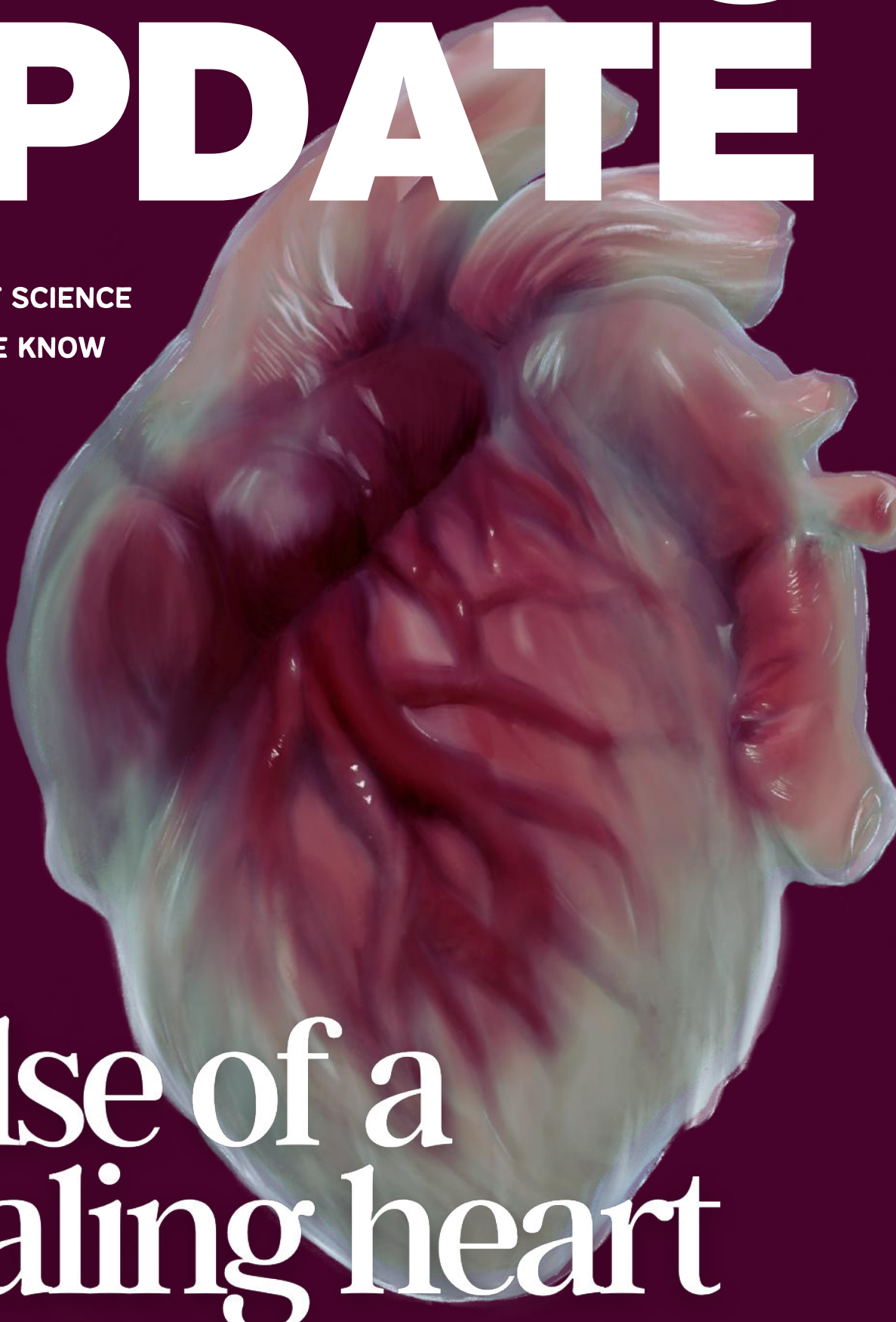
ISSUE 001 WINTER 2024

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Pulse of a healing heart

THE UPLANDS UPDATE

WINTER, JANUARY 2024.

Pulse of a healing heart: The paradox of mistakes

Have you ever wondered about the paradoxical nature of mistakes?

How strange that these obstacles in progress carve a new path- one that leads towards growth. Paradoxically, without mistakes, there is no success.

As we step into the new year of 2024 and look forward towards new beginnings, we also spend time looking back retrospectively at the year that had passed. We leaf through the pages of our memories and our old photographs. In those moments of reflection, the most prominent are our mistakes.

Though we may cringe, this remembrance ensures that we do not repeat the same errors. This self-awareness helps us become more rational, wiser and have better judgement. Every action, every mistake has been an invisible string, leading us to where we are now.

The ability for humans to bounce back conveys our capacity for change, growth and renewal. It takes great courage, empathy and wisdom to confront ourselves and acknowledge our mistakes. Only at our most vulnerable, do we truly transform and heal.

The pulse of a healing heart explores the beauty of human mistakes, and more importantly, the journey to redemption, which makes us who we are. 2024 is the time to redefine our relationship with mistakes, viewing them as guides adding depth to our journey in life.

We invite you to explore the imperfect, the flaws that make us human, and the resilient spirit that drives humans to correct our missteps. May 2024 be a year of growth, even with mistakes and all.

Elysse Siau, Editor-In-Chief

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BELOVED CHARACTER ENTERS PUBLIC DOMAIN!

By Yu You Phuah

On January 1, 2024, classic and beloved character Mickey Mouse entered the public domain! Artists all around the world have their creative gears spinning, eager to build new worlds and stories surrounding this beloved 95-year-old icon. However, to lifelong fans who prefer their favourite character to remain comforting and unvarying: you may be disappointed. As fresh ideas continue to emerge, it seems that many have decided to completely alter this persona and go with a strikingly contrasting genre — horror. From a horror-comedy film featuring Mickey as a slasher to a first-person shooter (FPS) where you play as Mickey himself, new projects aim to fuse nostalgia with fear - a strange and rare combination. As 2024 kickstarts with these interesting works, how will people all around the world attempt to expand and challenge their imagination even further? Only time will tell!

SOCIAL MEDIA

By Emeline Ang

In the last 20 years, social media has become and ever-increasing prominent part of our lives. Through its eliciting of excessive dopamine releases from us users, it has augmented its following, hence why 58% of the global population use social media now in 2024. However, its great following is followed closely by many dangers. Users willingly divulge personal information, habits, and locations, often underestimating the risks associated with sharing such details online. Social media platforms continuously collect and utilise this data for targeted advertising and this presents a significant threat to individual privacy. Such commodification of personal information raises questions and doubts concerning who has access to our digital lives and how our privacy may be compromised as technology continues to thrive. One glaring question still prevails: do we control social media, or does it control us?

ds Update

ALK OF OWN!

A MURDERER WALKS FREE? AND IS LIKED BY EVERYONE?

By Angel Sun

Could conspiring murder - not just any murder, the murder of your own mother - still make you favourable to the public? The answer might surprise you. Gypsy Rose Blanchard was recently released from prison, after serving eight and a half years on second degree murder. Turns out, her mother was believed to suffer from a rare mental health disorder. Known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy, they act as if their child has a medical condition that needs attention so that they'd receive attention and sympathy. Gypsy Rose had her entire life monitored by her mother. She had enough, and ended up asking her boyfriend Nicholas Godejohn to murder her mother. He did. However, now walking free, she reflects on her childhood: "I'm glad I am out of that situation, but I'm not happy she's dead," Gypsy responded to Dr Phil. Could she have saved herself from the situation another way? Should she have been sentenced at all? It seems to be a heated topic of discussion, on various online platforms.

COMMERCIAL COURSE TO THE MOON

By Elysse Siau

In a momentous return to lunar exploration, the US has launched another lunar lander after a hiatus of more than 50 years. First developed in 2014, the Vulcan Centaur was launched from the iconic Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, and its payload is now on course to the moon.

Paying homage to the fastest-flying bird on the earth, Peregrine may be the first-ever private mission to land on the moon. Lunar landing has only ever been achieved by the Soviet Union, the United States, China, and India, with more than half of the attempted missions being unsuccessful.

Peregrine's significance extends beyond a new lunar landing attempt. Not only does it carry a payload of NASA experiments, but it also brings a piece of Everest and even human remains to the moon. Peregrine is the first step towards commercial transportation to the moon.

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A heartfelt journey
By Michelle Wang

Healing mentally with science
By Amelia Li

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Healing mentall with science

By Amelia Li

Mental disorders cause psychological and behavioural stress with varying severities, affecting the lives of about one billion people worldwide. These mental disorders can be caused by environmental factors, genes, and lifestyle choices. However, many individuals experiencing mental issues do not have access to professional treatment and often face stigma.

Science is the systematic study of the physical world, a pursuit of knowledge through observation and experimentation. As technology and science advance further, this expertise can aid in the recovery of mental disorders by providing healthcare specialists with the resources to better understand the human psyche.

One of the most recent milestones in science-aided mental recovery can be found in the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store. Numerous apps such as Smiling Mind, PTSD Coach, Sanvello, and other apps help their users to recover from mental disorders such as depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or anxiety by using proven methods from healthcare professionals. This makes mental health services more accessible to individuals around the world – but what is behind these apps?

Effective treatment is improved using science-backed methods. An example of this is mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), which are two interventions that are effective in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Psychological scientists have found that mindfulness influences two different stress pathways in the brain, changing brain structures and activity in areas associated with attention and emotion regulation. This information is then applied to individuals experiencing emotional stress, which then improves their mental health.

In addition to this, individuals who experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can be helped with numerous forms of therapy. One of these methods is the use of antidepressants. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), the most commonly used antidepressants, work by blocking the reabsorption of serotonin (which is known as the 'feel-good' neurotransmitter) into the brain. They bind to and block the serotonin transporters on the neurons' surface. By doing this, it slows down the reabsorption of serotonin into the neurons, allowing more serotonin to remain in the synapse (a structure in the nervous system) for a longer period. This causes an increased concentration of serotonin to bind receptors to neurons. This increases the transmission of serotonin across the brain, which improves emotional well-being. Pharmacogenomic Testing studies how an individual responds to drugs such as antidepressants due to different genetic factors in order to find more personalised solutions.

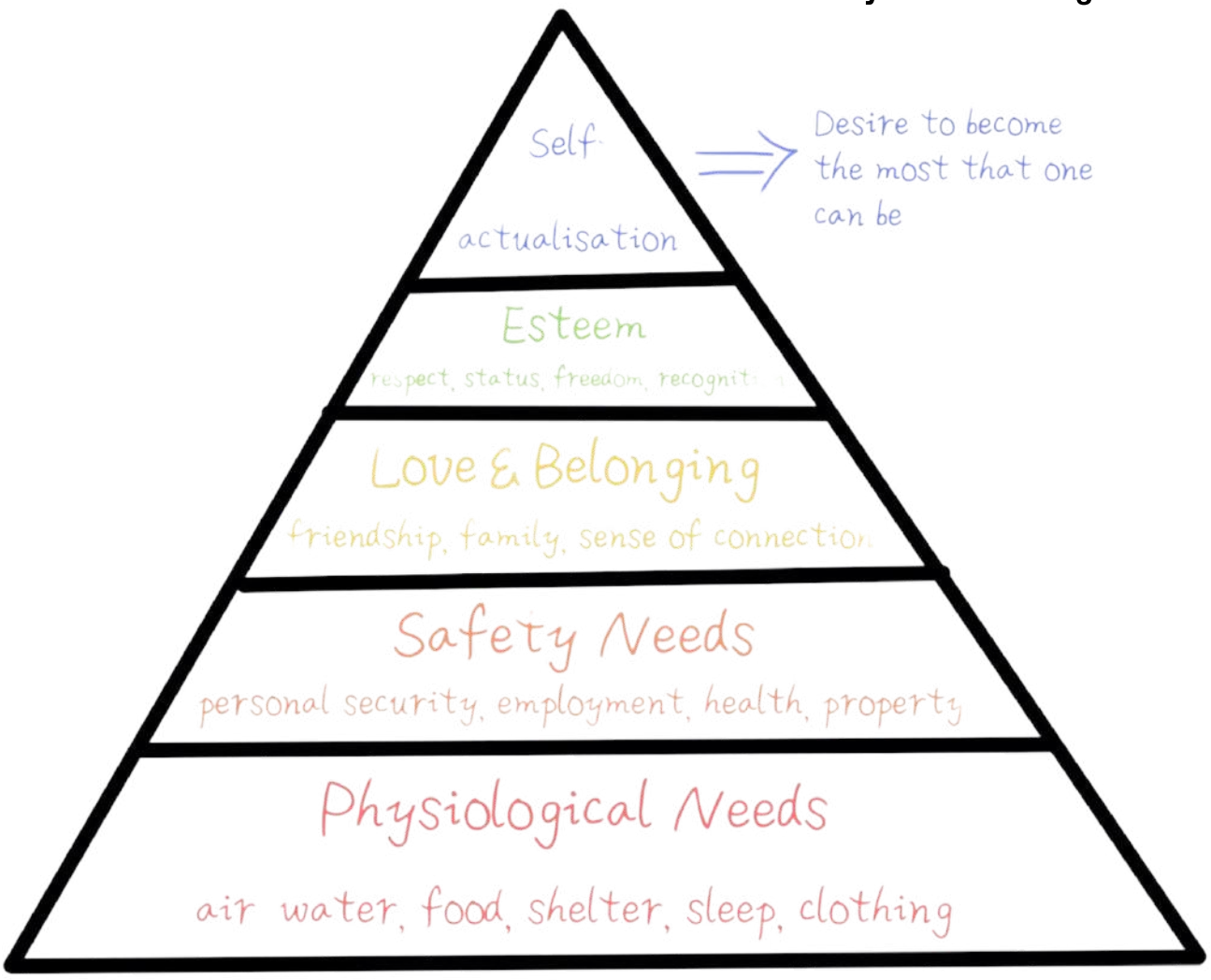
Psychological science studies human behaviour and interaction. This branch of soft science plays a crucial role in documenting how individuals clinically diagnosed with mental disorders react to certain situations and how their behaviour is affected by their mental condition. Experiments are carried out to test and research behaviour, then record the factors that may influence this. One form of psychological science is psychotherapy, which involves verbal communication with a licensed psychologist to develop healthy coping skills.

Without scientific assistance, there would be no proven effective method for mental recovery. Countless individuals have benefited from science-backed mental healing methods. Science uncovers the biological, environmental, and psychological causes of mental disorders, and their different methods of recovery. The development of new technologies and psychiatric counselling ensures that the future of next-generation science-backed mental recovery shines bright.

A HEARTFELT JOURNEY

EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE BEHIND SECOND CHANCES

By Michelle Wang



Many don't believe that rehashing the past helps, and they tend to question how reliving these negative experiences will benefit them today. However, the behaviours and reactions to certain stimuli are closely linked to these experiences.

Neuroscientists have researched the concept of "Memory Reconsolidation", which involves altering the emotional association linked to a past experience with a new emotion. This revision of memories induces neurological changes within the brain.

In 1946, psychologists Franz Gabriel Alexander and Thomas Morton French introduced the term "Corrective Emotional Experience". These experiences involve a retrospective examination of past events, aiming to uncover their influence on one's current behaviours. The theory is that a sincere reflection on the past is significant in fostering self-awareness, aiding individuals in comprehending the roots of their behaviours, and giving themself or others second chances. This concept emphasises the importance of acknowledging and learning from past experiences to shape a more informed present self.

In therapy, this is known as the "Corrective Emotional Experience". This refers to an experience an individual has later in life that "corrects" a negative experience from earlier in life that has left them feeling emotionally distressed. Commonly, those bad experiences intertwine with the relationships with individuals we are intimate with. The process challenges an individual's interpersonal relationships, self-perception and perspective on past emotional wounds. An example of this concept would be: if you are still upset about a prior experience within a relationship, a second chance at a new relationship that is healthier would help "correct" that negative emotional experience. It's important to know that it does not erase the negative experience, but rather creates something more recent that your brain would consider to be more important than the past, therefore having a corrective quality to it.

How might giving second chances to someone else benefit you? When someone you care about has caused you pain, the idea of offering them another chance can be challenging. However, forgiveness is a foundational value in interpersonal relationships.

Although the importance of forgiveness is established through societal education, not everyone possesses the capacity to forgive. A recent extensive study conducted by psychologists Katja Hanke from the University of Bremen and Christi-Melamine Vauclar from the University of Lisbon examined cross-cultural variations in the personality trait of forgiveness among an estimated number of 42,000 participants across 30 countries. The research explored whether countries emphasizing the morality of forgiveness would exhibit a higher commonality of this trait within their populations.

While forgiveness is commonly viewed in interpersonal terms, such as accepting apologies and refraining from holding grudges, the researchers highlighted its broader intergroup context. They suggested that forgiveness plays a crucial role in breaking cycles of counter-violence within post-conflict societies, potentially fostering healing and reconciliation.

The impact of forgiveness extends from individual relationships to societal harmony. Analysing data from 168 separate studies, Hanke and Vauclar found that forgiveness ranked eighth overall among 18 values. Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who created Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). He proposed this as a theory of motivation illustrated by a five-tier model of human needs including physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

The likelihood of a country prioritising and valuing forgiveness is influenced by certain factors which can be compared to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically emphasising qualities related to safety. In societies where individuals' safety is ensured, it tends to be more prominent to them in shaping the cultural value of forgiveness. However, within societies with a history of conflict and post-materialistic qualities, they tend to care more about feeling safe before they consider forgiveness. This therefore proposes the theory that history and an individual's upbringing within a country can make them care more or less about forgiving.

Living in a forgiving cultural setting not only prevents minor conflicts from escalating but also offers personal advantages. The willingness to grant second chances can positively impact your life while enhancing your well-being and contributing to a more forgiving and harmonious society.



THE WORLD

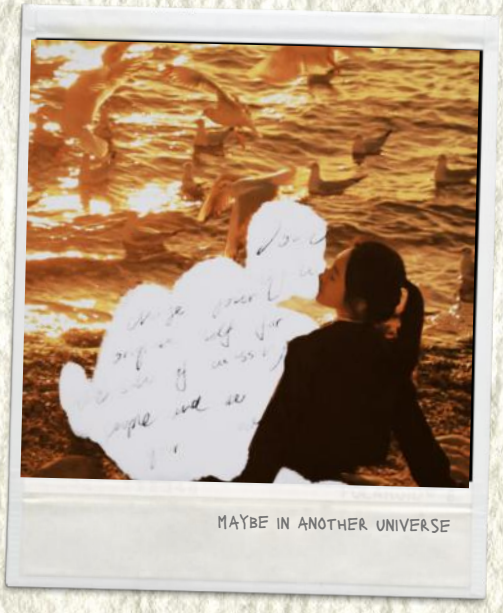
Moving on
By Connie Cao

Just Stop Oil: Peaceful or Disruptive?
By Mark Wee

Consuming our future
By Elysse Siau


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WE KNOW

Photos: suzy, XHS









moving on











Life, much like one of those novels you never want to put down, unfolds with chapters of joy, grief, and unexpected plot twists. But there always comes a chapter of change – the chapter that forces us to let go of whatever holds us back. Letting go is, without a doubt, a rollercoaster filled with emotions and uncertainty. Yet, it is within this process that we unearth the magic of renewal and growth. So, ladies and gentlemen, buckle up as we delve into this fascinating subject of letting go.

As humans, we are naturally drawn to the comfort of the familiar; whether it's your comfort drink at Starbucks or a relationship that has lost its spark, holding on will always seem like the safer option. But before making unnecessary and spontaneous decisions, it is important to recognize the signs of whether or not something in our lives needs a shake-up. Dissatisfaction, feeling stuck, dwelling on the past — these are all signals that it might be time to take a step back and reassess the situation.

Yes, we should all let go of past mistakes, and yes, we should all embrace changes in our lives, but this process isn't a one-size-fits-all experience. The process is often messy, and very, very personal, but surrendering to change isn't about giving up — it's about making space for new opportunities and relationships.

Loss is an unavoidable part of life; be it the loss of a job, a loved one, or a belief we've had since young, each experience offers a chance for growth and improvement. Through learning from these losses and challenges, we open up for a brighter future. On the contrary, staying stagnant does the opposite; dwelling on the past not only negatively affects one's mental health, but it prevents one from living in the present, and just simply gets exhausting over time.

Constantly revisiting past mistakes wastes our precious time and energy on the unchangeable past. While you can certainly learn from your mistakes, overthinking won't change what's already happened; what's done is done.

Forgive yourself, liberate yourself, and relieve the burdens of this unnecessary baggage by embracing change.

By Connie Cao



By Mark Wee

In October of 2022, two protesters hurled cans of tomato soup at Vincent van Gogh's iconic 1888 "Sunflowers" painting in London's National Gallery. The protesters were identified as members of the British environmental activist group, Just Stop Oil.

According to the official Just Stop Oil website, they are a British coalition of groups working together to "ensure that the government commits to ending all new licences and consents for the exploration, development, and production of fossil fuels in the UK." [1] The organisation carried out its protests at oil terminals in April 2022, following its inception in February earlier that year. Over the subsequent months, there were notable transitions from protests targeting private companies to public areas; locations included the 2022 British Grand Prix, art galleries and the streets of London.

In 2023, the British government announced its intention to grant a minimum of 100 new oil and gas licenses, a move that has sparked discontent within the ranks of the Just Stop Oil organisation. They assert that the British government's actions are "harming us, our freedoms, rights, and future, and making them work for us." [2] The organisation fervently advocates for all forthcoming consents and licensing agreements pertaining to fossil fuels in the country to come to a halt. The core mission of Just Stop Oil is to champion the investment of renewable energy within the government, ultimately aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Complementing this primary objective is a secondary aim: compelling the government to implement higher quality insulation in buildings, thereby minimising energy wastage during winter. [3] The organisation's protests are strategically designed to capture public attention, prompting reflection on individual contributions to emissions, particularly through travel. Additionally, the protests serve as a means to raise awareness about this global issue, effectively proselytising people to the cause.

On both the Just Stop Oil Instagram page [4] and website, the parent organisation is cited, A22 Network, "a group of connected projects engaged in a mad dash to try and save humanity." [5] The international A22 Network umbrella comprises of other organisations such as Declare Emergency USA and Letzte Generation Deutschland. The A22 Network is funded by the Climate Emergency FundAs of August 2023, Just Stop Oil reported that they receive 51% of its funding from public donations, 21% from donations over £20,000, 16% from green energy industrialist Dale Vince, 10% from Hollywood filmmaker Adam McKay

[1] Just Stop Oil – No New Oil and Gas. https://juststopoil.org/home/. Accessed 22 Nov 2023
[2] Just Stop Oil. "FAQs – Just Stop Oil." Just Stop Oil, 3 Mar. 2022, https://juststopoil.org/faqs/ . Accessed 23 Nov 2023
[3] Bakar, Faima. "Just Stop Oil: The Climate Change Activists Causing Havoc across the UK." Time out United Kingdom, 17 Oct. 2022, www.timeout.com/uk/news/just-stop-oil-the-climate-change-activists-causing-havoc-across-the-uk-101722. Accessed 23 Nov 2023
[4] "Instagram." Www.instagram.com, www.instagram.com/just.stopoil/?hl=en. Accessed 26 Nov 2023
[5] "A22 Network." A22 Network, https://a22network.org/en/#projects. Accessed 26 Nov 2023

and 2% from the U.S.-based Climate Emergency Fund.[6] As for the structure of Just Stop Oil, the group describes itself as non-hierarchical, with activists in the group operating in autonomous blocs that share resources but have no formal leadership.[7]



The Climate Emergency Fund, A22 Network, and Just Stop Oil all maintain the same core principles which are to prevent climate change and secure the sustainability of future generations. Just Stop Oil's slogan "When petitions don't work we hit the streets" references their methods of activism which are non-violent direct action, civil resistance, and vandalism. [8] Non-violent direct action, a cornerstone of Just Stop Oil's strategy, involves peaceful, assertive activities designed to bring attention to an issue and effect change. This method often includes acts of civil disobedience, such as sit-ins, protests, and other forms of public demonstration. Civil resistance involves various non-violent tactics that challenge established systems and policies. This encompasses a variety of actions, from boycotts and strikes to grassroots organising and mass demonstrations.

In the aftermath of industrialisation, coal provided the vast majority of power, before oil began to play an increasingly important part in the 1950s, being used for heating and electricity generation. However, it is widely acknowledged that the use of these traditional strains of energy production endangers the environment, with the most significant concern being the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, and this is what Just Stop Oil is concerned with. Open source data that can be found on Gov.uk presents some progress reports on energy usage in 2023. [8]

"RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY GENERATION CAPACITY GREW BY 6 PERCENT IN THE SAME QUARTER LAST YEAR, WITH OFFSHORE WIND GROWING BY 9 PERCENT AND SOLAR GROWING AT 8 PERCENT, THE HIGHEST RATE OF QUARTER-ON-QUARTER GROWTH SINCE THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2017

IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2023, DEMAND FOR COAL BY ELECTRICITY GENERATORS FELL TO 129 THOUSAND TONNES, 34 PERCENT LOWER THAN IN QUARTER 2 2022

IN QUARTER 2 2023, PRODUCTION OF PRIMARY OILS FELL TO A NEAR RECORD LOW OF 8.5 MILLION TONNES FOLLOWING REPORTS OF LOWERED INVESTMENT IN RECENT YEARS

FOSSIL FUELS GENERATED 25.1 TWH IN QUARTER 2 2023, FALLING 24 PERCENT ON THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR"

[8] Gayle, Damien. "Inside Just Stop Oil, the Youth Climate Group Blocking UK Refineries." The Guardian, 1 Apr. 2022, www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/01/down-to-earth-just-stop-oil-protest. Accessed 26 Nov 2023

As indicated in the statistics, the government has boosted the usage of renewable energy and identified capacities to reduce reliance on harmful energy sources such as coal, fossil fuels, and primary oils. Given the organisation's pro-renewable energy stance, these statistics may demonstrate the British government's response to the demands proposed by the activists. Furthermore, in 2023, the government enacted legislation to abolish the use of coal for electricity generation, with implementation scheduled for October 2024. [9] These developments underscore the government's past efforts in curbing carbon emissions. However, the question remains: are these efforts sufficient to appease the Just Stop Oil?

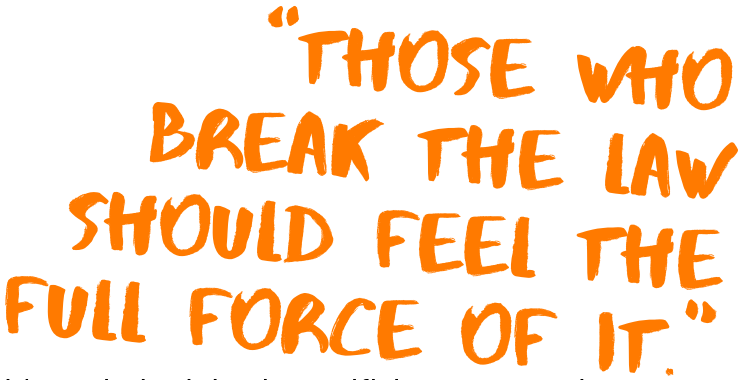
Though some comments indicate that their demands may be seen as excessive, and their protest methods are detrimental, a majority of critics can agree that climate change is real and that it is inevitable. With this, Just Stop Oil formulated a dilemma: "The choice: rapid transition to a low energy and low carbon world, or social collapse. We can do it now, in an orderly manner – creating millions of properly skilled jobs and protecting the rights of workers in sunset industries – or we wait for the unavoidable collapse." [11]

From the perspective of Just Stop Oil, they are simply prudent humanists concerned for human welfare and sustainability. They claim that without urgent and swift action, all the efforts of human development will go to waste. On their website, it is stated that "the end of workers' rights, women's rights, all human rights" [11] will become a reality if measures are not taken. In fear that climate change will create concomitant impacts, the organisation's stance remains clear – that climate change is detrimental. To do this they unveil the British government's deficiencies in empathy and morals regarding the future of humanity, our environment, and our dwelling that is Earth, strikingly evoking changes within the administration.

Prior to recent developments, they were once faced with an apathetic public and an unwavering government, wrestling to maintain relevance and engender change. The incendiary Van Gogh act committed by members last year of Just Stop Oil captured the attention of the press and sparked public outcry and disruption. It was this particular polarising incident that set things in motion when it made headlines. James Skeet, a spokesperson for Just Stop Oil, conveyed his sentiment in the Cherwell newspaper: "History has shown time and time again that disruptive civil tactics are a large component of what brings about change... most of the rights we enjoy today didn't come about through polite asking but through people making the nuisance of themselves and demanding change." [12]


Photo: Flickr

One article from Euronews brings to light Rishi Sunak's, the prime minister of the UK, opinion on another instance of extreme protesting.[13] Concerns were raised regarding the sentences handed to Just Stop Oil activists who climbed a suspension bridge in Dartford, Kent, causing gridlock for 40 hours. Protestors Morgan Trowland, 40, and Marcus Decker, 34, have been jailed, without the ability to appeal to the British high court, for three and two years respectively. Ian Fry, the UN's special rapporteur for climate change and human rights, warned the UK government about potential restrictions on freedoms due to lengthy jail sentences for activists. The UN special rapporteur criticized the UK's new Public Order Act, implemented in July, as potentially infringing on the right to peaceful assembly. Coming in defence of the government's unmerciful and strict response to the situation, the prime minister tweeted the following in response to this BBC article that commented on Fry's take on the affair on the 21st of November 2023:



It's entirely right that selfish protestors intent on causing misery to the hard-working majority face tough sentences.

[9] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6513fe8ef6746b000da4bab5/Energy_Trends_September_2023.pdf Accessed 24 Nov 2023 pg 1, 4, 6, 11
[10] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/feb/07/energy-dashboard-how-electricity-generated-great-britain Accessed 24 Nov 2023
[11] https://juststopoil.org/background/ Accessed 26 Nov 2023
[12] https://cherwell.org/2023/05/27/just-stop-oil-activist-speaks-at-oxford-university/ Accessed 29 Nov 2023

"IT'S WHAT THE PUBLIC EXPECTS AND IT'S WHAT WE'VE DELIVERED"

But, Rishi Sunak isn't entirely wrong that the incarceration of the activists is what the public has been "expect[ing]". The last sentence of the tweet suggests that the government has been pressured by the public to enforce these new acts. According to surveys conducted by the University of Bristol, an overwhelming 82% of respondents comprehend the complexity and importance of pre-empting climate change. A staggering 68% of respondents disapproved of the campaign, with 44% of these participants holding critical opinions about the campaign. However, with more information gathered from the survey, approximately one in three of the respondents thought the most appropriate punishment for people who participate in disruptive, non-violent protests, such as blocking a road, should be an imposed fine. From another angle, 27% of respondents believed that imprisonment was the deserving penalty for non-violent protesting, while 15% believed that there should be no penalisation for committing such acts of protest. [14] However, it is important to note that the survey was conducted earlier in the year, before the situation in question.

In an informative article from The Conversation [15], discussions surrounding Just Stop Oil have been primarily focused on examining the tactics and approaches, often sidelining their fundamental message. Nevertheless, in democratic nations, politicians must bear the responsibility to address the demands of the electorates. The article argues that the government diverts people's attention away from the movement by painting them as a minority, "It depicts people's demands as somehow niche rather than amounting to a highly pressing threat to the majority." [15]

The dichotomy between the British government's hasty actions and public opinions are strongly polarising. The aforementioned article uplifts that democracies are designed to allow people's voices to be heard, regardless of how they make their voices heard. It also further argues that the government is attempting to conceal the movement as a way of momentarily drawing attention away from public scrutiny. From the side of the government, they deeply believe that the actions committed by Just Stop Oil deserve immediate imprisonment, using the singular extremist act (Just Stop Oil activists who climbed a suspension bridge in Dartford) as a scapegoat, consolidating their ascendancy. In the perspective that *The Conversation* takes on, there is a high chance that the government is simply punishing activists for protesting, but on the other hand, the government could be seen as just "doing its job". This only further strictly divides the public into two distinct groups: ones that see Just Stop Oil in a negative light, and those who see them in a positive light.

Upon inspection of an individual perspective found on a Quora thread, one user strongly criticises Just Stop Oil's inefficacy in inducing a change. "The Just Stop Oil protests are merely an excuse for unruly people to do what they wanted to anyway: make a nuisance of themselves. It does nothing to convert people to their cause, much the opposite. It simply pisses people off." this user comments.[16] Another user contrastingly encourages Just Stop Oil to continue highlighting the issue in more practical and nondisruptive manners: "It's a shame because if we took action now, the UK could easily become a world leader in producing alternative fuels, which would be great for the economy and the environment", acknowledging some of the steps taken by the British government.

So, it seems as if the majority of Britons are in support of the core principles of the organisation, as typified in many of the official surveys conducted by government institutions; while most citizens are alarmed by the climate conundrum, they are not actively attaching importance to the movement, adducing the 'disruptive' methods used by Just Stop Oil. Thus, the public is faced with ambivalence, concerned that climate destruction will reach a point of no return.



[13]https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/11/21/uk-pm-says-tough-sentences-for-climate-protesters-are-entirely-right-after-un-criticism Accessed 29 Nov 2023
[14] https://www.bristol.ac.uk/psychology/news/2023/116.html Accessed 29 Nov 2023
[15] https://theconversation.com/dont-look-there-how-politicians-divert-our-attention-from-climate-protesters-claims-211381
[16] https://www.quora.com/While-in-UK-Just-Stop-Oil-have-got-much-publicity-from-blocking-roads-as-opposed-to-none-from-previously-protesting-outside-Parliament-how-will-this-publicity-make-the-UK-government-stop-oil Accessed 3 Dec 2023

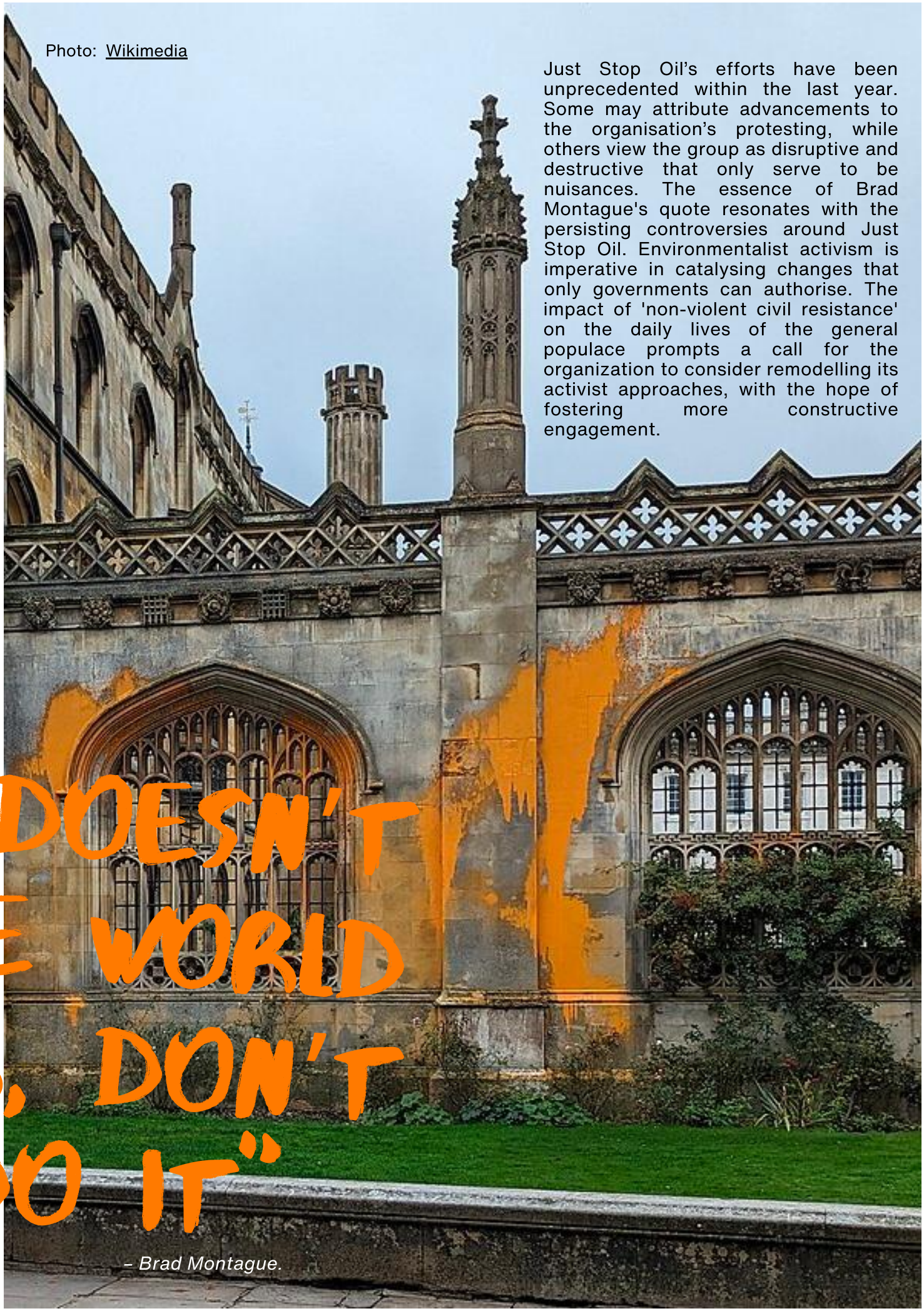


Photo: Wikimedia

Just Stop Oil's efforts have been unprecedented within the last year. Some may attribute advancements to the organisation's protesting, while others view the group as disruptive and destructive that only serve to be nuisances. The essence of Brad Montague's quote resonates with the persisting controversies around Just Stop Oil. Environmentalist activism is imperative in catalysing changes that only governments can authorise. The impact of 'non-violent civil resistance' on the daily lives of the general populace prompts a call for the organization to consider remodelling its activist approaches, with the hope of fostering more constructive engagement.

CONSUMING OUR FUTURE

Ten years after This Changes Everything

By Elysse Siau

Ten years ago, the urgency was clear. A stark warning echoed from the environmentally conscious, predicting the impending 4° C rise in temperatures by the end of the century (The New York Times, 2021). Reminiscent of the temperature change from the ice age to the present day, a 4° C rise in global temperatures would be a harbinger of major floods, severe droughts, and extreme weather changes. Coastal cities would be destroyed, livelihoods robbed and species lost (The World Bank)- changing our world forever.

The need for urgent action was undeniable.

Ten years later, implemented policies and actions have reduced the projected warming to a range between 2.5 °C to 2.9°C (Climate action tracker 2023). Despite a notable reduction, the devastation of climate change remains in our future.

"The stakes are simply too high, and time too short, to settle for anything less."

- Naomi Klein,
This Changes Everything, 2014

Climate Action Tracker (2023). "Temperatures." *2100 Warming Projections: Emissions and Expected Warming Based on Pledges and Current Policies*, Climate Analytics and NewClimate Institute, Dec. 2023.
Plumer, Brad, and Nadja Popovich. "Yes, There Has Been Progress on Climate. No, It's Not Nearly Enough." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 25 Oct. 2021.
"Turn down the Heat: Why a 4°C Warmer World Must Be Avoided." *The World Bank, 2012.*



Ten years later, not enough has been done.

“Is Earth f**ked” question, he set the jargon aside and replied, “More or less.”

- Naomi Klein,
This Changes Everything, 2014

According to NASA, human activities have increased the percentage of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 50% (NASA, 2023). This relationship between increased CO2 concentrations and increased global temperatures has led us to the indisputable conclusion that our human activities have led to the worsening of climate change. As long as emissions continue to increase, temperatures will follow suit. Therefore, it is our behaviour that must change to reverse the effects of climate change.

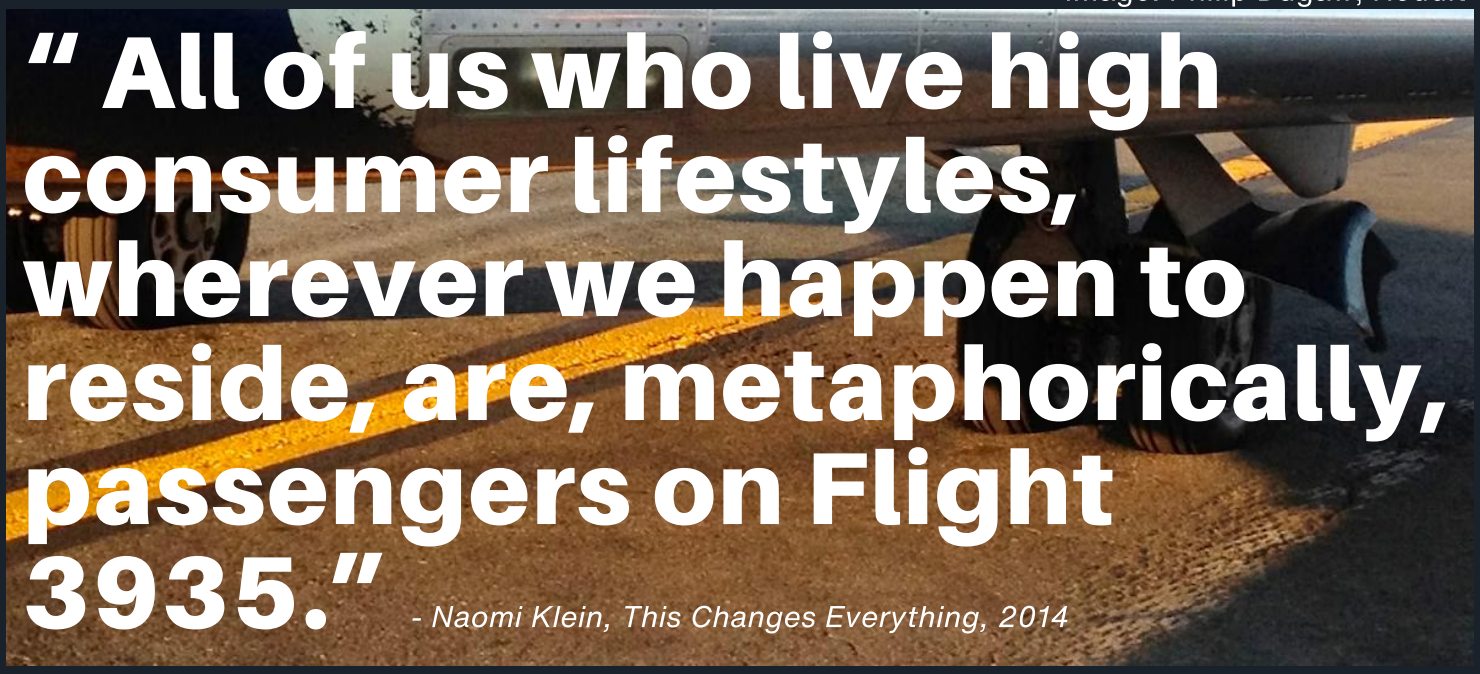
This, however, begs a crucial question. How can we influence and change the behaviours of 7.8 billion individuals to collaboratively reverse

In the documentary ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, Al Gore advocates for change through planting more vegetation, recycling, and making conscious choices in the electricity we use and the things we buy.

In Al Gore’s utopian society: everyone uses sustainable means to acquire their electricity, follows a vegan lifestyle, and solely drives electrical vehicles. It is true that if all 7.8 billion people on this planet can stop eating meat, embrace sustainable energy sources, and buy electric cars, carbon emissions can be reduced. After all, two-thirds of our emissions come from individual households (The United Nations, 2023).

“Act Now.” *United Nations*, United Nations.
“Carbon Dioxide Concentration .” *NASA*, NASA, 16 Mar. 2023.

Image: Philip Dugaw, Reddit



“ All of us who live high consumer lifestyles, wherever we happen to reside, are, metaphorically, passengers on Flight 3935.”

- Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, 2014

In the summer of 2012, the wheels of Flight 3935 sunk into the tarmac of the airport runway. To tow the plane away, the airline brought a larger vehicle- one that incidentally burns more fossil fuels. Klein draws attention to the absurdity of this. How paradoxical is it to solve a problem caused by climate change, by adding to emissions?

“Faced with a crisis that threatens our survival as a species, our entire culture is continuing to do the very thing that caused the crisis, only with an extra dose of elbow grease ”

- Naomi Klein,
This Changes Everything, 2014

Similarly, sustainable energy initiatives and the use of electric vehicles come with their environmental costs.

According to Harvard Business Review, solar panels are classified as containing hazardous heavy metals, which require special disposal. In America, this costs about $20-$30, whereas just dumping the waste at a landfill would cost $2-$3. (Atalay, et al., 2022) When you cannot see the immediate effects of dumping the waste and think of the externalities, it is easier and cheaper to simply dump the waste.

Though the EV craze offers more energy-efficient electric cars, it does not absolve the environmental consequences. Where do people think electricity comes from? Though more energy efficient, it cannot be ignored that by buying a new electric car, you are just shifting your fuel source from petrol to electricity. In a country where electricity is sourced from burning coal, driving an electric car emits more carbon dioxide than a normal petrol-powered car (Oremus, 2013). Furthermore, the production of batteries for electric vehicles requires the mining of lithium, which has other detrimental effects on our environment such as air and water pollution (Tedesco, 2023).

The solution to climate change isn’t to keep consuming.

Atasu, Atalay, et al. “The Dark Side of Solar Power.” Harvard Business Review, Harvard, 19 Apr. 2022.
Oremus, Will. “How Green Is a Tesla, Really?.” Slate Magazine, Slate, 9 Sept. 2013.
Tedesco, Marco. “The Paradox of Lithium.” State of the Planet, Columbia Climate School, 18 Jan. 2023.

To truly address climate change, we must look beyond human activity and look at our overarching societal structure. The puppet strings of overconsumption are pulled by the immoral pursuit of profit.

“By posing climate change as a battle between capitalism and the planet, I am not saying anything that we don’t already know. The battle is already under way, but right now capitalism is winning hands down.”

- Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything, 2014

Another reason why the Al Gore method of changing our daily lives cannot bring significant emissions reductions is because it is our systems that are flawed.

Inequality is arguably our world’s fundamental flaw. For years, major corporations in developed countries, encouraged by their nation’s policies, have exploited this flaw, outsourcing their production and waste to developing countries, while reaping the lion’s share of the profits. Ironically, politicians from developed countries now advocate for addressing climate change and argue that the burden must be shared. They languish in their profits, paying for eco-businesses and clean energy, relinquishing their guilt while developing countries bear the blame for emissions- stuck in a limbo where they cannot afford to escape.

In Peter Dauvergne’s 2016 book, “Environmentalism of the Rich”, he exposes how modern environmentalism has become a cleverly disguised, guilt-free facade for corporate profits and consumption. NGOs target individuals, urging us to adopt eco-lifestyles. Buy this, don't buy that. Pay for carbon offsets when you take an aeroplane, use green technology. Yet, they fail to address the true source of our crisis- capitalism. *(Dauvergne, 2016)*

A popular example of superficial environmentalism can be seen when celebrities like Taylor Swift purchase carbon credits to offset their emissions. The 138 tonnes of carbon dioxide from her avid jet setting does not miraculously disappear from our atmosphere *(McKenzie, 2023)*. Throwing money at solutions will do nothing when the problem is that we continue to *consume, consume, consume*.

Ten years later, we still forget what the real enemy of climate change is. Consumerism is so deeply ingrained in our societal systems, that the idea of halting seems to lead to society crumbling. However, it is essential in the fundamental reconstruction of ourselves to truly become sustainable.

. Dauvergne, Peter. Environmentalism of the Rich. MIT Press, 2018.
McKenzie, Parker. "Taylor Swift Is the World's Most Carbon Polluting Celebrity" The New Daily, 18 Dec. 2023.


MENU
WB
QUAL
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CLOSE UP

Stars of Earth: Showing us the way
By Ashraf Natasha Mohamed Anees

The unity of LGSM
By Keira Jade Jordan

Tabloid Turmoil: Beckham's Fight for Privacy
By Nicholas Khor

La Remontada
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Jesse Lingard: From Darkness to Light:
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Controversy, Cancel Culture, and the Phoenix of Creativity
By Max Tsui

STARS OF
SHOWING U

By Ashraf Natasha Mohamed Anees



One could easily assume that success comes easily in the glamorous world of celebrities, where the spotlight is always shining. Beyond the extravagant exterior, though, are countless tales of hardships, errors, and—above all—mistakes. It's a universal truth that mistakes can teach us important lessons, and even well-known and wealthy people like celebrities can receive help from learning from their mistakes. We hope the lesson of growing from mistakes can be learned by telling the tales of a few well-known celebrities who overcame their own hardships.

A very notable woman, Oprah Winfrey—a media biggie, philanthropist, and one of the most powerful women in the world—experienced a great deal of hardship. She bounced back from her first job firing as a news anchor, turning a local talk show into the legendary "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Oprah accepted her errors and saw them as opportunities for growth rather than roadblocks. Her experience shows us that failing is not the end but rather a chance to refocus and advance.

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US THE WAY

Early in his career, Michael Jordan—widely considered the greatest basketball player of all time—experienced rejection. His expulsion from his high school basketball team served as motivation for him to succeed after this setback. His unwavering dedication to his passion and his capacity for self-improvement enabled him to win the NBA six times. Jordan's story shows the value of resilience and the ability to turn setbacks into inspiration for greatness.

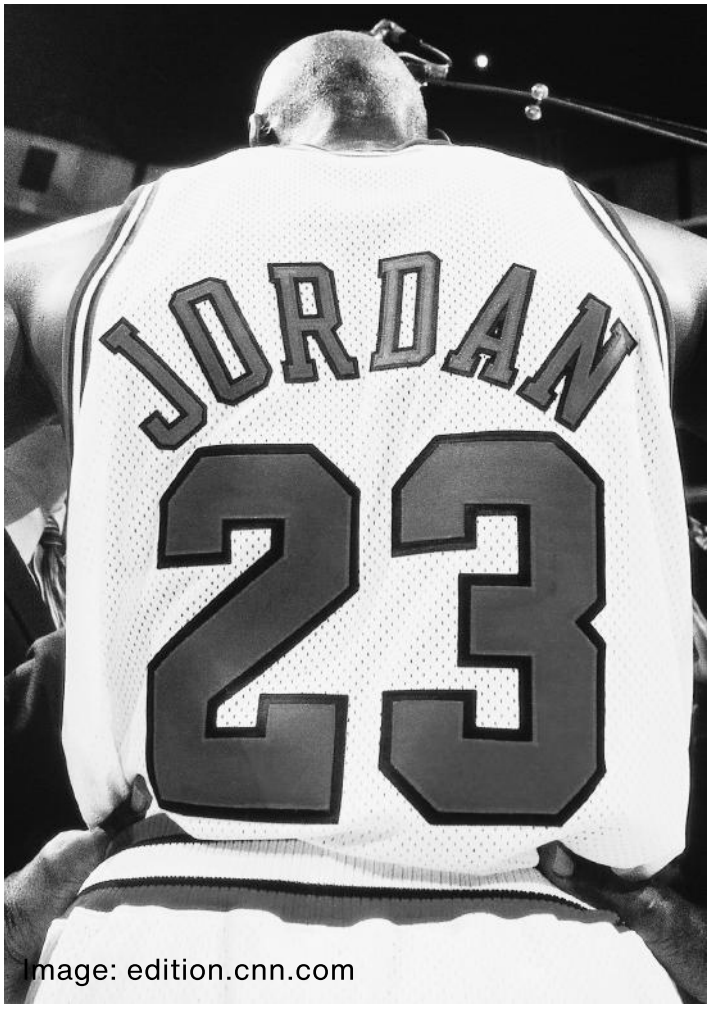


Image: edition.cnn.com


Image: Flickr

Last but certainly not least, J.K. Rowling was turned down by several publishers before the Harry Potter series made her an easily recognizable name. Poverty and divorce were two of the many personal and professional obstacles that shaped Rowling's life. Nevertheless, she used these challenges as inspiration for her writing rather than giving in to hopelessness. Rowling's journey proves the transformational power of using failures and mistakes as teaching opportunities to build success.

The life lessons learned from mistakes are invaluable, and the biographies of these famous people serve as potent reminders of this. Beyond fame and fortune, one of the most important aspects of professional and personal development is learning from mistakes. Accepting and growing from your mistakes is an essential step to reaching your goals and reaching your full potential, regardless of whether you're an aspiring artist, budding business owner, or just figuring out the intricacies of daily life. The real test of success is not how well one avoids errors but rather how well one recovers and develops from them.



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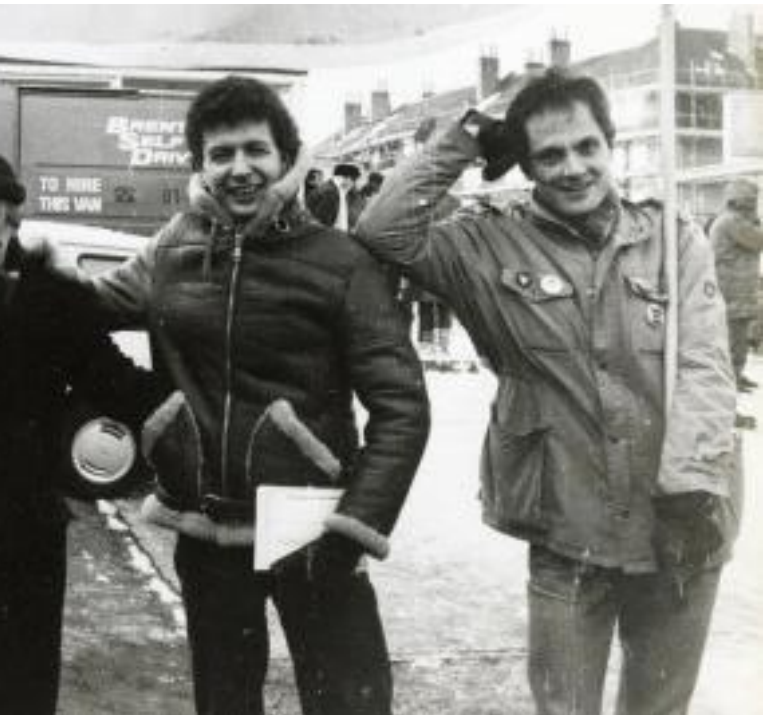
By Keira Jade Jordan



In short, LGSM (Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners) was a union between lesbian and gay activists in London, who supported the National Union of Mineworkers during the year-long strike from 1984 -1985. This movement was rather significant as a coalition occurred between two different communities which, at the time, appeared unlikely. The two communities banded together in an attempt to ‘fight’ against a common foe in the Prime Minister at the time, Margaret Thatcher. The laws implemented by her rule were enforced and carried out by the police, stripping away both of the communities' rights in different ways. Thatcher banned the promotion of homosexuality within local authorities and British schools. She authorised the closing of the mines, putting thousands of miners out of work, therefore changing the British economy drastically. This is, in short, the reason behind the Miners Strike.



UNITY
LGSM
Pride (2014)



The movie Pride (2014) is interesting as it is a rather accurate depiction of the LGSM movement. The movie is impactful and I feel that it corresponds well with the theme of “Pulse Of A Healing Heart” as it tells the story of how they came to be, and how the lesbian and gay activists who had raised money for miners were initially turned down by several mining communities they sought to raise funds for due to closed-mindedness and homophobia.

However, a mining community in a Welsh village opened their minds to accepting money from a cause combating the same foe as them. Throughout the movie, there are more conflicts, such as some members of the Welsh mining community being closed-minded though still accepting the kindness of the LGSM members. In the latter part of the film, the LGSM members disband for a brief period of time due to personal problems. However, they come back together toward the end to march for Pride in London. Later, they are unexpectedly joined by buses upon buses carting coal miners, who had come to contribute to the march in unanimity and solidarity with the LGSM group.

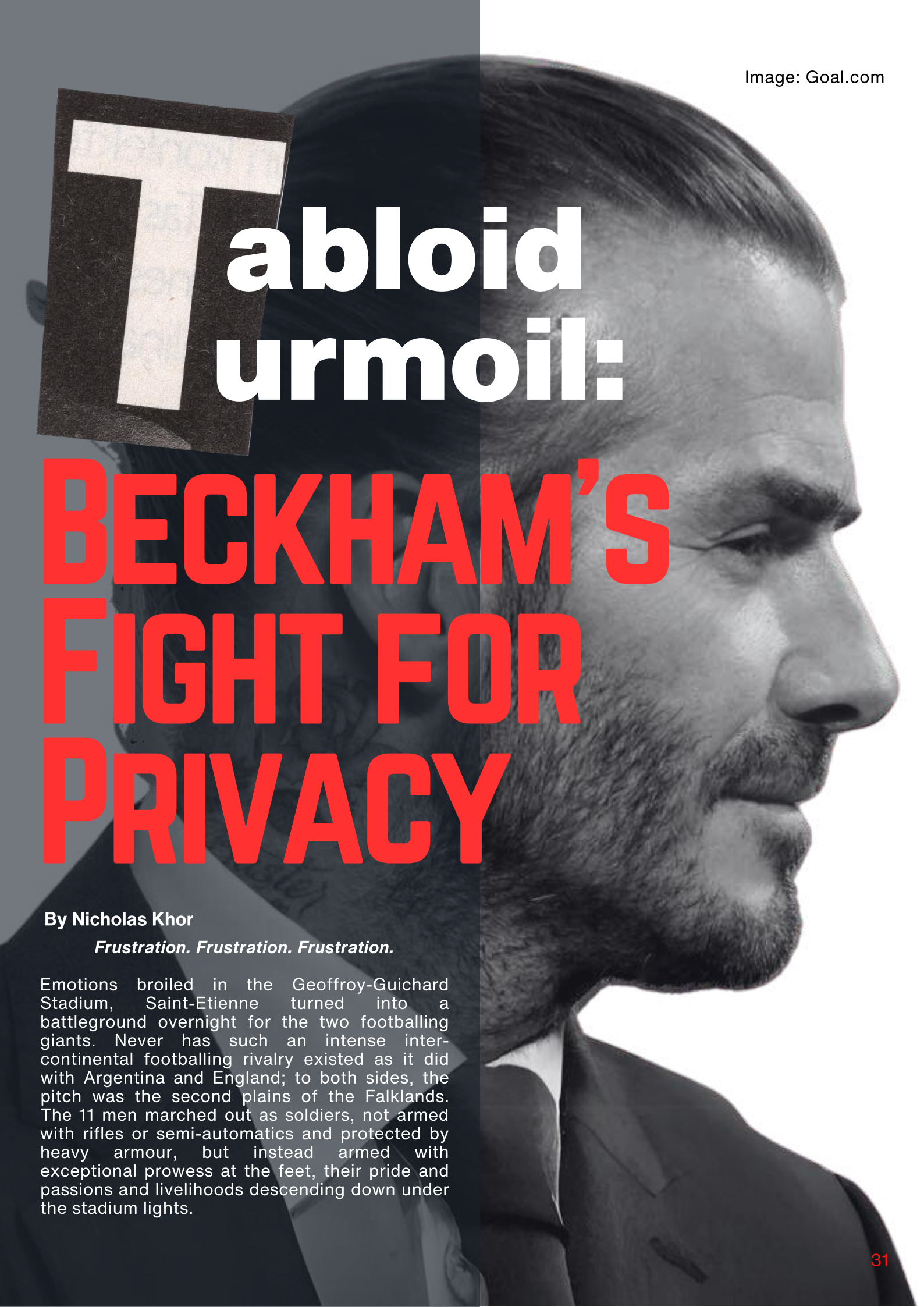


Image: Goal.com

Tabloid Turmoil:

Beckham's Fight for Privacy

By Nicholas Khor

Frustration. Frustration. Frustration.

Emotions broiled in the Geoffroy-Guichard Stadium, Saint-Etienne turned into a battleground overnight for the two footballing giants. Never has such an intense inter-continental footballing rivalry existed as it did with Argentina and England; to both sides, the pitch was the second plains of the Falklands. The 11 men marched out as soldiers, not armed with rifles or semi-automatics and protected by heavy armour, but instead armed with exceptional prowess at the feet, their pride and passions and livelihoods descending down under the stadium lights.

47 minutes in. An egregious shove from Diego Simeone hurled Beckham flat on the grass. Whistles, cheers and jeers rang throughout the French arena — the troops on the ground eyed each other with daggers, pacing around the two gladiators in conflict. Overwhelmed with a concoction of frustration and aspirations, Beckham unleashed a swift, petulant flick of his right leg. Whether intentional or not, it did not matter. Diego Simeone collapsed to the ground, a theatrical play which pulled the heartstrings of the referee; his disgruntled shouts became a rallying cry for the Argentine fans.

A fateful second was all it took. A brandished red card cast Beckham's career down the football abyss, a dagger thrust into the heart of the English campaign. As he trudged off the pitch, a tempest of fervour reverberated around the stadium — the uproar of the Three Lions contrasted with the sly smiles of the La Albiceleste, the gasps of disbelief and disapproval from the English fans clashed with the celebratory cheers of the Argentinians. For Beckham, walking off the spotlights was only the start of a long road down darkness. Even though the deadlock stood at 2-2 until the end of extra time, England crashed out of the tournament after a nerve wracking penalty shootout — the score: 4-3, Argentina. Overnight, he would turn from England's golden boy to their greatest disappointment.

Thus began Beckham's war against the imposing media — a conflict which spanned his illustrious two-decade long career. The British tabloids, infamous for their fervour and scrutiny, unleashed a barrage of criticism laced with sensationalist negativity which vilified Beckham, with headlines heinously singing songs of betrayal and the media painting him as a pariah, a symbol of shattered dreams and misplaced aggression. Pundits questioned Beckham's maturity, questioning his character and his capabilities to bear the weight of the Three Lions sewn onto his uniform. No ink was spared in their conquest to drag Beckham deeper and deeper into the depths of the media firestorm, with the backlash reverberating throughout the country. The team's homecoming was a dreary one, however whilst the rest of the team were cradled by the motherland, Beckham became the castaway child, a central figure for all of England to throw their rotten tomatoes toward.

What Beckham needed was a rope to drag him out of the abyss, for someone to turn toward and stand beside. Instead, Beckham was cast further into the dark by Glenn Hoddle's simple remark during the post-match interview:

> **"THE SENDING OFF COST US THE GAME."**

Not once was Beckham mentioned, yet it was enough for the media hounds to pounce on him. Despite Hoddle's plea to the English to let Beckham's mistake slide and highlighting the then-23 year old's importance to the team, asking the "footballing public to give him a chance" the following day, the damage had already been done. Only the television channels broadcasted Hoddle's follow up interview, whereas the tabloids took his post-match interview and ran gleefully with it. All of England was tuned into the post-match interview, nearly nobody bothered with the next day's one.

As for Beckham's teammates, they firmly believed that the frenzy would be like every other prior — that it would ride a wave, then crash and disperse into forgotten memory. However, for Beckham, this wave turned into a colossal tsunami that kept climbing. When the Premier League kicked in to play, opposition fans used the distaste of Beckham to fuel their chants, hurling insults at him and at times harassing the Manchester United team bus as it drove into away-game stadiums.

> **"YOU'D WALK DOWN THE STREETS AND PEOPLE WOULD BE SPITTING AT HIM. YOU KNOW, PEOPLE WILL BE GOING TO BARGE INTO HIM, TO KNOCK INTO HIM"**
>
> *– David Gardner, Friend and Business Partner of Beckham*

> **"THAT'S WHEN KATHY FOUND BULLETS IN LETTERS, SO OBVIOUSLY THE CLUB HAD TO GET THE POLICE IN...BECAUSE OF THE THREATS TO HIM."**
>
> *– Edward 'Ted' Beckham, David Beckham's father*

Fortunately for Beckham, someone did throw the rope down to drag him out of the abyss. Sir Alex Ferguson, Manchester United's manager at the time, was infamous for instilling a 'us (Man Utd) against the world' mentality in his squad, and with the Beckham fiasco he pushed that mentality to its very limit. To Beckham, Ferguson was already akin to a second-father figure in football, having spent more than a decade in Manchester United, and Ferguson knew Beckham needed unwavering support to ride out the storm and get himself back to footballing prowess, no matter how costly it may be. And so, he turned Old Trafford into a fortress, his team became an even closer unit fueled by this standalone mentality. They were prepared to do what the English squad could not, which was to fiercely protect one of their own from a treatment beyond abhorrent. To the squad which sparked Manchester United's golden era, David Beckham's struggles were their struggles, his fight was their fight. When any player, fan or journalist attacked him, they attacked the entire squad.

> **"SIR ALEX CREATED AN ISLAND, AND ANY UNFRIENDLY PERSON THAT CAME NEAR THE ISLAND DIDN'T GET NEAR IT. WE, YOU KNOW, FOUGHT THEM OFF"**
>
> *– Gary Neville, former teammate*

> **"THAT WAS THE ONLY THING THAT I COULD CONTROL. ONCE I WAS ON THE PITCH, THEN I FELT SAFE."**
>
> *– David Beckham*

It was with this drive that Beckham was soon back in his groove on the pitch, if not even more thirsty for a chance at a trophy. To which, the greatest season both for Beckham and for the Manchester United squad would unravel, made more triumphant by their stance as the most hated team in the domestic league, with the most hated man in England playing up front. First, the Red Devils lifted the Premier League trophy, laced with red and white ribbons. Then, they clutched the FA cup, before marching on to Barcelona to battle in the Camp Nou for the Champions League with the other treble-contenders in Europe, Bayern Munich. And after a match which had fans across the world on the edges of their seats for over 90 minutes, a clean volley by Sherringham threw United back into the ring with a 1-1 score. Shortly after, as the 93rd minute approached, Solskjaer's flick catapulted United into the promised land — alas, the treble was firmly in United's hands. Manchester, London and Barcelona all painted red. In all three campaigns, Beckham played a crucial role both as one of the top scorers, as well as one of the top playmakers of the season.

Following Beckham's sudden sacking from Manchester United in 2003, Beckham's transition to Real Madrid saw them enter right into the crosshairs of the Spanish media, who joined their English counterparts in the "Posh and Becks" agenda. Every move by the couple became headline news, and the narrative around their lifestyle choices became as significant as Beckham's exploits on the pitch. Beckham spoke of Real Madrid as his second-dream club behind United, however his time in Spain was plagued with turmoil. He was in a foreign land speaking a foreign language, chased by hawks who were so fascinated with his celebrity status that his achievements were increasingly threatened and his focus on football tested to its limits. Worse yet, his family were placed in an even more vulnerable situation — Victoria Beckham was no longer a Spice Girl, and with the disbanding of the group came the shattering of her shield. In the immediate aftermath of the 1998 upset, Beckham flew to the USA as Victoria knew as long as they were with the Spice Girls, the security and fame of the group would protect them enough. In Spain, this was no longer the case.

This intense focus on Beckham's family was especially worrying, as they were parents of two — then three, when Romeo Beckham was born in



David and Victoria, 2006 Image: Flickr

Madrid —, and yet the paparazzi spared no expense at prowling around their children too. Schooling in Madrid became a nightmare, as everyday Victoria would battle a mob of flashes and shouts to drop Brooklyn and Cruz off, and pick them up from school. Family time was non-existent, for no matter where they went there would be a camera lurking somewhere, or someone to tip off the press, who would then dash over in mobs like an avalanche. Their youngest, Romeo, soon became the prize for the tabloid photographers, a new face to the Beckham play. The result was an environment unfit to raise a child, whereby stress was heaped everyday onto the parents trying their best to keep their children away from the prying media. And where stress inevitably crashed into the childrens' own livelihoods, snatching away their chance to act as kids, to be carefree and take the occasional stumble out of fear someone was watching, and out of fear it would cause greater angst for Victoria and David.

> **"We've tried to give our children the most normal upbringing as possible, but you've got a dad that was England captain, and a mom that was Posh Spice... And they could be little s****, and they're not. That is why I say that I'm so proud of my children. And I am so in awe of my children, the way they've turned out."**
>
> *– David Beckham*

Beckham's footballing prowess was also at stake in Real Madrid — his arrival reinforced an infamous trend of Real's management scoffing at the basic dogmas of sporting success, whereby marketing took precedence over meritocracy. And the media made sure Beckham knew it — the question of whether he was there to sell shirts, or tally trophies became recurring. His position did not help either, as Real had an oversupply of right-wingers for the singular position on the pitch. As such, Beckham was forced to adapt to a centre-midfield role, one which he took up with a sharp exhale. Fed up as he was, Beckham insisted on using his time on the field to do the talking, rather than answer the redundant questions; a philosophy which quickly won over the Madridistas, as well as the dressing room. Within his first season, he scored in his debut against Mallorca, helped Real in their first win away to Barcelona in 20 years, and made his remarkable delivery "from the Orense Street" to Zidane, helping them crush Valladolid 7-2.

As Real Madrid grew to love David Beckham, the pulsating heart of the club rejuvenated and pushed back the media's scrutiny of him. Slowly, but surely, he too won the hearts of the journalists and editors.



Beckham at Real Madrid Image: Flickr

> **"We expected a pretty boy, but this guy scraps and fights."**
>
> – A Spanish Columnist

As if written by a playwright, four years later Madrid's increasing domination of the La Liga boiled down to June 17th, 2007, the final game of the 06/07 season. The Bernabéu erupted as Beckham led the white shirts onto the pitch, himself the last of the Galácticos project some years prior. Their opponents: Mallorca. Just as Beckham had stamped himself in 2003 as part of an all-stars team with the likes of Zidane, Ronaldo and Figo, he was now leading the next generation of Real soldiers against the very same opponents.



> **"THE GAME IS OVER! MADRID ARE CHAMPIONS OF THE LEAGUE AFTER FOUR YEARS OF SUFFERING WITHOUT TITLES!"**
>
> *– Spanish Commentary from the Real Madrid 3-1 Mallorca match*

Though Beckham's taste of victory was made bittersweet by an ankle injury which took him off the pitch in the 65th minute, to him the moment was a perfect enough end to his tenure in Spain. No matter how hard Real Madrid pushed for Beckham to stay, he was dead-set on moving on — to him, he had faced the English and Spanish tunes of disrespect, negativity and heinous lack of privacy for too long. Though he was mocked for his departure to a lesser league across the pond, many would now come to praise the work he did using his name to spread football to American shores, bringing with him revenues the MLS could have only dreamt of otherwise. And besides, his stint at LA Galaxy gave him something he had craved for ever since he saw red in that fateful Round of 16 match against Argentina:

Peace.

Image: Flickr

In America, he was finally given the breathing space he, Victoria and his children had been gasping for. In Los Angeles, he was no longer the largest name in the area, better yet his neighbourhood — he was on the lower rung in a city of stars, and he was thrilled with it.

And hence, David's war with the imposing media slowly simmered down. As described in his Netflix documentary Beckham, his public battering and humiliation only strengthened his resolve, made him stronger in the face of adversaries and made his career just that much more triumphant, proving time and time again he was more than the narrative the media painted. He was lucky too, to have had a strong base wherever he went, from Sir Alex's island fortress, to the Real Madrid Galácticos, to his headstrong parents and his wife who never left his side.

But it was still a painful journey, and one which he should have never had to endure. Because the incident that got the ball rolling should have never happened to begin with.

> **"Did you think he deserved a red card for the kick?"**
>
> **Absolutely not. Absolutely not."**
>
> *– Diego Simeone, responding to Fisher on the Beckham documentary*

LA REMONTADA

By Timothy Ang

Remontada: Spanish
Generally associated wi

Forty yards separate one of the world's most recognisable figures from the hexagonal tessellation that his craft revolves around. Forty seconds are perhaps all that separate two giants from either side of the Pyrenees from imminent glory.

Marco Verratti desperately staggers after the football. He musters whatever is left from ninety-five minutes of lactic acid build-up in his legs, and presses fervently; head down; arms oscillating maniacally. That is, until he sets his eyes on the man that has his studs almost teasingly grazing the star-spangled sphere. Though Veratti's legs do not stop lurching forward, and his arms do not stop swinging, his heart sinks, and he mentally utters an Italian obscenity.

The Brazilian demigod before him sets his eyes on the cluster of figures in the box, and recoils a leg worth possibly over a hundred million euros; a magician mesmerisingly priming his wand. Verratti has no choice but to perform an ungraceful half-pirouette midair in an attempt to block a cross that could carry with it a season's worth of agony. Arms still flailing like a pigeon fallen from grace, he mutters another industrious Italian term. The cross never comes. Perhaps this was how fish felt in the moment of realisation that their foolishness had deserted them on the end of a hook. He sheepishly turns to face the fisherman, who has already glided fifteen feet infield. In half a second, one of the world's premier defensive midfielders had been rendered just another mere witness to the mercurial greatness of a global phenomenon.

Neymar is now twenty five yards out, and makes the decision to place his entire body weight over the ball. It is a dead giveaway that he will attempt a wonder-goal from a near-impossible position - two white shirts close down on him rapidly. Camp Nou skips a cycle of inhalation. Yet, even the Paulistano himself may not have anticipated what would occur next. Rather than his laces connecting with the ball commandingly

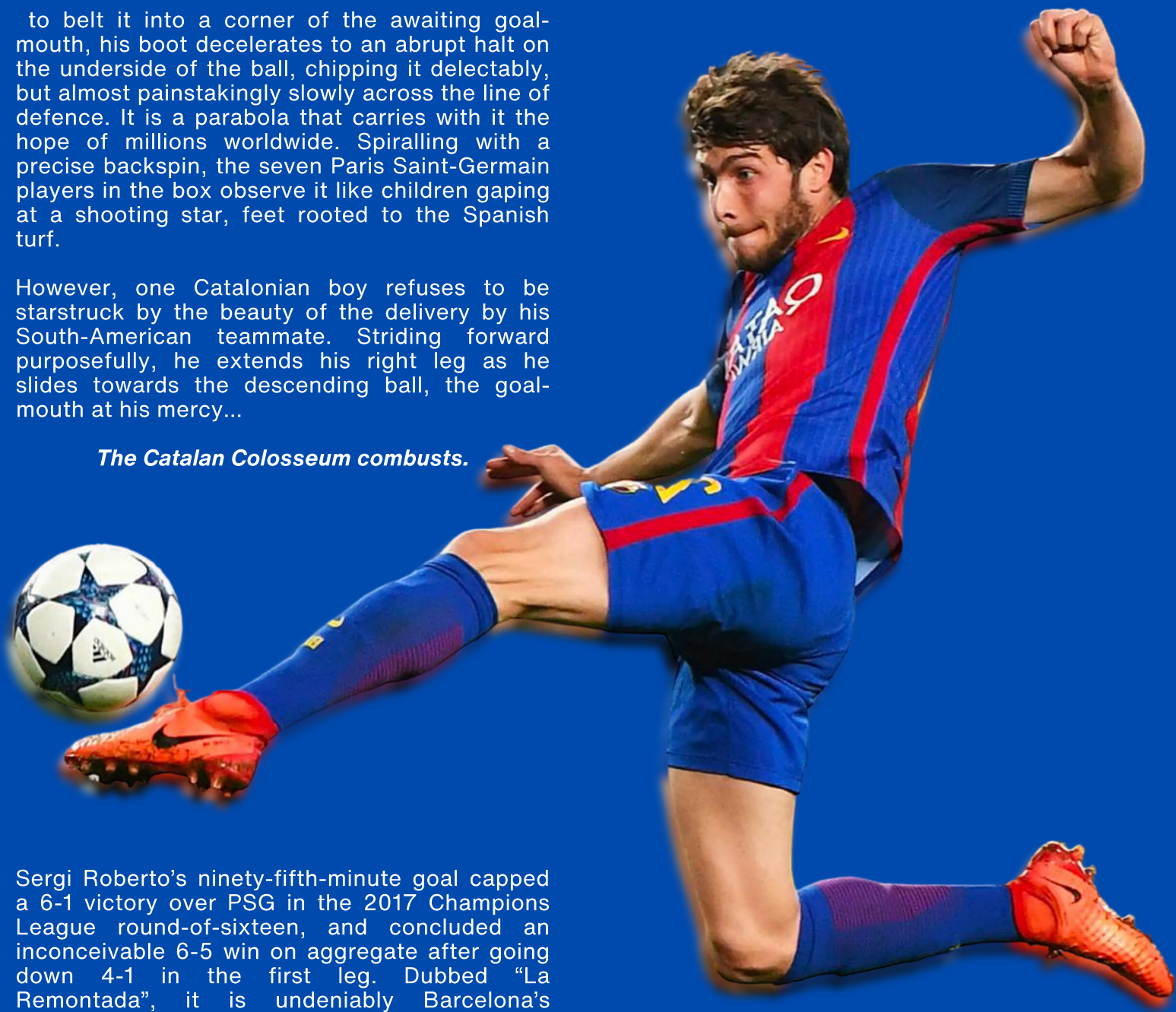
word for comeback.
ith association football.

Image: Goal.com

to belt it into a corner of the awaiting goal-mouth, his boot decelerates to an abrupt halt on the underside of the ball, chipping it delectably, but almost painstakingly slowly across the line of defence. It is a parabola that carries with it the hope of millions worldwide. Spiralling with a precise backspin, the seven Paris Saint-Germain players in the box observe it like children gaping at a shooting star, feet rooted to the Spanish turf.

However, one Catalonian boy refuses to be starstruck by the beauty of the delivery by his South-American teammate. Striding forward purposefully, he extends his right leg as he slides towards the descending ball, the goal-mouth at his mercy...

The Catalan Colosseum combusts.



Sergi Roberto's ninety-fifth-minute goal capped a 6-1 victory over PSG in the 2017 Champions League round-of-sixteen, and concluded an inconceivable 6-5 win on aggregate after going down 4-1 in the first leg. Dubbed "La Remontada", it is undeniably Barcelona's greatest comeback from error in the recent generation of football.

However, more than half a decade later, we may be bearing witness to the roots of a starkly different form of remontada at the club.

Football is a sport where the rich generally get richer. During the period of huge domestic and continental success during Pep Guardiola's famed run as manager of the side, FC Barcelona managed to propel their earnings, and continue to multiply this through signing better players as the club became more attractive and won more accolades. However, since Guardiola's departure, the monetary situation at the Catalan club has begun to erode significantly.

Through a variety of factors including financial mismanagement, poor decision-making and the effects of Covid-19, one of the world's largest sporting entities found itself in over a billion euros of debt in early 2021. In fact, the club faced the prospect of bankruptcy, which would have sent unimaginable ripples through the footballing landscape. Despite having the highest revenue in the Spanish top division at a whopping 729 million euros in 2020, the amount owed in bank loans, wages and transfer fee instalments crippled the club financially. In addition, they possessed the highest wage bill in world football, but as this did not correlate with the same levels of success as achieved previously, their turnover ratio diminished rapidly.

The result was a period of turmoil, including the departures of stalwarts of the club including Messi and Gerard Pique among others. Transfers became increasingly difficult, as the side that had once attracted the largest names in the world's game struggled to financially compete with their rivals and were forced into uninspiring loan deals and free transfers. To add insult to injury, manager Ronald Koeman had lost the dressing room as well as the faith of the club's fans.

Swift decisions had to be made at the club in order to revive their on-pitch form and alleviate the off-field debt. Transfer strategy had to be spot on, as contrasting to the scattergun, profligate signings made in the past few years, not a penny could be afforded to be wasted on any inadequate player. Koeman was sacked in late 2021, and the club announced the appointment of relatively inexperienced manager, but former icon Xavi.

This is where the remontada begins.



Image: Flickr

Messi, an icon of the club was offloaded for seemingly purely financial incentives



"In a recent match, eight of eleven starters were La



"Back-to-back winners of the Golden Boy award Pedri and Gavi are the faces of La Masia's lastest generation



Masia graduates, with an average age of 18.8 years"

As a graduate of Barcelona's famed academy La Masia himself, Xavi began to turn to the institution's conveyor belt of talent in order to harvest players capable of making the step up to the first team. What had once been a glorified tradition that Barca carried so proudly despite their undeniable riches became a necessity, and perhaps a final resort for the club. This has been further pronounced in recent weeks and months at the time of writing in the early stages of the 23-24 campaign. Several youngsters have burst onto the scene and breathed a new air of life into the previously floundering squad, rejuvenating the interest of fans and the desires of players to fight for the badge.

The most famous of this crop of Catalan youngsters are Pedri and Gavi, both winners of the Golden Boy award (for the best u21 player in Europe) in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Meanwhile, sixteen-year-old sensation Lamine Yamal has made headlines recently, and is now a regular starter at the club in addition to being called up to the Spanish national team. Another La Masia product is twenty-year-old Alejandro Balde, who is regarded by many as one of the best upcoming left-backs in world football, and starts week in week out for the club he has served from age eight. Fermin Lopez was another relative unknown until a couple of months ago when he made his presence known with a man-of-the-match performance in the Champions League. In fact, at a large proportion of Barca games nowadays, only the most diehard fans can truthfully say that they recognise every Catalan teenager that is listed on the bench, as the production line continues to provide a new talent seemingly every week.

Many of the aforementioned players were imperative parts of Barcelona's unforeseen LaLiga victory in the 2022-23 season despite financial troubles. They continue to provide opportunities for footballers barely older than myself to make a name for themselves and contribute meaningfully to a team with lofty aspirations. The future now appears brighter for the Catalan giants, as the debts will gradually, hopefully, be alleviated, and the young crop of talent can elevate performances on the pitch to aid with this. This is the hidden *remontada* that Barcelona has been discreetly fortifying themselves with, as they look to recreate the iconic sides such as the one involved in the original '*La Remontada'*.

JESSE LINGARD: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

By Daryn Zulkarnain

Jesse Lingard is a well-known professional footballer who currently plays as an attacking midfielder or winger for Nottingham Forest. At the age of seven, Lingard joined Manchester United's youth academy and made it to the first team. Lingard was known as United's hidden gem, with some believing that he would help the team return to the glory days.

Lingard departed Old Trafford in the summer of 2022, having spent his entire professional football career at Manchester United. Despite achieving the pinnacle of every child's ambition of playing for the team they support, Lingard opened up about battling depression, sharing the challenges he had faced whilst being in the club.
The 31-year-old had admitted to drinking alcohol as a coping mechanism to combat the draining effects of depression.

'Literally, I just wanted to sit at home and drink a little bit - try and take the pain away. I don't do that, normally. But sitting at home and drinking before bed ... that's when I knew I was in a bad situation. It wasn't drinking to excess. It was just little bits through the week.'

In 2019, after Lingard's mother was admitted to a hospital for treatment, the Manchester United star took on the responsibility to look after his siblings. During this time, he shared that he was at his lowest point because of having the big responsibility.

As responsibilities were piling up for Lingard, before lockdown in March 2020, he played a full 90-minute FA cup tie at Derby, the "Ighalo spoils Rooney party" which led them to a 3-0 win.


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Manchester United

Manchester United condemn apparent racist abuse of Jesse Lingard at Derby

- Incident occurred after FA Cup tie at Derby on Thursday
- United to contact Derby for help in investigation

Despite winning, Lingard was abused by United's fans as he boarded the team bus post-match as they were disappointed with his performance. As he left Pride Park, he suffered vile racist abuse as supporters screamed racial slurs. With the fans being unhappy with his performance, he reconsidered his football career and opted for a "break" from football for two months.

'I just felt so much scrutiny, especially after the Derby game and I was getting abuse as I got on the bus. Nobody really knew about my struggles off the pitch so they think "You're a footballer, you live in a nice house, you've got money, you can deal with anything." But when it's someone's health and well-being - it's a different situation. We're all human"

With him considering taking time off football due to struggles on and off the pitch at Manchester United, Lingard admitted that he was happy to be benched for the majority of the games. He shared that the reason why he felt this way was because he felt as if his mind was not at the right place and was not focused at all. He bottled everything up and thought about other things over playing football. He felt he had lost his ability to play and could no longer play when he attempted.

"I was going into games happy sitting on the bench and that's not me."

Lingard was known to be a regular starter at United under Ole Gunnar Solskjær however he was rarely featured after Christmas due to his struggles off the pitch.

He believed that the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 was his turning point.

"I could have easily quit in lockdown, been like: 'Nah I don't want to do it'. I could have easily given up but the fight in me always brings me back to life and in lockdown I was just smashing gym, doing runs. I wanted to get back to training fitter and faster than anyone else and I did that."

In his interview with "The Guardian", Lingard shares that lockdown helped him transform his mindset where his brother would show him videos of his England U21 days and World Cup games to remind him what an amazing player he was and his potential. He remembered watching videos of when he was playing for the World Cup and felt motivated to bring back the "Real Jesse Lingard". Through watching old games, he got his "attitude going", and was reminded that he was not a quitter. His brother, Scott mentioned in an interview with "Daily Mail" that the online abuse had gotten to a point where Lingard didn't have the motivation or energy to do simple tasks such as fill up his car with petrol. Scott felt "powerless" when trying to help his brother.

Lingard admitted when he was at his lowest point, he needed to get away from England completely to properly concentrate and refocus on his football career.



Image: transfermark.com

“I was thinking, 'I need to get away from England'. Not to Spain, but to China or Saudi Arabia, somewhere to stay out of the limelight and only concentrate on football.” Lingard said.

"I want to inspire more people to come and speak out."

During the 2020-21 season, Lingard decided to make a move and join West Ham on loan from Manchester United, rekindling his passion while with the Hammers. With no permanent transfer arranged, in 2022, he decided against returning back to the London Stadium and instead signed a one-year deal with Nottingham Forest in 2022. From being in such a dark place, Lingard learned a valuable lesson that opening up was the best thing to do. Bottling things up did not allow him to fight his battles. With his move to Forest, he managed to bag his first goal against Tottenham, managing to knock them out of the Carabao Cup with a 2-0 win.

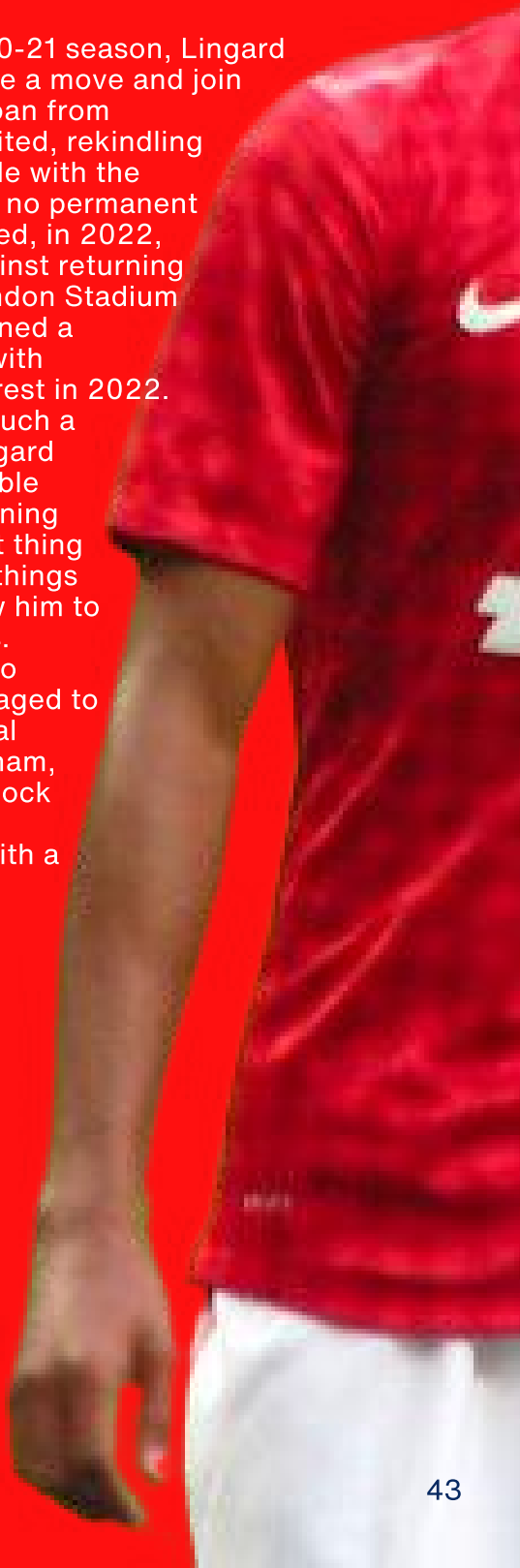


Image: Flickr



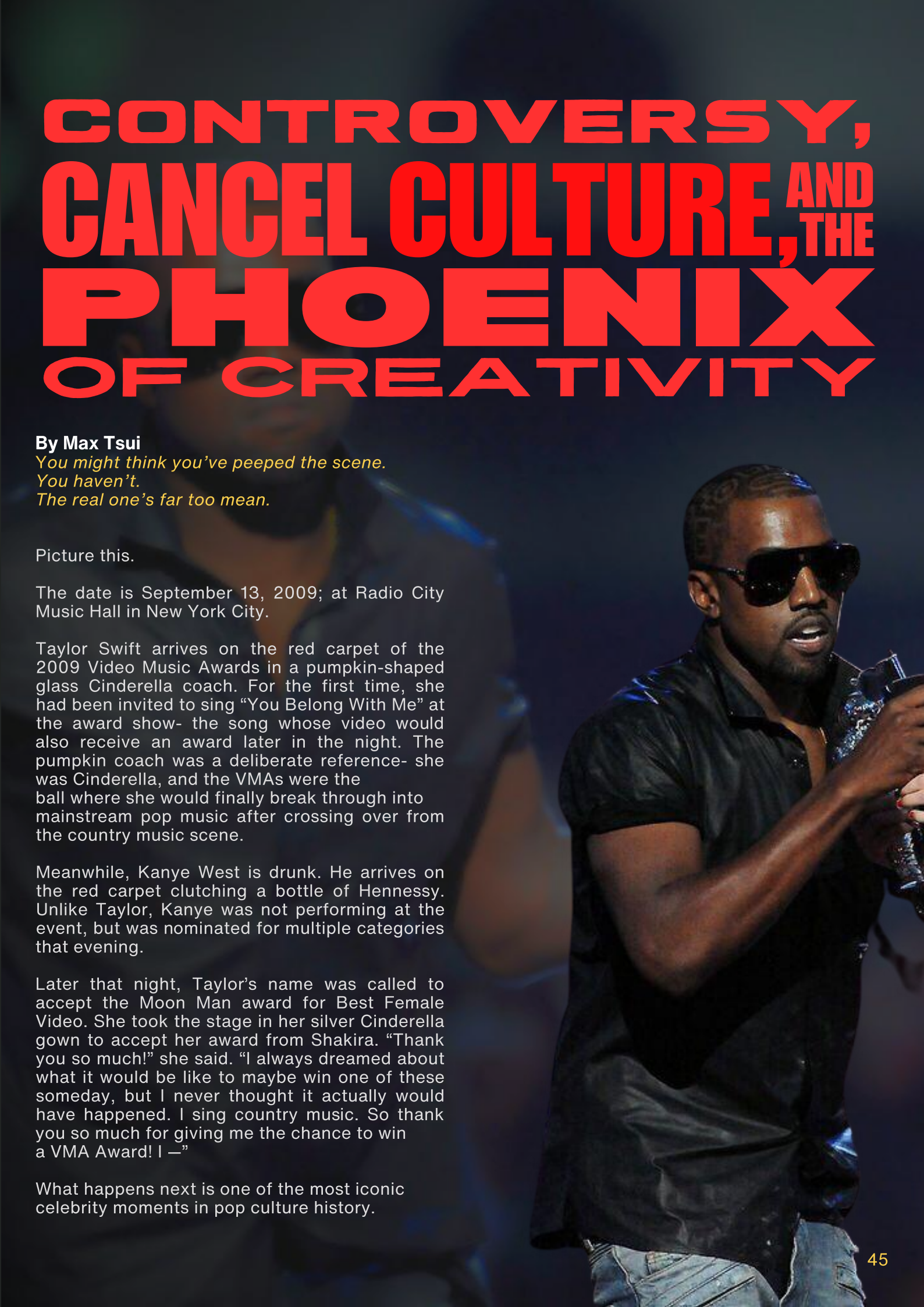
"Football is a manly sport, everyone is manly, and I feel like if you say something you might get called soft, and I thought I am just going to come out - and it made me much stronger after that.

In the end, Jesse Lingard's journey of finding a new club and rediscovering his spark has been nothing short of remarkable. His renewed passion and sense of purpose for playing football had transformed him into a better player on and off the pitch.

CONTROVERSY, CANCEL CULTURE, AND THE PHOENIX OF CREATIVITY

By Max Tsui

You might think you've peeped the scene.
You haven't.
The real one's far too mean.



Picture this.

The date is September 13, 2009; at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

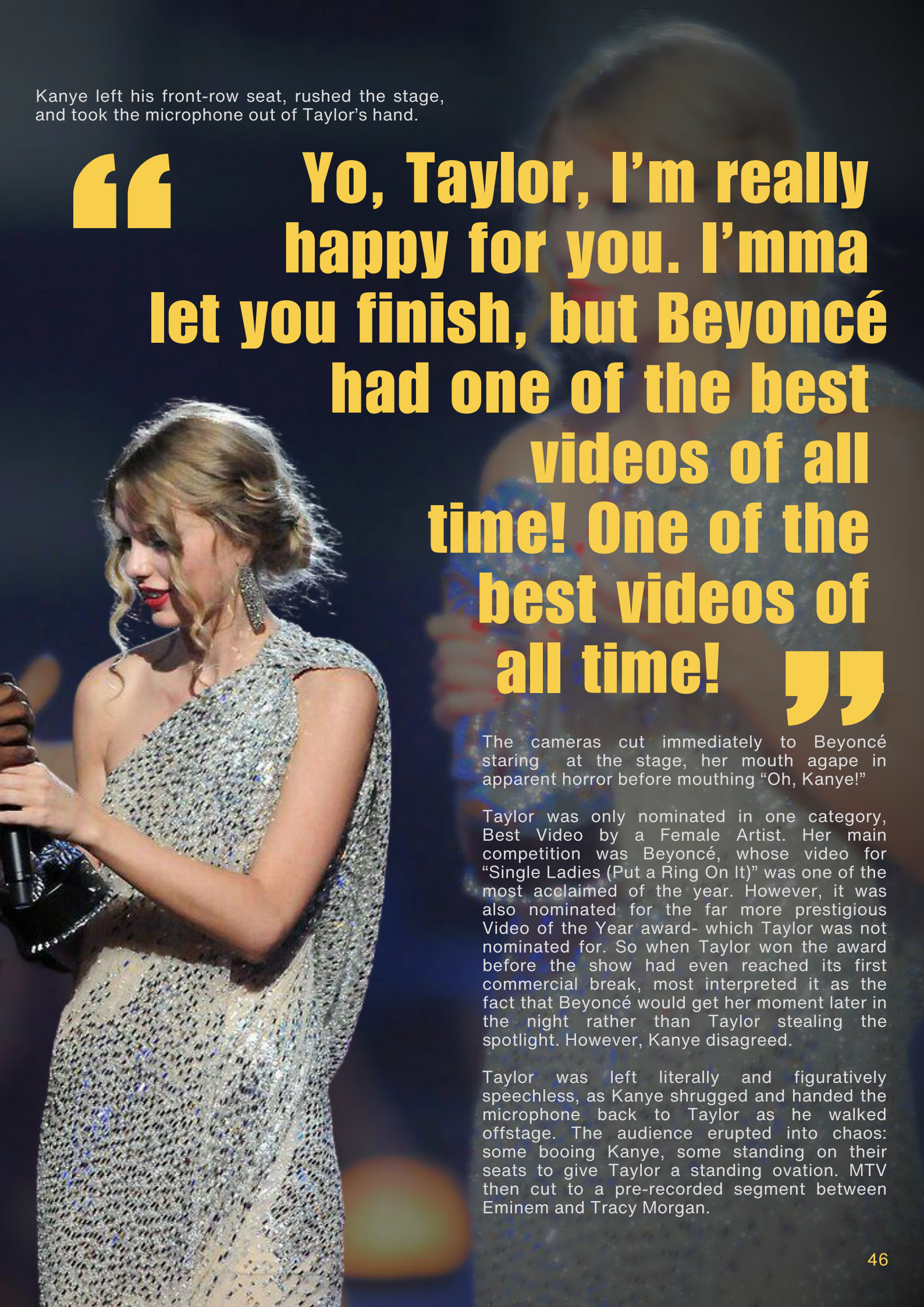
Taylor Swift arrives on the red carpet of the 2009 Video Music Awards in a pumpkin-shaped glass Cinderella coach. For the first time, she had been invited to sing "You Belong With Me" at the award show- the song whose video would also receive an award later in the night. The pumpkin coach was a deliberate reference- she was Cinderella, and the VMAs were the ball where she would finally break through into mainstream pop music after crossing over from the country music scene.

Meanwhile, Kanye West is drunk. He arrives on the red carpet clutching a bottle of Hennessy. Unlike Taylor, Kanye was not performing at the event, but was nominated for multiple categories that evening.

Later that night, Taylor's name was called to accept the Moon Man award for Best Female Video. She took the stage in her silver Cinderella gown to accept her award from Shakira. "Thank you so much!" she said. "I always dreamed about what it would be like to maybe win one of these someday, but I never thought it actually would have happened. I sing country music. So thank you so much for giving me the chance to win a VMA Award! I —"

What happens next is one of the most iconic celebrity moments in pop culture history.

Kanye left his front-row seat, rushed the stage, and took the microphone out of Taylor's hand.



"Yo, Taylor, I'm really happy for you. I'mma let you finish, but Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time! One of the best videos of all time!"

The cameras cut immediately to Beyoncé staring at the stage, her mouth agape in apparent horror before mouthing "Oh, Kanye!"

Taylor was only nominated in one category, Best Video by a Female Artist. Her main competition was Beyoncé, whose video for "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)" was one of the most acclaimed of the year. However, it was also nominated for the far more prestigious Video of the Year award- which Taylor was not nominated for. So when Taylor won the award before the show had even reached its first commercial break, most interpreted it as the fact that Beyoncé would get her moment later in the night rather than Taylor stealing the spotlight. However, Kanye disagreed.

Taylor was left literally and figuratively speechless, as Kanye shrugged and handed the microphone back to Taylor as he walked offstage. The audience erupted into chaos: some booing Kanye, some standing on their seats to give Taylor a standing ovation. MTV then cut to a pre-recorded segment between Eminem and Tracy Morgan.

Later that night, Kanye posted a public apology to Taylor and all her fans on his blog- but the scandal was only beginning thanks to one thing.

Twitter.



Image: Flickr

The platform, now known as X, was only 3 years old at the time and still evolving, but it was the main reason nobody could stop talking about what happened that night. Jim Cantiello, an MTV News correspondent at the time, told Billboard: “If you opened up your timeline that night, your feed was overrun with reactions. If you weren’t watching the VMAs and you opened Twitter, it felt like you were missing out on the craziest TV moment of all time.” The scandal revealed what Twitter could truly excel at- driving conversation during a pop culture moment. Public perception was no longer this amorphous concept. Now there were multiple platforms where sentiment about anything or anyone could be condensed into a trending topic.

Celebrities took to Twitter to express their outrage.

“What happened to you as a child?? Did you not get hugged enough??” tweeted Kelly Clarkson.

“F*** YOU KANYE. IT’S LIKE U STEPPED ON A KITTEN.” tweeted Katy Perry.

Then-President Barack Obama said “the young lady seemed like a perfectly nice person” while calling Kanye something ruder.

In today’s day and age we’re all too familiar with the concept of ‘cancel culture’- that is, ostracizing, boycotting, or shunning those who act or speak in an unacceptable way- particularly through the use of social media platforms such as Twitter. This was one of the first major instances of a celebrity being ‘canceled’- especially one as big as Kanye, who at the time was probably the biggest name in music.

Already known as something of a loose cannon due to a previous incident where he proclaimed on national television that ‘George Bush doesn’t care about Black people,’ in that moment at the VMAs Kanye officially established himself as the most hated man in America as well as the music world. The media was there to back him into a corner, ready to publish every tabloid headline they could milk out of him. A tour with Lady Gaga was set to begin, but both artists mutually agreed to cancel the tour in the wake of the overwhelming public scrutiny. In an interview following the VMA incident, he issued a tearful apology, admitting he needed to take some time off to recover.

And that is exactly what he did.

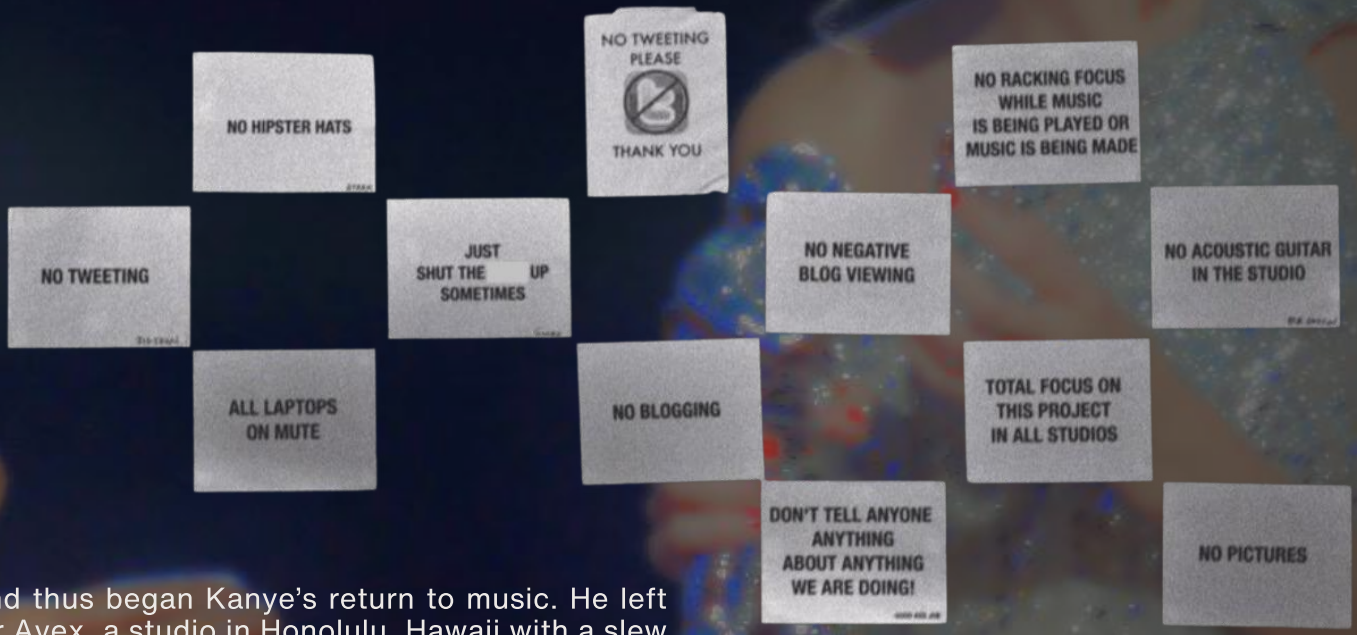
“(I) like literally, left America. I stopped doing music all together. I just took some time, -I went to Japan, just so I can get away from paparazzi all together, and then in November I moved to Rome and just like lived there.” -Kanye in an interview with Ellen, 2010

Longtime friend of Kanye and musical collaborator Mos Def advised him to get out of the country- so in 2009 Kanye left America as part of a self-imposed exile, to regroup far, far away from the paparazzi and the critics.

When in Rome, he interned at Fendi as he was getting serious about his fashion endeavors. There was inspiration everywhere- in Rome’s art, music, and culture- yet he claimed that he was absolutely done with music as he found fashion far more interesting. Still, Kanye couldn't help but think of music. In an interview with Complex, he explained that at the time he was conceptualizing music that would have melodies like his previous album mixed with the raw drums á la Mobb Deep.

Already recovering from his recent split with his then-fiancée Alexis Phfier as well as the death of his late mother 2 years prior (both of which led to the creation of his album 808s and Heartbreak), his mental health was at an all-time low. Combine that with the fact that seemingly everyone in America had declared his career over, he had nothing to lose- this was complete rock bottom for him. He was going to prove everyone wrong by doing what he does best- making incredible music. In order to achieve this, West had to put himself in a zone where he felt like his life was dependent on the success of his next album.

Sheets of paper were posted on one side of the studio including what were dubbed "Kanye Commandments", such as "No Tweeting" and "No Pictures". Kanye himself never slept a full night at the location, taking power naps in a studio chair or couch in intervals of 90 minutes during night working hours. Engineers operated on a similar schedule to West, remaining active 24 hours a day. According to comedian Chris Rock, who recorded lines for the album, "Everybody in the studio had suits on. I thought he had like, flown in a bunch of guys from like Europe or something. All the.. the guys, all the engineers were in black suits, white shirts and black ties. He set up a mood. When you walked in there you felt this mood."



And thus began Kanye's return to music. He left for Avex, a studio in Honolulu, Hawaii with a slew of producers, comedians, rappers, and more for what was colloquially termed Rap Camp— a dream team working around the clock to bring the grandiose vision to life. He block-booked all three session rooms of Avex simultaneously for 24 hours a day to work on a new album, until he felt it was complete.

For the dream team, he brought together musical legends and prodigies alike, with vocalists ranging from Sir Elton John to then-up-and-coming stars Nicki Minaj and Pusha T of Clipse. Other notable artists that would end up featured on the album included JAY-Z, Kid Cudi, Rihanna, John Legend, Rick Ross, and Bon Iver frontman Justin Vernon along with the rest of the group. However even with that star-studded cast of emcees, the standout of the album was the production. Apart from Kanye's own revolutionary production talents, he brought together RZA of the Wu-Tang Clan, the legendary Mike Dean, fellow Blueprint producer Bink, longtime collaborator and mentor No I.D., as well as producers S1 and DJ Frank E.

Legendary Queens rapper Q-tip described the process as communal, saying:

"It was like music by committee. "If the delivery guy comes in the studio and Kanye likes him and they strike up a conversation, he'll go, 'Check this out. Tell me what you think.' Which speaks volumes about who he is and how he sees and views people. Every person has a voice and an idea, so he's sincerely looking to hear what you have to say —good, bad, or whatever ... When he has his beats or his rhymes, he offers them to the committee and we're all invited to dissect, strip, or add on to what he's already started. By the end of the sessions, you see how he integrates and transforms everyone's contributions, so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. He's a real wizard at it. What he does is alchemy, really."

In order to get pop culture back he would have to return to the mantle he fell from- the MTV VMA's. After a series of singles released over the course of a few months, Kanye's return to the VMA stage came in September 2010 with a live performance of his song Runaway, which received a standing ovation.

The VMAs incident had evolved into a fable about his ego-driven downfall, and he would respond with a grander, more opulent fairy tale about his own genius and resilience. This album would not be an apology. Oh, no. Instead of humbling himself, Kanye would double down on his arrogance- a 'backhanded apology', as termed by West himself. If the world was going to deem him a villain, he was going to embrace it. He never planned on seriously apologizing for something he felt was true, saying:

"I feel like in some ways like I'm a soldier of culture, and I realized that no one wants that to be my job. And I'll never go on stage again. I'll never sit in a award show again, but will I feel convicted about things that really meant stuff to culture that constantly get denied for years, and years, and years, and years? I'm sorry, I will."

Remember how this album was supposed to be a fairytale? Well the story starts at the first track, titled Dark Fantasy- with Nicki Minaj reading the 1982 poem *Cinderella* by Roald Dahl in a faux-British accent, mentioning 'twisted fiction' and 'sick addiction' over filtered *oohs* and *aahs* before telling the listener to 'zip it, listen'. A grand piano chord plays, and an angelic choir chants 'Can we get much higher?' as multiple vocals are stacked upon one another- literally getting higher and higher.

Just over a minute into the song, *RZA*'s signature thumping bass plays behind a looped Japanese piano sample in what is probably the hardest opening to any Kanye album. Straight away the grandiose production creates a luxurious atmosphere, setting the tone for the rest of the album. Yeezy himself opens his first verse with a line speaking of success.

I fantasised 'bout this back in Chicago,
Mercy mercy me, that Murcielago
That's me, the first year that I blow-
how you say broke in Spanish? Me no hablo.
Me drowned sorrow in that Diablo,
me found bravery in my bravado'

The story begins with Kanye at a peak in his career before the incident- he's flying high, everyone loves him, he's achieved successes he could only dream of before. Heck, even the song's beat itself makes you feel like you're cruising in a Lamborghini Murcielago. If the question is 'can we get much higher?', the answer is no. It's a testament to how far Kanye's come in his career- evoking memories in fans of Kanye going from the lovable underdog from Chicago and ending up as the biggest name in music. Between mentions of luxury car models and blowing his money in his first year of success, he makes a humorous quip at how ludicrously rich he is: ('how you say broke in Spanish? Me no hablo.') he's so rich now he literally doesn't know what broke means anymore. He's able to solve all of his problems with money, 'drowning sorrow in that Diablo'- crying in an expensive car as opposed to a cheap one, 'drowning' possibly alluding to alcohol. All the money ultimately exacerbated his already massive ego- the same one that gave him the guts to eventually take the mic away from Taylor.

Among references to Steve Urkel and Kings Of Leon, a line from the second verse asks a valid question:

'The plan was to drink until the pain over. But what's worse, the pain or the hangover?'

This line serves as a callback to the VMAs incident- Kanye had been drinking a lot in before the night as a way of coping with exhaustion from working on his last album as well as recent personal tragedies. He was trying to drink his personal pain away- the pain being Taylor's VMA win and the hangover being the explosive fallout that followed. Was the coping mechanism worse than the trauma? Even if Kanye thought Beyoncé truly deserved that award, was the resulting media backlash worth it? Was the pain even over? This line asks a lot of questions- some of them from Kanye to himself, and some from the public to Kanye.

The song then reaches a chorus featuring Kanye's voice over electric, distorted vocals and an orchestra, and concludes with the same 'Can we get much higher?' choir that opened the track.

Track 2, titled Gorgeous, opens with an alluring hook by Kid Cudi backed by Mike Dean's electric guitar:

'Ain't no question, if I want it, I need it
I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
I'm on the edge, so why you playin'? I'm sayin'
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down'

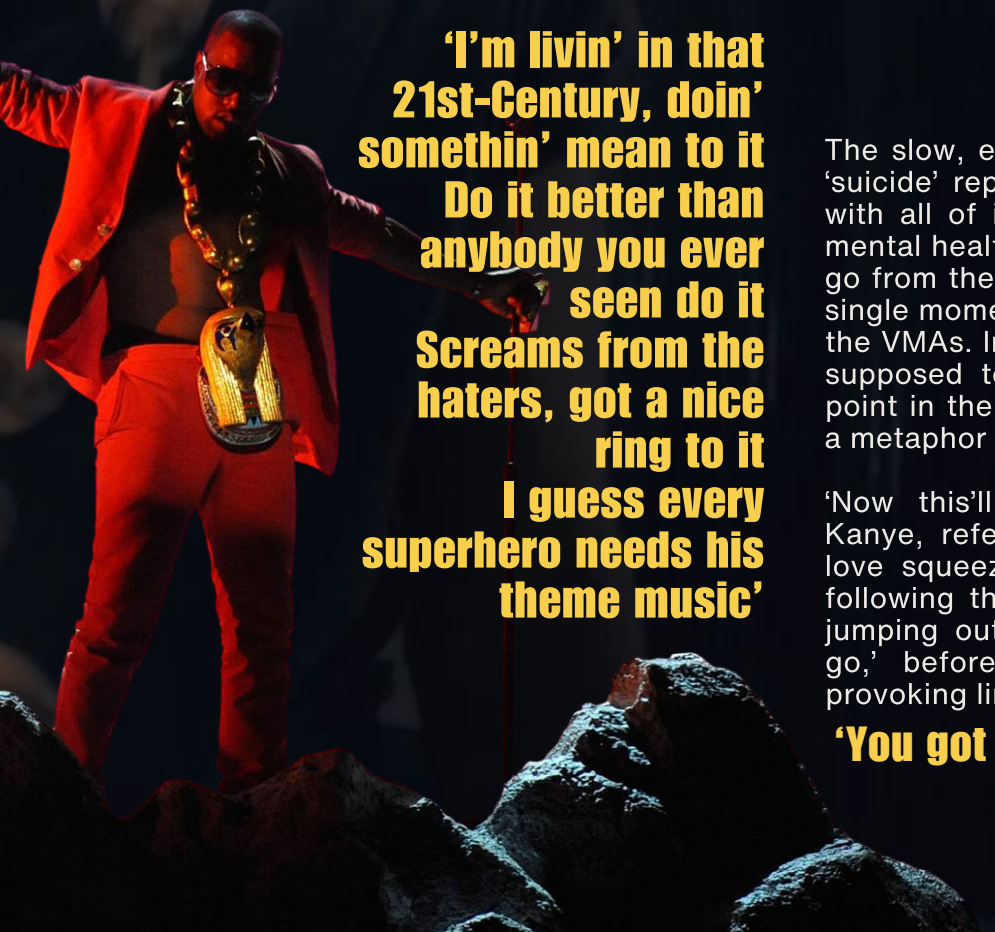
‘It’ refers to fame, the hook serving as sort of an anthem to those desperately pursuing it. Kanye was going to make his way back into the limelight, and was not going to let it drift away from him despite everything.

The song later tackles socio-political themes such as racial prejudice in lines like ‘And what's a black Beatle anyway, a [...] roach?’ highlighting societal biases. West also asks introspective questions on the track. (‘Is hip-hop just a euphemism for a new religion?)

The track also features a standout verse from Raekwon, who, in contrast to Kanye, raps about the progress that could be made to escape the problems faced by African-Americans; as well as the luxury life they could have once they escape it.

POWER

A brilliant sample from Afromerica by Continent No.6 brings us into track 3, titled POWER. The first single released after the VMAs, the accompanying music video cast Ye as God- surrounded by beautiful women at the gates of heaven. This is the point in the story where Kanye’s ego is at an all time high, going mad with power.



‘I’m livin’ in that 21st-Century, doin’ somethin’ mean to it
Do it better than anybody you ever seen do it
Screams from the haters, got a nice ring to it
I guess every superhero needs his theme music’

Ye addresses the ‘screams from the haters’- he’s extremely confident, and thus doesn’t care for the irrelevant opinions of others. In a twisted way, it proves he’s doing really well as he knows their opinions are insignificant.

According to Kanye, he spent ‘5,000 hours’ on this song alone, and it shows through the production. He needed a theme song as big as his ego- and accomplished exactly that. The upbeat claps and echoed chants of ‘aw, hey-eyy, aw’ are enough to get anyone hyped. Another brilliant sample- this one from legendary rock band King Crimson- provides an electrifying transition from the chorus to the first verse. Everything about this song sounds IMAX-level huge- from the hard-hitting drums to Kanye’s egotistical, almost sinister delivery.

‘They say I was the abomination of Obama’s nation
Well that’s a pretty bad way to start a conversation’

Referring to Obama’s comment about Kanye, he says ‘that’s a pretty bad way to start a conversation’- not just because it’s an insult, but because of the much larger conversation that was happening everywhere on Twitter.

The music video features a slow zoom out from Kanye, revealing a sword pointed directly at his head as well as various creatures reaching for him- showing the destructive nature of power despite its surface-level appeal.

‘I got the power, make your life so exciting
(so exciting)
(so exciting)
(suicide)
(suicide)’

The slow, echoed transition of ‘so exciting’ into ‘suicide’ represents how while fame does come with all of it perks, it can take a toll on one’s mental health. Or it could represent how one can go from the top of the world to rock bottom in a single moment- just as how Kanye’s career did at the VMAs. In a way, that was exactly what it was supposed to be- a career suicide. This is the point in the story where Kanye’s character dies- a metaphor for his public image at the time.

‘Now this’ll be a beautiful death,’ proclaims Kanye, referring to how the media seemed to love squeezing tabloid headline after headline following the incident. Dwele’s vocals echo ‘I’m jumping out the window, I’m letting everything go,’ before Kanye delivers a final thought-provoking line to the listener:

‘You got the power to let power go?’

He believed he was brave enough to stand up for what he believed in, even at the cost of his public image (and thus, power). The piano loop continues over distorted electric effects and maniacal laughter, before closing the track with the King Crimson sample and electric guitar riff.
A beautiful instrumental consisting solely of piano and cello follows, titled All of the Lights (Interlude). It's a nice change from the upbeat energy of the previous track- but why?
This track is largely interpreted as the funeral music for the death of Kanye's character, and provides a clean transition to the next track, titled All of the Lights.

ALL OF THE LIGHTS!

Marching-band style horns, a hook from Rihanna, and a completely insane drum loop bring us into the album's fifth track. This one has contributions from 14 other renowned artists (e.g. Drake, Alicia Keys, Elton John, John Legend), all listed as additional vocalists bar Rihanna, the solely credited feature.

The 'lights' mentioned in the title and throughout the song can be interpreted as a metaphor for the 'bright light' you see at the end of your life, or the burning brightness of a phoenix rising from the ashes. Either way, this song returns to the upbeat energy from POWER, revealing Kanye's character in the story has come back from the dead.

The opening lines set the tone- "Lights, lights, all of the lights / Turn up the lights in here, baby, extra bright, I want y'all to see this" The repetition of "lights" serves as a metaphor for the glaring, sometimes inescapable spotlight of fame and public scrutiny.

He refers to many types of lights- cop lights, (later linked to the theme of the protagonist being an abuser) flash lights, street lights (both callbacks to earlier songs of his- Flashing Lights and Street Lights respectively), and strobe lights (referring to the parties of the fast celebrity life).

'I slapped my girl, she called the feds
I did that time and spent that bread
I'm heading home, I'm almost there
I'm on my way, heading up the stairs
To my surprise, a (...) replacing me
I had to take him to that ghetto university'

Kanye begins the story in this song by 'slapping his girl', and being arrested for it. He then has to pay his girl child support (bread referring to money), and eventually returns home to see her and their child. He is surprised to find that she has a new boyfriend, and tries to fight him.

'Slapping his girl' again is a metaphor for the VMA incident- him doing something terrible to an innocent woman. Him 'doing time' refers to stepping out of the spotlight, and the person replacing him refers to rappers replacing him in the hip-hop game. By taking them to the 'ghetto university', he is showing them he is still the best in the game. (a ghetto is a derogatory term for a part of a city where minority groups live, often characterized by poverty and hence gang violence. To take one to the 'ghetto university' refers to fighting.)

Later in the song he faces a 'restraining order' from his daughter, and refuses to let her grow up in 'that ghetto university'. His daughter is a metaphor for hip-hop, and the restraining order was the time spent recovering from the damage instead of working on his music. Him refusing to let her grow up in the university shows his views have changed, while also saying hip-hop needs him to provide music that isn't the street-oriented gangsta rap we usually get.

The song later features a hypnotic bridge from Kid Cudi as well as an outro from Alicia Keys and Elton John- both incredible vocal performances.
A haunting intro from Bon Iver frontman Justin Vernon takes us to track 6 of the album- titled Monster.

'I shoot the lights out
Hide 'til it's bright out
Oh, just another lonely night
Are you willing to sacrifice your life?'

Kanye West, JAY-Z, Rick Ross, and Nicki Minaj assemble for this star-studded song, and despite the massive stardom of the first three at the time, the undeniable standout is Nicki- who was up-and-coming at the time. Named 'Best Rap Verse of the Last 5 Years' in 2013 by Complex, Nicki has named this verse as her 'breakout

moment' and it is generally considered to be her greatest verse of all time. In fact, most of the streams for this song nowadays are from Nicki's listeners- not Kanye's.

'So let me get this straight, wait, I'm the rookie?
But my features and my shows ten times your pay?
50K for a verse, no album out
Yeah, my money's so tall that my Barbies got to climb it
Hotter than a Middle Eastern climate, violent'

Everyone, including Nicki, dives into the excesses of fame, basking in the celebrity life and bragging about how much of a 'monster' they are on the mic- amid multiple horror movie references. The song's official music video contained dark, horror imagery, but was deemed too controversial and was thus banned from MTV as well as Kanye's YouTube channel.

The next track, titled So Appalled, provides a juxtaposition of the previous; expressing deep disgust and discontent with everything about the celebrity lifestyle to a harsh, somber beat. This track also features a star-studded cast, with the likes of JAY-Z, Pusha T, Swizz Beatz, RZA & CyHi alongside Kanye himself.

After a grim outro by Swizz Beatz, the album reaches its penultimate chapter with Devil in A New Dress. A pitched-up sample of Smokey Robinson's Will You Love Me Tomorrow? drags the listener into the music with an operatic cry, as the heavenly instrumental seems to pull you closer and sway with you. While featuring West's iconic pitched-sampling style paramount to his earlier albums, ironically this is the only track on the album not produced by him.

The song takes place during a night between Kanye and a woman that isn't going so well. Lyrics like 'haven't said a word to me this evening,' and 'How she gon' wake up and not love me no more?' carry a sense of longing and desire as Kanye fantasizes about her. While still talking about common themes of fame and excess, Devil in A New Dress takes a step back on the massive scale of the album, instead focusing on the intimate moments Kanye tries to have in this crazy life of his. Fittingly, 'Ye also gives the beat space to breathe on this track, pausing when needed and keeping his delivery steady. Using religious imagery and poetic language, Kanye likens love (as well as the woman) to a devil due to its destructive nature- the title itself being a reference to the 1995 film Devil In a Blue Dress.

'Stretch limousine, sipping rosé all alone
Double-headed monster with a mind of his own
Cherry-red chariot, excess is just my character
All-black tux, (...) shoes lavender
I never needed acceptance from all you outsiders
Had cyphers with Yeezy before his mouth wired (Uh)'

After a guitar solo by producer Mike Dean that will make you transcend, Rick Ross delivers what is considered to be one of the best verses of his career, massively outshining Kanye while touching on themes of opulence, excess, and success. The verse was so good, in fact, that Ross made his own music video for it on a song that wasn't even his. The song then closes with Mike Dean's incredible guitar carrying the listener toward the outro.
Track 9 on the album is titled Runaway.

RUNAWAY

The song starts with an isolated high E note.

Then another.

And another.

This repeats 15 times, before another E is played with a lower octave and gradually the notes make their way down the scale. Then the drums hit, and the piano-key heartbeat of the song continues by repeating.

"Look at ya!" A sample of Rick James plays repeatedly, panning back and forth between speakers- giving the listener a feeling of being surrounded yet alone. This mirrors the duality of fame- loneliness at the top despite being surrounded by critics and fans alike.

'And I always find, yeah, I always find something wrong,' Kanye sings. 'You been puttin' up with my [...] just way too long / I'm so gifted at finding what I don't like the most / So I think it's time for us to have a toast,' he says, recognising his imperfections. The song is an apology, but also implies he isn't able to change the way he is- the world will either need to live with Kanye, or run away.

'Run away from me, baby, Ah, run away,' he sings in the bridge. It isn't clear who this song is addressed to specifically- perhaps it's a love interest, the world, or even himself. Whoever it is, noting that the title is the noun 'Runaway' and not the action 'Run Away', has probably already left him- leaving him alone.

The bridge takes us to Pusha T's verse, where he gives a girl a choice- to live with his horrible personality, or run away. Because he provides her so much luxury in the form of material items, the girl essentially has to live with it and put up with him. Kanye repeatedly told Pusha to make the verse more sinister, not knowing Pusha was going through relationship issues himself at the time.

'Split and go where? Back to wearing knockoffs? Haha, knock it off, Neimans, shop it off Let's talk over mai tais, waitress, top it off'

Kanye takes over for the song's third verse. 'Never was much of a romantic,' he proclaims. 'I could never take the intimacy / And I know I did damage, 'cause the look in your eyes is killing me.'

The 9-minute track takes the form of a Greek tragedy- an ancient form of theater, characterized by a set of conventions: The protagonist being presented as a hero, before being defeated by their own hubris, and later trying to repair the damage caused but making it worse no matter what. As a result, the end of the tragic hero is never good.

After a final pre-chorus and chorus, the beat continues for a while- before returning to the song's beginning isolated notes. Through distorted vocals, Kanye says something, but it's too unclear to make out. He then sings the first four lines of the hook through a distorted vocoder, just barely enough to make out what he's saying. The vocal effects then completely drown out whatever he's saying, leaving listeners to sit with emotional, primal, distorted humming and singing over a string section.

This is interpreted in many ways, however one I believe best fits the album is that the public simply doesn't understand Kanye. Whatever he's trying to get across with his public statements is drowned out by himself, and ultimately overshadowed by his music.

The only person who knows what was said is Kanye himself. He's trying to hide again after being out in the open, but it's useless- we've already seen his admission to guilt and his flaws. This track is the centerpiece of a short film that was announced alongside the album, and for good reason. It's one of West's most personal works, and tells the story of Kanye West that will live forever through those haunting piano melodies.



After the incredibly somber ending of Runaway, we are dragged back into the fast life with track 10, titled Hell of a Life. The harsh, electric drums and guitar noises make up most of this track, with a manic arpeggiated piano between the chorus and verses. This song is about using the power that comes with fame to have a one-night stay with a woman, and how it ends up being nothing but a fantasy Kanye had. Throughout the song, he never pronounces the 'f' in 'Life', meaning all those fantasies with the woman were merely an illusion.

Track 11 is titled *Blame Game*, with John Legend featured on the chorus. Kanye is talking about his relationship with fame as well as with a woman. His character loses everything here, as his girl has run away (like in previous tracks) and he is trying to win her back. He wants to pretend he doesn't care, but it still hurts- his own ego and hatred tear him apart. An emotionally raw track, *Blame Game* features a humorous (while very explicit in language) outro featuring a monologue by comedian Chris Rock. It contrasts the rest of the song with its satirical nature, balancing the song with a touch of humor.

This brings us nicely to track 12, titled *Lost In the World*. It features tribal drums, a faster tempo, and heavy influence from Bon Iver. Sampling their track *Woods*, where they lament about the woods, Kanye flips this entirely and expands the scope to beyond the woods and to America as a whole. This gives the album a climactic ending, exploring themes of love, discovery, and the complexity of relationships- be that fame, women, or power. 'Run from the lights, run from the night, run for your life,' sing Kanye and Elly Jackson in the pre-chorus. This shows development from earlier in the album, with Kanye now rejecting the fast life shown in *All of the Lights*.

'I'm lost in the world, been down my whole life
I'm new in the city, and I'm down for the night
Down for the night, said she's down for the night'

Kanye's character is lost by this point. He's been put through so much- he's fallen from his throne, died, come back to life, re-entered the fast life, and now rejected it. And so was the real-life Kanye, due to the previous tragedies he had experienced in his life. He's yearning for fulfillment, and is now lost completely- he knows he's missing something, but after all this time and everything that's happened, he doesn't know what.

The track ends and immediately cuts to the final track- titled Who Will Survive In America. An abridged reading of poet Gil Scott-Heron's Comment #1, the track leaves the listener wondering: is everything that comes with fame really worth it? Flowing immediately from the previous track, Kanye's vocals are nowhere to be found on this one. This can be interpreted as either Kanye's character being truly lost in the world, or that he has finally died after realizing the spotlight isn't worth it anymore- leaving Gil Scott to eulogize him.

The track concludes with Gil-Scott repeating the question:

'Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?
Who will survive in America?'

And thus concludes the piece of work titled My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy.

The production of MBDTF wove every thread from all of Kanye's previous albums together- the same sampling genius that produced The College Dropout (2004), the orchestral elements prominent throughout Late Registration (2005), the stadium-level scale and pop feel of Graduation (2007), and the auto-tuned raw emotion and electric sounds of 808s and Heartbreak (2008). With this album, Kanye culminated the entirety of his career together (production, collaborators, controversies alike) and pushed it to unseen heights.

By the time West had finished the album, he and his label had spent a combined US$ 3 million on it, making it one of the most expensive albums of all time. The title was announced in October 2010 along with a short film titled Runaway. The film is still up on YouTube, with both an explicit and clean version available. On November 22nd, 2010, Kanye West's My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy was finally released to the public and was instantly met with critical acclaim.



The album's main cover is pixelated on streaming services but available online. The uncensored version shows West being straddled on a couch by an armless winged female, who has fearsome features and a long, spotted tail. Both are nude, with West shown holding a beer. In 2015, Billboard named the album's artwork as the 30th best of all time, stating that West "matched the widescreen brilliance of the album's music with boundary-cracking art, including a controversial image of a demonic West being straddled by a nude angel".



Multiple covers were designed by artist George Condo at his studio, a few days after Kanye visited and played tapes of the album for several hours.

Metacritic, which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from professional publications, gave it an average score of 94 based on 45 reviews, granting it the status of "universal acclaim" as well as the best-reviewed album of 2010- the only rap album to do this since Outkast's Stankonia in 2000. At the 54th Annual Grammy Awards in 2012, it was awarded Best Rap Album- West's fourth album to hold this title. Kanye did exactly what he wanted to do- he forced his way back into the spotlight by making an album so good many consider it to be his magnum opus. It's one of the few hip-hop albums even mentioned in music reviewer circles when discussing 'best album of all time', along with Nas' Illmatic [1994], Kendrick Lamar's To Pimp A Butterfly [2015], and MF DOOM and Madlib's Madvillainy [2004] (all incredible albums, give them a listen if you haven't already).

And the album has absolutely stood the test of time- in later years it would go on to top multiple decade-end lists. It was placed #1 in both Rolling Stone and Billboard's 100 Best Albums of the 2010s lists; as well as #2 and #3 in Pitchfork's 200 Best Albums of the 2010s and The Guardian's 200 Best Albums of the 21st Century. Until Fiona Apple came along in 2020, it stood for nearly a decade as the last new album to receive a perfect 10 from Pitchfork.

So Kanye turned the scandal into a number one album and a revolutionary piece of work. But what about Taylor? While she was obviously appalled by the whole thing, some members of her team noticed that the incident was doing incredibly good things for her. Scott Borchetta, the CEO of Taylor's record label at the time, noted:

"Yesterday most of the country had no idea who Taylor Swift was. Today, Oprah Winfrey sent her flowers this morning and asked if she could talk to her."

At the 2010 VMAs, Taylor performed her song Innocent with clips of the scandal playing on a screen behind her. "Thirty-two and still growing up now," she sang, apparently to Kanye. "Who you are is not what you did. You're still an innocent."

For the next few years after the incident, both Kanye and Taylor went out of their way to appear to publicly bury the hatchet and put the 2009 VMAs behind them. They were seen at public events together, seemingly talking as friends.

When Kanye won the Video Vanguard Award at the 2015 VMAs, Taylor presented it to him, describing him as “my friend, Kanye West” and joking, “I’m really happy for you and I’mma let you finish but Kanye West has had one of the greatest careers of all time.”

So everyone gets a happy ending, right? Kanye emerges with a successful album, Taylor becomes the biggest pop star in the world, and both parties make up and become friends. Right?

Right?

Wrong!

Both artists end up psychologically crippled by this!

In 2016 Kanye released *Famous* and all of that reconciliation from the last few years went up in flames.

Kanye starts the song with a line that sounds something like this:

‘For all my Southside (...)s that know me best
I feel like me and Taylor might still have (...)
Why? I made that (...) famous
(god damn!)
I made that (...) famous!’

Yeah.

The song was accompanied by a music video containing footage of Kanye in bed with lifelike nude figures of various celebrities associated with him, including Taylor. No source has confirmed that Taylor’s likeness was used with her permission, yet somehow the explicit video still remains up on YouTube despite violating multiple community guidelines.

Media outlets again rushed to capitalize on the scandal, and Kanye said he’d asked Taylor for permission to release the song.

“Kanye did not call for approval, but to ask Taylor to release his single ‘Famous’ on her Twitter account,” Taylor’s spokesperson told the New York Times. “She declined and cautioned him about releasing a song with such a strong misogynistic message.”

Taylor referenced the controversy in her emotional Grammys acceptance speech, saying: “As the first woman to win Album of the Year at the Grammys twice, I want to say to all the young women out there, there will be people along the way who will try to undercut your success. Or take credit for your accomplishments or your fame. But if you just focus on the work ... you will look around and you will know that it was you and the people who love you that put you there.”

But Kanye’s wife at the time, Kim Kardashian, released a series of videos on Snapchat the same year that showed Kanye clearly asking Taylor for permission to use the lyrics in the song. However the video is cut in a way that makes it unclear whether she heard that he was actually going to refer to her with an expletive.

Twitter rushed to cancel her, and Taylor scrambled to cover the damage- insisting that her main issue was with the word Kanye had referred to her with, and not necessarily the line about making her famous. This eventually became part of the reason Taylor created her album *Reputation* in the following year, among other things the media had said about her.

Taylor Swift and Kanye West are some of the biggest icons in American pop culture. And nearly 15 years after the VMAs, neither of them have definitely won the feud, with both incidents polarizing people online and leaving them with strong opinions about the two. Even widely-beloved icons such as Kanye and Taylor aren’t safe from cancel culture or the power of the American media, leaving one question remaining:

Who Will Survive In America?

fict

Anonymity
By Yen Chong Tan

Time heals. Doesn't it?
By Vivian Lang

After you left me here alone
By Brooke Wirth

ion

As hours go by
By Gimin Oh

The aftermath of a battle
By Kai Ning Chan

The cafe at 3A.M.
By Yu You Phuah

By Yen Chong Tan

BLINK ONCE, TWICE, THEN OPEN YOUR EYES.

The nondescript room leaves much to be desired, with the bleak wallpaper beginning its sign of erosion. The furniture is sparse, yet that is all that is needed for you - though, nature seems to have reclaimed parts of your closet. The soft whirl of machinery and air conditioning sets you at rest, for it mirrors what one once called home.

BLINK ONCE, TWICE, THEN STAND UP.

Many people say that the mirror reflects what you are. Your true inner self, yet the reflection is of one you no longer recognize, morphed like clay by the world. They guided you. They changed you for the better. They are all that there is. The hiss of the tap merely washed away the past and sorrows, to begin anew as one to be seen by the world.

My eyes only see all that there is. My world is their world. The warmth of the water cascading over your body is simply a stark reminder of what could be. Simply bask in the tears of those that lived in the past, and dream of a future that belongs to nobody. If only it was that easy to mend the falsehoods, hopes, and lies that have once filled the mind.

The rectangular void that lies beyond the room is nothing to worry about. Through the dark abyss, is a world that is no longer for you. Why bother? This is the world that you've lived in for so long. There is no reason to leave, not anymore. They can't see you now.

And yet, you are known. A mask to be worn, a mask known by all. Let the freezing winds fall over you, and let the burning stars engrave your mind. For every triumph, there exists only emptiness at the end. What path lies ahead? There is no right or wrong, only what you think is the way to move forward.

Yet there is no path to be seen.

BLINK ONCE, TWICE, THEN PRESS THE SWITCH.

As the curtains of light arose, everything fell away before its light. You are all, and you are every. From the hopeful man you once were, a dying veteran, the astronaut that you wanted to be, to the dregs of the world. What was your name, your past? Gender? Age? It no longer matters, your mind is in a world beyond any other's understanding.

They call for you. They yearn for you. They await your end. After all, the brightest stars burn the fastest, before exploding out in a beautiful supernova, a dance of stellar winds and particles. The singular point of satisfaction is all you await for. Each user, each demand, each inspiration.

The perfect jester to dance around the stage of data for all the world to see. To be laughed. To be pitied. Your mind is ever fixated on the ever-meaningless numbers that fluctuate up and down, left and right to the words that describe your life.

Forsake all else, to be granted a new life. Nobody said it would be better, and nobody said it was easy, yet driven by primal urges, you agreed to it all. The light basks on you, until the very end. At one point, you no longer remember who you once were - the perfect, blank slate, to dance in the theatre til the end. No more fickle emotions to worry about. Nobody else to care about. Just you.

Drive them to their ends. A dictionary of words, lay within your sight. You're just one of the many. You're not special. Fate brings you here, to the ones cast away. So why not make it more fun? Which delicate vase would break first? It's fascinating how much words could do. After all, anything that happens, they won't know it's you.

Rocks are thrown, ever so breaking the icy stage you reside on. Abandon all truth ye, who enter here. An everlasting act to play till the end. Reality is subjective, who shall say otherwise? The door's words don't matter, for they don't understand. Here, kitty, a trapped little soul. There is nothing to worry about. A cardboard box is all you need. Close your eyes. If you don't see them, they won't see you.

There is no path, and there is no end. There is no voice beyond the void of the outside. Time passes without parallel as you feel yourself getting weaker. The colors have drained from the world. The voices are getting louder, demanding your final act. Are you going to show it to them? Are you afraid, or will you meet them with a triumphant roar? The world darkens, as dreams of what once was flashed by.

BLINK ONCE, TWICE, THEN OPEN YOUR EYES.

The nondescript room leaves much to be desired, with the yellowed wallpaper beginning its sign of erosion. The furniture is sparse, yet that is all that is needed - though, the spiders seem to have reclaimed parts of your closet. The soft whirl of machinery and air conditioning sets you at rest, for it signifies another day. Be thankful, to forget everything else in your life. To put on the mask once again, to begin the next act.

I wonder, in the end, what their purpose is.

TIME HEALS. DOESN'T IT?

By Vivian Lang

Time will heal your wounds; just be patient. A mother whispered softly to her child as she nursed her first broken heart.

"How? How can time be the answer to this heartbreak that has torn apart my world? How can time fill this chasm that they stole from me? How can time be the cure when it is the cause?" the shard-like pain was neverending in the young girl's heart. Friends, past loves, they all took a piece of her as they left. The once colourful warmth of life was grey and frostbite-inducing to her.

"But it will. And one day, you won't feel the sting any longer." The gentle, warm tone soothed the aches. Just a little bit, but it had to be enough.

Time will heal all wounds. *Time will heal all wounds*. *Time will heal all wounds*. A young woman whispered her mutters more frantic with each repetition of the phrase. Her heart laid in pieces scattered around her. *It will heal with time.* Was her mantra as her hands frantically moved.

Years later, the woman with a bandaged heart bumped into another with the same fractured soul. They had never met but they shared the same pain. The bitterness of life left them wishing for honeyed words, but breaking through the barbed fence clustering around their wounds would take much more than sweet mutterings.

"Sorry about that. Would you mind if I bought you a new coffee to replace that one?" His sheepish tone was an echo of a lost love.

"If you want, I am in no rush." Her calm tone sent a ripple through his memory.

Déjà vu for them both. Yet, as they stood in line and made light conversation, a tiny spark ignited the candle they had both given up on. The slight flicker slowly grew stronger as the months went by. Eventually, the smallest flicker became a blaze.

The gaping wounds hurt occasionally; the barbed wires harmed them both, but neither would walk out. *Echos of door slamming rang in their ears as they thought about it. It would not end that way, not this time.* The shouts they sent at each other fell on deaf ears as they were trapped in the past.

BUT...TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS. TIME HEALS THEM... RIGHT?

EVEN THE ONES YOU DON'T SEE ON THE SURFACE, EVEN THOSE PROTECTED BY BARBED WIRE.

As the days drifted by slowly, the sun came out from behind the grey clouds; with every laugh and smile, the scar tissue slowly crept over the liquid red.

Near the end, they stared into the distance at the sun as it dipped below the horizon. Enraptured in the red bleeding into orange, as the soft wisps of cloud blended into the sunset's pinks, they held a pocket of peace in their hearts. Their scar-covered hearts contained the blaze of a wildfire within. Their heads long turned grey, but they were glad to have walked the rest of the winding road with each other. To have not walked alone to the end of the thorny passage, to have had someone on the days the scar covered wounds felt fresh. They were glad to have another who understood.

TIME MAY HEAL, BUT THE SCARS CAN STILL HURT.

AFTER YOU LEFT ME HERE ALONE

By Brooke Wirth

She was tall, slightly tan, and muscular — the sporty type. Her hair was dark with golden brown streaks and was thick with beach curls and knots. Around her neck swung beaded and rope necklaces holding jade and other gems. Her wrists were wrapped with hair bobbles, elastic bands, and leather silver loom bracelets. Her fingers were covered with bedazzled silver, and rocks glued and held onto finger loops with metal wire.

Her nails were always painted; she'd have chipped and crackled white or neon blues or blacks coating each finger every other week. She was actually quite good at painting her nails. She had steady hands, and she was patient.

Once, when I was out with her on the school field, she asked me to massage her legs as she bathed in the sun and let asphalt sift through her fingers. She'd just shaved, and in the morning she'd applied a summery-smelling lotion, making her legs soft and smooth, and allowing them to glow under the burning sunlight. I watched her anklets dangle; one was lined with mini skulls and there was one dainty gold chain that didn't match the rest of her at all. A small glistening feather hung on it. Under the anklets on her left leg, I saw scars. They were fine ripples on an otherwise smooth canvas. Dozens on dozens written over each other. Some of them were red, and others were white with age. A few were still open and dark and just scabbing over. I must've stared - because she hugged the leg close to herself, but kept talking and giggling about a hockey game from the night before. She played it cool.

I pulled her shoe off and threw it across the pitch and she rolled her eyes at me sarcastically. I tickled her toes through her sock and she kicked at the air to get me off. She screamed and jumped at me and held me down by the shoulders and we laughed.

I knew her well. She was the type of girl who would go for a 10k run randomly on a lazy Wednesday afternoon and wave at every person along her way. She would go out of her way to pet dogs on the street and smile and gallop and sing loudly while riding her bike down hills covered in gravelly dirt. She wore bright colours and loud hairstyles that would release her hair into a tangled mess in the evening.

Her laugh was infectious and loud, she talked fast and excitedly, and when she drank she would become flirtatious and dumb, kissing

whoever would kiss her back. She'd look them in the eyes and dance with everyone and she would would drink more. She didn't feel embarrassed on those nights, even after being called a sl*t or easy, or being told that she was gross. She wouldn't mind - at least on the surface. She would just say "It's done now, it is what it is" and continue with a smile and laugh, grabbing my face and blasting music. She would insist that I danced with her in the kitchen as eggs and bacon were being fried, as bread was being toasted, and as a smoothie blended.

She jumped off a high rise 4 days before the start of grade 12. When my parents sat me down and looked me in the eyes remorsefully, and told me why I hadn't been able to contact her that week, I didn't know what to think. I mostly didn't understand why. I thought I'd known her well - but maybe I thought that way because if you'd asked me what her hobbies were, I'd have known she loved hockey and rollerblading, or if you'd asked which guy she was into over that summer, I would have known that it was Bryan Louies. I knew the names of her mom and dad and I knew her little brother was named Keneth. But I didn't really know her. The girl I thought I knew was happy and she wasn't a coward. No one ever knew why she did it; she never left a note. One day, she was just gone.

***

Sydney knocked on my bedroom door meekly when my parents let her know why I hadn't come to dinner the next couple of nights.
"Onna, mum told me what happened..." I pretended to sleep when she opened the door without asking for permission.
"Laura was really good to you, and you must feel really sad right now. Do you want a hug?" I didn't move until I heard the sound of soft footsteps agitating the floorboards slowly.
"Sydney, get out of my room." The movements stopped and then resumed as I heard her move backwards quickly and shut the door behind her. I stared at the ceiling above my bed and heard Laura's laugh. Tears welled up in my eyes and my throat felt scratchy and swollen.

I didn't understand, and I still don't understand why she would do it to me. It was us against the world, and the day she died a part of me went away. Her absence left a gaping hole in my heart - an emptiness that felt like each movement I made wedged a shard of glass deeper into my back. I squeezed my eyes shut until my mind went blurry in an attempt to distract myself from blistering memories of us from that summer. Something thumped within my head as I cried under scalding water every night for that first week. When I would get out, my skin would be red, raw, and tender. I'd stare at my reflection: mascara dripping, my cheeks and nose pink and swollen, my eyes protruding from my face.

On October 18th, I woke up and checked my phone. With blurry eyes and a pounding at the side of my head, I opened our chat and wrote in the text box
"I feel like I haven't seen you in forever..." I didn't send the message before looking up the date of my last text to her.
"I miss you already" ...September 8...
"How could you do this to me" ... September 3...
And then the last time she responded
"My mom says dinner is on for Sunday - bring swimmers?"
"C u then" ...August 15...

She was dead. I'd forgotten. My heart stopped for only a second and I clenched my jaw. My breathing went heavy and I felt as if I might puke. She'd been gone since August 16th. Anger blistered in my heart. I hated her so much for it. As tears dripped down onto my phone screen, I accepted that she was gone. I'd never see her again. The realisation didn't feel surreal in the moment. I just felt broken.

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I spent a lot of the following months alone. I would go days without talking to Sydney, I'd skip dinner together most nights to avoid any excruciating attempts made by my parents to talk to me. I did start back at school pretty soon. I felt the eyes on me as I walked through the bleak hallways between classes. I sat alone on the field at lunch and spent snack times in the bathroom or drama room. Those were places I had gone with Laura because it was quiet and the drama teacher didn't mind us gossiping as she marked papers at the front of the class.

No one tried to talk to me, tried to understand how I was feeling. I remember feeling so sincerely and pathetically alone. I ate less. When I did it was snacks like Cheetos or honey on toast or Skittles. Laura loved skittles. I thought about her often. I thought about what grade 12 would have been like if she had been here to spend it with me. I wondered how many parties she'd get us invites for and how many sleepovers we'd have had by now. My skin became pale as winter approached. This time last year she was here. She remained tan all throughout Christmas because she went to tanning beds or used spray-ons. I'd never see her again. As the hours moved by agonizingly slow, I thought of all the road trips we'd been on. The amount of times I'd slept over at her house for more than one night in a row. Why didn't she ever tell me what she was

going through? Why didn't she ever cry to me or confide in me? We were supposed to be the maids of honour at each other's weddings. But now she was gone and I wouldn't have a maid of honour. And if I did, it wouldn't be her. I wanted things to go back to how they were. I wanted to feel how I did when school ended in June. How could so much have changed in such a short amount of time? My grades started falling and I didn't care. I didn't even check - so it's not like I noticed when it happened. The teachers tried to do more for me at first. There was only so much they could really do - I was failing. They couldn't really save me from that. All I wanted to do was sleep. Sleep and fill my mind with memories of the last time we'd spoken.
"I'm nervous for next year."
"I'm not."
"How? There's going to be so much going on and so much to do and everything is starting to actually matter..."
"Onna... Nothing matters if you really think about it."

I didn't take her seriously. I thought maybe she meant something philosophical about how we were so small in such a big universe... In the grand scheme of things, yeah, nothing mattered much. How can anything really matter when life can change in a second? Looking back now, why would she be nervous? She probably knew she wouldn't make it that far. She probably knew she'd be dead by then.

Something changed in December. I don't really know what, and it wasn't something I changed consciously. I started thinking about her less. I felt relieved when I found myself making it through classes without her being on my mind constantly. I felt a little less alone when a girl who had just started that year told me one lunch that her boyfriend had died two winters ago. I felt like things could be better for the first time.

***

One evening, as it drizzled outside and my family hung ornaments on a tree in the living room, I decided to go for a run. I remember running and running for what felt like forever. When I finally felt content, I walked to our park where I sat alone. Sweat drenched my neck and back - but hair stood on my arms and legs. Grass pricked the skin at the bottom of my thighs. It was itchy but I stayed still. I looked up at the sky. Iridescent reds, vibrant oranges, and rosy pink hues spilled over a vast, mesmerising canvas. I closed my eyes and breathed in the cold air and whispered to the downing sun about an old friend. I felt drowsy as I described her infectious smile, the way she danced so mesmerisingly, and her freckles that covered her face like stars covered a sky. I talked about how I missed her. About the guilt that sweltered in my heart every time I remembered her face and laugh and smile.

At last, I sat up. I rubbed my glossy eyes and willed against more tears from falling. Crickets buzzed and toads croaked amongst the flowers, and I could hear cars vibrating outside the park, anxious fathers racing home for dinner after working too long, exhausted mothers driving their sons home from late soccer practice.
"I'll miss you, Laura."

And then the world went quiet. The trees stood still, the crickets hushed. Mothers and fathers stopped at a red light.

I felt warmth swell around me and the small weight of arms on my waist. I held my breath and willed myself against succumbing to tears again. As the embrace lifted and life resumed, I made my way home. When I entered the kitchen, I hugged my mom calmly.
"Mom... A part of me died with her. A part of me will never get to grow up the way she never will."

I closed my eyes tightly and breathed. I knew that I would be okay, no matter how scary life was.

No one tried to talk to me,



tried to understand how I was feeling.

AS HOURS GO BY

By Gimin Oh

There once was a girl who found out that if she sat very still and thought very hard, she could stop time. Contrary to what others her age might have done, she didn't use this to wreak havoc or to gain fame. She simply used it to calm herself down and sneak in a bit of extra studying before a test.

However, while this method was harmless when it came to things such as speeches or the diving board, it was not so harmless when the girl grew up, as she started to fear something inescapable - the future.

The thought of growing up and venturing into the great unknown, with people and circumstances rushing at her from every direction, may as well have paralyzed her. At the start of every day, she froze the world until her heart stopped thumping, froze it again during lunch, and then once more right before bed. This did not stop her from waking up every day filled with dread. On the contrary, it seemed that every sunrise was worse than the last until she suddenly realized that if she simply stopped the day forever, then she wouldn't have to go through doubt anymore.

And so she sat very still and thought very hard until the birds stopped chirping and the wind stopped blowing. Every day - if it could even be called a day considering that the sun couldn't rise or set - was spent walking through towns, through cities, and gazing at the marble faces of those who had once been people.

There was nothing to be scared of anymore, and conversely, nothing to enjoy anymore. No laughter, no family dinners, no going to movies with friends. After what seemed like the hundredth day in a never-changing world, the girl started to ask herself: wasn't it unbearable living like this? In a static world because scared was all she was?

Making up her mind, she sat back to where she had been that first time, right at the edge of her bed. Perhaps this was wrong. Taking a deep breath, she let go and faced the world.

THE AFTERMATH OF A BATTLE

By Kai Ning Chan

The air was humid, the metallic odour of freshly spilt blood and the stench of rot hung heavy over the wide expanse of the battlefield. It was deafeningly silent and seemed as if nothing had happened. Lifeless bodies united in death, Saxon warriors lay amidst the French invaders, no longer the enemy. This was the price of death, where choices were taken away and one was left with nothing but what he had been cursed with. The burgundy-tinged liquid, thick and viscous, stained the fertile soil and turned the pristine waters of the river nearby a boudoir red. Knights limped across the mounds of dead soldiers cursing under their breath for the sudden incursion, their halberds brushing against the meadowsweet with blood dripping languidly down the stems.

The subterfuge yesterday had done no justice. The soldiers began to use crossbows with fire-tipped arrows under the army general's command, but most of the time the quarrels fell short, showering over the Saxon's troops and injuring many of the halberdiers. It didn't help that most of the army soldiers were young men: peasants and serfs forced into the army through recruitments, without training nor experience, and coerced to hold up their weapons, if not punishable by death.

Sightless eyes looked at the carrion birds circling overhead lazily in the blue mantle, their repast spread out before them. Swooping down to gorge on waiting flesh, this day they would feed to their heart's content. To one with a lessened soul, the silence that reigned the battlefield would have sent shivers down the spine. But King Harold trudged slowly past his fallen men and beasts, his eyes grim but filled with implacable fury. There would be a time to commemorate the valiant soldiers who had fought this battle and shed their blood for him.

Except for the occasional movements of the remaining Saxons disposing of the dead bodies dispersed over the north end, all stood still. With a swift turn and a glide of their wings, the carrion herd rained down on the corpses, tearing at the flesh of their prey. It was seldom that birds would feed right in the presence of humans, but these crows threw their caution to the wind. The knights could only watch in anguish, at the loss of their comrades. Away from the tents, serfs had begun constructing wooden pyres, piling dry kindling on them. The bodies of soldiers were then laid respectfully in a cluster of four, after which Harold would personally ignite the pyre. As the flames rose in the air, black smoke billowing, the surviving army watched impassionately as traces of mortality disappeared with each flaming tongue.

The cremation lasted throughout the day; by twilight, the last vestiges of Harold's sendoff disappeared with the sun. Bonfires lit the field and from afar, the French were doing the same. For the moment, peace reigned - but a heavy pall of acrimony was still in the air. At the first tinge of the waking day, the slaughter would ensue. The tide of war would shift, its purpose fulfilled or defeated, and the victor would emerge.

THE CAFE AT 3A.M.

By Yu You Phuah

SUNDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2008, 3 A.M.

Three words.

I forgive you.

I watch silently as my sister's letter to me hits the moonlight-tinted water, a gloomy piece of paper destined to drown in the vast sanctuary of significantly jovial beings. At Maple River, children laugh and sing during the weekends, feeling the cool breeze on their faces as they escape from school's constant turmoil; the countless marine animals and seaweed residing there are their best friends, their quiet allies. Sometimes, youngsters use that safe place to make lifelong friends. Sometimes, they try, though perhaps in vain, to capture fish for their gentle mothers waiting patiently back at home.

Or, sometimes, they bond with their sister there and create their best childhood memories - until they cut contact because of a petty, revoltingly immature argument at the peak of their adolescence.

I turn away with a sigh, an electric pain growing behind my eyes as my stomach grumbles. I haven't eaten since the rather disastrous funeral, after all, and it's been 5 hours. Dragging my feet pointlessly, I stroll under the shine of the brilliant streetlamps, searching for a cafe that'd be relentless enough to remain open at 3 a.m. on a Sunday. As I walk, a flash of blinking neon lights catches my eye and raises my spirits. The facade of the building that comes into view is slightly weathered, yet manages to suffuse a comforting and nostalgic air into the cold earthen ground around it. Flickering intermittently, the adorned sign displays the name of the diner brightly:

"TIMELY DESSERTS"

I desperately accept the subtle invitation extended by the friendly illumination and rush inside without many expectations - how good could a worn-down dessert shop be, anyway?

A middle-aged man, probably the owner, looks over as I open the door, startled by the ringing bell attached to it. He tilts his head towards me in question as I pick a seat, notebook and pen in hand.

"Do you serve any apple pie here?" I ask expectantly.

Smiling, he nods and walks away promptly.

The cafe is wholly deserted, with neither customers nor employees in sight. Somehow, I appreciate the silence; it anchors my sense of tranquility, muting my obstreperous mind after a ridiculously long day. A sense of warmth envelops me as I spot a few familiar titles of fables displayed on a singular bookshelf. "The Hare and the Tortoise", "The Boy Who Cried Wolf", "Cinderella"... those stories had been cherished companions for my sister and me in a world where we only had each other. We fell in love with the enchanting princess and the kind prince, the humorous fool and the loyal partner, the misunderstood villain and the brave hero.

"One slice of delicious apple pie freshly baked just for you!" the owner announces enthusiastically, interrupting my train of thought.

He puts down the plate right in front of me and sits down on the chair opposite me. Perhaps he is getting tired of the stillness - it *is* 3 a.m., after all.

I inhale the hearty aroma and commend the flaky crust of the apple pie, my hunger rising to a

climax. Excited, I take a bite of the dessert, allowing the sweet golden filling to tingle my tongue and leave a lasting impression on my mind and stomach. It is, surprisingly, delectable.

“You’re sad, but you’re not sad enough - aren’t you, Maia? You wish you were more upset about your sister’s death because that’s what people expect of you - but you’re not.”

With a sonorous clang, my metal spoon drops on the plate, right beside the barely eaten apple pie. I snap my head up to stare at the nearly-balding manager, his eyes gazing confidently into mine. There doesn’t seem to be any malicious intent, but how does he know my name? How could this stranger utter those words, as casually as if he were asking about how my day had been?

“I’m sorry. Do I know you?”

“You don’t know me; I know you, though. I know everything about everyone who comes in here,” the mysterious baker before me folds his arms and leans back comfortably on his chair. “Maia, calm down. Don’t worry. I want to help you find the ending you desire.”

The man is calm and composed, his expression containing just a hint of tenderness. His eyes are twitching, but he doesn’t seem fazed by it at all.

“Help me? How?”

“Do you remember why you stopped talking to Lea, the sister who loved and raised you?”

“No,” I smile, attempting to mask my anxiety. “I don’t. Not at all.”

“I think you do,” He raises his eyebrows slightly, unimpressed. “But I’ll help jog your memory, anyway. Jealousy tore you apart, child. Lea and Maia, the sisters who loved writing and creating stories - but one was often praised more than the other. And that corrupted you, Maia, because she had the potential to become a renowned author and you didn’t. That made you so, *so* angry, and the boundaries became blurred, didn’t they?”

I try to slow my jagged breathing and calm the wild drumbeat echoing in my chest.

“She didn’t become an author because of you. All of her sparks vanished in an instant, and she was unable to create a story she truly loved anymore. It was likely that her books could have given young children the castles and dragons and talking foxes that made her less lonely all those years ago. But that didn’t happen. Lea got a job she hated, a job that was dull and frustrating and lacked all the creativity she had stood for. Why is that, Maia?”

“I got jealous,” I whisper, my eyes glistening. “I couldn’t stand the fact that she was leaving me to pursue a dream I fantasized about but couldn’t reach for the life of me. When our parents passed, I only had Lea. I didn’t want to lose her, too. At that point, stories were already slipping away from me; the words lost their way and stumbled before reaching my pen and paper. I believed that it was unfair, believed that she was abandoning me to create dreams and lives much more extraordinary than the one we shared. *“Why couldn’t stories and writing take me away, too? Why was I the unlucky one?”* Those thoughts never stopped swarming my head - it was endless.”

“So you spread rumors about her stealing your ideas, so nobody would read her stories. You made her feel isolated and forced her to give up on one of the only sources of happiness she had. You, the poor girl’s pillar of support, discouraged her,” the owner shakes his head and gives a hefty sigh.

Shoulders trembling, my vision turns blurry as tears trace down my face, leaving a glimmering trail. A sob tears through me, my body now a cocoon of all my best memories with Lea.

“I’ll never forget the day she found out that it was her own sister who was spreading the rumors - I’ve never seen that look on her face. Never. My guardian, my best friend. I know - it’s a foolishly childish argument. I should’ve said sorry that day, right there and then - but I couldn’t bring myself to do that. I hate that I ruined her future, I hate that I ruined our sisterhood, and I hate that, in the end, she still forgave me. I didn’t want her to forgive me. I *still* don’t. ”

The room is quiet, silently absorbing my shimmering tears and occasionally echoing my sobs; the air hangs heavily as we burrow into our thoughts.

The baker stands up suddenly. “Eat another bite of the apple pie,” he demands.

I blink. “What?”

“If you want me to help you, and it seems like you really do - eat the apple pie.”

Reluctantly, I pick up the spoon and bring it to my mouth. The sweet filling is depressingly

contrary to my emotions, but I savor the refreshing tastes of apples and warmth. Suddenly, darkness shrouds my vision, and the man before me becomes a blurry outline.

“Maia. Apologize to Lea on the 5th of May, 1994. Fix things, and create your satisfactory ending. You won’t be able to reverse her death, but you’ll find that an apology can make situations much better. When you return, it’ll be the morning of Saturday, 7th of November 2008. Keep it quick.”

Eyes twitching and twinkling, he smiles softly as I reach for the table.

“I wish you luck. Truly.”

SATURDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2008, 8 A.M.

The manager glances up from behind the counter. Overwhelmed with fatigue, I collapse and lean on the wall for support.

I said sorry on that day. I owned up to my mistakes. Supposedly, I fixed our relationship, but how is that going to change what happens right now, in the present?

“Did you do things right this time?”

“I did.”

“You said sorry?”

“I did.”

He flashes a grin. “Good for you, kid.”

As the owner beams, I notice something different about him.

“Your eyes,” I mutter.

“Hm?”

“Your eyes. They stopped twitching.”

He bursts into laughter - a hearty and infectious sound.

“Strangely, I’m cursed to help customers who visit Timely Desserts at exactly 3 a.m. It’s peculiar, isn’t it?” A playful spark flashes in his eyes as he smiles. “My eyes don’t stop twitching until I help them fix whatever they need rectifying, so I suppose you could say I’m helping others for the sake of myself.”

I tilt my head as a grin forms on my face uncontrollably. “Is that so? Has anyone told you that you’re an awfully eccentric man?”

“It is, and you’d be surprised at how often I hear that, ” The kind baker glimpses at his watch. “You better go, Maia. You have a funeral to attend. I won’t see you anymore, but I do wish you the best. Oh, and make sure to pick up the letter from Lea!”

***

I clutch Lea’s letter tightly, her handwriting heart-warmingly familiar, her paper ever so slightly crumpled. A comforting solace seeps through my body.



Dear Maia,

My story has ended, but don't be upset. It's nothing to cry about! We've had enough memories to fill thousands and thousands of libraries, fill millions and millions of children's hearts. I'll be heading off to another adventure now, one where I can create even better, even more imaginative stories. It's always the newest experiences that change you, isn't it? Someday, in the far future, we'll meet again past the horizon and think of another tale where two sisters are reunited. They only have each other, but that's more than enough to fill their fragile hearts; the wildest of worlds are produced, and the strongest of connections are made. They're never alone, because their lives have been intertwined since the moment of their births, woven seamlessly into history.

Maia, you've always been my best friend, my best supporter. Thank you.

I've written and published about sixty books because of you, and I love all of them, just like my readers do.

But none of them measure up to the story I've built with you, Maia. Our story has always been my favourite, and that'll never change.

Never forget that.

Your sister,
Lea

EMS POE

EMS POE

EMS POE

EMS POE

Grow
By Emeline Ang & Rachel, y10

To the moo
By Vivia

EMS PO

EMS PO

EMS PO

EMS PO

n and back
an Lang

Pulse of a healing heart
By Olivia Ang

Grow

By Emeline Ang

In a digital world where hearts are measured,
She finds her solace, her dreams tethered.
Through screens and filters, she seeks affirmation,
Seeking love in likes, trapped in validation.

In the realm of followers and online fame,
She gets lost, playing the illusionary game.
Scanning endless feeds, comparing, she goes,
Her mental health - the lowest of lows.

Perfection is sold, seemingly out of reach,
She scrolls and scrolls, and the posts each
Tell of happiness and internal peace.
Her own doubts just never decrease.

So it becomes a habit - to hover over the edit,
For a face that's not hers, she will get all the credit.
But behind those smiles, behind that façade,
An aching heart hides, vulnerable and flawed.

Her self-esteem dances on a fragile thread,
As she measures her worth by numbers in her head.
"Perfection" reigns, casting shadows on dreams,
Her innocence fades, torn apart at the seams.

Yet society is blind to the damage we sow,
She is suffocated, afraid to let go.
Behind each post lies a vulnerable soul,
Filled with aspirations, yet paying a toll.

Nothing comes without a price, they say,
But what is the price they are willing to pay?
Her happiness, freedom, peace, and joy,
All for the sake of media's ploy?

In the realm of screens and digital haze,
She weaves through a complex maze.
Her heart, a vessel, worn and torn,
By the subtle storms of a virtual scorn.

But over time, she learns, she grows:
A struggle behind the pose nobody knows.
Through the hashtags and curated dreams,
A glimmer of authenticity gleams.

In the digital world and pixelated glow,
She finds her solace, a path to let go.
Through the noise of tags and endless chatter,
She seeks a refuge, a space to matter.

Slowly but surely, her heart begins to heal,
She realises there are other emotions to feel,
Than just envy, jealousy, and desire,
She sets her jaw, fuelled by a new-found fire.

With difficulty, she steps away from the glowing screen,
In search of a reality yet unseen:
The world outside, a canvas of grace,
A healing balm for her digital chase.

She blocks out the calls, breathes in the air,
Now authenticity, not filters, is her wear.
No longer bound by the virtual chain,
She dances freely in the sun and rain.

She lets herself grow;
Lives a joy she's never known.
She lets herself heal;
Her joy has never been so real.

Rachel , Y10
Colour pencil, ink pen on paper

A painting that shows how words can affect and pressure someone but also how they might overcome it and put it behind them.


DO IT
YOU'RE NOT PERFECT
JUST DO IT
WHY
GO ON
COME ON!
PLEASE
WHY DONT YOU
YOU HAVE TO
C'MON
BE LIKE
US...
UR SO
BORING...
JUST BE
COOL!
LOSE
Weight
We're SO
COOL!
Look at
YOU...
PLEASE

To the moon and back

By Vivian Lang

"A human may live up to 70 years. In a year, the human heart generates enough energy to drive a truck 7,300 miles. If we consider the lifetime of a human to be 70 years, then our heart generates enough energy to drive a truck 511,000 miles.

Consider this: 20 miles × (365 days/1 year) × 70 years = 511,000 miles
The distance to the moon and back: 238,855 miles × 2 = 477,710 miles

When you say you love a person to the moon and back, you love this person with all the blood your heart has pumped... your entire life. And some more."
– Erangvee, steemit

To the moon and back,
But your heart never came back.
To the moon and back,
But you never came back.

To the moon and back,
Now, all I am left with are shards.
Shards that mock me as they crack,
For every piece I move, two more form,
I put them back together, but my hand bleeds
I glue the pieces, one by one
I will not remain broken.

To the moon and back,
Your words haunt me.
But–I think I got it,
A steady beat.
I think I am fixed, it took time.
It may not look the same, but it is mine
It is no longer in pieces.

I look around to see,
Another that looks like me.
Another where I was – Bleeding.
Cuts cover their hands,
Their hands are like mine.

Let me help.
Let me make it better.
It won't be the same,
But it can be better; I can help.
Let me help you heal.

It doesn't have to be only you,
My hands may be cut by your shards.
But I can make it better,
I won't leave you to pick up the pieces alone.
I know the pain well; let me share your burden.

I will stay with you,
To the moon and back
My pulse in time with yours,
To the moon and back.





Pulse of a healing heart

By Olivia Ang

In the broad symphony of life we weave,
Not many will realise the struggles to achieve,
A life full of joy, content, stability, and relief,
Because it is a life, only mistakes can conceive.

Behind the colours of every artist's painting,
Is a story of hardship, agony, and suffering,
Like an artist's palette, mistakes mix and blend,
Creating a masterpiece where success ascends.

In the text of a book, is an author's frustration,
Nights of headaches and sleep deprivation,
Yet they never give up with the hopes of success,
Disregarding the pain and constant distress.

Every day, politicians navigate the complex array,
Desperate for progress, for a better day,
Yet through political missteps, alliances mend,
Success is often born where mistakes transcend.

So don't fear mistakes as they're crucial in life,
Only with them can we progress and strive,
Behind every successful person, is a list of faults,
That made them who they are despite initial bad thoughts.

Because In the broad symphony of life we weave,
Not many will realise the struggles to achieve,
A life full of joy, contentment, stability, and relief,
Success is a thing, only mistakes can conceive.



The G

Grief of a heart
By Assia Uzalova

Rescue the
Save the in
the aba
By An

The confusion of social media.
By Erin Verity

Space for f
in cance
By An



Gallery

New Beginnings
By Connie Cao

Balancing the scales
By Ines Chave

mistreated;
njured; Love
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nson Ip

forgiveness
l culture
nson Ip


Acceptance.

Asiia Uzalova

Grief of a Heart
Digital

In my opinion and experience, "acceptance" is the hardest stage of grief to get to. It takes a long while and the person has to go through a long path of struggle to finally reach it. However, in the end, it turns out to be worth everything as you finally feel peace.


NAYIS
12.28
1 DECEMBER 2023
NOTIFICATIONS:
Instagram
Facebook
Tik Tok
Snapchat

Erin Verity

The confusion of social media
Marker on paper

I believe that social media is bringing us some damage into our lives even though it can be used for good reasons. Many of us waste time on social media instead of doing, for example, homework, which can lead to many distractions.
The background in this piece represents the time and confusion that we waste while scrolling through social media as all the apps suck in our time.
Many also spend too much on these apps instead of living their lives. (I'm not saying everyone because some people use social media wisely while some don't)
We might also be affected by others' comments on social media like they don't like the posts and this could lead to cyberbullying, then depression.
Please use social media for good reasons and pay attention to other things in life!


Rescue the mistreated
Save the injured
Love the abandoned
Anson

Anson Ip

Rescue the mistreated;
Save the injured;
Love the abandoned
Digital

This is Chips. He was an abandoned dog in the street and we were lucky enough to have adopted him. Unlike buying from store or breeder, we didn't have any details on him.
We don't know his birthdate.
We don't know his age.
We don't know his parents details.
We don't know what he has gone through.
BUT - What we DO know - Is to provide him with the best and most loving days for the rest of him lifetime.
That we know. Clearly.

If you can't adopt the abandoned dogs, you can consider to donate to dog shelters. Chips's savoir is a nice old women who owns the dog shelter called Penang Animal Welfare Society (4PAWS). Give a helping paw!


SPREAD
LOVE
FORGIVENESS
Good job!
NOT
HATE
UNFRIEND
&
UNFOLLOW
CANCELLED
Anson

Anson Ip

Space for forgiveness in cancel culture
Digital

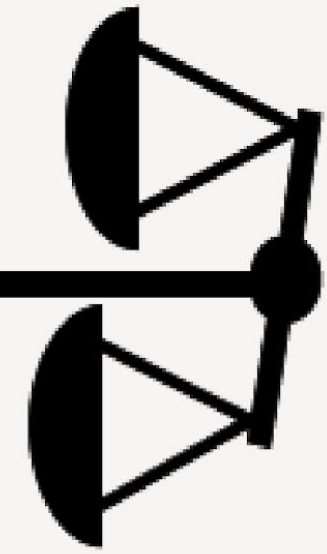
Cancel culture, in our society today, has infested every bit of our lives. Calling people out, and publicly shaming them is not the good way. It is the worst thing that has come out of our digital world. It leaves no room for forgiveness.
Please, cancel the cancel culture and stop cyberbullying!



Connie Cao

New Beginnings
Acrylic on canvas

The path towards new beginnings may be a long and dark one, but once you reach the other side, it'll all be worth it.



BALANCING THE SCALES

EMBRACE IMPERFECTIONS

THE MISTAKES YOU MAKE ARE CRUCIAL IN YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY, YOU MUST EXPERIENCE FAILURE ALONG THE WAY

MEET SOME FRIENDS, GO FOR NIGHT OUT, WATCH A MOVIE. KEEP THAT SUPPORT SYSTEM AND PRIORITISE WHAT YOU ENJOY

ADAPTING

EACH MISTAKE LEADS TO ANOTHER UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY, GAIN INSIGHTS TO GUIDE YOUR ACTIONS AND THOUGHTS. BECOME CRITICAL AND SELF AWARE AS YOU REFLECT ON THE PROCESS

THE FUTURE YOU IS DEPENDING ON CURRENT YOU TO KEEP GOING

THE LONG RUN,

THOSE WHO LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES OFTEN FIND GREATER SUCCESS. BY CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING AND ADAPTING, THEY ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES AND ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

OVERCOME THE BARRIER OF FEAR

CULTIVATE STRENGTHS AND SPIRITS

Ines Chave

Balancing the scales
Digital

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And for Ting and Eliza,
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