

Taken for granted  
so many times before,  
she realised  
there is no point in believing  
the space outside the pages,  
when all she dreams of  
receiving,  
keeps only existing in the  
book world.

The hard cover caresses her  
wounds,  
with gentle reminder of what  
she desires,  
without the intention to  
settle for less,  
not even if that leaves her  
barefoot and tired.

## "Reminiscence"

In the surroundings  
of hollow souls,  
yearning for wisdom  
and kind words,  
her chest aches  
a little more,  
a reminder of an  
unattainable goal.

She left her  
family behind,  
in a quest to find  
a better future,  
only to realise  
this journey's lonely nature.

Her childhood memories  
haunting her down,  
especially the one  
with her running around,  
barefoot on the lawn.

What a price  
she would pay,  
to revisit those days,  
one last reckless summer,  
with scratched knees and a  
slow pace.



## "Emotionally unavailable"

She's all he ever dreamed  
about,  
Kind, loving, wise.  
speaks her own heart.

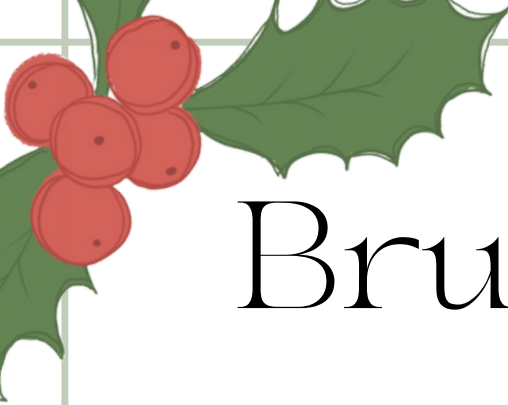
Mistreated by the ones  
who came before him,  
she fears to let him in.  
One slight sign of mistrust,  
of difficulty,  
and she'll be far away,  
fleeing.  
unaware of the fact,  
he desired to keep fighting.

When she talks about  
the things she loves,  
her eyes spark bright flames.  
but once he gets too close,  
he might lose her  
once and for all,  
thinking she plays risky  
games.



*Kristina Capova*

**Kristina is a Communications student who loves reading, writing and making a good cup of coffee. She believes in a world full of equality and compassion, shared through stories and kindness.**



# Brushing teeth

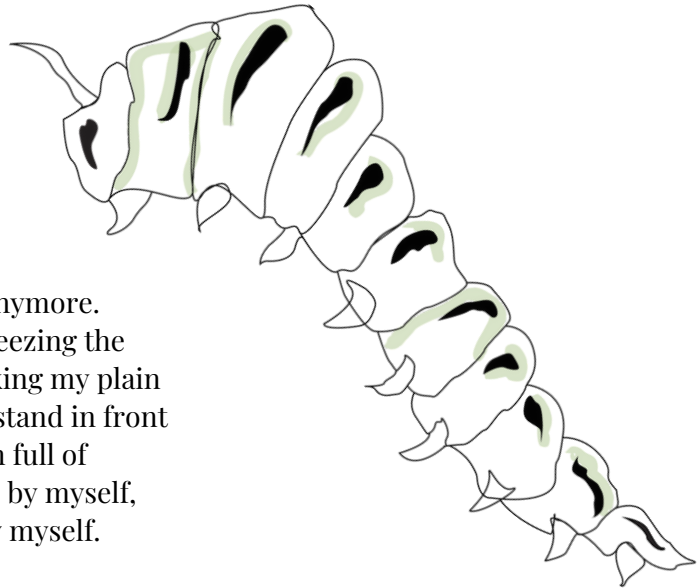
## **“Have you ever tried brushing your teeth while crying?”**

It's such a weird feeling. The gums are burning as if set ablaze, the bristles cutting them sharply. My gums are pretty weak, though I brush well. They bleed easily.

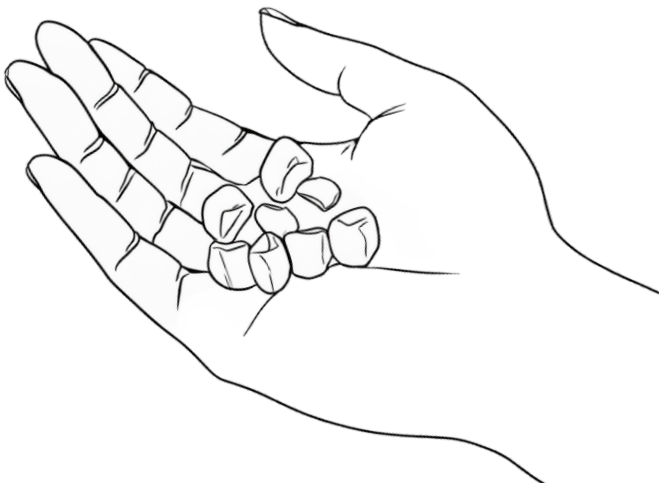
There is red on the bathroom floor. It is instantly washed away by the stream of lukewarm water rushing to the drain. The droplets on my fingers tremble.

There is red on my face. I can barely see it, a veil of tears blinding me. There is white on my left cheek, loathing toothpaste smudged from the corners of my lips. I can't wipe it off, though my hands are damp.

Brushing teeth does not come so easily anymore. It used to be a simple trick: my mom squeezing the tube for me, gently holding my chin, tucking my plain straight hair behind my ear. Now I must stand in front of an uncomfortably big mirror in a room full of caterpillar yellow light, squeeze the tube, by myself, tie my hair, by myself, turn the tap on, by myself.



It's a task, a chore, a tedious process of flicking the light switch, of stepping on cold tiles, of listening to the water hitting the sink and spilling over, splashing on my feet. A never ending routine.



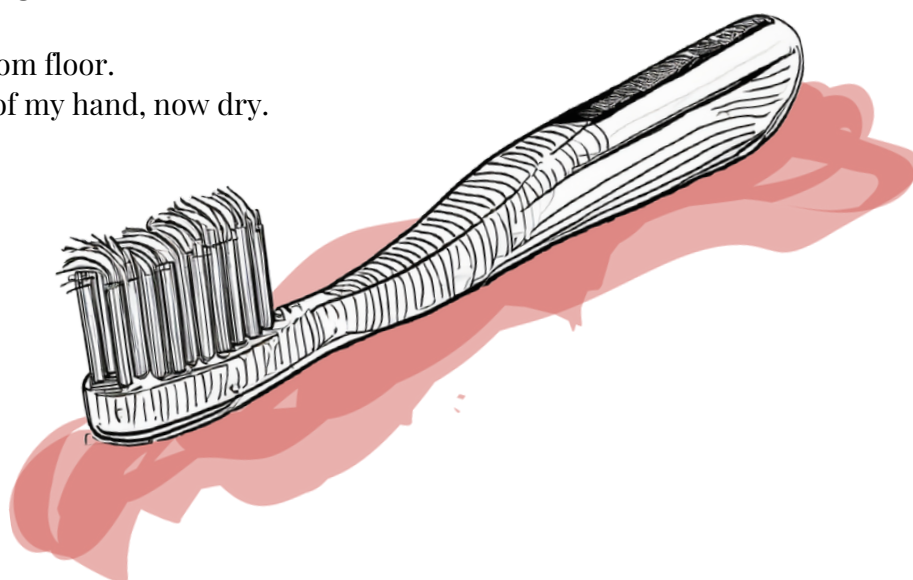
**Brushing teeth feels like a punishment. I stand in front of an uncomfortably big mirror in a room full of caterpillar yellow light. I must stand, I have to stand, curling my toes and holding my toothbrush. It cannot rid me of two black dots on my two front teeth, one perfectly round and the other stretching into a thin line. It's my trademark, my speciality, my mom says.**

Brushing my teeth means I have to look at my reflection. It's unavoidable, an inescapable reality of standing in the bathroom. Taking my glasses off does not help, I am at my most vulnerable. My body is on display, unsightly and small, so fragile. Sometimes I can't find the strength to brush my teeth. I go to bed, passing the bathroom door. I lay awake deep at night and think of my toothbrush. It's black, dotted with colourful stubble. I dream of my teeth falling out, clicking against the sink one by one. Sometimes I cry so hard I can't keep it to myself. I collapse, my knees weak and shaky. I bury my head in the warm skin in front of me, feel soothing breaths on the top of my head.

**“It’s going to be okay,” his voice is soft and calming, “You can cry.”**

And I cry, so ugly and loud, with hiccups and sweat. My gums are ablaze and I'm brushing my teeth, yellowishly poking from my face. I wish I could brush my whole body instead; every corner of it. I wish there were menthol-flavoured sprays and gels so I could take my skin off and wait for a new one to regrow.

There is red on the bathroom floor.  
I wipe it off with the back of my hand, now dry.  
The night is so dark.  
My mouth tastes like mint.



*Pana Khazina*

**Pana is a third-year Communication student who is passionate about giving young voices a platform to speak. She is a betterment enthusiast; making the world a safer and more inclusive place with space for everyone is something she wants to dedicate her life to. Experimenting with different beverage recipes is her part-time hobby.**





# The Beach

**When I realised I was standing in the middle of a beach, my first instinct was to look around for something other than sand. Many people would have sat down and enjoyed the warm rays pouring on their skin, but that was definitely not me.**



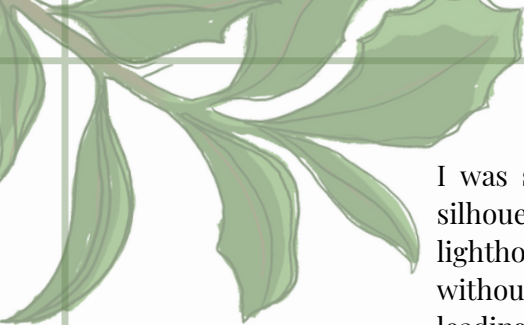
I had never been the kind of person that enjoys the heavy hotness and the sweaty stickiness of summer holidays on the shore, and I don't see any reason why that should have changed at that moment.

Soon I noticed a huge, tall, absolutely-vertical stone wall standing behind my back. About ten steps away and parallel to it was the edge of the foamy water that submerged the warm grains of sand, just to leave them a few moments after. Soon, I found myself looking left and right aimlessly. Somewhere there had to be a restaurant, hotel or any other kind of touristy place, but I couldn't really spot any.

It was clear that my best option was to walk in a random direction, hoping to find anything that might have been too far away for me to see at first glance. As a left-handed person myself, I constantly found that the world we live in tends to favour my mainstream counterparts, so I went against my gut and made the decision most people, I thought, would make if they were in my black sneakers. I turned towards my right.

The sun was right above my head when, in the line of the horizon, I saw the tiniest shape growing from the sand into the sky. I headed towards it, making my best effort to hurry and reach it as fast as possible. However, after a few hard, unsatisfactory and exhausting steps, I realised it wasn't worth it and resigned myself to a slower pace that I could keep up even under the crushing rays.





I was still quite far away when I started making out the silhouette of a huge red-and-white, movie-like, lightless lighthouse. After another look at the barren horizon, but without much further thought, I headed up the steep steps leading to its metal door. I checked there was no one around one more time, before pulling the cold doorknob and facing the humid and obscure vowels of the building.

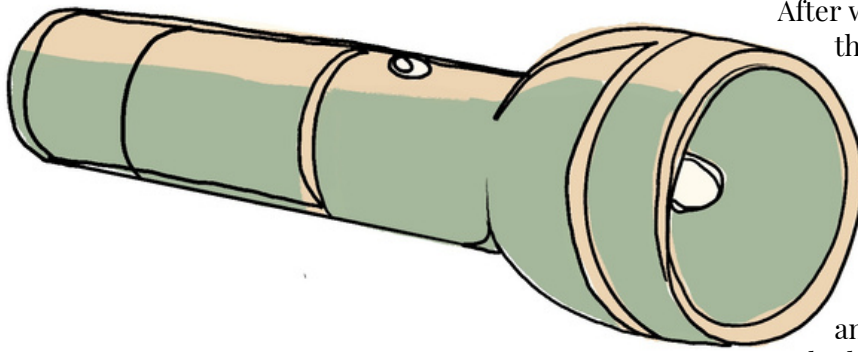
It took me quite a while to get used to the dark insides of the room, but once I did, I started searching for anything that could help me. After some time, I found a lantern buried in the pile of nets, planks of wood and other useless items. Then, I didn't hesitate to head up the spiral staircase, one step at a time, with the poor illumination of the dim, every-now-and-then flickering light ahead of me.

Upon entering, I had been certain that no human being had been inside of the building for a long time. Still, some tiny part of my delusional self was clinging to the hope that there might be someone upstairs and that the damp smell that had welcomed me into the lighthouse was simply the typical odour of such structures. The more logical side of my brain, however, nagged me for having walked all the way up a steep and extremely unstable staircase.

Still, I knew there was a highlight to my newfound height. I quickly headed to the circular terrace, trying to make the most of the view. There had to be something, some other building nearby, some place where the beacon operator was meant to live. No such building was visible anywhere. However, I quickly noticed one difference about the beach. The whole area around the tower was covered by water. I could hear the strong sound of the waves violently crashing against the wall of stone and the fuzziness of the foam. I was certainly trapped inside.

A strong breeze messed up my hair as the upper half of my body stretched off the edge of the lighthouse in an effort to see something that I had missed before: maybe a tiny beach house on the horizon or the faintest shadow of a roof behind the rocks. There was nothing; not a single human-made item as far as my eyes could see. Just the endless sand. *Why the hell is this here then?*





After wandering around the top floor of the building, I carefully made my way back downstairs, lantern in hand, to see if there was any map or phone -or anything at all- that could help me rejoin humankind. I wasn't really in a position to be picky. So, I knew I had to make the most out of anything some random light-keeper had chosen to leave behind and, considering the circumstances, I was definitely up for the challenge.

I had already looked around for a while and found virtually nothing more than a pair of massive boots, when I realised that the entrance door to the lighthouse was closed. Even if I didn't remember it too vividly, I was overwhelmed by the feeling that I had left it open when I walked inside.

I tried to mentally retrace my steps: I had pulled from the heavy piece of hinged metal, had walked into the darkness and, once my eyes adjusted to the darkness, had gone directly to the piles of slightly illuminated items lying around. I hadn't cared about anyone finding me in there nor had I taken the time to shut the door. It took me another attempt at opening it to confirm that neither the breeze nor an involuntary reflex would have been able to close it. Hope told me that this had to mean something, so I opened the door wide and sat at a random -rather high- step of the staircase, turned off the flashlight and tried to disguise myself in the shadows to keep watch.

It didn't take me more than a couple of minutes to realise that being a hawk-eyed gatekeeper in a desolated tower was the most boring task on

the face of the earth -or at least one of the most boring I had ever encountered thus far. There was no way I'd be able to do

it as attentively as I had hoped without killing time by doing something else. First, I thought of humming. However, soon, I realised anyone or anything around would be alerted of my presence by the sounds. There was little the shadows could do for me once someone was actively trying to find me. So, instead, I imagined that the waves crashing against the steps were talking. I wondered what they would say, as I listened to their repetitive hushes and soft watery sounds searching for anything that could vaguely resemble words.

I had gotten quite good at it when I noticed that the tide was low enough for the water to be out of sight from my spot up the staircase. It took me a moment to stand up and another one to reach the lowest step of the tiny staircase leading to the beach.

Everywhere as far as my eyes could see, the water was moving back, leaving a wide strip of beach made mainly of wet sand and cracked seashells. After reaching the ground level, I looked at the horizon for a moment trying to figure out a plan and then headed towards the side of the beach I had come from. Something in me told me that choosing to walk towards the right side at the very beginning had been a mistake.



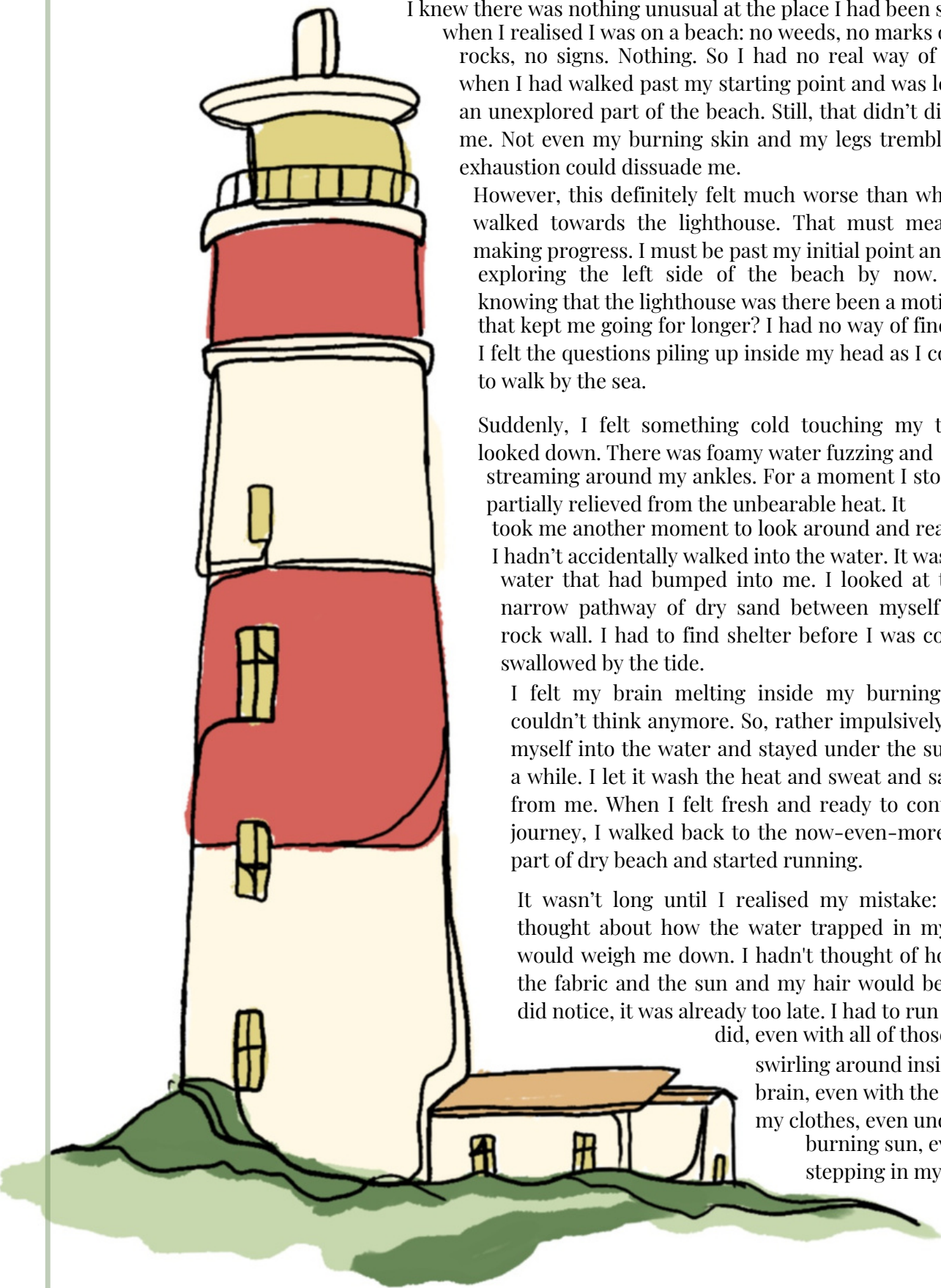
I knew there was nothing unusual at the place I had been standing when I realised I was on a beach: no weeds, no marks on the rocks, no signs. Nothing. So I had no real way of knowing when I had walked past my starting point and was looking at an unexplored part of the beach. Still, that didn't discourage me. Not even my burning skin and my legs trembling from exhaustion could dissuade me.

However, this definitely felt much worse than when I had walked towards the lighthouse. That must mean I was making progress. I must be past my initial point and exploring the left side of the beach by now. Or had knowing that the lighthouse was there been a motivator that kept me going for longer? I had no way of finding out. I felt the questions piling up inside my head as I continued to walk by the sea.

Suddenly, I felt something cold touching my toes and looked down. There was foamy water fuzzing and streaming around my ankles. For a moment I stood there, partially relieved from the unbearable heat. It took me another moment to look around and realise that I hadn't accidentally walked into the water. It was the water that had bumped into me. I looked at the quite narrow pathway of dry sand between myself and the rock wall. I had to find shelter before I was completely swallowed by the tide.

I felt my brain melting inside my burning scalp. I couldn't think anymore. So, rather impulsively, I threw myself into the water and stayed under the surface for a while. I let it wash the heat and sweat and sand away from me. When I felt fresh and ready to continue my journey, I walked back to the now-even-more-narrow part of dry beach and started running.

It wasn't long until I realised my mistake: I hadn't thought about how the water trapped in my clothes would weigh me down. I hadn't thought of how sticky the fabric and the sun and my hair would be. When I did notice, it was already too late. I had to run and I did, even with all of those thoughts swirling around inside my brain, even with the weight of my clothes, even under the still burning sun, even while stepping in my squishy shoes.



After what felt like a lifetime of pushing through my weariness to keep up the fastest pace I could manage, I saw the tiniest shape growing from the sand and into the sky. I headed towards it, making my best effort to hurry and reach it as fast as possible. However, after a few hard, unsatisfactory and exhausting steps, I realised it wasn't worth it and resigned myself to a slower pace that I could keep up even on the sand, even under the crushing rays and even with the water swirling around my shoes and my bare ankles.

I was still quite far away when I started making out the silhouette of a huge red-and-white, movie-like, lightless lighthouse. *Is it the same one I was in a while ago?* I had no idea. After a quick glimpse over my shoulder in which I - obviously- couldn't see the other beacon, but without much further thought, I headed to the steep steps leading to its metal door.

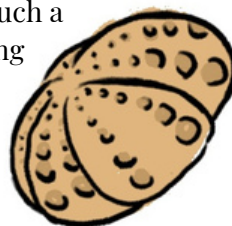
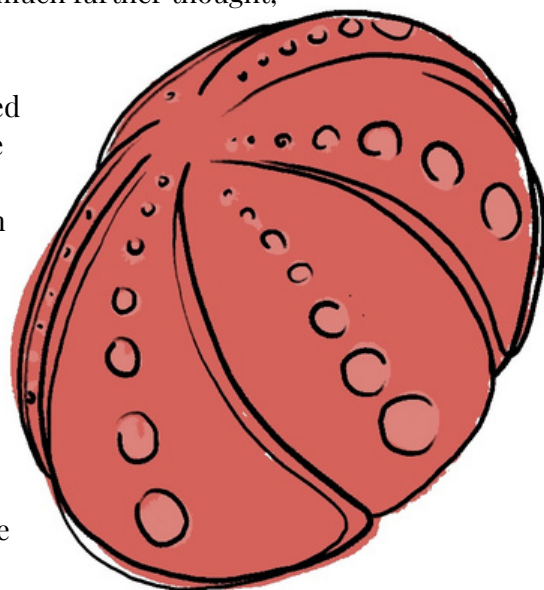
*There is no way it is the same one,* I told myself as I pulled from the cold doorknob to face the humid and obscure vowels of the building. For some reason, this building didn't seem as uninhabited as the previous one. It even seemed welcoming to some extent: the door wasn't as hard to move and I found a flashlight quite quickly, lying around on a random step of the spiral staircase. *Where did I leave mine last time around?*

I couldn't really remember the answer, but something in me told me I had left it on the staircase at some point. After a while, I realised there was no use in trying to remember what I knew I had already forgotten. Besides, I was quite sure I wouldn't be able to think about anything, being as tired as I was. So I walked up the stairs to the top floor, where I made myself an improvised bed with a moist blanket that smelled like humidity and I closed my eyes. Almost immediately I fell into a deep sleep.

When I woke up, I felt dizzy and confused. My memory and sight were foggy. I wasn't quite sure where I was or why I was inhaling such a putrid smell. However, after rubbing my eyes and sitting up, it all started to come back to me: the beach, the sun, the tides, the lighthouse. *How long was I asleep?* I wondered as I stood up and headed towards the terrace.

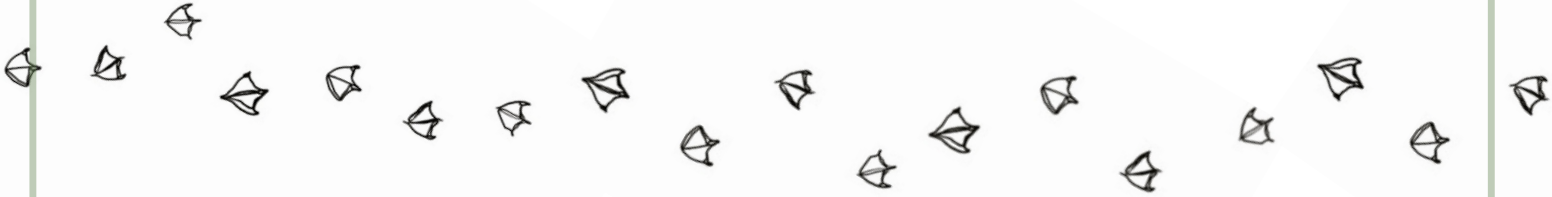
The sun was shining bright and hot and a very subtle breeze moved my hair, when I looked down at the beach only to find the tide was quite low and there was a pretty wide pathway of dry sand. Because I had no idea how long I'd slept, I didn't really know if the tide was going to start rising soon or if I still had time. Still, the more I moved forward, the faster I would find other people. Plus, I would probably be able to move faster after my nap.

I ran down the spiral staircase, leaving the blanket contorted into some kind of bow right in the room upstairs, a piece of rope on the eighth step and the lantern standing on the third step. There was no way these items



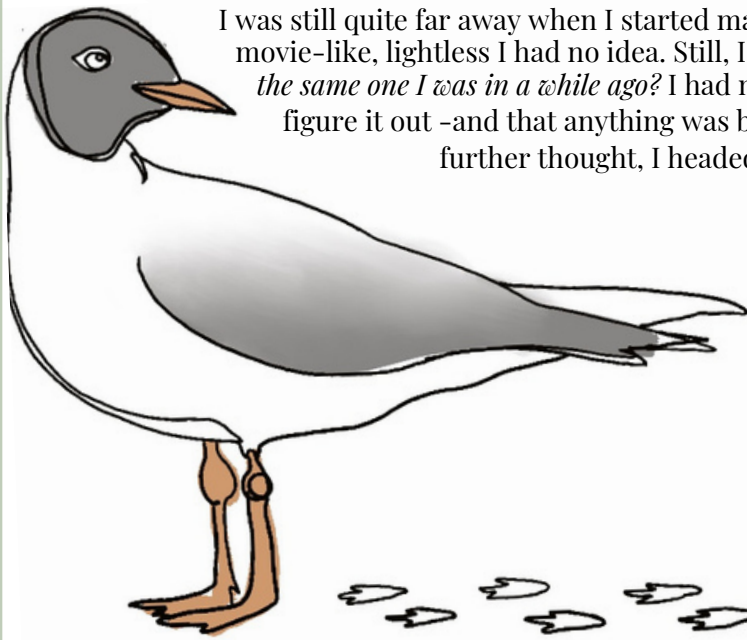
would be like this in another place just by chance. So, if after walking I found this same organisation, I'd know I had just been walking in circles on an island. If not, then there'd still be hope of getting out of there.

I rushed outside and started walking on the dry sand, in a straight line in the middle between the sea and the wall of rock. My knowledge about masses of water was pretty average -which is another way of saying I barely understood what a tide was, let alone how it worked- but my reasoning seemed pretty logical: when the water had covered half the distance to the wall, half the time would have passed. So I stuck with it. It wasn't long before my feet started getting wet. I tightened my pace as much as I could, but there was only so much I could do when I felt my skin burning under the sun and my legs trembling from exhaustion.



This definitely felt much worse than my previous excursion. That could only mean I was walking on a longer patch of beach. *Only a little further*, I told myself. When the stripe of dry sand had shrunk beyond what I was comfortable with, I saw the tiniest shape growing from the water and into the sky. I headed towards it, making my best effort to hurry and reach it as fast as possible. However, after a few hard, unsatisfactory and exhausting steps, and feeling the resistance of the water, I resigned myself to wading at a slower pace, one I could keep up even when the water level reached my waist.

I was still quite far away when I started making out the silhouette of a huge red-and-white, movie-like, lightless lighthouse. Still, I reminded myself I had a plan to figure it out -and that anything was better than drowning. So, without much further thought, I headed up the steep steps leading to its metal door.



*Ju Laclau Massaglia*

**A curious student and an adventurous reader who likes to travel around in search of little pieces of herself.**



# Finding the Charm



## “crying in the rain”

Why do people hate the rain?  
Who decided that it's depressing?  
What if we are looking  
from the wrong perspective?

Nature also has emotions,  
and it is so beautiful.  
How nature can be happy, sad, furious -  
and even lonely.  
Why did we decided its tears  
have to be seen as something bad?

What if nature is actually crying with you?  
On bad days, when you need support.  
What if nature is crying with you, for you?  
And when you are happy?  
What if nature cannot resist your happiness  
and bursts into tears out of pride for you.

What if the rain is actually not that bad  
And it all depends on our perspective?  
The way we decide to see things  
determines their value.

## “light soul”

Even if you are in a rush  
Stop and  
look around,  
calm your mind,  
free your soul.

Give yourself a moment  
of emptiness.

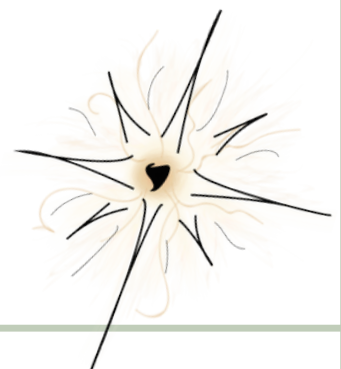
A moment only for you,  
without any worries.

A moment to admire  
what you happen to see  
and be grateful.

Thank yourself,  
for how far you have come,  
for the journey you took  
and for the one  
that you will be choosing  
from now on.

Be grateful,  
for all the oppurtunities you had.  
Take a deep breath,  
refresh  
and empower yourself  
for the new ones that are coming.

Give yourself a moment  
of calmness  
and lightness  
for the soul.

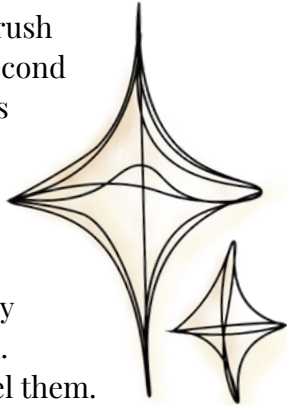




## “charm in details”

Exactly when  
the sky has its prettiest colours  
you need to stop.

Even when in a rush  
just stop for a second  
and let your eyes  
admire them.

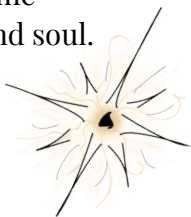


Let your mind  
explore them.  
Let your memory  
remember them.  
Let your soul feel them.

The colours  
that the sky chose today,  
this exact blend,  
is unique.  
It will never be the same again,  
and you were so close  
to missing it.  
And we all,  
everyday,  
are so close  
to losing the unique things  
that are happening around us.

all the time.  
everyday.

And it's such a loss  
that we pay huge attention  
only to the things  
that don't deserve our energy,  
time  
and soul.

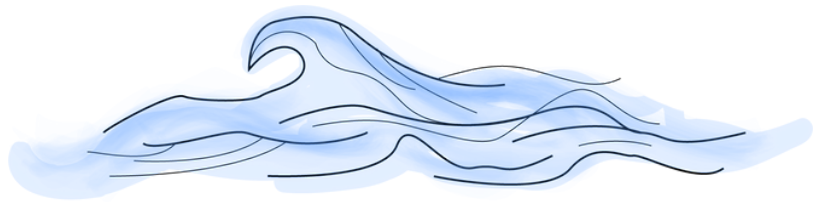


## “shore's perspective”

In those days when nothing feels right  
Remember  
Rocks wouldn't be that beautiful  
if the waves weren't hitting them,  
if the salt wasn't eating them,  
if the wind wasn't scratching them

or maybe it is because  
the waves are hugging them  
and the salt is kissing them  
and the wind is dancing with them.

What if everything  
that you think is torturing you  
is actually shaping you,  
and making you beautiful?



*Elizabet  
Vrentcheva*

**Betty is a second  
year UXD student.  
Creativity in all  
kinds of forms and  
shapes is what her  
soul always searches for.**



# MISSION 57: *Merry Christmas!*

The Christmas season is here! If you don't believe it, look at the decorations that are all around town and the huge tree that was set a week ago in the main square. You would think that the snow would stop people from getting ready for the winter festivities, but it didn't, rather it motivated them to compete against each other to see who can hang the Christmas lights better.

**And they say Christmas is all about being good, right? It's about being with your loved ones. Or is that tradition dead too?**

Or maybe it is about the smallest things: those little things that make your soul light up after a long day, those little things that put a smile on your face. Like planning to murder someone. Just joking! Or am I?

Anyway, where were we? Oh yes, we were talking about Christmas. In particular, about two days before Christmas Eve around 12:00, when I was sitting in a café. It was a busy morning. Everyone was running around in the city centre to get last minute presents. You can, of course, be one of those people who actually get Christmas presents in advance, but not Khrione. Nope, not her. In spite of her anxious nature and her concerning obsession with planning everything in advance, she tended to let herself lag behind during the Christmas season.

After enjoying a well-deserved coffee break, she returned to the hunt ignoring her phone which kept buzzing every now and then with messages about the Christmas party.

"WHERE ARE YOU? AND WHY ARE YOU NOT PICKING UP?" she heard as soon as she picked up the phone. She had finally decided to talk to Lara after 10 missed calls.

"I am... a little busy at the moment," said Khrione. She squeezed herself through the crowd to get to one of the shops on her list. The only problem was it was going to take her hours to get inside.

"Are you doing last Christmas shopping again?!" asked Lara, hearing the noise on the other side of the line. "You told me you wouldn't do this again after last year."

"I was busy, okay?" responded Khrione with a loud sigh, moving on to the next shop on the list. "I was crammed with work. Do I have to remind you that I don't have the same luxury you do?"

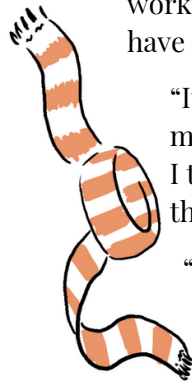
"It's your fault you weren't gifted like me," teased Lara. "How many times did I tell you to leave that office job and live the artist's life with me?"

"Too many times," replied Khrione and they both laughed. "I hope you didn't forget about the party. My place at 8 and not a minute later."

"I'll call you later," said Khrione, before the noise from the people passing by her became too loud.

"I hope you are going to dress-" started Lara, but Khrione had already ended the call. Lara had this habit of reminding her not to come dressed up as a librarian, which she did not. It wasn't her fault they were always hanging out after work. Not that she was a librarian, not lately at least.

As every other year, Christmas was going to be spent with her friends, and the friends of their friends, who were actually more than friends. Lara had just got into a new relationship last month "for the 'Winter Season'", as she liked to say. Her brother, Marcus, was already in a two-year-long relationship and Philip was bringing another good friend of his. As boring as it may seem, the group had met in college and been inseparable ever since. Especially her and Lara, despite their completely opposite natures.



After Khrione made sure everything was checked off the list, she headed home to wrap everything in nice Christmas wrapping and ribbons. She was the most excited about the gift she had made for Lara: an album with the photos from their last trip together to France. It was a memorable one and Khrione found herself laughing when she saw the photo of them making silly poses in front of the Eiffel Tower and the photo where Lara was trying to break some of the locks from the so-called 'Love bridge' or Pont des Arts.

Sometimes Khrione wished it could remain like this forever, but she knew eventually all of them were going to settle down. She suspected Marcus wanted to propose to his girlfriend at the party, Philip has been telling her about a girl he was talking to at work and even Lara was in somewhat of a relationship. But who needs that 'special someone' when Khrione already had the best friends she could ever have, right?

The night of the party, Khrione headed to Lara's apartment as promised. As she expected, she was the first to arrive. "What did you buy me?" asked Lara, inspecting Khrione's bag before she could even enter.

"You'll have to wait and see," replied Khrione with a playful smirk. Lara sighed and frowned like a five-year-old. The other guests arrived shortly and, after Lara finally stopped talking about how amazing and charming her new boyfriend was, they exchanged the presents. Lara got very excited about the album and the boys laughed when they found in their bags their new ugly Christmas sweaters.

"I can't believe this!" said Philip, as he pulled out a green sweater with a Golden Retriever with a red nose attached to a sleigh. Khrione laughed. However, Marcus and his girlfriend started talking about why they didn't think about this idea themselves. As one would expect the argument escalated quickly into a fight, so Khrione decided to go pour herself a drink in the kitchen.

"Pour me one of those too," said Philip, holding his cup towards her. "There is no Christmas without family drama, am I right?"

"You mean without a circus." Khrione giggled and took a sip of her drink. Suddenly her phone buzzed in her pocket: first one message, then another one and another one.

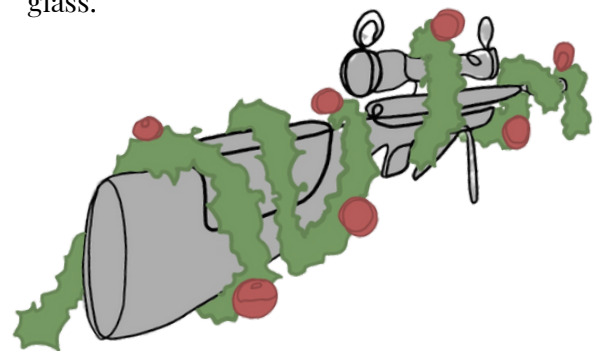
She reached for her phone and soon her ~~Unknown number~~ **Unknown number**: Enjoying the party, Agent White? It would be a shame if you didn't since this might be your last.

**Unknown number**: That's why I want to deliver my present for you personally this year. Be ready to smile at me when you notice the red dot.

**Unknown number** : Oh yes, I almost forgot: merry Christmas!

Khrione looked down to her chest and noticed a small red dot glitching. She had made sure her location was untraceable before arriving at Lara's, as she did every time. Still, somehow her lovely enemy had found a way past that. Years of enduring Lara's nagging about why she was working so much seemed like a waste

since they all were going to die. "Khrione? What's that?" asked Philip, unsure of whether he was imagining the red dot because of all the eggnog he had been drinking. "Get down!" was the last thing Khrione yelled before a bullet shattered the glass.



*Theodora-Maria Mrejeru*

**Hi! I am a third year law student at THUAS and I am happy to be part of Collective. When I am not reading law books I actually enjoy reading fiction, traveling and escaping reality.**

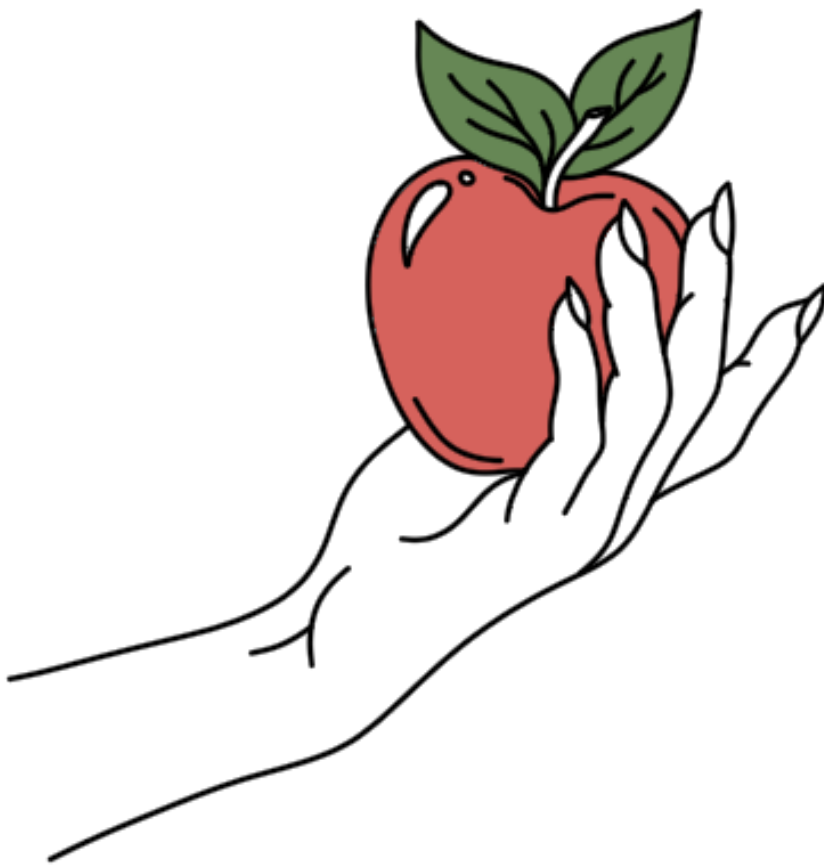


# *From Eden*



Do you cherry pick your sins when you enter the garden of Eden?

Do you always end up reaching for me in the end?



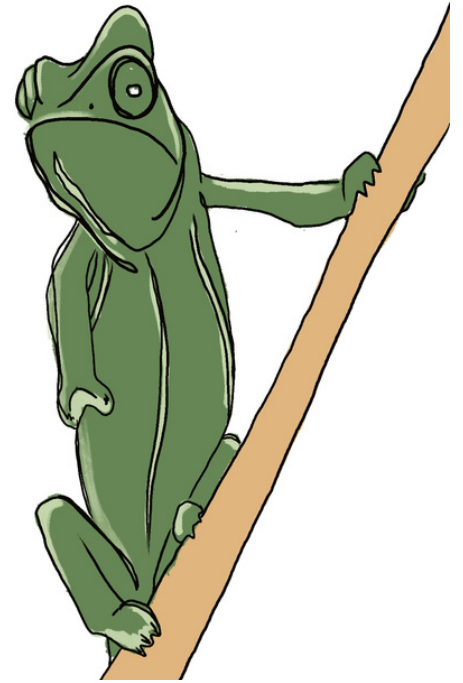
*Mairah Khan*

**Aspiring human  
and poet.**





# ARE YOU READY TO BE A CHAMELEON?



In a world where stability and predictability were often held as virtues, there was a maverick named Anna. She was a true hustler, a spirited wanderer of career paths, and a relentless pursuer of her dreams. Anna was a job hopper, a career switcher. She revelled in the unpredictable dance of her own destiny. Would she ever stop? That was a question even she couldn't answer. One thing was for sure: she was born to tirelessly chase her aspirations.

As Anna embarked on her unconventional journey, she encountered the curious glances and judgmental whispers of those who couldn't comprehend her boundless drive. Still, she didn't just accept those judgments; she flaunted them with pride. Anna knew that her

relentless desire to explore new horizons was a gift, a unique trait that set her apart. She was a true polymath, lifelong learner, and she refused to be confined by the boundaries of a single career path.

With a decade of diverse experiences etched into her life's canvas, Anna's story was a rollercoaster ride of thrills and adventure.

She had danced with the world of movies, conjured magic as a broadcast engineer, shared the wealth of her knowledge as an associate professor, and breathed life into the world of music as a teacher.

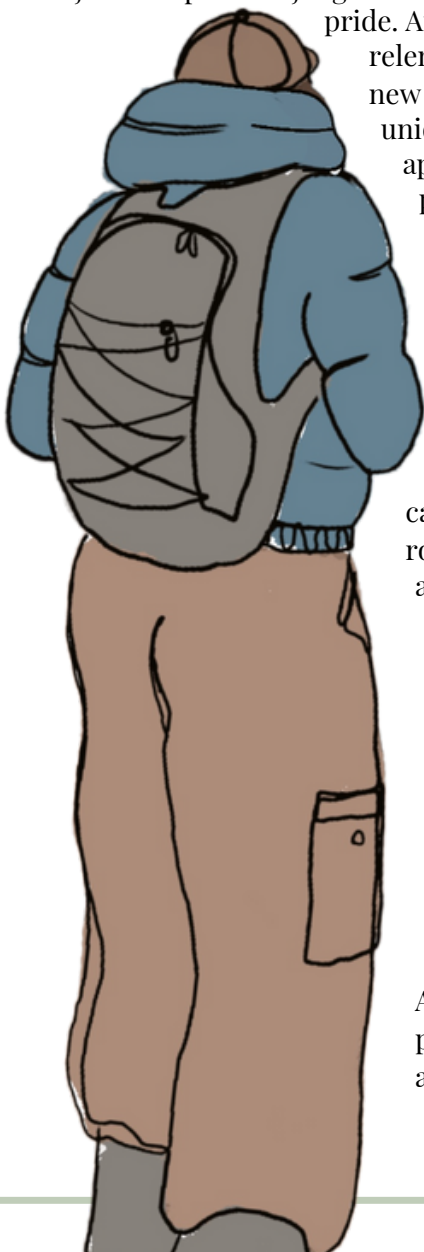
Anna's analytical prowess had seen her analyse data as a bank

analyst, and she had mastered the art of social media management.

Still, Anna was never one to rest on her laurels. In the heart of the year 2020, when the world was grappling with a global lockdown, she decided to make one of her most audacious career leaps. She bid farewell to the bustling streets of New Delhi and found herself amidst the serene landscapes of Kerala, where she embraced the role of a Senior Service Associate. Just months later, her restless spirit led her to cross the sea to the Netherlands.

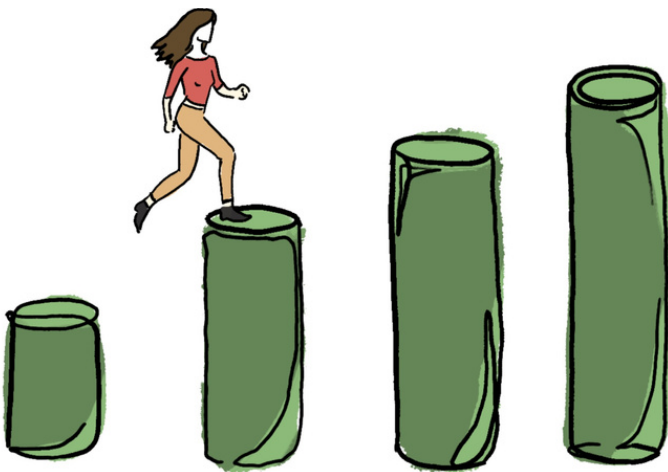
She shuttled back and forth, navigating the labyrinth of pandemic-induced bureaucracy, and, in the end, she earned her right to reside in the Netherlands. Still, to secure her visa, she needed to take a basic Dutch exam. Determined to learn, she began her education with children's storybooks and embarked on daily adventures at local supermarkets. One word at a time, one interaction at a time, Anna built the bridge to her new life.

As each Dutch word nestled itself in her vocabulary and as each bureaucratic hurdle fell by the wayside, Anna's foundation for the next leap grew stronger. She took the Dutch exam and got her visa. With determination burning like an eternal flame within her, she ventured deeper into the heart of the Netherlands. But her journey was far from over.



Anna set her sights on the job market and applied to hundreds of positions, never losing faith in her ability to adapt and conquer. She believed her extensive academic background in music, engineering, and literature, coupled with her rich tapestry of work experiences, would open doors of opportunity in this foreign land.

After having been a professor, she thought she would find a teaching job. She had a knack for storytelling, and her students had always loved her lessons. Still, every university or school that she reached out to rejected her application. The reason was that she didn't have enough experience to work in the Dutch educational system. She was broken. She decided to pursue her PhD, which would enable her to finally start teaching.



However, soon she realised that couldn't happen: her Master's certificate was evaluated by the Dutch system as a 4-year bachelor. All because she had gotten married to a Dutch national. She was tired, broke, and exhausted. She felt like giving up.

She was left with no job and nothing to look forward to. Anna felt like her life was getting engulfed by a huge dark cloud. She saw no light and no future ahead. She started working at Picnic, but very soon she realised the job at Picnic was not meant for her. She started looking for other jobs, but her email box got flooded with rejection emails.

Every single one of them read "Fluency in Dutch is required." Anna slowly felt that she was losing her ground.

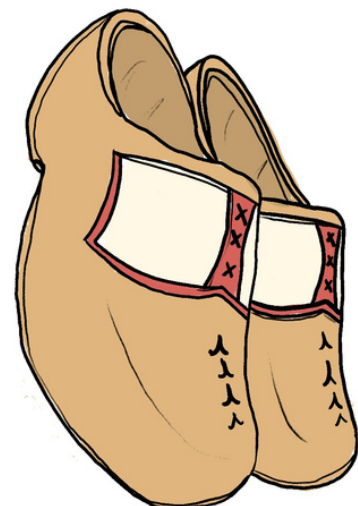


Among those many jobs, one was the job offer to Bunq. Even though Anna had good literary skills, she struggled with maths. Still, as they say, necessity is the mother of invention. She studied for her aptitude trial exams, and she got her first bank exam. Her efforts paid off, and she passed with flying colours. They asked her to be ready for a second round. So she went to Amsterdam to complete more exams. The same day, she cleared her interview.

Something she never thought would happen happened that day: Anna was hired as a banker. Finally, the doors of opportunity swung wide open at Bunq, where she leapt from the role of a Broadcast Engineer to that of a Banker. It was a transition she hadn't anticipated, but it was just the opening act. It was not an easy one; every day was more challenging and required more learning than the one before. Everything seemed to be going well, except that Anna struggled to sugarcoat things the way she was asked. Still, she enjoyed being pushed out of her comfort zone.

**She was just getting settled into the job when she met another wall.**

Anna got laid off due to the recession. She was lost again. With everything seeming dark and hard, she searched for a light and decided to pursue her passion for writing.



She started writing on LinkedIn, and that changed her life. People started reaching out for freelance work. So, she decided to join a Startup NGO, where she wore the hat of a Social Media Manager, wading into the ever-evolving world of digital content and engagement. She also embraced the mantle of a student, rekindling her passion for learning. After that, her journey took a fascinating twist as she ventured into the realm of ghostwriting, weaving words for others. Anna never thought her ghostwriting income would one day become her main source of income. She wrote an educational book for one of her US clients. And since then, she hasn't had to look back on her ghostwriting profession. However, her freelancing life took a great swirl.

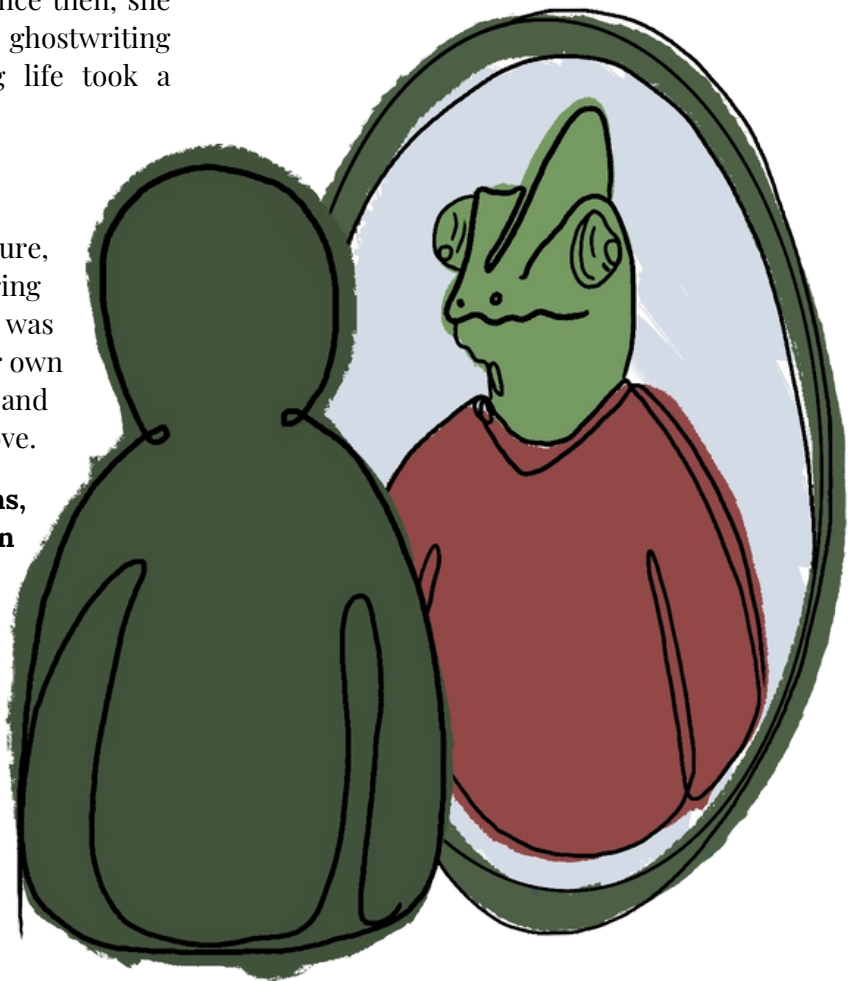
Life, for Anna, was a masterpiece in the making. It was an extraordinary adventure, where relentless curiosity and unwavering reinvention were the guiding stars. She was crafting a unique existence, carving her own path through the wilderness of choices and shaping her destiny with every bold move.

**Remember: When life gives you lemons, find some vodka and salt and a person to celebrate with. Don't wait for the opportunity to knock on your door; just go ahead and make one.**

Now, Anna embarked on the new chapter of her life at THUAS, leaving us with a lingering question: in a world brimming with possibilities, will you dare to embrace the unknown, to experiment with your own life, and to create a narrative that is uniquely yours?

Anna has shown us that the journey of a hustler is not just a life well-lived but a legacy well-crafted.

So, are you ready to become a chameleon?



*Shilpa Nelson Aka Annabellez*

**I am a first year ICM student. This is my first time being part of a magazine. I am a ghostwriter and a musician. I love reading horror and mysteries, which is why my pen name is Annabellez. I enjoy being a ghost.**





# Share Your Thoughts

*Calling all writers!*

Are you Interested?  
Shape the dialogue!  
Send us an email at:

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# WHO, WHAT, WHERE

Finding The Student Service You Are Searching For

Talk to....

**MENTOR OR SLB'ER**

Questions about your program or the curriculum?  
Or are you struggling in planning?

Talk to....

**FACULTY OFFICE**

Questions about your schedule, signing up for an exam, grades, or Osiris

**FACULTY**

---

Talk to....

**SOMEONE YOU TRUST**

Are you dealing with inappropriate behaviour at THUAS?

Talk to....

**OMBUDSMAN**

Do you need assistance in going into objections and appeals?

Talk to....

**STUDY & CAREER CENTRE**

Are you having doubts about your study choice?

**STUDENT SERVICE**

---

Go to the...

**LEGAL PROTECTION FACILITIES**

Do you have a complaint?  
Do you disagree with a decision made by THUAS?

Talk to....

**DEAN**

Do you have:

- A study delay? or concerns about money?
- Need special facilities due to your circumstances?
- Questions about college regulations, financial or legal?
- Want to get in touch with a student psychologist?

Talk to....

**STUDENT NET TRAINING**

Are you looking for a training in the area of personal effectivity?



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POLINA KHAZINA



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## DESIGN



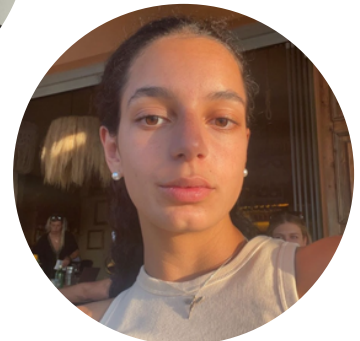
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MIDORI FUCHS



AMARIS H. ROUSSE



ELIZABETH NENTCHEVA

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Who knows who **YOU** might inspire?



This is your page. What inspired you? What is on your mind? Consider this a safe place to add your thoughts.

**Once you feel ready to share it with the world, reach out to us and send us what you wrote (anonymous or not).**

# Get Involved

**CARE**  
*Caribbean*  
*Empowerment Network*  
*@care\_hhs*



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**ILSA**  
*International Law*  
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*International Business*  
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*Safety & Security*  
*Management Studies*  
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**Agora**  
*International Public*  
*Management*  
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**S.N.A.P**  
*Survivor Network Assault*  
*Protection*  
*@snap\_hhs*

## Impressum

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