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# Desserts You Should Try from Different Cultures

by Kaeli S.



Image from Canva

Different cultures have many different cuisines, and for this article I wanted to focus on desserts! Desserts are one of my favorite (if not my favorite) kinds of food, and I love trying new ones from different places when I visit. This article will share six desserts from different cultures. I hope you enjoy reading!

## Halo-Halo (Philippines)

Halo-halo is a classic, refreshing Filipino dessert whose name means 'variety'. Halo-halo mainly consists of evaporated milk and shaved ice, and is typically purple as it is topped with ube ice cream.

However, the rest of the ingredients are usually unique to the person who makes them, hence the name's translation to 'variety'. Some

examples of components in halo-halo from Wikipedia include nata de coco, soft ube, jellies, fruits, and sweet kidney beans. It is usually served with a long spoon and in a tall glass so that all of the layers and ingredients can be seen.



Image from Cambio and Co.

## Alfajores (Argentina)

Alfajores are small desserts from Argentina, made of two soft cookies sandwiching a filling. Puerto Loa Boca, an Argentinian restaurant, says that a basic alfajores is a sandwich of two cornstarch-based cookies with dulce de leche, caramelized milk, according to Wikipedia, in between. However, there are many different variations, including types filled with chocolate marmalade, cream, or or dulce de



Image from Vintage Kitchen Notes

camote, which is a type of sweet-potato-based caramel. Turismo, a travel guide for Buenos Aires (the capital of Argentina), also states that the cookies are coated in chocolate sometimes!

### **Melomakarona (Greece)**

Melomakarona are honey-soaked Greek cookies eaten around Christmastime. They are oblong in shape and are usually made with walnuts, orange, and cinnamon.

According to Mia Kouppa, a recipe blog for Greek food, melomakarona originated in Ancient Greece as part of a meal eaten after funerals, called makaronea. The Byzantine Empire adopted these cookies, but added honey. In Latin, honey is meli, which led to the name of these cookies becoming melomakarona.



Image from Unbox Greece



Image from Sunday Baker

### **Bienenstich (Germany)**

Bienenstich, translating to ‘bee-sting cake’, is a German almond and honey cake. This dessert has a cake base, thick vanilla cream, and is topped with honey and sliced almonds. According to Sour Sweet Bitter, a recipe blog, the exact origins of this cake are unknown, but there is a myth surrounding this cake. According to the myth, in the 15th

century invaders were planning to attack a small German town. When the news reached some of the bakers in the town, they decided to protect their village by throwing beehives at their enemies. They succeeded in chasing out the invaders and celebrated by baking the first Bienenstich. They topped the cake with almonds and honey to give homage to the bees that protected their home.

### **Gajorer Jorda (Bangladesh)**

Gajorer jorda is a dessert from Bangladesh, with carrots as its main ingredient. In a gajorer jorda recipe I got from Rownak's Kitchen, a recipe blog for Bangladeshi foods, the carrots are grated



Image from Roksana Dewan

and cooked with milk, cardamom, and cinnamon. Once all the ingredients have come together, it is topped with almonds and cashews. When I was younger, I would eat this occasionally as it was served at an Indian restaurant my family was a regular at. I remember that it could be quite sweet (which I liked), but it was delicious and I always enjoyed it.

I hope you enjoyed learning about desserts from different cultures! Be sure to try any of these desserts, or any other new desserts, if you get the opportunity!

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# What Is a True Friend?

by Claire P.



Image from Canva

## Introduction

In an individual's life, one of the most important things is to make friends. According to the American Psychological Association, friendship can “predict well-being and can protect against mental health issues such as depression and anxiety—and those benefits persist across the life span.” This may be a fact many people know and learn at a very young age due to schools and adults teaching children the importance of making friends. However, it is not that simple. Anyone can make friends, yet forming deep and meaningful connections requires effort and sincerity. This leads us to the questions: what is a true friend? Where can we make them? And what do true friends not do?

## **Where Can You Make New Friends?**

In the many places that people go, they can come across all kinds of people. Even as a child, student, or adult, it is possible to make friends. According to *TenMinuteMomentum.com*, young students are recommended to go outside, join extracurriculars, and attend local events. This is because areas like these may have many people who aren't just mere passers-by but "provide opportunities for children to interact with peers who share similar interests," Ten Minute Momentum states. Ten Minute Momentum also provides people with a guide on some of the best social skills to have when it comes to making friends. They endorse being genuinely kind to other people, being curious about their interests, and not trying to be friends with everyone. These qualities allow people to have an easier time making friends, which includes learning to be able to distinguish between a fake friend and a true friend. Although it may seem difficult to make friends, it is possible if people go to these recommended public places and use social skills to build a connection with others.

## **What Makes True Friends**

It is possible for anyone to make friends, but finding true ones depends on what people look for in a friend. Many people have different perceptions of what friends should be. For example, some may consider friends to be kind, caring, and loyal, while others may believe that friends are those who push you to your limits and help you step out of your comfort zone. According to Omar Itani from Medium, genuine friends bring joy to the dullest moments, appreciate your presence, and remind you to love

yourself a little more. Itani also says, “True friendships are the ones that stand the test of time.” These qualities display a sense of long-term relationship rather than friendship for temporary enjoyment. In other words, true friendships are ones that consistently have a strong bond even after many years. To go even further about the thought of friendship along this line, friendship is not just about having fun, but about maintaining a strong connection even through times of difficulty and inconvenience, further suggesting that true friends are defined more by their careful actions—more than just a simple label or name.



Image from Dreamstime.com

## **What True Friends Shouldn't Do**

Of course, throughout friendships, it will not always be “sunshine and rainbows” and there will be fights. However, friends can bring along many wondrous things in people’s lives. At the same time, those who are not considered true friends may do some toxic things that may bring negativity in people’s lives, even if they don’t realize it. According to the Life Hack Organization, here are some things that true friends should not do: gossip behind your back, try to change you, and/or discourage you from achieving your goals. These things may not

be necessarily bad or mean to some people, but over time they can damage trust and make the friendship one-sided or unhealthy. Small actions like these can build up over time and affect how safe or valued someone feels in a relationship. Although nobody is truly perfect or is fully accustomed to someone's preferences or personalities, it is important to recognize how these are not just simple mistakes, but rather actions that reflect their true characters. When people show patterns of negative behavior like these, it is important to keep in mind the decisions people can make about whom to invest their time and energy, ultimately leading to healthier, more meaningful relationships.

## **Conclusion**

It is important for any person to make friends along the way throughout their life. If they struggle, there are many solutions to help them create friends easily. It is recommended to go to areas with many people who share similar interests with you, such as extracurricular activities, outdoor activities, and local events. Making friends is not always quick and easy—often requiring patience and effort. Some people may not be able to immediately feel the connection with others, but that does not mean they are not able to make friends. Instead, it can show how time and persistence can help find the right person. Over time, these small efforts can lead to stronger and more genuine relationships rather than a temporary one, bonding with each other based on mutual understanding and shared experiences.

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# Original Poetry

by Layla P.



Image from Canva

## **The Last Time**

You give someone a kiss, or hug, or wave, or smile  
Then they walk away  
Is this goodbye?  
Or is this hello?  
The end?  
The beginning?  
Sunrise or sunset?  
Anything could happen  
Everything could be perfect  
Ticking like a clock  
But maybe it's ticking like a bomb

A grenade, about to blow  
It could be perfect  
For a minute, an hour, or a day  
Then it all goes wrong

Like a wave on the shore  
The type of wave that just destroys  
Everything in its way  
The sea crashing down  
Crash, crash, crash  
Like a castle crumbling  
The bricks cracking  
Crack, crack, crack

Until it all falls apart  
Until the pieces drop down, one by one  
Until there is nothing left.  
Until you are broken and damaged  
And there's nothing to do.  
But just accept it.

Accept the gnawing hole in your gut  
The ache in your mind.  
The things that were  
And never will be.  
When someone walks away  
Promises they'll come back  
How do you know it's not the last?  
How do you know it will all be ok?

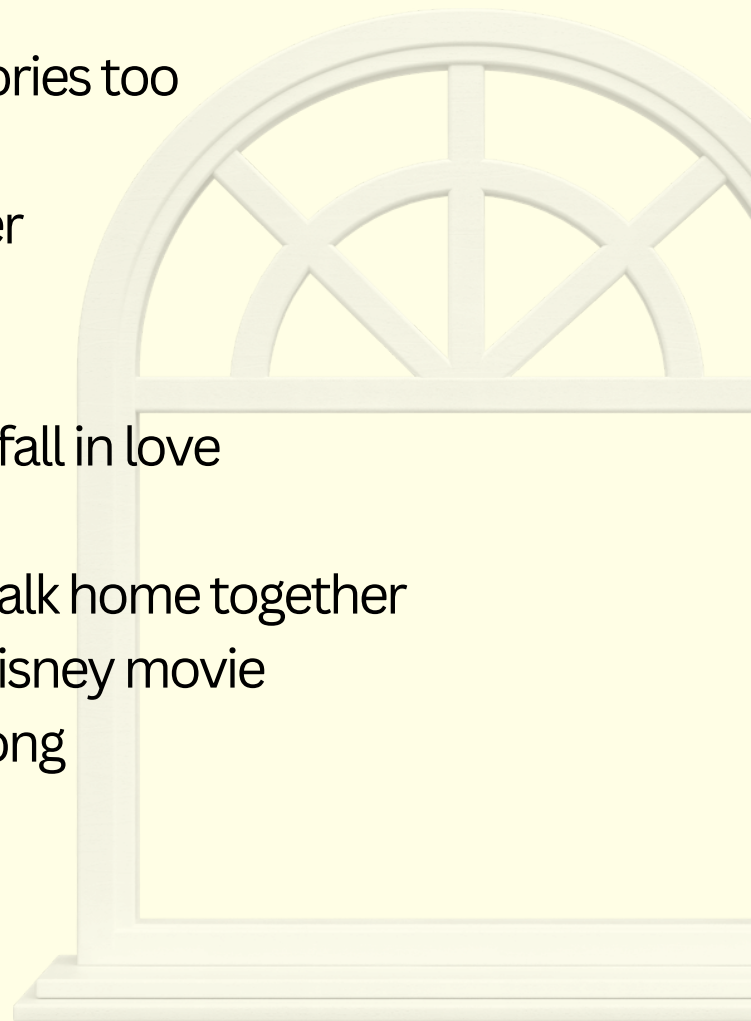
There's no way to know  
Do you just wish for the best?  
Hope the cracks don't form  
Hope they don't spread  
Hope they don't tear everything apart.  
And maybe that's good enough  
To just let fate decide  
Decide if it's your last time

## **The Window on the Third Floor**

The window that sees  
The window that knows

The little girl with her mom  
Leaping over the cracks in the pavement  
Smooth as silk  
Smooth as ripples across water  
She's dressed in her tutu and leotard  
A little porcelain ballerina  
Made of glass, so small and fragile  
Jumping and bending and twisting and twirling  
Her whole life long

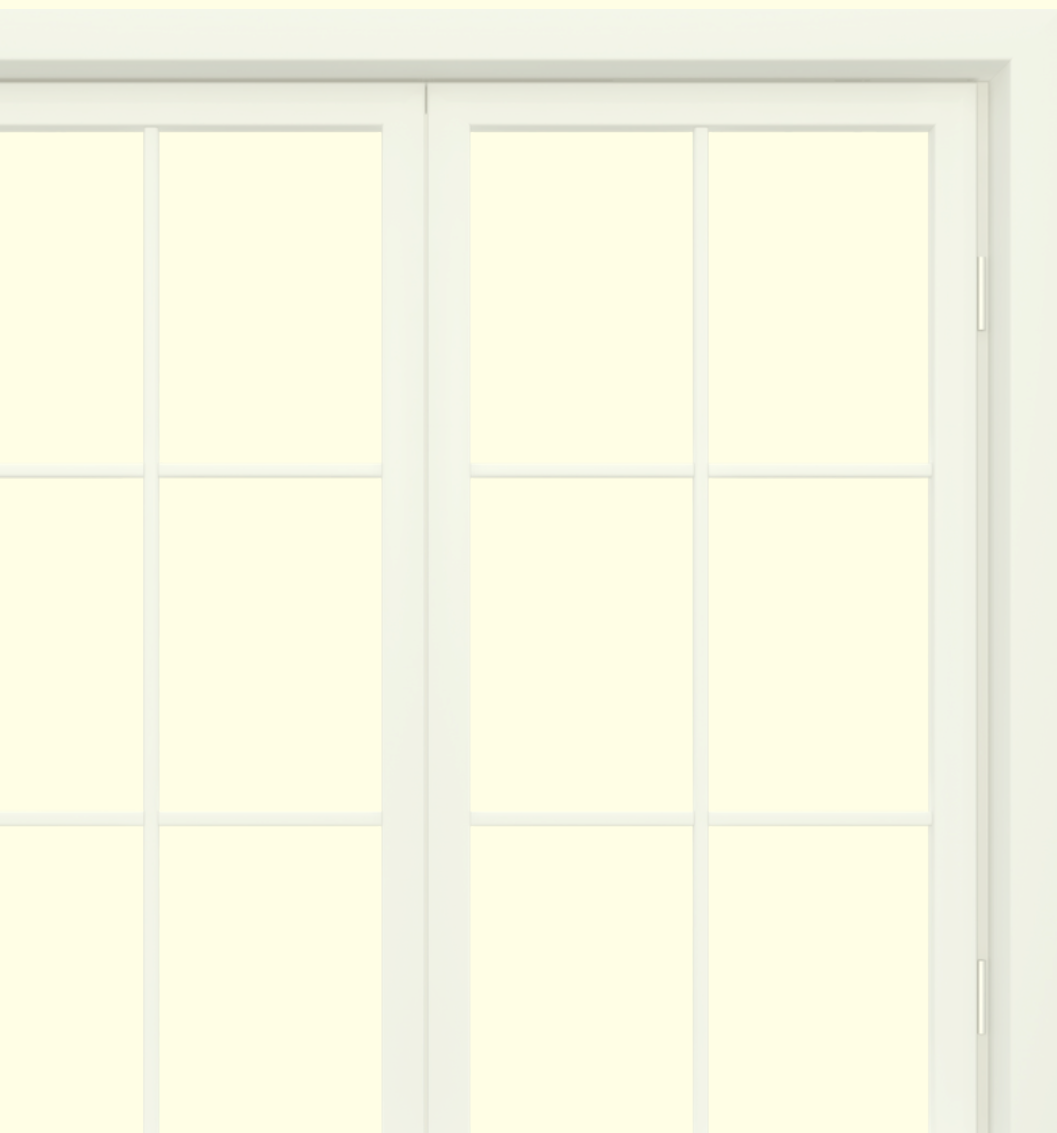
The window sees other stories too  
The boy and the girl  
They bump into each other  
Spill their warm lattes  
A matcha, a chai  
The window knows they'll fall in love  
They always do  
And the boy and the girl walk home together  
Off into the sunset like a Disney movie  
Together their whole life long



But like I said the window knows  
The window knows the mother of the ballerina  
She sees her trying to keep up with her ambitious daughter  
Not enough coins in her wallet  
Not enough food on the table  
Always and never enough  
The mother cries every night  
For her husband that left  
For her beautiful, sweet girl  
That won't get the life she wants  
But the mother tries to keep her daughter happy  
Does all she can to give her a good childhood  
And she does it right  
The little girl is happy  
She has her legs and her arms and that's all she could need

The window knows the other girl too  
The one who falls in love  
She's lived her whole life in pain  
Her friends got boyfriends  
Her friends got flowers  
Her friends got everything  
That girl got nothing  
Just the romance books that made her cry  
The daydreaming, wishing her life away  
The girl loves hard  
Loves like it's all she can do  
No one understood her  
Until she met the boy

The window sits on the third floor  
All it does is watch  
Watch the seasons change  
Watch the people walk by  
All going somewhere with a purpose  
A purpose the window will never have  
The window is trapped  
Locked up in that crumbling building  
Waiting for a comet to strike through the sky  
A hairclip to pick the lock  
A knife to cut through the bonds tying it  
And set it free



## Little One

Dear little one

What is life like?

Do you fly around the playground?

Get blisters on the monkey bars?

Sand in your socks from the golden pit?

Do you kick a soccer ball happily?

Go to sleep, waiting to wake up?

Sing princess songs loudly?

Clip bows in your hair?

Wear frilly stockings, vibrant headbands?

Do you not care what others think?

Sweet, young little one

I hope you enjoy this life

I hope you take all that you can from it

Live how you want to

Let every moment pass with no regrets

Because soon it will get very hard

You won't even realize it is happening

The pandemic isn't going to be the problem

It's not the video calls, trapped in a screen

It's you growing up

It will always be inevitable

The tears spilled

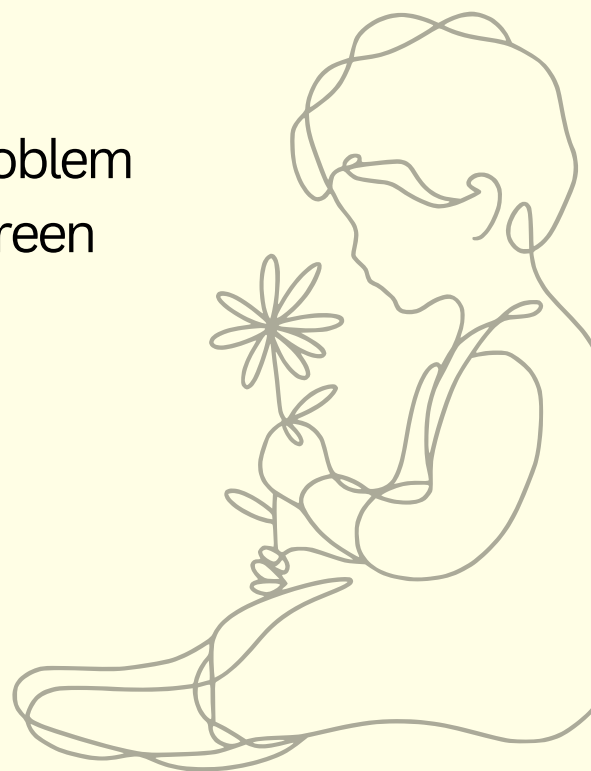
The echoing screams into your pillow

You will hate the way it is

It will never be easy

You will struggle

Feel like you're carrying the world on your shoulders



So little one, when you face those struggles  
Look back on the time you didn't have them  
Think of your old self  
How they would want to live  
They are cheering you on  
They believe in you  
And they know you can do it  
I believe in you little one  
Remember that

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# What Are Deepfakes?

by Celine C.

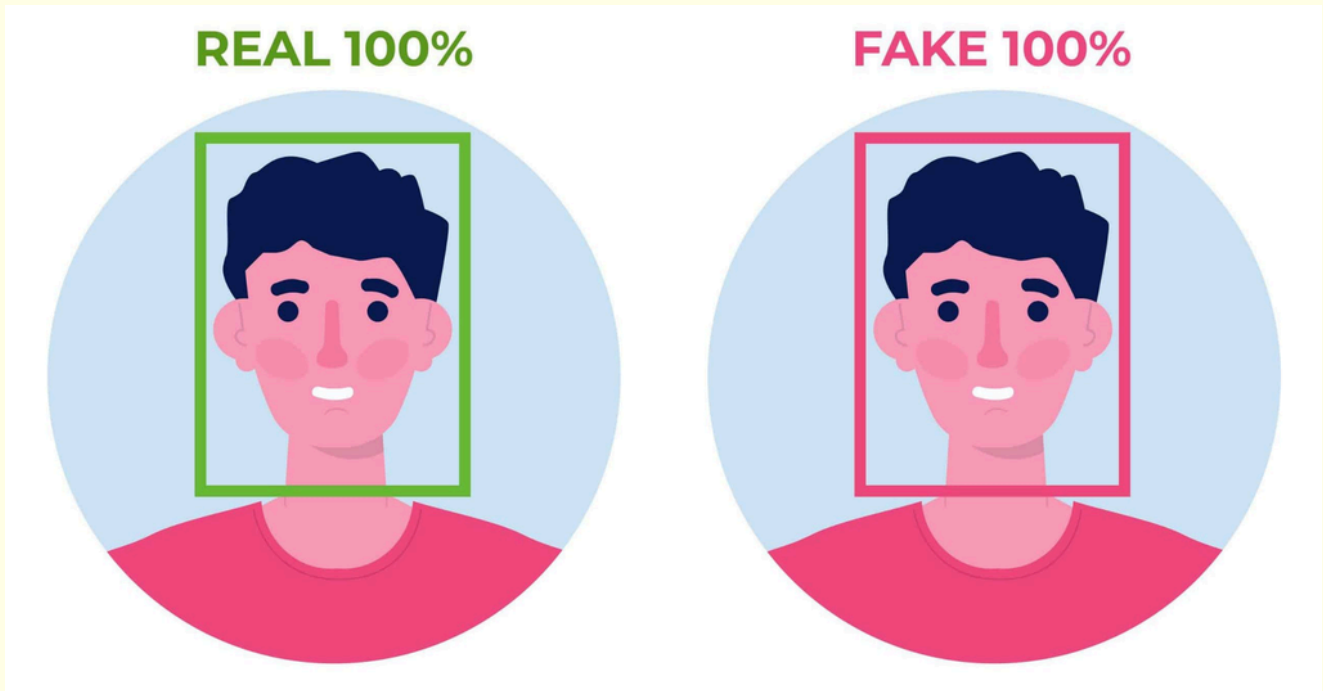


Photo source: <https://www.techslang.com/how-to-spot-ai-generated-deepfake-images-tech-tips-everyone-needs/>

## Introduction

In the current world, where phones and devices have become an essential part of our lives, we are exposed to a different set of risks: Scam calls and emails, cyberbullying, and now with the advanced development of artificial intelligence, deepfakes. Deepfakes are one of the biggest issues that have occurred due to the modern day world's use of technology and AI. They have become a repetitive problem that are mentioned in different articles and even the news. In this article, you will learn about what deepfakes are, what it can do, and how to prevent getting scammed by them.

## What Deepfakes Are and What They Can Do

Deepfakes are highly detailed fake contents created and produced by artificial intelligence. "Simply put, synthetic media is any content, such as audio, images, or video, created by artificial intelligence. This includes "deepfakes," which are digital forgeries so realistic they can convincingly mimic a person's voice or likeness." As seen in this quote, UNESCO describes deepfakes as a 'realistic digital forgery' that mimics a person's voice or even appearance. Just looking at this, it might not seem to be an alarming problem. However, deepfakes are often used nowadays in a way that makes it seem like a person did or said something they never did. It is also used widely in scam calls. According to Kaspersky, "AI voice scams use cloned or deepfake voices to impersonate people you trust, so a familiar voice is no longer proof a call is real."

Deepfakes are getting harder to identify, but there still might be signs that show a photo or video was created by AI. The Government of New South Wales, states how to spot if a video or photo is created by AI or not. In the case of a video, they recommend checking for details. This includes the sync of the audio and mouth, unnatural movement, and even the number of fingers or small texts in the video. For images, they insist on checking for asymmetry and the placement of facial or physical placements. The pose, and even expressions can be a telltale sign. Apart from these, just a simple fact check can also be a big help when it comes to identifying deepfakes and AI-generated content.

In the current world, remaining ignorant in these topics can now lead to a much greater danger. While just knowing what deepfakes are is a step in the right direction, it is much more important to know how to protect yourself from getting exposed to deepfakes.

## **How to Stay Safe from Deepfakes**

There are several types of deepfakes, such as ones that mimic your voice, or appearance. According to the NSW Government, these are some of the effective ways to be protected from deepfakes.

1. Be cautious and aware about what personal information you are sharing online. In addition, limiting posting high quality photos and videos may also help.
2. Prevent strangers from following you. Don't accept a stranger's follow request when on social media and limit the people that can see your posts.
3. Be aware of deepfakes and AI. Knowing helps. Learn about how deepfakes work and how they function. Just knowing about these issues can help you stay cautious of deepfakes.

There are many other factors that can lower your chances of getting fooled by deepfakes or getting your own image used in a deepfake, such as using stronger protection methods like multi-factor authentications.

## Conclusion

Though deepfakes and AI seems like it won't be a problem to you, it can be. The most alarming part about deepfakes is that it can happen to everyone. Whether it's your friends, parents or even yourself, there is a chance of anyone getting impersonated, especially due to the growing usage of social media. As artificial intelligence technology is also developing day by day, we will continue to be exposed to more, newer kinds of dangers. Being aware of these dangers and reducing the possibilities of being part of it can seem like a small action, but can be a big part when it comes to preventing them, and is much better than not doing anything.

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# Lesser-Known Places in Japan to Visit

by Maya F.



Image from Canva

## Introduction

Japan is well known for its mix of natural beauty and cultural history, offering landscapes that range from volcanic islands to coastal villages and even desert-like environments. While many people stick to visiting major cities or well-known destinations like Hokkaido or Kyoto, there are also lesser-known destinations like the Tottori Sand Dunes or Mount Aso, that reveal a different side of the country.

## Aogashima

Aogashima is a volcanic island to the south of Japan in northernmost Micronesia. It is the southernmost and most isolated inhabited island of the Izu Islands. There are no tourist resorts on the island and about 160 people lead a quiet life on this small island. The island was formed by volcanic eruptions and is unique because it is a “double caldera,” meaning a volcano sits inside another volcano.



According to “Aogashima,” Tokyo Islands, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Japan National Tourism Organization, on Aogashima the main attractions are that you can hike up to the Maruyama Crater, which is the double caldera, and go to the Otonbu Observation Point, which has natural pools heated by volcanic activity. At Otonbu Observation Point you can also go stargazing with almost no light pollution from the surroundings. During the day you can also go visit the Joman Cooperative Ranch, which helps support local businesses and is the location of the annual cattle festival. At the Joman Ranch there is also a beautiful view overlooking the sea.

Far from the remote and rugged landscape of Aogashima, Japan also offers quieter coastal towns that focus on tradition and daily life. One example of this is Ine, a small fishing village in Kyoto Prefecture.



## Ine

According to “Ine,” *Japan Guide* and “Ine Town,” *Ine Tourism Association*, Ine is a bay town located in northern Kyoto Prefecture. Ine has a long history as

a fishing village and is thought to be one of the most beautiful villages in Japan. It is known for its unique housing called funaya, which are boat houses. These funayas are traditional waterfront buildings that contain a garage and second-floor housing. Today there are over 200 funaya remaining along the bay. In Ine you can visit these funayas, check out local shrines, or take sightseeing tours around the waterfront and try out some local dishes.

Like Ine, many of Japan’s most stunning places are found along the coast. However, some coastal locations, such as Motonosumi Shrine, combine natural scenery with cultural and spiritual significance.

## Motonosumi Shrine

According to *Japan Guide*, Motonosumi Shrine was founded in 1955 after a local fisherman reported receiving a message from a deity, which led to the construction of the shrine along the coast in Yamaguchi Prefecture. It faces the Sea of Japan, and you can see the Ryugu no Shiofuki or natural spout of white wave spray

that erupts from the particular rock formations on the cliffs as the waves dash against them. Visitors go there to see the 123 torii gates that lead up to the main shrine. Torii gates are traditional Japanese gates found at the entrance of a Shinto shrine. They usually have two vertical posts and two horizontal bars, often painted bright red, and look like a simple open doorway. Walking through one symbolizes entering a sacred space in Shinto. This shrine was chosen as number three in CNN Travel's list of "Japan's 31 Most Beautiful Places."



Moving away from the coast, Japan's landscape is shaped by powerful volcanic activity. Mount Aso is one of the best examples of this natural force.

### **Mt. Aso**

According to "Aso and Around." Japan Travel and Japan National Tourism Organization, Mount Aso is located in Kumamoto Prefecture on the island of Kyushu



and was formed by massive volcanic eruptions between about 300,000 and 90,000 years ago, creating one of the largest calderas in the world. Aso's ancient caldera ranks among the world's largest, with a diameter of up to 25 kilometers and a circumference of over 100 kilometers. In the center of the caldera stand the mountain's active volcanic peaks, including Mount Nakadake which visitors have access to.

Around Mount Aso is Aso-Kuju National Park. Aso-Kuju National Park has many different outdoor views for visitors, including hot springs, waterfalls, hiking trails, and local shrines. One hot spring called the Uchinomaki Baths offers visitors a chance to relax surrounded by mountains and beautiful views. Along Milk Road you can visit Aso's livestock who produce some of Japan's best dairy products.

Another surprising landscape can be found in Tottori, where the environment looks completely different from the rest of Japan. Here, visitors can explore the country's largest sand dunes.



### **Tottori Sand Dunes**

According to “Tottori Tourism,” Torican, “Tottori Sand Dunes,” and Japan Travel, Japan National Tourism Organization, the Tottori Sand Dunes are part of the San’in Kaigan Geopark.

The Tottori Sand Dunes are one of the biggest sand dunes in Japan, extending 2.4 kilometers from north to south and 16 kilometers from east to west. The sand dunes create distinctive features, including the 47-meter-tall dune named “Umanose,” deeply eroded spots known as “suribachi,” and wind-made patterns on the sand called “fumon (sand ripples)”. These dunes lie right next to the water, creating stunning views for visitors to experience.

In the Tottori Sand Dunes you are able to go visit these sand dunes, slide down them, explore, and visit the Sand Dune Museum across from the sand dunes where experienced artists create sculptures out of sand. While Tottori is known for its sand dunes it also has stunning coastal views along the Uradome Coast, where visitors can also take a boat ride and experience its water caves, clear waters, and rocky cliffs.

Overall, these locations show the wide variety of landscapes and experiences Japan has to offer. From remote islands to traditional villages and dramatic natural formations, each place provides a unique perspective on the country’s geography and culture.

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# How to Effectively Study for Exams

by Ai L.

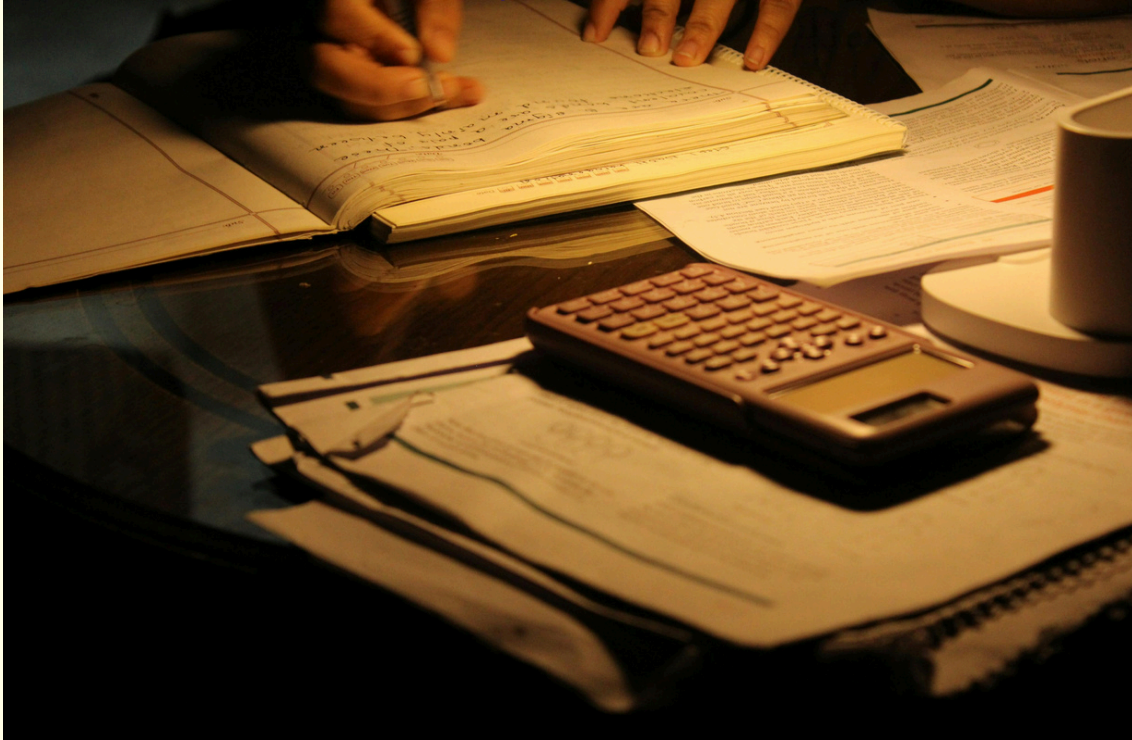


Image from Canva

## Introduction

Studying for exams can be incredibly overwhelming when having to juggle multiple subjects at once, and review such a large amount of material without knowing how much time should be used. It can feel unmanageable and impossible; however, it simply comes down to how effectively one can use their time. By planning accordingly for an exam – having flashcards, practice quizzes, and time blocks for studying, and creating the perfect environment and ambience for studying, students can significantly improve their memory and understanding of the material, preparing them for any upcoming exams.

## Planning

In order to do well on an exam, early preparation and review are ideal.

First, set up study materials (such as flash cards, quizzes, or study guides) to use throughout the studying phase. These can be utilised any time throughout the day, and are ideal for using around a week before an exam, when all material should be relatively familiar. According to Cornell University, creating flash cards, Quizlets, practice questions, and study guides complete with bullet points on what to remember are perfect for reviewing. Using flash cards and Quizlets makes sure that you can identify concepts or remember important vocabulary, while practice questions help prepare you for what the exam could be like. Personally, I have had an experience where a practice question that I created was an actual question on the exam, and so I got through it with ease. Therefore, it is a proven technique! Regardless of whether on the final exam you end up receiving the same question that you previously created when studying or not, practice questions are always great to see if you are ready to apply critical thinking skills to concepts. Doing this helps solidify any learning material and get you prepared or identify any extra gaps on topics you may still need to work on.

Additionally, make sure of one thing throughout the study process: that you spread out study blocks over numerous periods of time, rather than having one or two lengthy sessions where cramming happens. According to Cornell University, people learn faster and perform increasingly better when

working in smaller chunks of time rather than studying for a longer period of time (more hours) over a short timespan (a day or half a day). For example, students would perform better on exams when studying an hour per day during the month before the exam rather than if they studied 10 hours per day 2 days prior to it. Practicing little by little every day helps build up knowledge at a manageable pace. By doing both these things, review will not be random and will be planned properly. By having this, studying for multiple exams at once can be much simpler and less overwhelming, and performance will be drastically better.

## **Environment & Ambience**

Studying efficiently is not something that comes naturally to many people, but the process of studying can easily be sped up through setting the perfect environment and listening to the perfect beats. Switching up the environment that surrounds you during studying matters. For example, instead of studying at a home desk every day, heading to new cafes or visiting the local library from time to time is ideal. According to Neuroscience News, studies done at the University of Amsterdam have shown that switching up your environment can improve recall performance. A change of scenery is perfect for improving memory and can help maintain concentration – and once (or if) you come across the ideal environment for yourself, you should stick with it to promote peak concentration. In addition, listening to music (particularly with no lyrics) is a great way for some to maintain focus. According to the University of Maryland, the right choice of music, like instrumental or ambient music, is ideal

to block out distractions, maintain attention during sessions, and help balance out excessive anxiety (which then helps with the learning process and memory). Ambience and environment are a part of studying that not many think about, but can make a huge difference.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, studying means more than just reading over notes mindlessly or studying for tons of hours at a time. Instead, it means planning study sessions out accordingly, setting the perfect ambience or environment to study in, and utilising any tools which can be helpful for revision and spotting skills and knowledge that need improvement. By doing this, students can feel more comfortable in getting ready for exams – with manageable tasks that still allow them to maintain a good social life, ensure that they can gradually approach concepts that can be difficult to grasp with ease, and end up with a final result of success.

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# Don't. Swipe. Up.

by Zora S.



Image from Canva

Endless scrolling. If you say you haven't done it, you'd be lying. I'm talking about those moments when you want to watch one short about that adorable baby monkey, Punch, at the Ichikawa City Zoo. You think not much time has passed, but after 20 short reels on all the things that are wrong in the world, your mind wakes up and realizes that you're in for a long, depressing moment in life where you will suffer from your poor decisions. Next thing you know six hours have passed, and you have not submitted the very article that you are reading now to Ms. Shiozawa on time. \*Coughs Totally not what I did. Ahem.

To doomscroll is "to spend excessive time scrolling through online content (especially news) that makes one feel sad, anxious, angry, etc." That's the definition Merriam-Webster gives us to describe the thing that has succeeded in gluing so many people's eyes to their screens. I swear it's like the zombie apocalypse already happened. No, it is happening currently. Or maybe it's not the zombies we've become, but the aliens in the cartoons we watched as kids that have gone right under our noses and have used some kind of mind control to make us addicts to our screens. At this point, \*sighs the takeover is now. By the end of this article, I will have informed you, reader, about the negative effects of doomscrolling, and will have recommended things you can do to avoid it, and also positive things that you can do to substitute the time you would have spent doomscrolling. Things you can do so that the precious time we have left with each other on this earth isn't wasted bathing our faces in blue light.

To start off, let's face the truth. No one feels good after they doomscroll. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram...each share one thing in common: They're hotspots for people to doomscroll. Now, even though you have already picked up on some of the negative effects from doomscrolling based on how you feel when you do it, let's hear from another party. According to Yale New Haven Health, "Doom scrolling is associated with increased depression and anxiety. It can also negatively impact sleep, especially since people are more vulnerable to doomscrolling at night, when the brain is depleted." Furthermore, the University of Colorado Denver states similar

effects, saying that “When people doomscroll, it is reported that it can increase or create: anxiety, sadness, uncertainty, a sense of overwhelm, fear, disappointment, and many more negative emotions. There are also indications that there may be secondary effects that impact people externally, such as your physical health, sleep, and eating habits.” So with all this information in mind, I think most of you guys are probably thinking: I admit that sometimes I feel some of the emotions listed, but Zora I’m still wondering: How am I supposed to avoid it? And what can I do instead? Well, I’m glad you asked!

Some of the things that the University of Colorado Denver recommends are:

1. To set app limits. Set boundaries and time limits with yourself and your devices.

For this one, I know, I know, it can be hard to do, or if you already have it, it can be really annoying at times, but it can also be really effective and helpful for preventing doomscrolling and even procrastination. Personally, I recommend asking your parents (even if you may not want to) to set a time limit on your phone or another device that you use and not let them tell you the screen time passcode. Because if you know the passcode, this whole thing is pointless and you know it.

2. Try low-dopamine mornings. Avoid screens for the first thirty minutes after you wake up. Set the tone for the day.

This one can actually help you with your mental health. Instead of starting the day absorbing negative or meaningless content,

you can start it fresh and most likely be in a better mood, free of stress.

Finally, here are some examples of what you can do during the time you would have spent scrolling! The first thing you could do is to: **READ A BOOK!** I know some people don't enjoy reading, because it can be challenging or boring, and I get that. But if you're a person who has been thinking about reading a book on your shelf or in the library but has been skeptical about it, I have two words for you. **TRY. IT.** You never know unless you try. Who knows, you might even enjoy it if you find the right book. You could also ask one of the librarians for book recommendations if you're stuck.

Another thing that you could do is...**TOUCH GRASS!** Go outside and breathe that fresh air! Unless you have allergies...that might not be good. But take a walk, or spend time with friends, or make a small errand for yourself to complete, so that you are spending more time outside. Small moments outside can also make a huge difference in your mood.

Congratulations! You have officially learned about what doomscrolling is, the negative effects it can have on you, things we can do to avoid doing it, and finally, things you can do to substitute the time you would have spent doomscrolling!

For the finale, I want to remind you about something. We're all mortals. We won't be here forever. We only live once. And spending the precious time we have left doomscrolling is a waste

when you could be spending it with your loved ones, who also won't be here forever. Or when you could be spending the time doing something that actually makes you happy. Don't follow Alice down the rabbit hole. Don't waste your time swiping up. Live your life to the fullest. So that when your life “flashes before your eyes” and slowly comes to a close, you have no regrets.

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# A Journey: An Original Story

by Lynn U.



Image from Canva

## Chapter One: The Departure

“Good luck!”

“I wish I could go.”

“We’ll miss you.”

The tides crashed against the rocky shore as seawater sprinkled onto the wooden boats lounging lazily in the shallow water. Seagulls sang their morning tunes as the villagers crowded the streets, bustling about in their daily lives. Out of the sea of people appeared the priest, like a seashell awash on the shore. I followed his movements with my eyes as he took the virgin water harvested from the underground water channel and gently spread it across the surface of a boat and the oars. The boat he was cleaning was stunningly different from the others - intricate patterns carved into the wood like a snake in the sand. It was a wooden

masterpiece, meant to guard and protect the rider of the boat. Our village was the last one out of the others who have fallen before us. This beautiful boat was probably the last on this whole island.

“We will all wish you luck.” He gave me a trinket. It was a bracelet, with beads of light blue, coral, and tan, and amongst the beads were creamy white seashells, rolled up like a scroll, dainty and fragile. I fitted it onto my hands with ease as I smiled.

“Thank you.” I replied ritualistically. My nerves tingled in anxiety as my eyes were drawn to the eternal blue rolling across the vast emptiness in front of me. Mist and fog lilted just out of the reach of the waves.

I closed my eyes, inhaling the faint scent of excitement and seawater. Opening my eyes, I took one last look at the village- my village- with the faint scent of fish, with the soft grass and occasional trees, with the seagulls and crabs and seashells. Taking a deep breath, I got onto the boat.

I picked up the oar, slowly pushing away. I felt anxiety boil within me. I didn't know what would happen, I couldn't possibly predict the future. But I have to believe in myself. I had to move on, go forward. The ocean would help me, I'm sure. It would guide me as a parent would guide a newborn. It's okay.

“Good luck!” The village cheers soared through the air like the wind itself.

My chest swelled with excitement as I yelled back, “*Bye!*”

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Streaks of gray and white in the blue like a painting- pebbly scales of the fish glimmering like glass, the afternoon sun sighing a damp wind down onto the land. Seagulls and their bright yellow beaks, circling round and round amongst the tufts of white, moving along with the breeze in quiet

satisfaction. *Plsh...plsh...plsh...plsh...* the oar splashing in the water was repetitive and calming, occasionally changing in tempo, going faster and slower, faster and slower, sort of like a see-saw in some way. Putting the oar down and letting the flow of water take the lead, I gently dipped my finger in the cool water as the mosaic of blues mixed like an elegant painting. Sapphire shadows slipped past. Fish! *I guess I won't struggle with food after all.*

I oared for some more time, sometimes lost in my thoughts as if I was in a misty land, pining for light.

Some more time lilted along, and the air grew considerably colder. I didn't have much with me— only the bare necessities and a single, worn-out blanket I decided to wrap around my shoulders as a means of warming up. Dusk crept in as I curled into a ball to sleep— I was a very light sleeper and didn't move much, so I had no worries of the boat tipping over. Even if I did move much, the sturdy boat spanned almost 2 meters and was quite balanced— I trusted it with all my might.

Morning came, and I started oaring like before. I started seeing leaves in the crisp water and a cluster of clouds and oared more in that direction, towards the land. The hazy fog melted away in the rising sun as the sandy beach soon came into view.

## **Chapter Two: The Island of Wilderness**

Wafts of verdant green showered my eyes a humid flavor. I pushed my oar with more strength as the boat slid into the almond-colored sand. Silence awashed upon the shore, settling and sinking into the land. A single word escaped my lips: "...hello?"

The only answer I got was the call of uncanny birds I didn't recognize. I stepped off the boat, washed my sandals with the crystal-clear water, and walked onto the land. With the boat's rope, I tied the boat and oar onto a sturdy tree and entered the forest.

Although the scent in the air still held traces of the beach, the view that graced itself upon my eyes was of great wonder.

Trees— sturdy, reddish-brown trees stretching out into the sky. The leaves were dark green and held resemblance to needles. Sunlight trickled through the canopy of leaves and poured on the grassy, fertile ground, occasional barren patches of dirt peeking through basil and fern.

Just as I was about to declare no known people inhabited this land, I smelled smoke. A fire? I turned and followed the scent.

*Tap. Tap tap.*

*Clank.*

*Tap tap.*

I crouched near the bushes and eyed for an opening through the leaves and thorns. When that opening came, I saw people. They were making some sort of music— mainly consisting only of percussion. A pile of stone spears lay neatly in the corner of their meagre camp. In the middle was a bright, passionate fire, burning with a vibrant orange hue. There were only 4 people, and upon closer examination, through the creeping dusk I could make out a cave behind them, dark and ominous. Was this a family?

At that moment the frigid wind blew and one of the people looked over in my direction. Using the shadows to my advantage, I slowly crept out and later when I was far enough away, sprinted back to my boat. I wanted to greet the people, but I was not as foolish and adamant as to not always be cautious— I remembered there was a spear on the boat, one that was sharpened and good for self-defense, hunting, fishing, those things.

The sky was slipping into darkness, the moon trying to wedge itself into the utter blue, as I followed my faded footprints back to the camp. Suddenly a wave of fear seized my limbs and made the ground shift like fluid, like a river. These were the first people I was going to meet since I left the island, and I was all alone, defenseless. Would they accept me? Would they- no. I shook my head. *That doesn't matter right now.* Taking

a deep breath, I took a quiet step into the clearing.

I did, indeed, startle the people, as they reached to grab for their spears. I whimpered and took a step back, trying to make myself look smaller. The people looked at me once, in confusion, then realized to some extent that we were both human, and seemed to calm down. They gestured to a log bench they were sitting on, as if to tell me to sit. I took a step forward, then I paused. *How do I even tell them the situation?*

“I—” I stammered, “I am from another island. Our village is dying, because the summers are slowly getting hotter, the ocean is getting more restless and violent, and because the plants won’t grow properly. Does your village experience the same thing? Do you know how we can solve this?”

One villager says, “Did you cause it? If so, can’t you just change the way you live?”

Suddenly, I felt the world start to spin. I felt my mind go blank, falling into an empty abyss. I turned and ran away. I staggered onto the boat bathed in moonlight and crystal-clear water, bathed in a deep midnight blue, drifting quietly, awaiting to be used once more. My hands trembled as I fumbled for the oar. I got on the boat and dipped my oar into the ocean like a brush in the aquamarine paint.

*It’s not like I did it. It’s not like my village did it. It’s not like we didn’t try everything we could.*

I weakly oared forward as the island grew smaller and smaller, until it was the size of a tiny bean. Rain started pouring down like dainty glass beads, shattering upon contact. Wind ruthlessly battled with my meagre boat, twisting and turning the restless waves. I squinted despite the heavy rain. Is that...I saw a small splotch of black on the distant horizon as I kept oaring. After a while, I decided to sleep as I pulled the blanket out, bringing it over my head as I fumbled with my hands to attempt to wipe water off my face while simultaneously trying not to accidentally push the blanket away. The soft rocking lulled me to sleep.

-----

A cold wind blew through the blanket, forcing me awake. I stir, my eyes slowly opening. Clouds rolled through the soft light blue of the sky. I lay there, blanket half-covering my body, as my mind slowly cleared, the fog rolling away. I yawn as I sit up. In the distant, I saw a cluster of clouds. *Maybe an island? They could be gathering on a mountain peak...* I kept oaring in the direction of the clouds and soon saw bits of leaves and plants, confirming my decision. I keep oaring. Soon, the next island came to view- dense and bushy with forests and a scent of life.

### **Chapter Three: The Island of Prosperity**

Leaves drifted through the restless winds as seagulls cried their songs of dismay. The boat slid gracefully onto shore as I got off, walking up the sandy hill. Already at this point, I heard yelling and singing from a distance away. Too hasty to properly tie a knot, I dragged the boat aggressively onto the shore until it was at a safe grassy patch and I walked into the forest. I tripped on a tree root, tumbling down onto the dirt and leaves as I felt a graze spark pain in my skin. I stood up and continued walking, although this time more carefully as I didn't want to risk any more injuries.

Following the sound proved to be quite hard, as it seemed to come from all directions, taunting me, making fun of me. Tears appeared in my eyes. I tried to wipe them away, but a surge of pain dug into my core as I started sobbing. I bent forward and trembled as my hands weakened my grip on the spear. The spear clattered onto the ground. I will never be able to find any solution. *I will never succeed for my village. Why was I chosen in the first place? Why me?*

***“Because everyone likes you! There isn't a single villager who expects you to fail. We know you can do it. We know you can.”***

*“STOP!” I screamed, sobbing as I punched the dirty ground, though the sobbing made it more of a weak shove. Everyone likes me? Everyone likes me?! That's because I keep tolerating everything. That's because I keep tolerating what you all say because that's what you guys want me*

to do! You all spit out lies, but that's what you think inside your head. That's what you say. I kept sobbing. I can't do it.

I heard footsteps as I quickly wiped my eyes.

I saw a woman approaching me. She had chestnut brown hair tied neatly into a braid as she wore a loose, ankle-length dress in a pretty shade of orange - orange like the persimmon I ate all the time behind sheds and homes, poking at daisies and barren grass.

"Are you injured? Don't worry, come to our village."

I followed the woman to a small settlement in a grassy meadow. The people there had different, more colorful attires, and I did not recognize any of them. The woman led me to a well-kept hut that was bigger than the others, as she knocked on the door. She reported, "I am coming in," as she opened the door. The room inside was clean and immaculate, and in a fancy wooden chair sat a person dressed in elegant fabrics. The person motioned to me and asked, "Who might this be?"

The woman said, "A visitor."

I took a deep breath, then I said, "I am from another village. My village and island are dying because of a curse- the summers are getting hotter, the plants are withering, and the ocean is getting restless. Do you know of a solution?"

The person- most likely the leader- said, "...our village is facing the same thing too. We don't know how long our village can survive either... and with limited resources..."

"You also don't know of a solution?"

"...unfortunately, no. We don't know of a solution."

"I-it's fine," I stammered, "I'll journey some more, and when I finally found a solution, I will tell you too."

The leader smiled, "Thank you for your generosity. Would you like to take some of our fruits with you? They are quite tasty."

I accepted his offer, as I left the island on my meagre boat. The light blue of the sky was soon stained with the blackness of the night, as I fell asleep.

-----

A large wave suddenly jolts me awake as I stir, the faint rock of the boat lulling me awake. ...huh? I look around. Ocean. Eternal blue. Rolling waves and drifting clouds. I lick my lips and taste salt. My fingers comb through my drenched and tangled hair as I use the spare blanket to wipe my face. *I guess I had fallen asleep.* I see a distant island. Unlike the other islands, I could not see any green. It was all grey. Grey, like decay. “Decay...” a memory tugged my consciousness as a flashback took hold of me.

*[flashback]*

*Huge waves, crashing onto the shore. Water sliding and oozing into the village like blood. Houses collapsing one by one as villagers scramble to get high land. Withered leaves and broken wood floating in the water.*

*“Hurry!” Someone grabs my hand.*

*“Why do we have to leave?”*

*“We can’t be here anymore. The curse has spread to this village!”*

*“What curse?”*

*“Do you not know? The Legend of the Decayed Island. Once, there was a very developed island. It had splendid technology, far better than the others. Many people lived in huge rectangular homes called buildings. But the technology had gone too far. The curse was triggered— it would slowly grab hold of the island and drain it of its health— it made the weather unstable and slowly heated up the land. But the island people could not stop it. They had grown too dependent on the technology, and they could not find a stable alternative in time. As the curse slowly took hold of the island, it also spread to the other islands. The effect of the island did not only affect the singular island, it spread further and further. It took hold of the surrounding islands who had contributed to the curse, and spread further and further, until it had reached even the innocent islands who had no relation to the technology and curse. It slowly spread little by little, and the curse had already spread to us. So we need to escape. Hurry!”*

-----

I snap awake as the boat jolts a bit from the force. *The curse. That's it! If I find the source of the curse, maybe I can fix it!*

## **Chapter Four: The Island of Decay**

I slid into the grainy shore. However, this island was different from the last island. Dead and withered plants lay half-buried in the sand, an arid taste settling into the air. *This must be the Decayed Island from the legend.* A metallic taste tinged my tongue as a gush of cold wind slit past my cheeks mercilessly. I look ahead and see many tall, black rectangles of black and dark grey. I quietly drag my boat onto the beach, all fear strangely washed away, leaving only a tingling numbness. The sun was only a small, meager dot of light as stratus clouds rolled above like wisps of fog.

I was cold, so I resorted to wrapping the blanket around my shoulders and arms as I tiptoed near one of the tall rectangles. They had doors; ice-cold ones in fact, only a tiny bit taller than my height. I reached forward, turning the knob and pushing the doors open. Dust fluttered away. The door gave way to a small room with a round oakwood table frosted with abandoned papers and notes. Four chairs surrounded the table – two on each side – although the definition of “side” was vague because of how the table was so round. *Was this a home?* I closed the door and kept walking ahead.

Buildings were abandoned and some were crumbled, debris carpeting the land in a desolate silence. I walk down the street as I muse at the various mechanics and contraptions that I have never seen. One looked like a silvery wagon— except it had a roof, and the wheels were slightly different. Suddenly, I noticed a glimpse of water. I ran towards the water, and then I saw a lake— a huge one, in fact. It covered a few hundred meters. I slowly walked up the lake as I dipped my hands in the water. Water rippled outwards, except I noticed something strange. *Is that...*

I saw a vision in the water as I looked closer. Big metal birds flew in the

sky. The same big rectangles that resembled homes, except brighter. People flooded the streets and many different kinds of smaller birds flew the skies too. The village was huge and stretched as far as my eyes could see. But what caught my attention the most was the strange dark grey gas pumping from huge pipes and chimney-like rectangles. It was like a serpent - ominous and black, soaring the skies.

Then years started to pass in the vision.

Whatever it touched slowly decayed. I trembled as I saw all the rectangles, silver and bright, decay to dark blue and black, the people inside disappearing, one by one, until no one was left and no life remained. Water crashed into the city, thunder rumbled, crops withered, islands shrunk from the hungry ocean. Trees were destroyed. I heard a voice within me: *climate change*. "Climate..." my voice trailed off as I took my hand out of the water and used my clothes to dry it. *This must be what happened to the Decayed Island.*

"The trees," someone says.

I turn back to see a woman in a white coat, slightly translucent and blue. She held a book. I squinted. '*...climate...and environmental...science*'...?

I ask, "What is it about the trees?"

"They are the key."

"The key to what?"

"Helping climate change, helping this curse, even by just a little." The woman walked forward and showed me the palm of her hands. Seeds. There were a handful of seeds in her hand.

"Are these..."

"These are the seeds of various trees. Can you help me plant them?"

I nod. I took a few seeds from her hand and I went to various places to plant them. I planted them gently, one by one. Then I returned to the woman. She smiled and said, "These trees will grow up one day and help the curse heal. Thank you for helping me plant them," and with that, she faded into the air.

The End.

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# **THE STUDENT OUTLOOK**

## *Members*

**Celine C.**

**Layla P.**

**Maya F.**

**Kaeli S.**

**Ai L.**

**Zora S.**

**Claire P.**

**Lynn U.**

**Sponsor: Ms. Shiozawa**