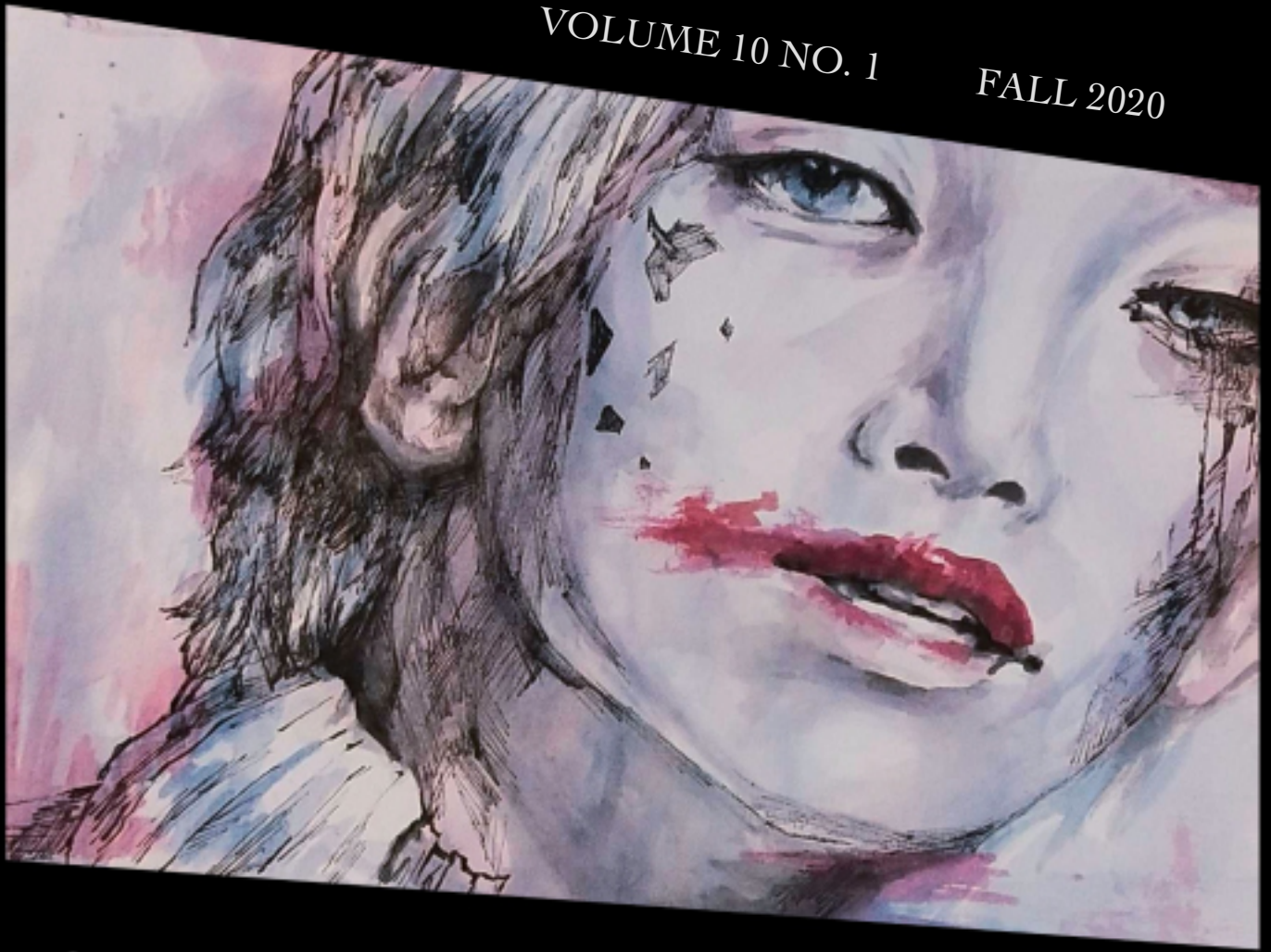


# Zeitgeist.

VOLUME 10 NO. 1

FALL 2020



features

FRIDA

henie zhang

THE  
Roaring '20s

Catie Yu

CAFÉ

elizabeth chen

# staff

# table of contents

## Content Editors-in-Chief

Henie Zhang  
Catie Yu

## Copy Editors

Julia Fang  
Sara Pratt  
Mamie Yang  
Vivien Yeung

## Design Editor-in-Chief

Joyce Wang

## Layout Editors

Elizabeth Chen  
Celine Hung  
Sophia Xin  
Alisa Zheng  
Ashley Yu  
Finna Wang  
Joe Liang  
Vivien Yeung

## Zeitgeist

/ 'tsīt-gīst; zīt- /

The general intellectual, moral, and  
cultural climate of an era.

A student-based enterprise that seeks to entertain,  
motivate, and inspire through short stories, arts,  
columns, and a variety of other media.

Provides a platform for aspiring writers  
and artists to express their identity.

## Theme

Yuanfen (n. Mandarin):  
a fateful coincidence; an  
invisible thread connecting  
lives destined to collide

1. Silver *by Joyce Wang*

2. Café *by Elizabeth Chen*

3. Blue Desert *by Athena Ru*

4. Kismet *by Ashley Yu & Celine Hung*

5. The Forgotten Bear/ The Shoe and  
the Fire Hydrant *by Joe Liang*

6. we're learning to be less fearful  
*by Sara Pratt*

7. The Roaring '20s *by Catie Yu*

9. Xinhua *by Joyce Wang*

10. what other love did she not  
get to choose? *by Joyce Wang*

11. Yuanfen *by Alisa Zheng*

12. On Love *by Vivien Yeung*

14. Abraxas *by Joyce Wang*

15. Quondam *by Finna Wang*

16. Frida *by Henie Zhang*



# Silver

By Joyce Wang

Layout by Finna Wang

You lift your head, wishing to see the stars stare back at you,  
but their crescent moons don't move you anymore.

You notice the bruises and bumps on their surfaces, they match  
The ones that were tattooed onto your fist, your legs. Your face

is even uneven. You've never seen them before, & you don't  
want to remember his smiles that burned you inside. You

looked up, and he was escaping,  
suddenly wanted.

# Café

by Elizabeth Chen



Material: Oil Paint

Artist Statement: The reference photo for the painting was taken at Starbucks-Tsutaya in Roppongi, Tokyo.

# Blue Desert

An ekphrastic poem in response to “Landscape of the Fall of Icarus” by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

by Athena Ru

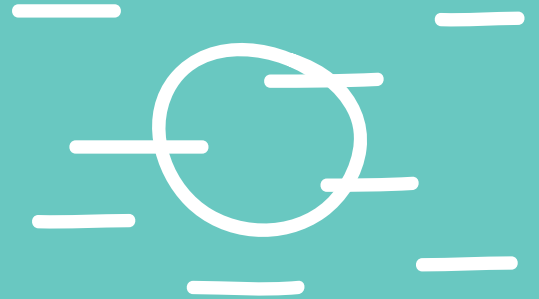
Layout by Celine Hung

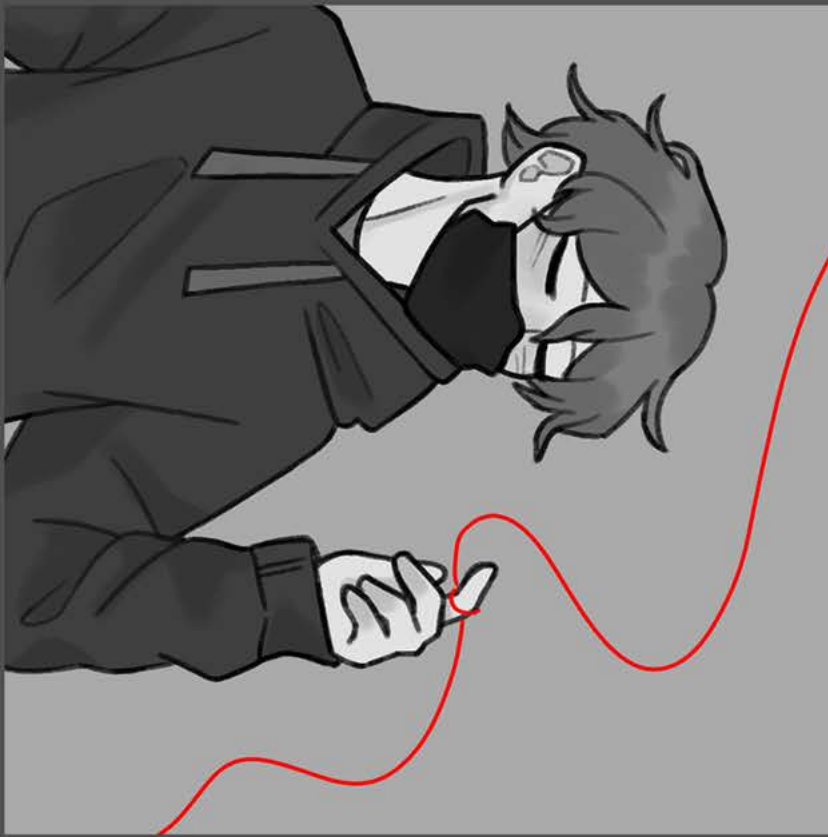
The blue ocean teems with  
oblivious life:  
ivory sails unfurl at the cries of merry men;  
the shepherd and his hound count bleating sheep;  
even the pearl ice mountains bask in the sun.

But the blue desert swallows Icarus.  
His plight lies barren –  
unseen and unheard over bone-white sails,  
sheep, summits.

A shriek cut  
short makes a fisherman look up,  
yet all he sees are snowy feathers  
fluttering and drifting mournfully  
against sheets of ice and cloth and wool.

A child stranded in a sea of turquoise  
is the price for believing that  
you can rule the blue desert.





# *Kismet*

by Ashley Yu &  
Celine Hung

Layout by Elizabeth Chen

**Material:** MediBang (digital art)

## **Artist Statement:**

Kismet: destiny or fate.  
The word originated from the Arabic word, "qismah" with the meaning of "fate". In East Asian mythology, the ultimate symbol for fate is the red thread. Though we may suffer from the challenges of life, there is still someone we're destined to meet.



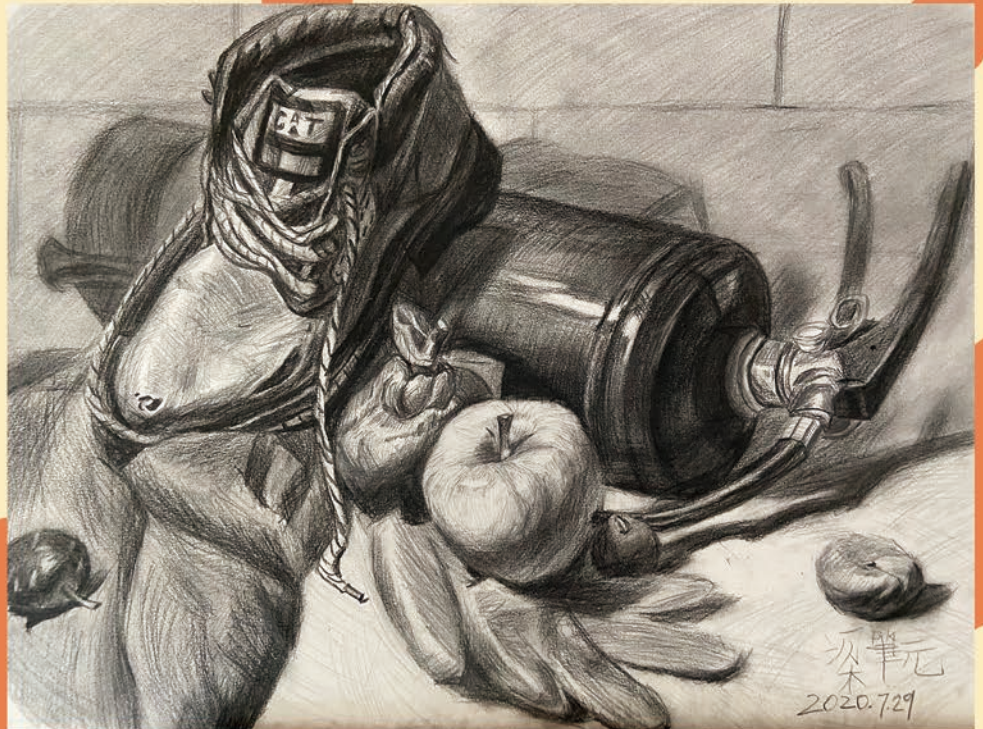




The  
Forgotten  
Bear (Top)

The Shoe  
and the Fire  
Hydrant  
(Bottom)

By Joe Liang



Materials: Charcoal Pencils and Graphite Pencils on 4K-size Sketch Paper

Artist Statement: No matter how much one loves an item such as a shoe or a teddy bear, they could be abandoned in the storage after the yuanfen is gone.

# we're learning to be less fearful

by Sara Pratt  
Layout by Celine Hung

i don't want to believe in destiny.  
to be fated to another half,  
another soul—  
i'm afraid to disappoint.

it is not that i don't want the experience,  
but too many nights have been crowded with ripped-up dreams;  
thoughts scattered from a balcony before i could ponder my questions,  
my thoughts,  
my what-ifs.

--

but such is to be alive and human.  
my ambitions are written regardless.  
perhaps i'm possessed by childlike wonder  
or destined for more than loveless hugs and  
revolving doors that keep  
    spinning  
        and spinning  
            and spinning

because i believe in destiny—  
god, how reckless and naive that looks on paper.  
truly, my thoughts embarrass me.

but why shouldn't i dream?  
don't i deserve at least that much?

so for this reason,  
and the million more left in tattered margins:

i rewrite my dreams and hang them on my bedroom wall,  
believing that destiny will let me exist,  
with or without you.



# The Roaring '20s

By Catie Yu  
Layout by Sophia Xin

Three empty glasses stood next to Alcie's arm at the table, their spindly crystal legs wobbling unsteadily every time she readjusted the cardigan wrapped around her. Tinny, tinkling sounds echoed out. She paid no attention to them, however. Her perception of the world had been narrowed to the golden dance floor in front of her, brightly lit underneath an undeniably expensive chandelier, where she watched the night unfold like a flower blossoming in time lapse on a silver screen.

The first time the waiter passed, she eyed the tray he brandished with almost embarrassing greed, excited to finally eat something that hadn't been acquired from the convenience store down the street. As the orchestra began to play the first notes of what promised to be a lively waltz, she delicately plucked out a madeleine and savored the way the buttery taste melted effortlessly against her tongue (unlike the cheap Twinkies she'd consumed yesterday) while observing the first few bold people make their way out into the center of the high-ceilinged, ballroom-like dance floor. It was early, she told herself. For now, she was happy to just sit and watch.

The small cake had long since disappeared by the second time the waiter went by, but, surprisingly, she wasn't terribly hungry for another, so she just carefully reached for one of the small crystal flutes balanced precariously between his hands. She felt as though she had become full just feeding off the energy of all the people dancing in front of her. The thought of getting up and joining them briefly flitted through her mind before she shut it down. There was still time, and she had her drink to finish. It wouldn't hurt to speculate for a little longer.

She barely registered taking her third glass off a passing tray; while she hastily downed the liquid in the new glass, her eyes stayed glued to the scene in front of her as if she was a moviegoer and the dancers were her lifeblood. She wasn't aware of her thoughts. Perhaps she was not even thinking at all. All she saw, all she knew, was the gilded hall in front of her.

She wasn't sure how much time had passed since all the cups near her arm had all dried out. Things had begun to go a little blurry along the edges, the same way one's eyes droop after hours of staring at the same television program. Had the partygoers always been this loud? Had the flavor of this drink always been so dull? Had autumn nights always been this cold? A slight headache was starting in her temples, and her gaze drifted naturally to the floor to alleviate the pain. Right before her eyes fully slid shut, however, a light tap on her back startled her. She looked up to find a young woman a little too close to her, her wide smiling mouth stained with burgundy and a matching cup in tow. Alcie wanted to speak to the lady and ask her questions, so she moved her lips, but it seemed that the words got lost in her brain's filter because no sound was translating over. Seeing this, the lady's smile widened, and she opened her mouth to reveal a dazzling set of ivory veneers.

"Hello darling, what's your name? I'm Grecia and you look like you need someone to pick you up," she crooned with a smooth, jazzy accent, and Alcie, as if in a trance, desperately wished to respond with her name. But before she could, one perfectly painted, pumpkin-hued hand traded her burgundy glass for Alcie's arm and dragged her—them, the both of them—up, up through the golden screen that had transfixed her for so long, and out the door to who knows where.

After stumbling through, over, and around at least seventeen different species of bushes and flowers for what seemed like eternity and no time at all, they finally made their way into a clearing lit only by a handful of low-burning gas lamps and a sprinkling of fairy lights through the surrounding trees. Grecia, her name was, abruptly came to a stop and because of her firm grip on Alcie's wrist, she had no choice but to halt as well. Slowly Alcie turned to face the girl, and the two of them stood there in the garden facing each other, only the sounds of their heavy breathing, the faint orchestra music, and the woodland insects filling the space between them. A small spark of warmth started up in Alcie's chest as she gazed at the ever-changing facial expressions of the girl in front of her, a warmth she had not felt in quite a while. A small twinkle graced Grecia's eyes as she lifted their interlocked hands and spoke up.

"Dance with me." Her voice was barely a whisper, and yet it seemed to resonate everywhere within Alcie and around the clearing. Her lips, once damp from the three glasses now abandoned on a table lightyears away, were sandpaper, scraping drily against one another and impeding her speech. All she could do was nod as they started up a slow waltz to match the music trickling in from somewhere beyond them. As they danced, Alcie was sure the girl opposite her could hear her heartbeat because it seemed something ferocious was trying to fight its way out of her ribcage. The night was not a chilly one, she realized, as the spark from inside her chest burst out and spread a deep warmth over her limbs, loosening her stiff limbs up and allowing her to move as freely as a pet unleashed. Finally, she remembered that she was able to clear her throat and did so because she felt she could not not talk for any longer without suffocating. As they leapt, she opened her mouth, poised to let her name fall from it.

At that moment, the lights cut out and for an indefinite length of time, Alcie floated in the dark. There was no feeling of up or down, front or back, left or right; there was only suspension and anticipation and dread. Then a sharp voice cut through the nothingness straight into her temporal lobe. *Thank you for using Adocul. Enjoy the rest of your night*, it went. Just like that, she was left alone with just an oncoming migraine slowly crushing her skull, the discomfort of her cheap sofa springs pressing into her agitated back, a quiet stinging in the back of her throat where words once lay.





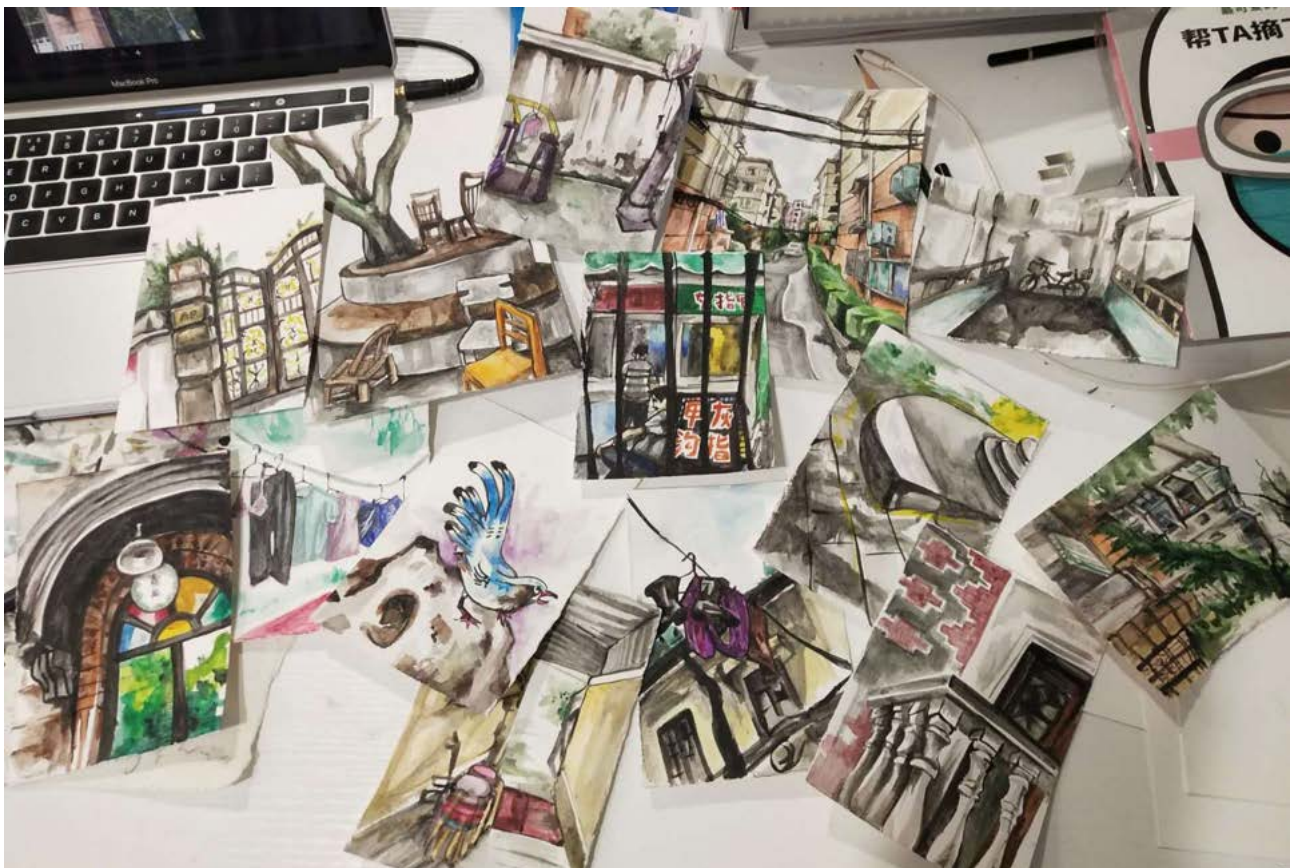
# Xinhua

By JoyceWang  
Layout by Alisa Zheng

Materials: Watercolor

Artist Statement:

Through making watercolor poker cards, I attempted to capture the overlooked & underappreciated details of an old Shanghainese neighborhood.





What other love did she not get  
to choose?

By Joyce Wang

Layout by Finna Wang

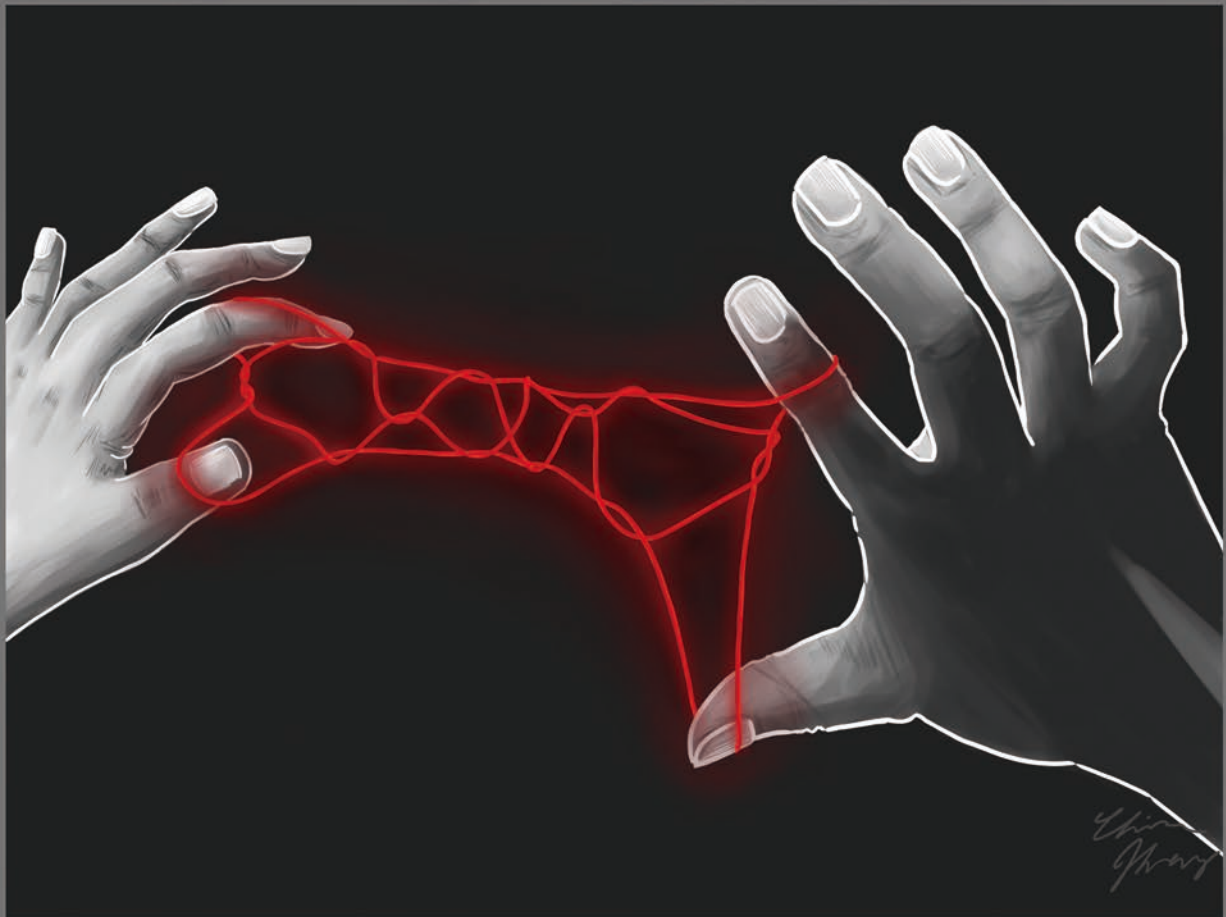
she stops abruptly  
& only allows herself a few seconds' pause  
before kneeling down. The wheels of her luggage  
are broken – they hit rocks.

her child cries. *Mom. Mom it's so dark. I'm scared,*  
she puts her hand on his head, touching his hair,  
touching air.

no one was around – no one *else*  
was around. Her legs are cold – oh. her dress  
was ripped. By the rocks, too?

The street seems to be extending  
never ending.  
she pulls out a small box from her  
fractured luggage. She lights up & starts to smoke.

has she fallen off her cigarette yet?



# Yuanfen

Alisa Zheng

Materials: Digital, made with Medibang Paint Pro

Size: 1200 x 1600 pixels

Artist Statement: The red string of fate wraps invisibly around us. But what if you could see it? What if you could touch it? What if you could control it?



# On Love

By Vivien Yeung  
Layout by Vivien Yeung

Welcome to On Love. Here, all imaginable partners are available to you and only you! Take a look around. The prices vary but for good reason, and we include ingredients on the side for wary visitors. We're ready when you are!

1. **The Adventurer** - The one with a dream to see the world. Discovering its nooks and crannies, splashing in poisonous waves, double daring the sky to fall, breaking the very ground upon which you stood. Your joy is in fighting the impossible, proving to the world that you have something to prove. Walking around with scars and tears on roughened skin like deranged trinkets of trophies. *Every bruise is a hickey from the universe.*

**\$367**  
Made with  
sugar, air,  
and  
neverending  
vacations

2. **The Artist**- The one with a gentle flame, a willingness to confront and to drown in themselves. Breaking quintessentiality, malleable but unbreakable. A sense of novelty - a duty to stray furthest from people and towards humanity. There is joy in questioning identity, in being everything, every colour, every pitch, every word, every movement, all at once. *Every feeling is worth every moment - irreplaceable.*

**\$345**  
Made with  
honey and  
the aurora  
borealis

3. **The Scientist** - The one with a questioning eye. A spark in curiosity, famished. The world is a strange but understandable place. Complex things can be made simple, or vice versa, and you strive to find the best way to look at it. Your life and that of many others will be better and, with knowledge, more efficient, cleaner. The space between your hands is never empty, always one puzzle or another, because there is always one puzzle or another in the world. *Everything is worth a chance to understand, and maybe the truth will be better.*

**\$498**  
Made with  
books, pens,  
and moonlit  
conversations

4. **The Hero** - The one with a shining heart. Patient, driven and empathetic. Curiosity for other's problems. Others know a lendable ear is present when you walk in the room. You remember the little things everyone forgets. Most of all, when something or someone gets them down, you're not there just to be with them, you're there to fight. You change their environment because you see their pain, you see the unjust world they live in, and you fight, or at least show them that you will. *Everyone is worth saving.*

**\$412**  
Made with  
honor,  
courage, and  
gold

# Warning Labels

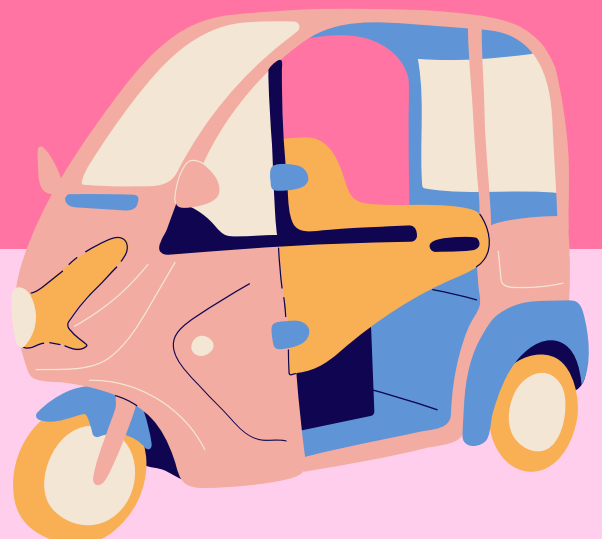
We get a lot of unsatisfied customers that return their partners when they deem them unfit. The truth is that people's characteristics are part of a zero sum game - in order to heighten an aspect of someone, other traits must be abandoned. Each partner will come with their own warning label. Please take a look!

**1. The Adventurer** - There are people who depend on you, but it's all too much, all too tight. The people you care about become chains binding you down. You're caged by the expectation to care and respond. Domestic life is dull and full of responsible madness. What happened to your dream? The bondage is there until anxiety trips your wire, and you fly away to experience the world as you remembered it - beautiful. *I have to get out. I have to go.*

**2. The Artist** - You forget yourself in a stream of identities. You're always the one being moved, always the victim in your story, too fragile to admit it. You let yourself be pushed and pulled and you blame others for your pain, paint it into art to show others how much you've suffered. They stray away from you because you're always running, even in your art and your feelings. They're afraid they'll become the villain in your story, or be portrayed that way. *You hurt me. It's all you.*

**3. The Scientist** - Discovery and the truth has brought you pain and unrest. You push everything else away because if anything else were present, you would snap and break. You're outfitted with hunger and a one-track mind. Everything is black and white with one thing at a time, and family is never important enough. Significance lies in what discoveries you have made, and you've made no progress. Two days pass, three weeks, four years, no sleep, no eating, no love. To everyone else's pleas and worries, all you have is "I'm fine." But you don't understand that you hurt them every day you kill yourself. *I have to finish this. One more day, I promise.*

**4. The Hero** - You think you know what's best for everyone. Not everyone can be saved. Not everyone needs or wants to be saved. In your own emptiness, you find purpose only in the change and growth of others. When it's yourself it is never enough. You use your kindness to bind others to you, and they owe you a favor in every possible way; complacency is assured. *Look, I saved this one. I saved that one. I'm so kind. It's all me.*





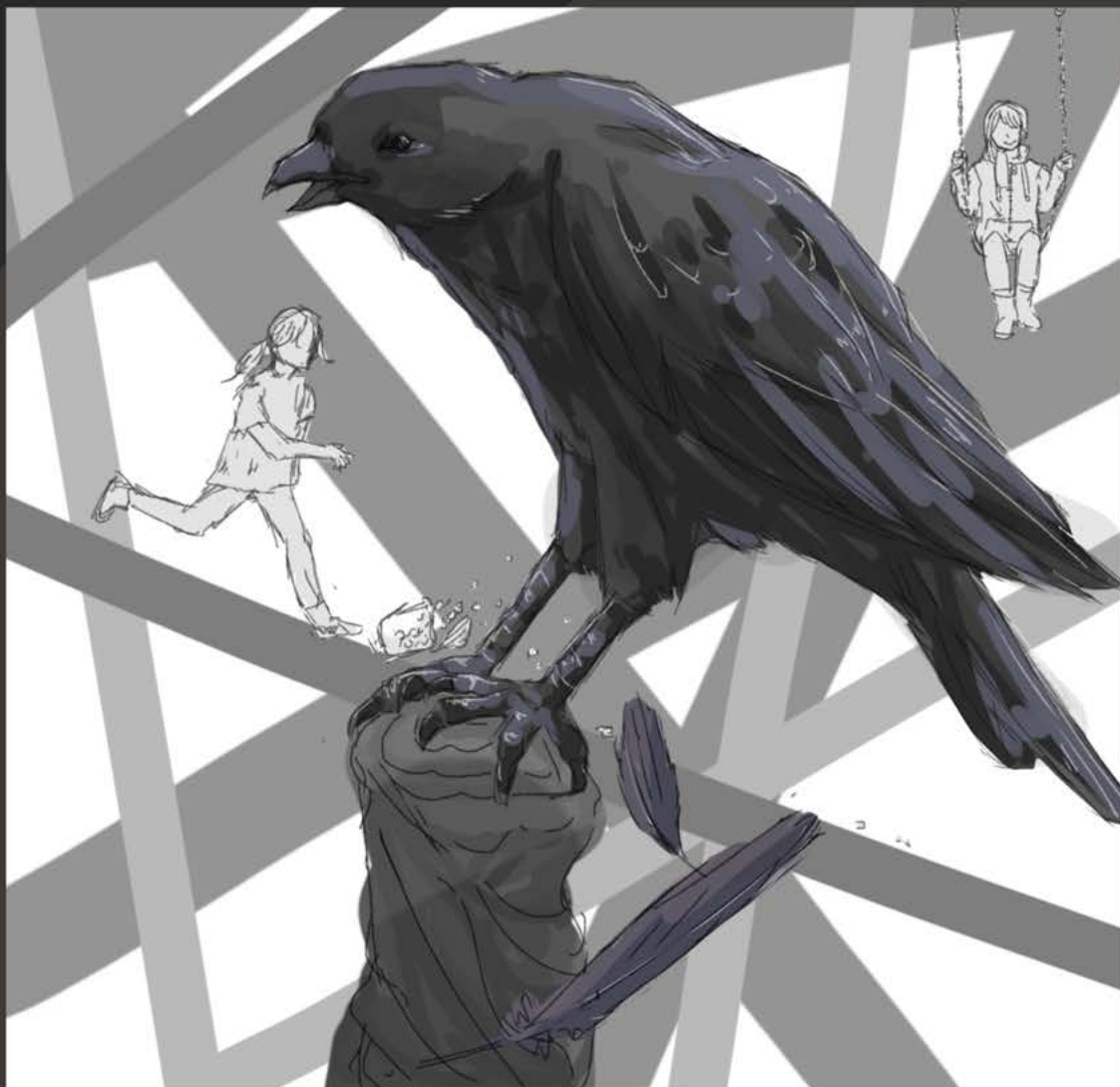


# Abraxas

By Joyce Wang  
Layout by Ashley Yu

Materials: Pencils

Artist statement: "The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy a world. The bird flies to God. The God's name is Abraxas." -- Hermann Hesse.



## Quondam

By Finna Wang

Layout by Ashley Yu

Materials: Autodesk Sketchbook (digital art)

Artist statement: Quondam, or what once was. Our experiences in the past merge into who we are now, almost like interwoven threads.

# Frida

by Henie Zhang

Layout by Celine Hung

This is your face, a crack in the wall,  
a black flower

growing out of it. This is your foot,  
a puppet hanging. This is your lip,

a bow pulled taut, an animal crouched  
in waiting. There are portraits & there are memories,

but today you are alive in both—in your blue house,  
your white dress, in the popping red-purple fruit-

dripping treetops it's all sunshine & no rain—a picture book  
prison, a long goodbye. If only your brows were wings,

& you could escape into this room,  
if only your face was a book I could hold.

Instead you are here but not here,  
a grave but not a grave,

instead you are a grave with flowers. Your heart sliced  
into petals so flat they slip out

of your four slender hands & get snipped off  
like a vine grown awry. You stand here,

stripped & cross-hatched, a tall tale  
or a pallid dead candle.

I could never decide which one you are,  
which is why I make up these stories. In mine I would say

that you are still alive, that  
your lip has never known an arrow

nor a saber-toothed grin.  
I like my version better. It's feathered & beaked

& stone cold, a creased-paper omen,  
weightless.

What have I done to your story  
but choke it with roses?





Concordia

---

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI