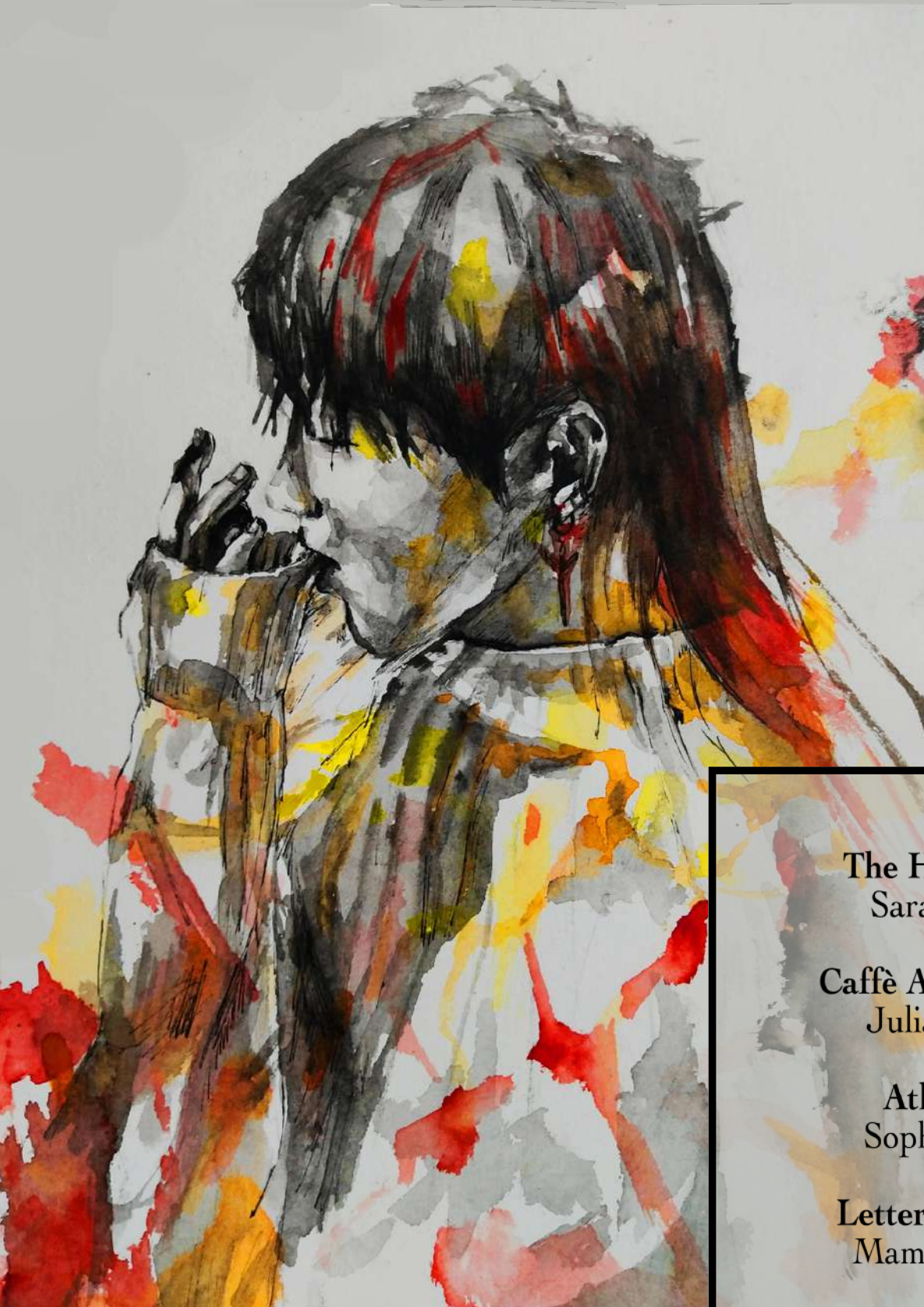


# Zeitgeist.

VOLUME 10 NO. 2

WINTER 2020



## FEATURES

**The Holidays**  
Sara Pratt

**Caffè Americano**  
Julia Fang

**Atlantis**  
Sophia Xin

**Letter to Oma**  
Mamie Yang

# staff

## Design Editor-in-Chief

Joyce Wang

## Layout Editors

Elizabeth Chen

Celine Hung

Sophia Xin

Alisa Zheng

Ashley Yu

Finna Wang

Joe Liang

Vivien Yeung

## Content Editors-in-Chief

Henie Zhang

Catie Yu

## Copy Editors

Julia Fang

Sara Pratt

Mamie Yang

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.

# table of contents

1. The Holidays *by Sara Pratt*
2. Aureate *by Ashley Yu*
3. A Vertical Battle *by Elizabeth Kim*
5. Atlantis, Extension *by Sophia Xin*
6. Quasimodo, Blade *by Sophia Xin*
7. Winter Strawberries *by Grace Wu*
8. Refulgent *by Finna Wang*
9. Caffè Americano *by Julia Fang*
14. 'Cause I'm Your Home *by Celine Hung*
15. The Light *by Joe Liang*
16. Eastern Light *by Joe Liang*
17. BED *by Joyce Wang*
18. Ironically, I don't have insomnia *by Joyce Wang*
19. Warm *by Alisa Zheng*
20. Crown & Anchor *by Alisa Zheng*
21. Poof *by Henie Zhang*
22. Prisoner (repainted from *Detroit: Become Human*) *by Vivien Yeung*
23. Letter to Oma *by Mamie Yang*

## Theme

Hygge (n., Danish): a quality of coziness and comfort, like the feeling of curling up next to a fire on a cold winter night.

# The Holidays

By Sara Pratt

Layout by Finna Wang

Wrapped in the comfort of childish bedding,  
can we shield ourselves from the looming threat of growing up,  
of moving on.

Can we let this feigned persona protect us,  
protect our Christmas wish lists,  
protect the stuffed animals we moved from our bed to the back of the closet.

What if we shared hot cocoa and left cookies on the kitchen counter,  
if we waited for those euphoric sleigh bells,  
if we played hide and seek with New Years,  
turning a cold shoulder to future goodbyes.  
Let's keep this newborn joy warm,  
cupped in our palms, safe from the wind of the world.

Let's keep this flame alive for as long as possible,  
and cherish our holiday—  
our joy  
our youth.





## Aureate

By Ashley Yu

Materials: Watercolor

Artist Statement: The golden-brown glow of freshly baked pastries and the fragrance of cinnamon provide an atmosphere of security and serenity.

## A Vertical Battle

By Elizabeth Kim  
Layout by Elizabeth Chen

Embers saturate the night heavens;  
stars twinkle in an attempt to catch their  
prey, concealing condescending lies.

Gravity wields no power  
over the radiant red and orange dots  
as they perform hysteric dances.

The dimmed lights travel up like frantic  
bees, enraptured and ghostlike, toward  
the seemingly ominous luxur.

Once upon a twinkle, a red dot is lost,  
and all that is left is colorless ash;  
the silence drowns the remaining sparks.

Quietness engulfs the platoon of  
what is left: ash, embers, the fire.

Like war dogs, stars stretch the horizon.

Gusts of wind reinforce and howl;  
the calvary bolsters the anguished  
embers against black terrains.

Raging fire counters an attack,  
crackling sparks of hope outnumbering  
countless hostile, twinkling foes.

Devilish stars laugh at their feckless schemes,  
overshadowing the colorful insomnia;  
their jubilee depresses the whistles in the air.

Battalions of embers retreat  
as darkness subdues specks of crying ashes.

The seething power stifles the blaze.

Undefeatable darkness shudders in awe of  
its victorious reign over the  
flames; they tremble in fear of the hostile.

But then, a flickering ember appears,  
daunted by the blinding stars, but not  
quite gone—

A sign of everlasting hope.

# Atlantis

By Sophia Xin

Materials: Markers, pen and ink, with digital additions (Procreate)

Artist Statement: Abandoning the boisterous human world, when we think of the sea, most of us are drawn to “the beauty of the unknown.” The gnarled hand climbing out, the alien-like man figure, and the colossal sculpture at the seafloor altogether attempt to create a mysterious fantasy world under the sea. The face sculpture—which is not actually sculpted—could be interpreted as an entrance to “Atlantis,” or simply an enchanted rock. In this everlasting tranquility, the figure is stunned by this new world and seems to have found some spiritual connection with the enormous sculpture.



# Extension

By Sophia Xin

Materials: Markers, pen and ink, with digital additions (Procreate)

Artist Statement: She extends her body—extending all the way into her dream and extending possibly into my childhood. I once had the dream of becoming a ballerina, but it left me in the process of growing up. When depicting the dancer, I felt like I was touching the soul of a younger me in my floating memories. This artwork’s reference photo was taken by photographer Dan Hecho.



# Quasimodo

By Sophia Xin

Materials: Markers, pen and ink, with digital additions (Procreate)

Artist Statement: A combination between grotesqueness and beauty: the octopus tentacles all over the artwork—inspired by H. P. Lovecraft’s fictional cosmic entity Cthulhu—not only reach out to the girl but also replace her arms; her hair is depicted like cobwebs, while the bottom decoration of the dress is designed based on spores and fungi.

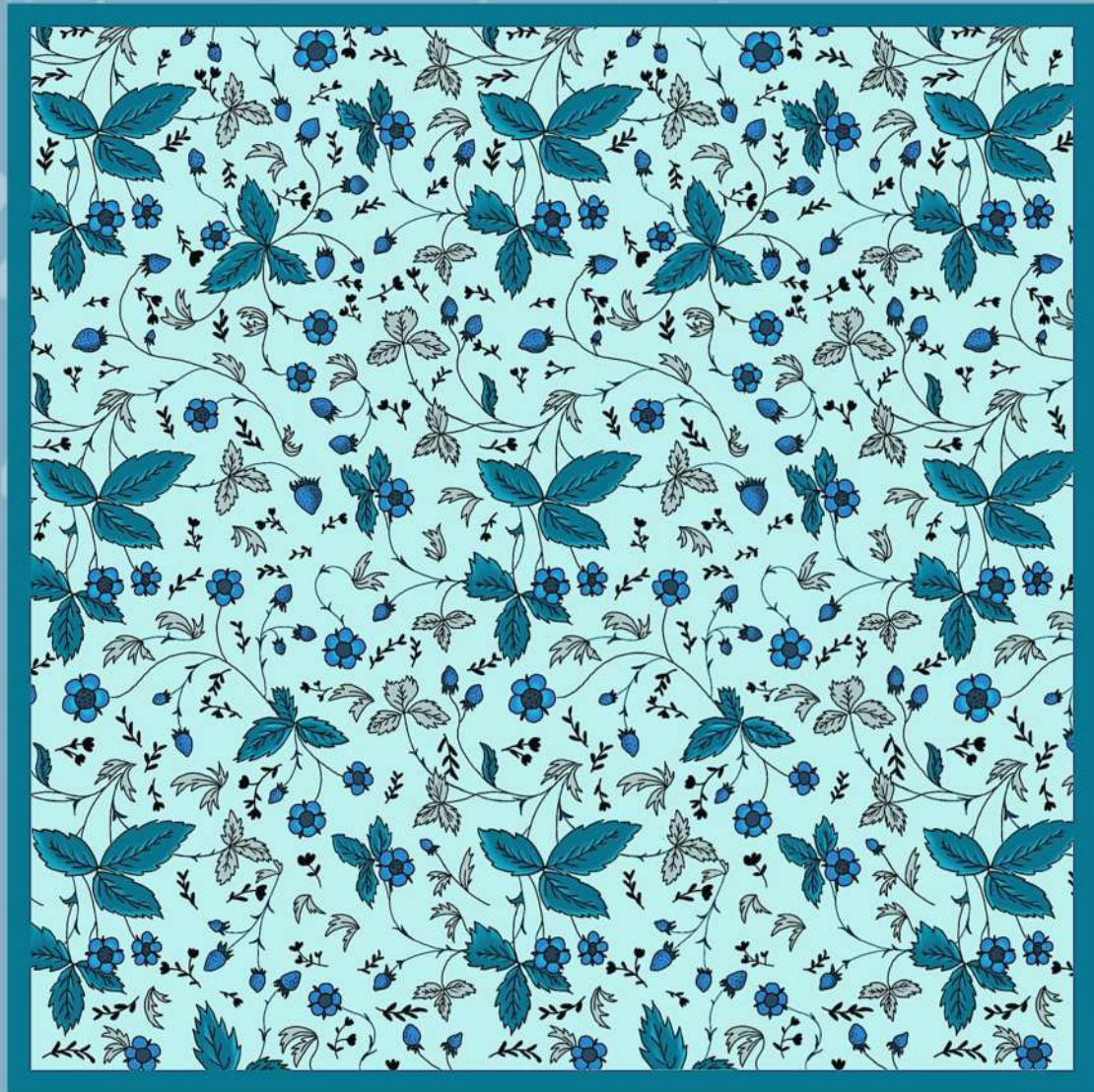
# Blade

By Sophia Xin

Materials: Markers, pen and ink, with digital additions (Procreate)

Artist Statement: The word “blade” is interpreted figuratively—flowers and wings made of bones grow out of the girl while she wears a painful expression. Her spine is overly bent to exaggerate the ominous atmosphere. Meanwhile, her hand holding her neck not only shows her pain but also hints at the possibility of her choking herself. Often, external or internal “perfect expectations” of one’s self and superficial compliments can become toxic, and one might suffocate from all of that.





# Winter Strawberries

By Grace Wu  
Layout by Sophia Xin

Materials: Digital art

Artist Statement: Inspired by a vignette of my childhood that has dwindled to a distant memory, this piece reflects the serenity and joy I experienced while picking strawberries with my family on winter mornings. Although the colors in my memory have become faint and perhaps altered, the charm of this pleasant reminiscence has always lingered. Gleaming with a sense of nostalgia, this composition encapsulates the fragmented yet simultaneously entangled nature of human recollection. This minuscule—and seemingly insignificant—moment is a puzzle piece of what shaped my knowledge, personality, and worldview.



# Refulgent

By Finna Wang

Layout by Alisa Zheng



Materials: Digital (Autodesk Sketchbook)

Artist Statement: The quiet thrum of the engine and warmth of the car feel safe. The streets are awash in the muted light outside, and there is a sleepy sense of security.

# Caffè Americano

By Julia Fang

Layout by Ashley Yu & Celine Hung

A rich coffee aroma wafted through the little coffee shop, which was tucked away in a cozy corner on Fourth Avenue. An old man sauntered through the wooden doors with a creak, taking in the warm air like an adopted cat stepping into its new home for the first time. Clothed in white pajamas that were matted with a light dusting of snow, he was greeted by a rush of warmth that sent nostalgic tingles down to his fingertips. The customers meandered about, occasionally sneaking curious glances at the old man.

“That’ll be \$3.50.”

He looked up to find himself directly in front of the server, who was drumming her fingers on the oak countertop impatiently. He could briefly recall walking up to the oak countertop, but why she was asking for payment, he had no idea. Wearily, he rubbed the confusion from his bleary eyes while the lady waited expectantly, fixing him with a glare when he made no move to pull out a wallet.

The old man said blankly, “Sorry. How much?”

The cashier sighed, repeated the amount, and waited for the old man to fish out a few wads of cash from his pajama’s pockets.

Another woman emerged beside him, offering a card and making her own order. His eyes widened, and a hint of shock rippled through his features as he turned. He could’ve sworn she had not been there a minute ago, but her movements were so natural and elegant that he must not have noticed her entrance. For a moment, he was overwhelmed by a profound sense of familiarity, but he quickly composed himself, cleared his throat, and clasped his hands together calmly.

The woman wore a brown leather bag slung across a beige sweater, but the simple clothes did nothing to dampen the tranquil aura she carried. There was a peculiar gap that surrounded her in his mind, one that refused to be filled, which he found oddly compelling. So, when she wandered to the circular tables and amber couches, he followed.

The area behind the counter aroused childhood memories of Christmas mornings—some of the only vivid recollections he still had in his old age. In the corner, a fireplace crackled and glowed, enveloping the area in a ring of warmth.

The old man pulled up a chair next to the woman, whose hands were folded neatly across her lap as her petite figure sank into the soft leather couch. They sat in silence as she gazed at the floorboards, pretending he wasn’t studying her features with a curious eye. The old man was accustomed to solitude, but the

uncomfortably long pause that sat between them began to disturb him like a subtle itch in his age-stiffened palms, which he clasped together to quell the ache.

“Pardon me, but you look awfully familiar,” he murmured.

The lady continued to examine the wooden panels and matte black letters on the wall. He ignored her indifference and went on.

“It’s a nice name, isn’t it?” he commented. “‘The Coffee Home’.”

Although he wasn’t sure what home felt like, he imagined it was a place of memory. And everything from the warm upturned lights to the graceful woman in front of him seemed to have been ingrained in his mind, like a recurring impression of a romantic evening. Despite his certainty that he had wandered by accident into this coffee shop for the first time, his sense of safety and intimacy told him otherwise. He supposed it was a sense of belonging that he experienced at some point, but the feeling was so foreign to him that he was enveloped by a strange emptiness when he reached out to find it. Perhaps he was reaching for something that had never existed, he thought in slight defeat.

“Well, my name is...” he trailed off.

The woman’s eyes drifted back to him, and a solemn expression mellowed her features. There was something comforting about her gaze. Perhaps it was the somber glint in her eyes or her nostalgic expression, as if he was a distant object she could not grasp.

“Daniel. Yes...my name is Daniel.” The words flowed from his lips like a distant stream.

“Hello, Daniel,” the woman said quietly.

A waiter strolled up to their table, smiling warmly as he set Daniel’s latte in the middle of the table. A weak puff of vanilla steam rose above the white mug, barely hanging onto warmth in the chilly winter afternoon. He didn’t remember tasting a latte before, yet the curious aroma invited him in like an old friend. But, afraid of the memories the drink might rekindle, he refrained from touching it. The waiter then placed down a second drink. As Daniel examined it curiously, he immediately recognized the rich scent and dark liquid as an Americano—a fitting drink for the tranquil woman.

“Is this your first time here?” Daniel asked the woman after the waiter left.

“Someone took me here a long time ago.”

She reached for the mug, wrapping her hands around it eagerly. But not a millisecond afterward, she snatched her hands away, spilling little spots on to her skin.

“It’s cold,” she said, startled.

Then, her innocent surprise soured as she licked the cool coffee residue from her delicate fingers and called the server, who hurried back to the counter with

embarrassment. A shadow of distress fell over her face as Daniel regarded her with sympathy. He wasn't sure why, but a pang of regret jolted through his chest as if he had somehow disappointed her.

"It's so cold here," she muttered.

Indeed, through the foggy windows, snowflakes were drifting down leisurely, gathering on the sidewalks and forming little mountains of white fuzz.

"I wanted it hot."

Suddenly, she stood, eyes misty and cheeks flushed. Before Daniel could process what was happening, she was stepping past him. With the distance growing between them, he felt as if he was losing something important. Involuntarily, he grabbed the woman's arm. She jerked back in surprise.

"Sorry," Daniel blurted. "I just...felt as if I would regret everything if you stepped out that door."

The woman gave him a pained look and clutched her arm where he had grabbed her. Daniel shut his eyes in embarrassment.

"It's alright," she said, "But I should go now."

He opened his mouth in protest, "But the waiter made a mistake. He didn't know it would upset you this much."

"Well, it did."

The woman continued to stand there with her jaw locked and her eyes flitting between the door and Daniel as if she was contemplating how much longer she should endure his feeble attempts to forestall her. It was odd, the pull that Daniel felt toward the reserved woman, but until he figured out why he desired to fill the space in his mind, he couldn't allow her to leave.

"But won't you give him a chance to fix it?"

The woman seemed to ponder for a moment before dismissing the thought with a sharp turn of her head.

Daniel pressed on, "It was a mistake."

He had never felt so cold next to a crackling fireplace. Heart pounding, he wanted to confess his longing and desperation. He wanted to tell her why she couldn't leave.

"It wasn't just a mistake," she insisted, "You don't understand. I wanted it warm."

"He deserves another chance to make things right," Daniel objected.

"And I've given him that! I can't remember all the evenings I sat by and waited for something that never came."

"Well, have you brought this up to him?" Daniel asked. "How do you know he forgot about you when you never waited around long enough?"

"He would've served it to me long ago if he truly remembered!" she shouted.

She stared at the floor as the waiter rushed back, replacing the cold mug with a fresh, steaming one. Around them, customers' annoyed stares seemed to pass through

the woman, as if she didn't exist, and hit Daniel directly.

"Come on. Your coffee is here. Sit down." He sighed. "I don't believe I got your name."

The woman smiled wistfully.

"Daniel, don't you remember?"

He stilled, gazing at her in puzzlement as he grappled with the overwhelming familiarity that plagued him. Unconsciously, he reached out to his mug and gripped the pale ceramic handle with quivering fingers. Amidst the vast emptiness, he latched onto the familiar scent of the vanilla latte like a safety railing as he traversed his mind's tightrope in search of the woman in his consciousness. He pulled himself closer to the railing, lifting the mug so close to his face that he could feel the moisture from the steady clouds of steam gather on his upper lip. The heavenly odor of vanilla and rich caffeine saturated his senses, and he was closer than ever to the woman's tender smile and that same Americano cradled in her hands. But he couldn't say where these feelings came from. Brows furrowed, he finally touched his lips against the brim and lifted the cup to let the foamy beverage trickle into his mouth.

Then, everything came crashing down like plates smashing at the bottom of an abyss, cracking the silence into opalescent porcelain shards. The gaping hole began to speckle with flecks of moments.

Two coffee mugs beside a sizzling fireplace. Three shot glasses challenging her dazzling smile. A glass of red wine standing in front of her glistening eyes. A cold coffee mug set on a dining table. The taste of caffeine was still fresh on his tongue when he found her dried tears and dull eyes.

Daniel looked up, and she was walking away, like the night she discovered red lipstick smeared on his sheets, sickly sweet perfume on his pillow, an iced Americano left on the counter. He listened to the clicking of her loafers like a metronome as she walked across the coffee shop's floorboards, looking every bit as graceful as she did back then.

"Sarah!" Daniel called.

He hadn't been there to explain. Hadn't grabbed her arm when she flew up the marble stairs.

"I'm sorry, Sarah!"

The customers waiting in line were staring at him with a curious intensity now, but he ignored their burning gazes searing into his back. Sarah pushed through the heavy wooden doors, her lithe figure disappearing through the opening. Daniel remembered her blank stare at the bottom that night. And the flashing lights. Red. White. Red. White.

"Please don't go, Sarah," he cried, a heaviness spreading in his chest.

Old legs wavering, he burst through the exit with effort. Outside, a wave of bitter cold bit through his thin pajamas, sending chills down his fragile body. He whirled

around frantically, ignoring the flurry of snow drifting down from the gray sky. A group of men marched toward Daniel, talking vigorously to each other when they spotted him. He noticed the matching blue hospital uniforms peeking out from under their thick coats and stumbled back as a wave of fear drove through his chest.

The men were closer now—a mere few feet away when Daniel whipped around in alarm, searching for Sarah’s brown sweater on the desolate street. He dashed down the road, wobbly legs carrying him as far as they could. But when he turned the corner, she was gone.



## ‘Cause I’m Your Home

by Celine Hung

Layout by Joe Liang

Materials: Digital art

Artist Statement: A hearth refers to a fireplace and the area around it and provides warmth, light, and protection. I wanted to create a warm piece that centered around those ideas and evoked feelings of coziness and comfort.



## The Light

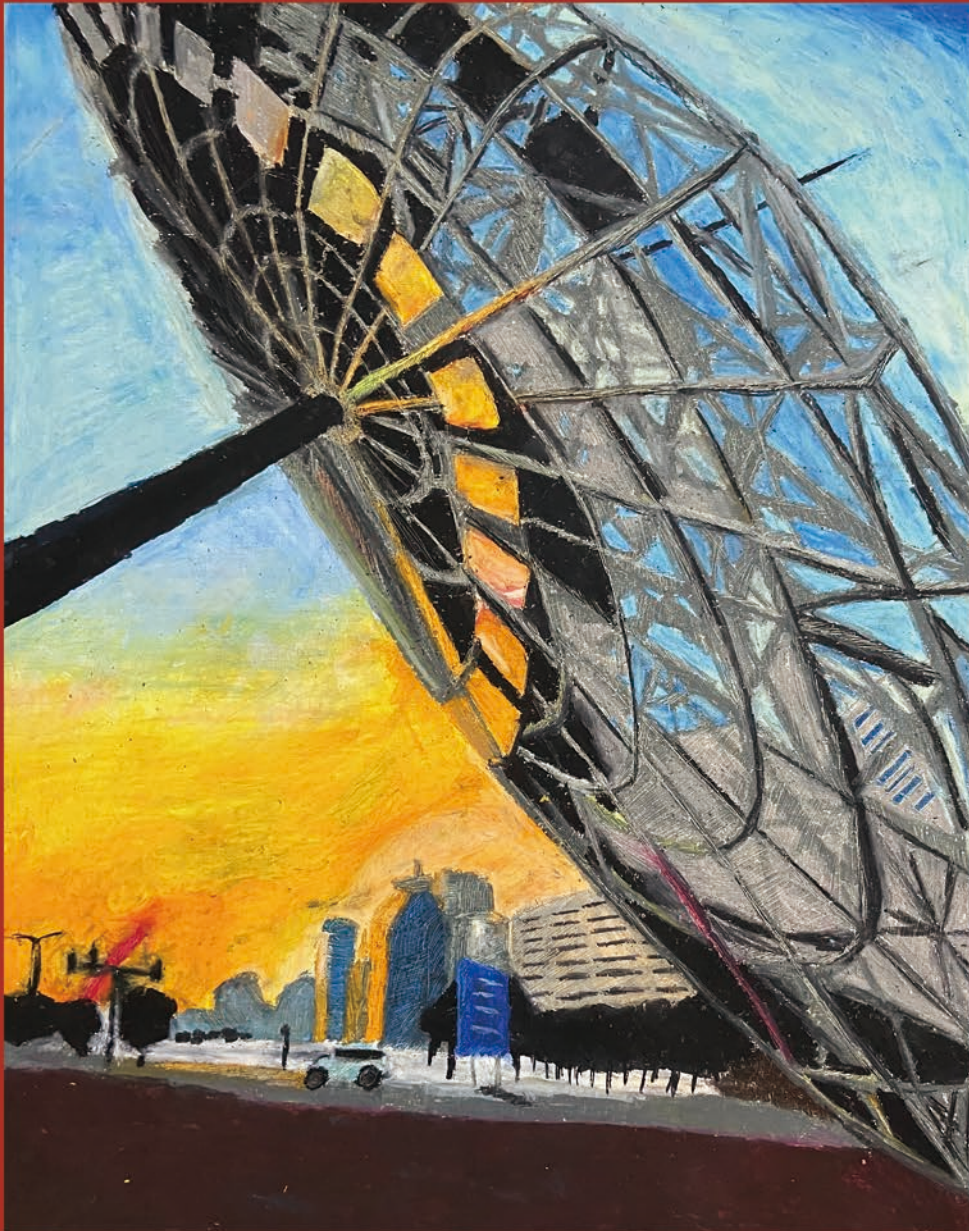
By Joe Liang

Materials: Digital art

Artist Statement: A large Christmas tree such as this is unforgettable when seen. The brightness is so overwhelming that one can only see sprinkles of lights combined together, especially at night.

Streaks of colors are splashed onto the tree to create the effect.





## Eastern Light

By Joe Liang

Materials: Oil pastel on canvas paper

Artist Statement: Although a seemingly dreadful year, 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the opening of Pudong. The sculpture *The Light of the East* depicted in the picture can be seen on Century Avenue, and it was created to celebrate the 10th year of the Pudong district's opening-up. This commemorative work of art was used to symbolize the hope there was after the turn of the century, and it is important for one to remember that there is still hope left.



# BED

By Joyce Wang  
Layout by Elizabeth Chen

Embrace  
all that you are  
even the Hunger that threatens to consume  
your memory,  
when you wake up for the second time,  
you'll only see Yesterday's image, oil sliding  
down your fingers  
Again. You feel its gasoline ignite  
light up

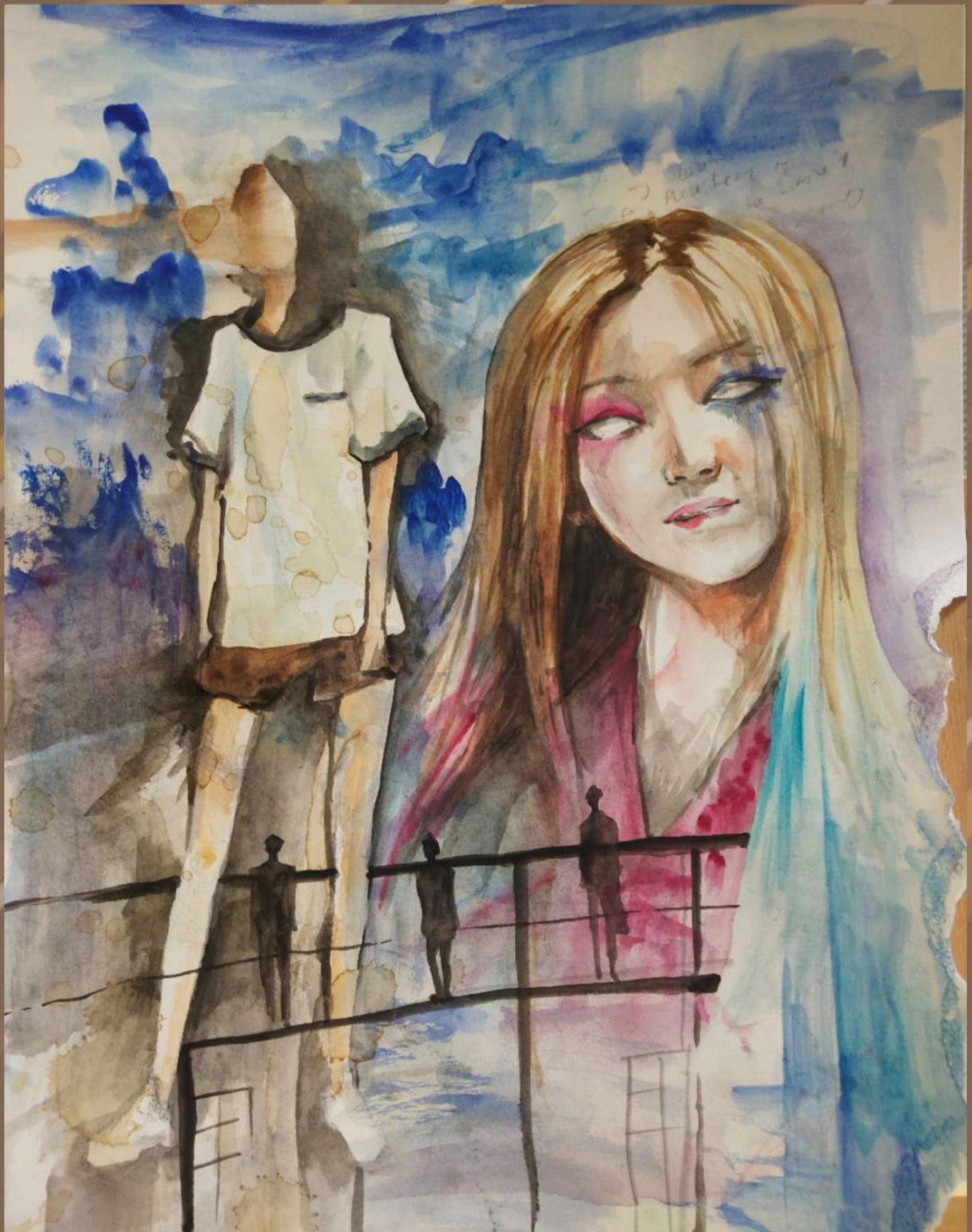
your reflection, reddened,  
unclear from the greasy mirror —  
its scratch mark taints those petty moments  
from your childhood. you've  
been lied to, but

you felt no shame back then;  
why the hiccuping now?  
the dread of lying  
down. Turning off the lights.  
You flatten yourself beneath  
your blanket. Recognize your reluctance to  
move.

Recognize things like this can't be cancelled  
out—  
what are you even hiding from?

The normalcy, you answer.  
When you wake up for the second time,  
that's what scares you the most  
The disruption of routine action you  
longed for, dreamed for  
never came, & you  
Wake up to see yourself in the same scene.  
The tape loop of you  
overstuffing yourself with food. It's playing  
on repeat, and your mouth dries

but you keep on chewing, it's tasteless but  
you kept on chewing & swallowing & biting  
& reaching &  
you are the woman who was plagued by the  
Mania. she danced until she died. She  
allowed herself to malfunction, & so did  
you  
know? It's Disgusting to see everything you  
gulp down painfully  
leap back onto you. Wipe your mirror —  
they're feeding on you too.



## Ironically, I don't have insomnia

By Joyce Wang

Materials: Watercolor

Artist Statement: lying in bed = wishing that they'd leave

# Warm

By Alisa Zheng

Materials: DSLR Photograph

Artist Statement:

The sunset in Toronto and Melbourne.  
During these cold times, the sun gives us its  
version of *hygge*, keeping us warm and cozy  
as we wait for the frost to melt.




# Crown & Anchor

By Alisa Zheng



Materials:  
DSLR Photograph

Artist Statement:  
Crown & Anchor: a cute and cozy restaurant in London complete with fairy lights and flowers. In the rainy cold winter, a hint of *hygge* warms our fingers and toes. As strangers huddle for shelter, a comfortable silence envelops us.



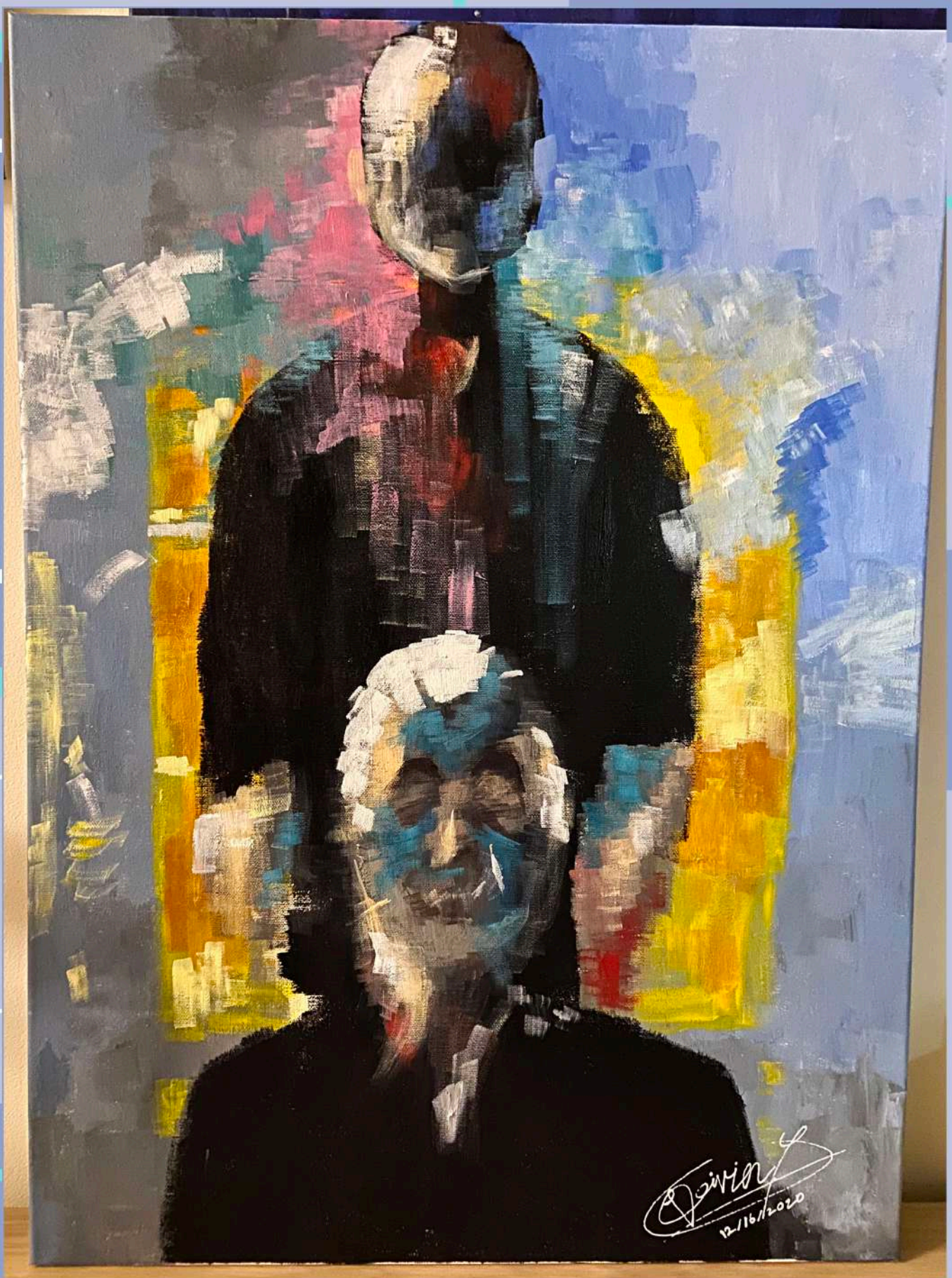
A mayfly was born from a glass cocoon  
3 hours ago, and now  
it's at the bottom of the river. From a neighboring cocoon  
I was born, and everyone I loved fought  
to etch their name onto  
my tiny pink skull. Immediately after that  
I found myself folded into the dead body  
of a favorite pen, whose ink cartridge  
burst like a broken appendix. We once wrote  
our names on each other's hands with permanent markers, remember?  
By the whine of the fireplace,  
remember? Black strokes  
against deep red heartstrings, crisscross  
like train tracks off to forever.  
Then we never wrote  
our names as the same people again, and there was always  
something upsetting: a shaky hand, an awry brushstroke,  
the eclipsed dot of an *i*. Tomorrow  
I will shave my hair down to the stubble, and the barber  
would ask no questions about the starved black smudges, and  
we will only pretend to recognize each other  
at the stoplight. You would look at me,  
and I could be a dog, and  
you would be my favorite child  
(or I the earthworm, and you the bird). But it takes me too long  
to write anything down and the previous page  
is covered with the scribbles of a stranger—

But listen. Listen to the hum of my breath  
and the drumming of my fingertips. Say for a moment  
that we went together,  
that "always"  $\neq$  never again,  
and flowers could bloom when we aren't looking. Say  
that I could look up  
right now  
and I would see you, across from me,  
and that could be everything.

# Poof

By Henie Zhang

Layout by Vivien Yeung



## Prisoner (Repainted from *Detroit: Become Human*)

By Vivien Yeung

**Materials:** 60cm x 90cm canvas, flat and bright brushes, acrylic paint

**Artist Statement:** I repainted this in honor of our best man Carl from *Detroit: Become Human*. A faceless man some distance away, not physically bound to the other man, stands over him and keeps him prisoner.

# Letter to Oma

By Mamie Yang  
Layout by Finna Wang

Dear Oma,

It's crazy to think that I haven't seen you and Yeye in almost a year...I wish I could tell you when I would see you next. As winter break approaches every year, instead of focusing on my final exams, I fantasize about boarding the plane back to Taipei. Before the taxi doors are even halfway open, I would race into the kitchen and swing the fridge door open, greeted by a stock of your favorite ice-cream flavors: caramel biscuit, raisin rum, chocolate with macadamia chunks. You'd pretend to be angry at me for not hugging you first, but the chuckle in your voice always gives you away. If this were a regular year, I'd probably be sitting next to you on the tiny footstool right now, wasting your nail polish trying to give myself a subpar manicure as you unravel a year's worth of gossip. We'd be enveloped by the familiar scent of your floral Chanel perfume, Yeye's newly finished acrylic painting, and the Bath and Body Works Christmas candle that you've been using for more years than I can count.

The cynic in me is starting to think the holidays don't exist in Shanghai. Everything is missing: Yeye's handmade decorations, the smell of your signature turkey wafting from the kitchen, the pile of presents stacked neatly under the makeshift tree. I miss it all: the homemade gingerbread cookies that I don't like, the missing chocolates on the advent calendar that still gets hung up every year. I even miss the excruciating caroling session that we continue to entertain, even though hardly anyone enjoys it (except for my dad). I now realize how magical our Christmas Eve was—the synchrony of the women in the family working to curate a table-full of food, while the rest of us catch up after a long year apart, clinking wine glasses and munching away at your endless supply of Sun Chips.

This year my mom will still make the creamy vegetables, turkey, and cranberry sauce that we always have, and I'll cherish it—but it won't be the same. This year I might exchange a gift or two, sing a carol or two, maybe even eat a gingerbread cookie (or two...probably not)—but it won't be the same. I'll do my best to decorate with our Christmas lights that haven't been used in a decade, but no one will be here to show me all the different variations the lights can flicker in like Yeye does every year. There won't be your carefully designated seating arrangements—a 'kids' table and an 'adults' table; I won't be able to honor my noble role of youngest by handing out the presents; and most importantly, I won't be able to see Brian, Austin, Andrew and whomever you and Yeye decided to take in this year. Whether it be my brother's friends or a random auntie you befriended at the marketplace, we always seem to make room for at least one more every year, welcoming anyone who doesn't have a Christmas dinner. I guess that's what grandmas do, right?



Dear Oma, I miss you and Yeye very much. I'm sorry that we all can't come back this year, but I know you and Yeye will have a wonderful Christmas regardless. Remember to FaceTime me and show me all the delicious food, although I wish I could be there to try it for myself. I can't wait till I can go back without having to miss school or be cooped up in a cell-like room for two weeks. I promise that as soon as it's allowed, I'll be on the plane and on my way to Da'an, and before you know it, I'll be at your door thinking about what flavor ice-cream I'll choose that day...except this time, I'll be sure to hug you first.

Love,  
Meimei





**Concordia**

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SHANGHAI