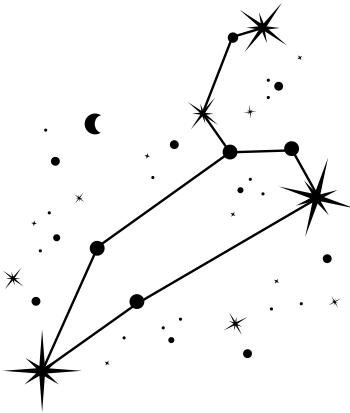
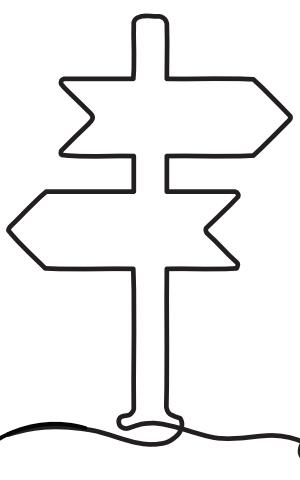


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S I G N S



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ZODIAC SIGNS **AN INTERVIEW** **WITH STAFF AND** **STUDENTS**

STREET SIGNS **AN INQUIRY ON** **SIGNS AROUND** **US IN REAL LIFE**



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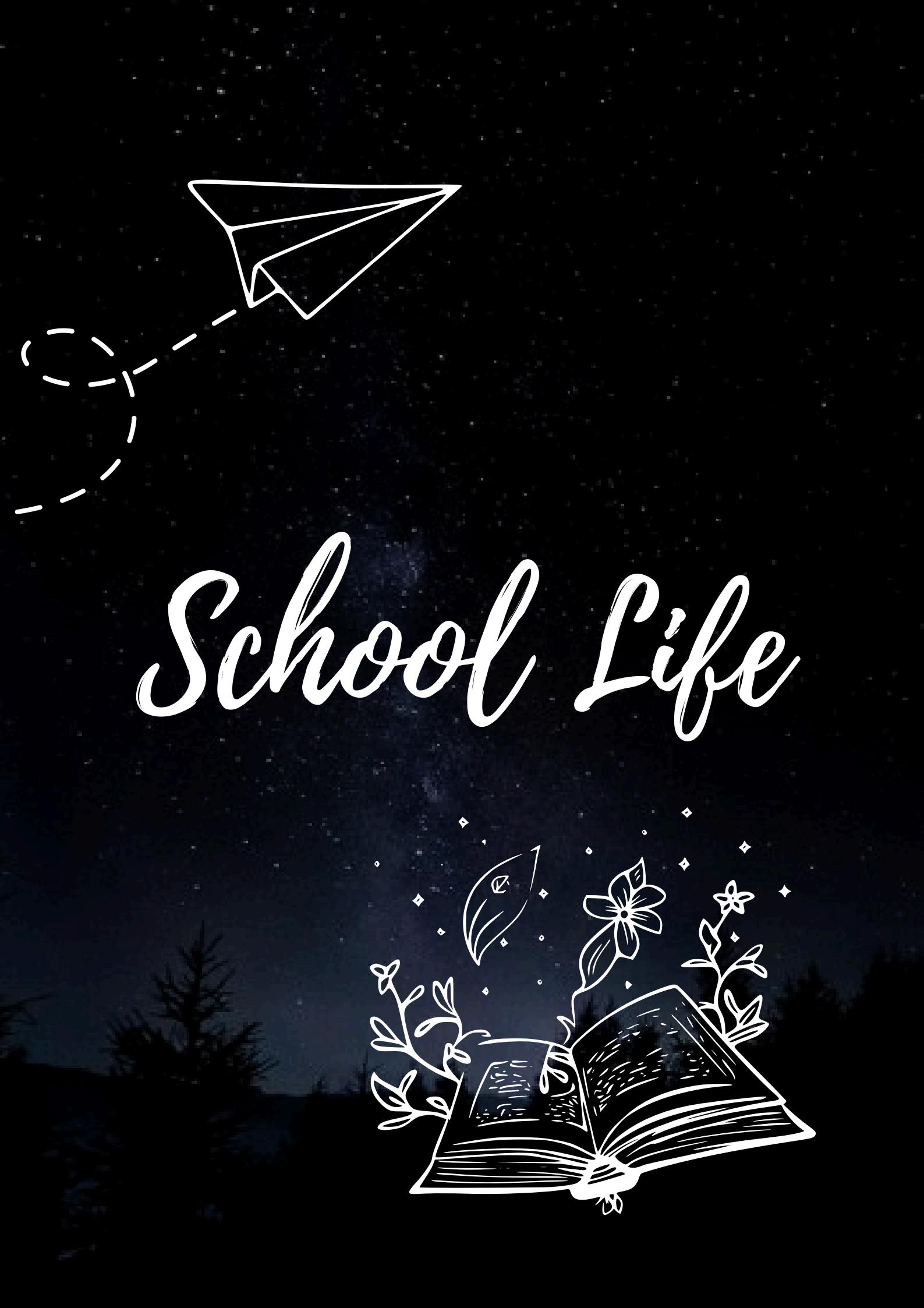
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School Life

New School Smell

by Wee Zen and Ming Hong

Everywhere I go in school, I see carpets laid out for the VIP in our school: paint.

The signs of its presence were everywhere: barricades and red mesh barriers, painting contractors walking around, and the smell... oh the smell. Surely having this many volatile organic compounds in the air isn't worth it? (Spoiler: it is.)

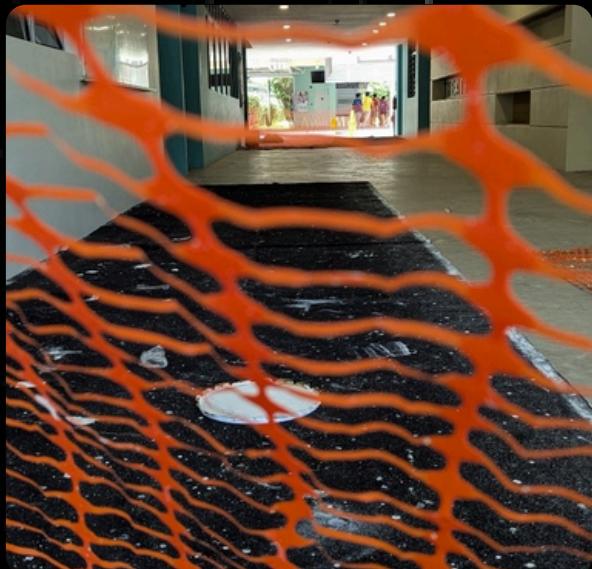


Truth be told, there were some days where I felt that all the renovations were unnecessary, and sometimes downright intrusive. Imagine my surprise when I entered boarding, and the entire lift lobby was covered with placed carpets and filled with ladders, somewhat obstructing my way to the lift entrance.

This is in addition to the multiple times I've had to make a detour after encountering signs saying that paint works were being done.

The overpowering smell followed me wherever I went. Sure, the paint smell already wafted out of my boarding room and my classroom, but every other place had indications of paint jobs taking place. Revising at any place but my often-noisy classroom resulted in smelling paint. I might not be able to see or hear it, but I was still distracted and frustrated by it.

Every new week, every new barricade encountered, every vacated classroom places another burden on our minds, ever so slightly feeding our resentment towards the decision of repainting the school. In fact, I remember distinctly leaving the theatrette after a CCE session, only to be slowed down due to the one-person-wide bottleneck caused by the barriers outside the theatrette.



Then, I saw the half-done paint jobs.

What I thought would have been my breaking point of my distaste for the renovations, turned into something of an inflection point.

Sure, perhaps the school would survive without refurbishment. Perhaps the original dulled paint represented our dull monotonous lives. Yet beneath all the cynicism, I started to appreciate our new vibrant colours for the new refreshing light that it brought to our school lives. I started to fall in love with the fresh smell of a new coating of paint signifying the inception of change – a journey that we will all embark on together.

Not to mention, the paint in the classrooms is water-based paint, which is completely safe for students. And I was struck by the efforts to ensure our wellbeing when I learnt that the school leaders pushed for the painting of the classrooms to be completed as early as possible during the holidays. And of course, that would not have been possible without the help of our hardworking painters!

Yet, I believe that NUS High students, both present and future, will one day notice the glossy sheen everywhere in the school, and be thankful that we gave our dear school a makeover, instead of letting its colours slowly but pathetically flake off.

As I saw the school in a renewed hue, in bright majestic whites, greens and blues, I started feeling like I was in a car. A newly bought car, with its distinct new car smell, fuel tank fully filled, ready to Take Me Somewhere.



The Astrology (not Astronomy!) signs of NUS High

by Vasu, Giselle, Le En, Eva

During Chinese New Year, there seems to be much anticipation of what luck your Chinese animal brings. Meanwhile, others focus more on lucky (or perhaps, unfortunate) coincidences. What about us? Well, it seems that our generations have taken a liking to astrology instead. We are sure that many of you have seen videos depicting the future of the horoscopes, maybe even what fortunate or unfortunate predicaments we might encounter. So, many of you probably have heard of this term before and might have often mixed it up with astronomy.

In terms of our research conducted on astrology, Capricorns are said to be goal oriented but unforgiving. Meanwhile, Aries are usually competitive and tend to have explosive anger for short amounts of time. Geminis are known to be versatile but impatient. They seem to understand both sides of the argument (except when it comes to pineapple on pizza). On the other hand, Cancers are passionate but uncommunicative. However, they enjoy listening to others and can empathise well. Leos are mostly confident but dominating. In contrast, Virgos are known to be perfectionists but self-crucial.

Well, how much of this is true? These are mostly stereotypes from all the research we have done, so of course, they may not describe everyone who has this zodiac sign. This is because zodiac signs are based solely on your birthdays in the first place, and no scientific evidence can support their premises.

Even so, we were still fascinated by them. How true are they really? Thus, we decided to embark on a fun investigation!

Today you'll find out how the people at NUS High think of astrology, as well as whether they believe in it.

To aid in our investigation, we interviewed some of the teachers at NUS High. Their names may ring a bell for most of you! They are none other than Mr Silas Yeem, Mr Jeremy Yeo, Mr Daniel Wong and Ms Melody Tay!

All four of them seem to be close friends, yet none of them have the same zodiac sign. Mr Yeem is a passionate Cancer, Mr Yeo a classic Gemini, Mr Wong an Aries, and Ms Tay a Virgo. Do any of them believe in astrology? Let's find out!

QN: Hello teachers! Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Are any of you familiar with astrology?

Mr Yeem: [It's] all too familiar— As the astronomy teacher in charge, I get asked about astrology all the time. In terms of whether I believe in it, I only believe in those from [the] satirical newspaper The Onion.

Mr Yeo: While I always find it entertaining to see if someone has personality traits as depicted by their zodiac sign, I [do] believe that people can forge their own personalities [instead].

Mr Wong: I'm somewhat familiar with astrology. Whenever it is close to Chinese New Year, I [often] take a look at the stands that are placed around the shopping centres.

Ms Tay: ...My only understanding of astrology is those Instagram shorts where people create impressions of how different astrology [signs] react to different situations, [the different astrology signs] dress[ing] up or [doing] make up; Oh yes and Fairy Tail!; ...I do not believe in Astrology however but I find it interesting when people strongly relate to it!

QN: Have you seen any lucky or unlucky signs? Also, do you have any lucky or unlucky numbers?

Ms Tay: I don't know much about luck, other than the ones in the past I've read in [the] Lifestyle Straits Times newspaper where they would predict your day based on your sign! ... I do like the number 5 very much, [though] [I'm] not sure if it is because of this show called Hi 5 [that] I was obsessed with... [I] will [also] feel more comfortable when things are in 5s... I have.... 2 very precious bolsters that have survived with me since I was born, and I feel much more at peace when they are there [too]! [About unlucky numbers], when I was in Secondary school, I was haunted by the number 33, because I always scored 33 out of 100 [in] A-Maths for my tests and exams, so this number still makes me a little shook. Can you believe that every test had been 33... how in the world!

QN: We have also conducted our fair research of the astrology signs. Do you think any of their descriptions fit you or relate to you?

Mr Yeem: Yes. I find them moderately truthful - and [I] love teaching! I love my mentoring sessions and listening to my students and mentees. I also take ages to reply when my students remind me [that] I have not put up my SLS (Student Learning Space) assignment yet, so ...I would say that is accurate.

Mr Yeo: ...I do believe in hearing from all parties involved so that we have the most complete information when making a decision for our next action...

Ms Tay: ...How hilarious, today's CCE lesson was about perfectionism. I think I am very far away from being a perfectionist. However, there are some aspects which I consider my forte which would make me want to perfect that craft. [For] [example], [crafting] aesthetic notes for students, or even musical performance[s]. [For] [Context], I used to play the Guzheng.

So, it seems like most of the teachers believe in astrology and relate to it! Of course, there are some exceptions, but it seems like the stereotypes are true. To further prove this theory, we asked some students in school as well.

We interviewed Oray Maanya and Mandy Myat from 106 and 403 respectively, and here is what they have to say:

Maanya is a Libra, and while she knows some information about astrology, she is not that familiar with the specific information. Her belief in astronomy is very subjective, based on its predictions and how she thinks about it. If it predicts life will be better, then she believes the prediction and if it predicts that life will be worse, then she chooses not to trust the prediction. On the other hand, Mandy is a Pisces, and is quite familiar with zodiac signs, as she reads about them during her free time when she is bored.

From cards to keychains, many of us keep lucky charms, and Mandy and Maanya are no exception! Maanya's lucky charm is a K-Pop photocard. When she had the photocard and was playing around with it, she lost it and when she was searching for it, there happened to be money next to the photocard!

Meanwhile, Mandy has some charms, and small items are fun to keep, and one interesting luck charm is the pair of earrings that her dad bought her as a kid. So, during exams, she wears them and hopes for the best. Do you have your own lucky charms?

Sometimes, coincidences may also occur regularly in our lives. Are coincidences planned out for us in our future, or are they simply just incidents that we should not overlook? Well, Maanya believes that coincidences can happen. Once, a Chinese zodiac sign board mentioned that she would have good luck during the pandemic, and she did.

(She got full marks for almost every subject she took!) Maybe after this story, we might all take careful notes of our predictions for our horoscopes. In contrary to Maanya's belief, Mandy thinks that coincidences do not work; she believes that they instead make life more fun.

In conclusion, we had a wonderful time interviewing students and teachers in our wide school community. Their insightful responses have allowed us to learn more about Astrology. Thank you to everyone who participated in this interview! Based on our newly found discoveries, we can say that this investigation is done, and that it really depends on the person. Now, many people have differing opinions on Astrology...but what are YOUR opinions on your zodiac signs? Do you think you have those traits?

Signing off,
Giselle, Vasu, Le En and Eva

P.S. turn to page 137 to see some horoscopes for the upcoming holidays!

Creative Writing





by Elgin

12050

Kav'q beckons before me.

After hundreds of days, millions of steps, crossing vast plains and high mountains, bountiful and barren places, my weak and emaciated figure stands before the God. I am the first to survive the journey.

The God presents itself in all its glory, a mighty structure sitting in the middle of the valley. Grandiose mountains with their gentle slopes and icy peaks flank the God, forming the eternal throne in which the God sits.

Daylight peeks out from behind Kav'q on all sides, encapsulating the God's silhouette. Vast and lifeless, its never-ending intrigue has baffled my people for eons. It shall no longer baffle us now.

Tall and stoic Hak'ta (sharp concrete monoliths) jut out from the bleak soils, with varying heights and angles, and all of them have the same sign on them. A circle in the middle, three curved blades coming out of it. . My people have known it for generations, but no one has deciphered its meaning.

I step forward, entering the forest of Hak'ta.

The whooshing of wind falls silent, leaving behind a peaceful yet unsettling void of sound – the God's aura. Every footstep echoes around as the Hak'ta look on silently.



More signs follow the deeper I walk in.

A skull, two bones below it. It means laughter - perhaps Kav'q is taunting me? Letters of a strange, ancient language accompany the signs – probably the language spoken countless eons ago, before the Rebirth, of the long-lost golden era of society.

The path is uneven and ever cunning in its attempts to derail me. Tiny spikes, tripwires and other obstacles present themselves before my feet. Yet having sat victimless for thousands of eons has worn them out too much, and their frail attempts are no match for my dexterity.

Alas, I stand before the Mu'-c'qw, the Heart of Kav'q, its Hak'ta rising hundreds of willows into the sky, ever so silent and grand. I kneel to the ground and open my ears to the God's heart – listening, for its eternally old message.

2050

In the frigid wilderness of Siberia, hundreds of trucks shuttle across kilometers of barren, unpaved road, between the outpost town of Srednekolymsk and nuclear waste containment site RL-01. The original due date was 2053, but it was pushed forward with priority from the Kremlin due to the imminent collapse of society.

The original plan was to bury the waste within a mountain, but logistical problems forced a switch to plan B – build a vast concrete jungle in the middle of nowhere, dotted with sharp monoliths and a clear message: STAY OUT.

RL-01 was drawn from the mind of architect Alex Konyaev (b.2010). The highly radioactive nuclear waste would be buried 50 to 100 meters underground, with a total capacity of 5 million m³, sealed from the outside by a thick layer of concrete. Its entrance would be marked by a monolith 100 meters tall, and a small room containing information and warning messages in 66 different languages.

All in the hope that, 10,000 years in the future, people will still know to stay out.

12050

I grasp the cold Hak'ta with my hands, feeling, hearing its words. I move in a circle around it, slowly walking the rounded path, making out its ridges and irregularities.

Mu'-c'qw reveals its soul to me. It speaks of fortune, desire, magic, but also death. Its message transcends the heavens, space and time, finding its way to the weak, emaciated human circling it. As I move, I feel its weakness. The cracks and crevices, under its stoic and eternal façade.

A gentle nudge reveals the point of entry; taking out my O'-qvvyr (tool/weapon), I raise my hands and impart momentum to the spot. Two old souls weakened by the passage of time – one by the journey of a -U'hqaw (10 million) steps, one by standing still for - U'hqaw days. Mu'-c'qw's door opens to me, allows my soul inside. I become one with the God.

Mu'-c'qw breathes, at long last open to the outside air after all those eons. Its chamber expels the prehistorically stale air and welcomes a current of fresh air that guides me inside.

I step gingerly on the hard flooring. Signs and letters surround the walls of the chamber, each lettering somewhat different from others. Maybe different forms of the ancients' language?

However, the signs are the same throughout. That circle surrounded by three blades. Skull and two bones below.

Mu'-c'qw beckons me to dig downwards. I strike the concrete floor with my O'qvvyr, feeling it buckle and crack with every blow. Mu'-c'qw shakes and trembles like never before as I continue to impart force to its hidden chamber. The spark returns to my eyes; the blood in my arteries rushes forward with newfound vigor.

2050

In 2043, the U.N. executed Operation Evergreen with the aim of preventing a nuclear winter.

One key part of the plan was transporting highly dangerous nuclear waste to remote storage sites safe from future generations. As identified by nuclear physicists and experts, seven long-lived fission by-products presented a potential biohazard for millennia to come.

Tc-99, Sn-126, Se-79, Cs-135, Zr-93, Pd-107, I-129

The RL-01 site was brought forward by the New Russian protectorate as an excellent candidate for isolating and containing nuclear waste – stable, barren, isolated from civilization.

By 2050, global warming was reaching extreme levels, causing millions of deaths in warmer areas due to heat, extreme weather and disease. Mass migration to colder climates soon

ensued, causing a population crisis. However, the vast inhospitable lands of Siberia remained mostly untouched.

Thousands of barrels of nuclear waste were shipped to RL-or over 9 years and buried deep underground. Nearby settlements were evacuated, and the New Russian protectorate even took great measure in redirecting wildlife away from the site.

Anything to protect the world from the immense danger it contained.

12050

The inside of Kav'q is pitch black.

I light my S'dt<n (special kind of wood torch) and it reveals itself to me.

Rows upon rows of barrels, strangely pristine despite the -U'<hqaw days passed. I sense the magic within. Mu'-c'qw's message resonates within me once again. It beckons me to open the barrels and reveal the magic inside.

All have that sign on them. ☢. The holy sign.

I move as if controlled by something foreign. My hands rise with no conscious thought, and I strike the first barrel with my O'qvyyr. The metal casing gives way to a dark and dull ore.

Now I finally know what ☢ is.

Though it is humble in appearance, I sense the immense power it contains. Something magical, something different. The sustenance of Kav'q, the fuel of the God, and the weak emaciated human now in possession of unimaginable power.

Kav'q's secret has been revealed to me. My soul has transcended the human body, becoming one with the God.

When I bring ☣ back to my people, they shall bow down, worship me, for I am another form of Kav'q, my human body a humble vessel for the God's bidding.

Another journey of an -U'hqaw steps awaits, a journey to glory back home.

2050

On October 16, 2050, nuclear waste disposal procedures at Ringhals Nuclear Power plant, Gothenburg, Sweden, were interrupted by a cyber-attack.

While attempting to shut down internet controls, supervisor Marco Casanova was accidentally exposed to 14.5 sieverts of radiation, a fatal dose.

Casanova was immediately rushed to Varberg hospital, where researchers documented the progression of his fatal radiation sickness in his isolated and protected ward.

During the first few days, initial symptoms were nausea, pain and difficulty breathing, but Casanova otherwise appeared fine.

Unbeknownst to him, the accident had destroyed his body's ability to regenerate cells. His immune system was already gone and so were his bone marrow stem cells.

By day 7, his condition became critical as his skin began peeling off and he needed supplemental oxygen and a feeding tube.

By day 20, his body was literally falling apart, melting into the specially made bed. When scientists connected his brain to a computer interface, they discovered completely nonsensical brain waves.

It was later deduced that he had been in unimaginable pain and begged to die for 4 days straight but had no way to express it verbally due to paralysis. This later drove his mind to insanity.

With no sign of survival, life support was immediately terminated, by which time his body had lost all coherent shape. Marco Casanova's remains were scooped up and inserted into a lead-lined coffin, and a funeral was held on November 10.

A quick cover-up ensued to avoid the ethical implications of the study.

12050

2 days have passed since I left Kav'q, and something feels wrong.

My body has become even more weak and emaciated. I vomit blood every few steps. A large burn has developed on my back, where ☢ is, and the pain shoots through with every passing second, like an inferno slowly burning the life out of me.

Finally, I can walk no more. My body gives up on me, falling, collapsing to the grass.

I desperately search for the spirit of Kav'q to give me a sign, but my call fades away unanswered through the ripples of space and time.

Alone in the middle of nowhere, still <U'hqaw steps away from my people, I begin to shed tears.

Red, bloody tears.

I beg and scream for Kav'q's forgiveness, but the God remains silent, unmoved.

Why has the God deemed me unworthy of carrying its magic, its soul? What did I do wrong to deserve a painful end like this?

Was it not the human who survives the journey and finds Mu'-c'qw is the worthy one?

The tears slowly dry up. I feel my spirit moving, picking itself up. My weak and emaciated body rises slowly, blood flowing to the legs again, urging them forward.

Perhaps Kav'q is giving me a sign? Perhaps it is testing my faith, my perseverance? One step at a time. Though my body is close to death, I shall journey the <U'-hqaw steps back home.

2050

By September 2050, 565 workers involved in the transport and isolation of nuclear waste at RL-01 came down with acute radiation exposure.

Over 20,000 workers were quickly quarantined in their secret camp to prevent radiation and news from leaking out. They were then forced into slave-like labor with little regard to their needs, and many perished as a result.

RL-01 finished construction on December 19, 2050, six months ahead of its deadline.

After construction finished, the surviving workers were told they were going home. Then, the site was flooded with poison gas and abandoned.

The surviving workers found themselves trapped in the middle of nowhere, slowly suffocating to their deaths as the gas tore open their insides. Many tried to escape, but the tall walls of barbed wire and concrete proved too formidable an obstacle to their freedom.

All were dead within 3 hours.

Questions were quickly raised when none of the workers returned home to their families. The New Russian Protectorate attempted a massive cover-up, but it would not be long before independent investigators uncovered the campsite where the 20,000 workers were gassed to death.

The New Russian Protectorate was formally dissolved into anarchy on January 30, 2051. Its president, 300 high-ranking government officials and supervisors of RL-01 committed mass suicide at exactly 12 noon with an explosion that blew the Kremlin, and much of central Moscow, to unrecognizable debris.

12050

4 days have passed since I left Kav'q, and the end is near.

I can no longer move my body. After thousands of days of being a faithful vessel to my soul, it has finally given up, fallen apart. Blood leeches away from my eyes, ears, gums, every crevice, sore, lesion. My skin is tearing apart, chunks breaking off and falling into the grasses below.

The pain is unimaginable.

Once again, I try to grasp the ☣ with hands that are barely holding together.

No matter how hard I try, they will not grasp.

All I can do now is lay my head to the sky and beg. Beg for forgiveness, for life again. Beg to feel the touch and warmth of my parents, my siblings, my spouse for one last time.

For ☣'s power has destroyed my body, eroded my soul. Kav'q has abandoned me to die, deemed my weak and emaciated body unworthy of being its vessel.

My lungs barely muster breath, my heart barely musters blood. My vision begins to cloud and darken. I feel death's embrace get closer and closer every second.

The pain is unimaginable, but I know it will end soon.

I admire the beauty of the land for one last time. A vast blue sky, serene clouds, the bright sun nourishing life. Grandiose icy peaks and gently sloping valleys stretching out for eternity, blanketed with evergreen forests, crossed by flocks of birds and foxes, forming the eternal throne where Kav'q sits, to which humans, as mighty as we may seem, are as insignificant as specks of dust.

A feeling of peace follows. For I know that the ground and the grass will absorb my body, the wind will absorb my soul, and one day, perhaps after another <U'-hqaw, another human will make the same journey as me, find ☣ and bring its power to my people.

Maximillian's Magical Signs

by Zizhuo



Maximillian Maximus was talented. No, he could not solve mathematical conundrums with a sweep of his hand, nor could he weave intricate ideas into sheer beauty that he could make a man weep. He was not capable of impossible feats of athleticism or a virtuoso of sound, a commander of his instrument. No, he was a painter. And paint he did. He painted signs that breathed with enchantment, marvels of art and magic, unique portals that were not merely for advertisements or instruction.

One foggy morning, as the mists curled over the cobblestones, Maximillian decided to paint a sign for the new café down the street, opened by Mrs. Kettlepots. He found a piece of wood in his studio, rich mahogany in color, with soft curves, lovely and inviting. He dipped his paintbrush royal blue, a sophisticated color, elegant and vibrant. The brush slid smoothly across the wood, the words “Welcome to Whimsical Brews!”

As he painted, a cascade of colors seemed to wash across the words, just slightly discernable. He then painted loaves of golden croissants pastries and pastries piped in chocolate icing, a sign filled with promise of delicious treats.

After the sign dried, Mrs. Kettlepots insisted on hanging it up right away. As they lifted the sign and slid it onto the wall, the sign began glowing, an ethereal and otherworldly light. A voice soft like a gentle summer breeze whispered, “Come in for a delicious surprise!” Maximillian and Mrs. Kettlepots glanced at each other with shock painted over both their faces.

They decided to heed the mysterious advice and pushed open the café door, tinkling bells announcing their entrance. The walls and floor had turned to soft grass, the tables and chairs were now tree stumps covered with checkered tablecloths and giant mushrooms and the air was filled with the sweet scent of blooming flowers that twined on the ground. Trees dripping with fluffy marshmallows, sprinkled with crystallized sugar, and rivers of chocolate flowed gently, reflecting the golden orbs that floated around, casting a magical glow.

Just then, a teapot with a fantastic mustache and a monocle suddenly popped out from behind a tree stump. He introduced himself as Sir Brewster. A beautifully sculpted porcelain teapot that appeared to have been taken straight out of a fantastical fairy tale, Sir Brewster was a wonder to behold. Delicate green fronds curled around his torso, and elaborate hand-painted floral motifs in tones of pale blue and gold decorated his smooth, white porcelain. The monocle perched upon his ceramic nose lent him a distinguished air. His wide mouth permanently extended into a smile that was warm and inviting, exuding a sense of hospitality that made anyone feel at home. Sir Brewster's mustache was a marvel, twirling at the ends in a perfect spiral like delicate wisps of steam rising from the top of a teacup. He skipped over, dragging them both along a path, promising more delights.

They walked toward a cave made from solidified caramel and gingerbread, with rock sugar stalactite hanging from the ceiling. Stepping in, they saw a giant doughnut bed filled with jelly, with vanilla icing serving as a blanket. This was the house of the Doughnut Dragon. "Hello, my friends. Welcome to my edible abode!"

The Doughnut Dragon himself was a confectioner's delight. Plump and round, he resembled a doughnut, his scales a rich currant color like jelly. His wings were decorated



with rainbow sprinkles and powdered sugar. After a delightful tea with the Doughnut Dragon in which they finished half of his table, a giant cookie with wafer legs, they had to bid him goodbye and continue on their merry adventure.

They passed the Biscuit Ballerina who wore a tutu made of woven cinnamon, twirled, and dived through the air, leaving trails of glittering crumbs and a mysterious Scone Sphinx that refused to let them pass, posing them a riddle with a buttery purr, staring at them with gumdrop eyes.

At the end of their scrumptious journey, when their stomachs were filled with as much pastries as possible, they were finally at the exit of Whimsical Brews. A troupe of Muffin Minstrels were waiting to bid them goodbye. The Muffin Minstrels were a merry band of animated muffins. They stood about a foot tall, with plump, golden-brown bodies that looked as if they had just come out of the oven.

Their tops were decorated with a variety of delicious toppings, blueberries, chocolate chips, raspberry drizzle, to each Muffin its own. They sang their ballads about breakfast adventures, capturing the simple pleasures of morning delights, to send the visitors on their way.



Whispers of Nature

by Bindu

I was striding aimlessly, not really taking in what lay around me. That was a mistake. My foot was then welcomed aggressively by a rock.

Paff

A comforting sound greeted me. At least I knew there was still something of substance, and this world was real. This was not a dream. But was that a blessing or a curse? I laughed softly into the soil. Funny, I don't feel a thing.

Plip, plip, plip

Oh gosh darn fruit loops. Of course, it had to rain. Sighing heavily, I turned around to face the heavens, wishing I'd just melt into the soil and become a worm. The heavens answered my prayers with more droplets pelting me in the face. Hair, clothes and mind a mess, I sat myself up and rubbed my eyes. I thought briefly about finding myself shelter but lifting a single finger itself proved to be an exhausting chore. I was tired, and half-soaked. So, what was the point? Sitting there in the unrelenting shower, I mulled over my tangled thoughts. "Just how did I get here?"

All I remember was a picnic, sandwiches and laughter. I had volunteered to retrieve a frisbee, and when I turned around, all I saw were trees. Heart beating loudly against my chest, I wrapped my trembling hands around myself. I nervously scanned my surroundings. More trees towered over me, no longer seeming friendly and inviting. It didn't help that I was cold, confused and cornered. I couldn't move. I couldn't breathe. I closed my eyes.

Plip, plip, plip

Plip, plip, plop, plip

Focusing on the raindrops falling on a nearby log, I was able to make out a pattern.

“One, two, three... Three, four, five, six...” I muttered to myself countless times, trying to sync my mind to the rhythm. Soon, my breathing stabilized.

Whoosh

Just then a gust of wind gently blew against my auburn hair, caressing my cheeks. It was as if it were wrapping me in a warm embrace. I opened my eyes, spying on a tree that was dancing wildly in the breeze. A singular branch, however, jutted out and pointed sharply to the right as if to say, “This way!”

I narrowed my eyes. That single branch was unwavering even when the rest of the tree was wildly dancing about. If I weren’t in this situation, I would have found it amusing.

“Could this be a sign?”

A sign from the heavens, perhaps? I rolled my eyes. There was no way. This was just a goofy little tree. Yep, that had to be it.

Whoosh

This time, the tree swung about much more angrily, startling me. What in the cinnamon toast hell? I shrugged. Maybe I was just hungry and seeing things.



Whoosh

This time the tree swung about more frustrated than before, as if it were trying to escape its roots and fly away. It was now bending at angles that should not be possible

considering the general flexibility of a tree, resembling the tube man you'd see at gas stations.

“Alright, alright,” I shouted, frowning as I stood myself up with much effort. Reaching out my hand, I gingerly touched the bark of the tree, and the swaying stopped in an instant. It stood eerily still as if it wasn't breakdancing in the wind just a few moments ago. I shivered. There was something going on here, and yet, it was both terrifying and oddly comforting. Clenching my fists with determination, I took a deep breath.

After all, I was already hopelessly lost. There was no harm done in following a few rogue ghosts, right?

“One, two, three... Three, four, five, six...” I repeated, trying to align my footsteps to the rhythm. Somehow, it just felt right. After which, there would be a new gust of wind, nudging me slightly in a different direction. This repeated a few more times until I found myself facing an oak tree, and my breath caught in my throat. A faded pink ribbon was tied to one of its branches.

“Someone has been here before...” I whispered.

Was someone else lost? If that were true, maybe I could find that person. A flicker of hope burned in my heart. Just maybe...

Maybe we could find a way to escape together!

But first, I needed to rest. All my muscles were screaming and pleading for relief, and my head felt like it was on fire. Groaning, I sat on a boulder conveniently placed at the base of the tree. It's just a short break. I need to get out of here as soon as possible. I sighed. And

with that, I closed my eyes and drifted off into a long, peaceful sleep.

“Ow.”

An acorn landed squarely on my head, jolting me from my slumber. Grumbling, I rubbed my eyes and looked around. At some point, a large leaf from the tree had fallen softly onto my lap, almost creating a cozy leaf blanket.

“Thanks...” I chuckled, patting the tree’s sturdy trunk.

Sunlight streamed through the foliage, as birds merrily conversed in tunes. The storm had cleared, and so had my head. I got up, stretching.

Gently stroking my hair with my fingers, I noticed a roughly sketched drawing of a squirrel eating an acorn on the boulder that I had sat on.

“How adorable!” I squealed, twirling my hair in excitement. “I can’t believe I slept on such a wonderful masterpiece!

But that wasn’t the only wonderful thing I noticed. A trail of ants had picked up the fallen acorn and were likely bringing it back home for a feast. Oh, fruit snack! Maybe it’s another sign. Refreshed and hopeful, I followed the acorn that bobbed in the air.

To summarize my journey, I came across more trees with faded pink ribbons. Sketches of butterflies, bunnies, fruits, plants and a nearby stream graced my eyes. The stream, especially, was as beautiful as its sketch, so much so that I sat near it and closed my eyes for a while, letting my thoughts wander and flow with the water. I loved all the sketches, however

However, there was one sketch that stood out to me. It was a drawing of four stick-figures.

‘Home,’ It read in crude handwriting on the bottom. This made me a bit sad.

“Don’t worry. We’ll get out of here, together.” I promised, placing my hand over the drawing.

As I followed the signs and rested at various checkpoints, the flicker of hope in my heart burned stronger and stronger, filling me with a comforting warmth. I was positive that I could find this person, convinced we would escape together. After all, the signs of someone so full of life were evident. Would it not be easy to find this person?

I was wrong. With trembling fingers, I picked up the last stone from the earth and brushed it off. There was no drawing, only four large letters smeared in blood.

‘HELP,’ was what it read.

My stomach churned, and I felt sick. Clasping my hand over my mouth, I dropped the stone and took a step back.

Thump, thump, thump

I needed to get out of here. Trying to calm my irregular heartbeat, I took another step back, and another.

And then my heart dropped, along with me.

Squeezing my eyes shut, I shielded my head, rolling down the hill like a sack of potatoes.

I'm going to become mashed potatoes at this rate. Just as I was resigning myself to my fate, I felt myself fall onto something soft.

Paff

“Funny, I don’t remember a bush being here...”

It was as if someone had moved it to catch my fall. Bewildered, I picked a leaf off the top of my head. A light breeze proceeded to tousle my hair, offering me a comforting pat. Taking a deep breath, I stood up, brushing leaves out of my dress.

Plip, Plip, Plip

Rainwater trickled down from the leaves of an oak tree, dropping softly onto a spot on the soil, coloring it a darker brown than the rest. It was as if it were telling me, “Dig here, you moron.” And so, wordlessly, I began digging.

As I dug, an old yellow paper which was torn around its edges began to peek out. gingerly removing it from the earth and unfolding it, I let out a relieved sigh. I could still read it.

Dear Traveller,

Hey, it's me. This is the spot where I... became one with the soil.
Haha, I guess you could call it that. Oh, not only that! I also became the rain, wind, and trees.

I pretty much am nature. That's cool, isn't it? How does it feel talking to one of the biggest forces on earth?

Anyway, that's why I made you walk all this way.

My spirit is concentrated here, and that's the only way I could help you. Sorry, I know the journey must have been tough. Or I could have just been bored. Who knows? Haha.

With a shaky breath, I turned it around.

You know... I regret it sometimes. If I had only just listened to mama, and not been so insistent on exploring, I would have been just fine. But I was so reckless. I hate how stubborn I am sometimes.

Well, the forest is my home now. And this is why I am here, isn't it? To help travellers who have lost their way like you. To make sure you don't end up like me. It's a bit lonely...

It's a bit lonely, but I'm fine! If you do make it out of here, can you do me a little favor? Tell the world that Emily Bennet is happy where she is now. Thank you!

My breath caught in my throat. Below, there was fresh ink that still seemed to be wet.

It was newly written.

"It was fun playing with you. So now, please..."

Vision blurring, I closed my eyes and hugged the note tightly.

"Thank you..." I whispered.

I was wrong.

"Go home."

Just then, a warm light wrapped around me, and when I opened my eyes, I was there under the tree and on the picnic mat, a light breeze blowing through my auburn hair. It was as if nothing had ever happened. Trying to maintain my composure, I carefully wrapped my fingers around the piece of paper. I sighed.

“What’s wrong, Lucy?”

“Yeah, you seem a bit out of it. Are you alright?”

Some of my friends gathered around me with worried expressions on their faces. Smiling, I tried to reassure them as I struggled to organize my thoughts. I failed. The worried voices of my friends ringing in my ears, I closed my eyes. In the end...

We did find a way to escape the forest, but we were never able to do it together.



Scribbled Signature of a City

by Eleos and Danyson

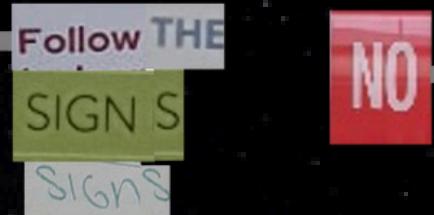
These signs are all in school — see whether you can spot them around!



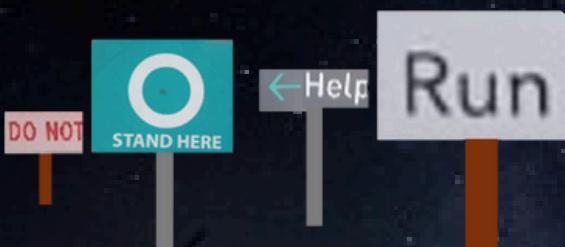
All promising the eternal solution—
Direction, clarity, truth?

A half-baked mass of clay
unmoving, derisive
Stuffing you in cramped corners

The city shoves you to its core,
Into the whirlwind of the sign stream



It's a matter of trust
or blind compliance



A blinding flash of bright epiphany
Bubbles behind dark brooding,
Direction - unclear
Purpose - non-existent
Mind – spinning
A distraction from potential

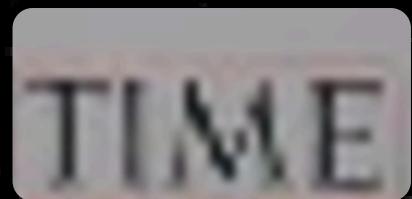
My



is of the essence

Escape is necessary

Every step deeper into the gathering of
Concrete, glass, metal, brick



is at stake

Is a more suffocating envelope

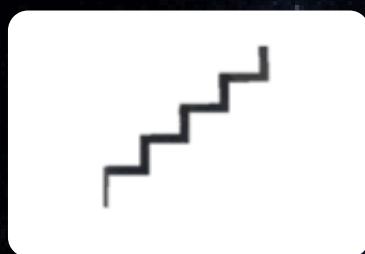
Of signs

Fighting for purpose

Wrestling for influence, power, manipulation

Clamouring for your consent

To accede into their false direction



STAIRCASE
USES LIFT

PUSH

Shut up SIGNS

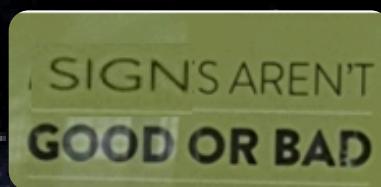
You struggle against
The shouting of the signs
Dashing, shouting
To the nearest respite



You escape
But the city leaves you
With a parting message

You push out of its warm embrace,
Beads of sweat dripping down your forehead
And billowing green
Welcomes you back
Brown branches wide open
Inviting you into its hug

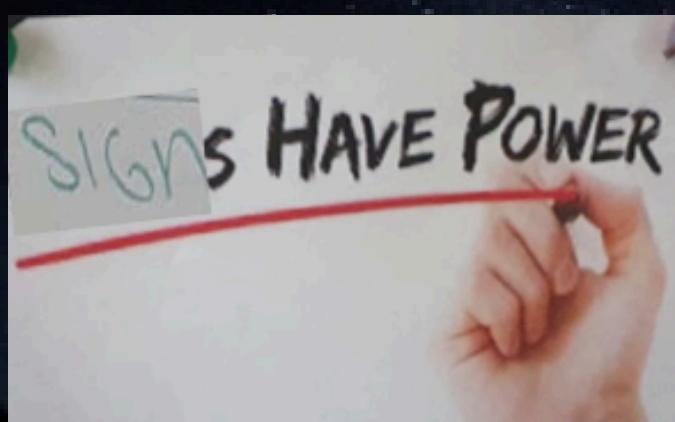
And an opportunity comes



THEY ARE

a mind game

But the message left its signature
ever still convoluted
But you somehow
understand



But you
Have choice

Clarity

by Cheng Jie

In whispers, longing glances spin their tale

A smile, a frown, a distance near yet far

In this deep labyrinth, feelings frail

Confusion sparks a dim faraway star

A mark that lingers, words that softly mend

Silence hides behind, loud as church bells' chime

Each truth concealing lies, when will this end

This game of darkness played on borrowed time

Beneath the mask of calm, fire rages

Lights of sparkling eyes, in shadows they drown

Each heartbeat scrawling questions on pages

Of thoughts uncertain, clad in dusky gown

Signals bring forth a swirl of hope and pain

Bitter sweetness, happiness stained with strain



Each contact hides a mellow, muted plea
Yet words betray what actions often mean
Slow dance between what hearts feel and eyes see
Twilight falls, ominous clouds intervene
Promises vague as morning's fading mist
One second close, the next a void laid bare
A gentle brush, then swiftly case dismissed
Crafting fractures in decades' old hardware
A cruel play, with rules that shift like sand
In summer's sun, snowmen smiles melt away
Under the surface, hints of reprimand
Behind every word, a night turned to day
Navigating these signs, a road unknown
In hope's sweet grasp, minds simply overthrown



A moment shared, a spark which could ignite
Soon coldness follows, dousing budding flame
Blurring the fragile lines of wrong and right
Statues left wondering who's there to blame
The mind deceives, the heart in turmoil stays
Silent cues cover truth's attempt to peek
Wading through murky waters, a wild daze
Once was strong, now incomparably weak
False maps guide this lost ship upon the sea
Compass spins wildly, through the brewing storm
In tight embrace, both chained and flying free
In echoes soft, a soul begins to warm
In romance's hedges, twisted ways to truth
Riddles still evolve, their source uncouth



A sigh, a laugh, quietness thick as night

In small gestures, a universe confined

In this volatile ultraviolet light

A path is lost, though quickly redefined

Through words unsaid, a sacred language speaks

In each look, lies entries of a journal

Detangling itself, mind in chaos seeks

Connections pure, a passion's inferno

The exit to this web of false intent

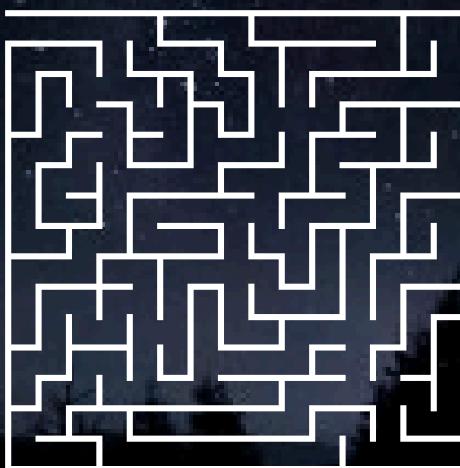
Another question, an answer yet to find

When eyes meet, a million meanings are sent

Between distinct souls, the deep threads unwind

Through mixed signals, hearts must forge their way

In dream's bright dawn or in love's dark dismay



Ballet at the Zoo

by Renee

There's a sign above the exhibit --
No flash photography allowed.
I pressed my hands up against the glass,
My face reflected back at me,
As if I was standing in the water beyond.



From the corner, a small face appears.
Behind the glass, she is inches away,
She is gentle gray and delicate pink,
Tiptoeing through the water, water gliding
Off her small, round body -- a baby hippo.

I read the sign again -- no flash.

Perhaps, my 5-year-old brain thinks,

She would be startled by the flash, blinded

By our shallow, transient admiration.

She is the star of the exhibition --



On display, her every kind movement,

Every light step her small legs take.

Staring at the girl beyond the glass,

She twitches her ears, her words muted,

The only request I hear is spoken by that metal sign.



While ethical zoos can help in wildlife conservation and breeding programmes, I wonder what it must be like to be on display. Perhaps they don't mind? Or perhaps they do? No matter how much we care for them and learn about them, I feel as if there is something ineffable about them that we could never understand.

The Sign of My Life: In Two Parts

by Renee

I.

The house of Dreams had burnt down.

It was pitch-black, covered in soot, remnants

Of a young flame smothering itself out.

Kneeling, I wiped the ashes from a tile,

Staring at the apparition

In the tile's reflection —

She blinked once, then twice.

Was it a sign? What was she saying?



Trapped in the house, I was suffocating.

I needed someone to help me

Open the windows, clear the smoke

Light the way to the exit with no sign.

But in the house of Dreams,

There are never any real signs,

Only conjured illusions in that lead you

To a different cluttered room,

Then another, then another.

Where do I go? I cried out

But only my echo answered,

Reverberating down a million corridors.



2.

Outside of the house, the fields

Were flowering pink, illuminated with sun,

The grass glowed, dew dripping like pearls.

Sitting down gingerly — first checking for ants —

I traced the edges of a flower,

And its petals unfolded for me,

Arranging themselves delicately.

Was it a sign? From the flower or from above?

Free in the fields, I could go anywhere,

Babble with the brooks, sing with songbirds

There was no one to chain me,

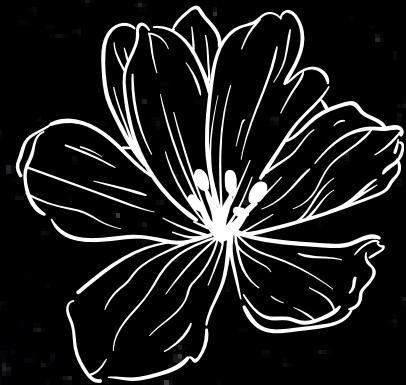
To hang cautionary signs above cliffs.

But my subconscious summons its own signs,

I see thorns sprouting from my flower,

Smothering the stem in rough needles,

It's infectious, the next flower has caught it too,



Then another, then another.

I thought I had escaped! I cried out

But when you are looking for signs

No field will stay evergreen.

Silent Sign's Salient Song

by Penn Lun

cracks of thunder echoed through the sky
traffic light's virescent sign reflected against the road
car's jarring screech whilst time slowed
yet a step too tardy, as I started to fly

a ceaseless null, with nought but bursts of consciousness
cold tubes inside my nostrils, sorrowful hands nudging my body
dim manifestations of light and night's bleakness
with nothing in this limbo to keep me company

darkness faded into white, void became air
blinding fluorescent light flooded in
tastes of moist plastic
and smells of disinfectants
I opened my mouth to scream
and heard the sound of silence
but it nonetheless drew regard
arrant worry melted into relief and joy
and yet their lips parted
with words that never reached truly

innumerable tests later, the results were confirmed
a glaring string stood out amongst a blurred sea of word
both ears diagnosed with a severe loss of hearing
aberrant receptacle's cry left to be my auditory swansong

the days subsequent were jarring from the norm
speech's stifle palpable, yet shifting amplitudes produced no bloom
a perpetual sieve retaining sound but not annoyance
engulfing and encapsulating my only "claim to fame"
the following consultation started with laments of insensibility
overflowed dams of emotions' undercurrent burst forth rapidly
the torment of alienation from awareness nevermore
voices and pleas unheard, evanesce

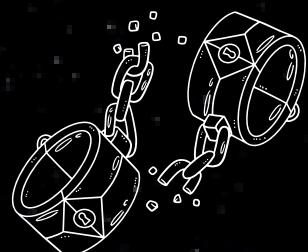
he merely, genuinely listened to all that I grumbled
the only pair of listening ears in the room, and the world
hearing, understanding, thinking, typing
suggesting to me the language of signs and lip-reading
hours of drilling merely to spot signs in spoken text
learning and rote memorisation of an entirely new language
amidst varying speaking styles and misinterpretations' roll of dice
yet it would all be worth it to decipher the silent script

lip-reading manifested with twain usefulness and caprices
myriad interpretations formed countless puzzle pieces
with only the surrounding context as the totality's aid
'twas then companions' help shone as lustrous as jade

still, sign language ultimately emerged as the most pleasant choice
distinct, intricate, and reliable, as fingers spoke in silent grace and soul
even more so for friends and family accompanying me in this voice
in the quiet of my mind, former vestibular's nostalgic feel reignited whole

free from the shackles of silence's agony, I navigate with ease
with the signs of hands and lips, yet still not completely at peace
for some eyes persist in averting, their patience thin, as if I am but a chore
the cold sting of indifference morphs into wounds that cut to the core

so let us all heed the signs around, the signals that we miss
they all can be reciprocated with kindness, to give some bliss
with every action of empathy and every thoughtful sign
we step ever closer to a world without malign





Current Affairs

Signs from our Sea

by Cheng Jie

Growing up in Singapore, seafood has always been a part of my life. From weekend trips to the hawker centre near my house to savour a steaming bowl of fish soup, to travelling all the way to the food village at East Coast Park to enjoy a sizzling plate of sambal stingray, seafood has been more than just food – it's a connection to the local culture, a source of comfort, and an experience I share with my family. But lately, I've noticed some changes that are hard to ignore. Seafood prices have begun to rise rapidly, and the nourishing bowl of fish soup that used to be \$3.80 now stands at a staggering cost of \$6.

Even at the wet market, my parents have complained about how the prices have shot up. The stall where we usually buy our fish had an abundance of options, from plump red snapper to shiny barramundi, and even grouper. But now, the selection seems to be thinning, just like the fish themselves. They also appear less vibrant, appearing to lack the shimmer that those before them possessed.

The auntie at the stall tells us fish isn't as easy to get these days, and they've had to shift further away for their imports, from Malaysia to Thailand. Warming seas are affecting fish populations all over the world, causing their depletion. Even though Singapore imports most of its seafood, it's certainly not immune to these changes. Fish that once thrived in our neighbouring waters are now migrating further away to cooler waters nearing the poles of the Earth, making them more expensive to catch and bring to our shores. The impact starts in the warming seas, flows through the market stalls, and eventually finds its way into every meal we prepare.

Seafood used to seem like something that would always be there – something to be taken for granted. Though now, that supply is starting to feel more fragile. The fish we eat today may not be available in the same way tomorrow.

It's not a simple issue of higher prices or fewer choices – it's about what this signifies for our environment and our future. If the fish populations are depleting, what does that say about the health of our oceans? What does it entail for the people who rely on the sea for their livelihoods, not just in Singapore but around the world? These aren't just abstract questions; they're evolving into a reality that we need to face.

The disappearing fish are a sign that our world is changing, and if we don't take action soon, these changes could become irreversible. The love for seafood is deeply ingrained in our culture, and I hope future generations will be able to enjoy the same experiences that I have. But for that to happen, we need to pay attention to the signs and act on them. The fish are disappearing, and with them, a part of our culture, our heritage, and our connection to the sea.

It's time to start listening to the signs. The ocean is telling us something important, and we just need to be ready to hear it and act before it's too late.



What can you tell us, MRT's Signs

by Ariel

Have you noticed anything different about the MRT stations recently? Or have you simply been a satisfied traveller through the help of clear and aesthetically pleasing signs that can be found everywhere in any MRT station?

Join Ariel in exploring and analysing the new upgrades to the many signs in our MRT stations in this video “What can you tell us, MRT’s Signs” and be sure to look out for these in your future commutes!

Simply scan/click the qr code below or click the link to view!



<https://nushpress.com/2024/09/27/what-can-you-tell-us-mrt-signs-a-short-video/>



Lifestyle/
others

Analysis of Inside Out 2

by Lokesh and Aditi

The highest grossing film of 2024, Inside Out 2 has become a famous and meaningful animated movie for children and adults alike.

Join Lokesh and Aditi as they dive into in-depth analyses of the various scenes and give their various takes on the movie!

Simply scan/click the qr code below or click the link to listen to the podcast!



<https://nushpress.com/2024/09/27/what-can-you-tell-us-mrt-signs-a-short-video/>

Signatures with Significance

signed by Kyan, Kai Yi

Which famous person's signature is 'the best'? We're here to answer that question for you. But first, our highly objective rating system, split into the following categories: Style (out of 17 points), Simplicity (9 points), and Safeness (11 points).

Side note: High Simplicity does not always equal low Safeness. It is possible to create a signature that is not only simple to write but difficult to forge.

Pablo Picasso



Behold... Pablo Picasso's signature. His signature is fittingly just that abstract.

In terms of style, this signature does not have much going for it. Its childish simplicity combined with messy pen strokes creates a very displeasing signature. Furthermore, looking at his past signatures, it seems to have morphed from a legible one to this by gradually removing pen strokes. 3 points for style.

For simplicity, Pablo's signature is however the epitome of simplicity. There are a total of 9 short strokes, with a lot of room for error. 8 points due to its ease to remember.

Finally, safeness. Due to the factors mentioned above in Simplicity, Picasso's signature is easy to learn and copy fluidly. Furthermore, there are not many overlapping sections which makes it easy to dissect. -1 points for negative effort.

TL;DR

Style: 3/17

Simplicity: 8/9

Safeness: -1/11

Total: 10/37

The beginning of the end of modern art.



Frederic Chopin



This is not a key signature or a time signature, but Chopin's (pronounced Shopahn) signature. This signature looks refined, yet playful, with many overlapping lines. The simplistic beauty of this signature shines above all, as probably the most readable signature on this list. For style points, it is easy to rate this a solid 14/17 points. The legible cursive handwriting gives elegance to an otherwise more boring signature. Especially beautiful is the F for Frederic. It adds a touch of complexity to the name, possibly a tribute to the simple yet confusing nature of music.

Similarly, the simplicity will score very high, with an easy flow of just 2 brushstrokes in common cursive language. The 'F' part is merely two cursive Fs under the umbrella of a big, overlaid F. Hence, this signature will score a 6/9 for simplicity.

Finally, the safeness score. This signature is deceptively difficult, as the 'F' section will cause major troubles in trying to forge. Especially since this style of cursive is no longer really used in the modern day. Yet, with enough practice, this is not too difficult to forge. Hence, this receives 8/11 for safety.

TL;DR

Style: 14/17

Simplicity: 6/9

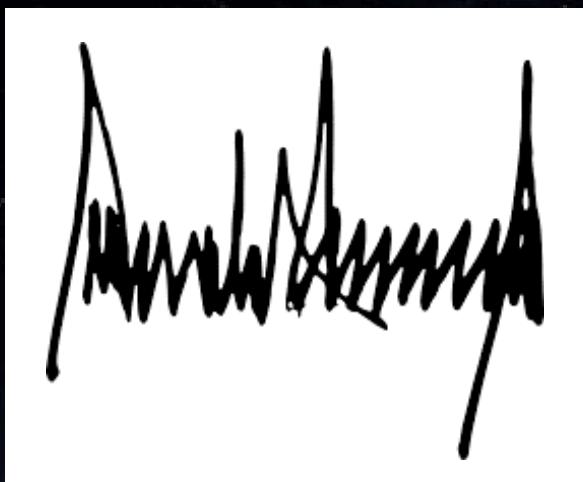
Safeness: 8/11

Total: 28/37

Who's Chopin onions here? Simply bravo!



Donald J. Trump



This is grass with a nice touch of symmetry. If you stare hard enough, you can vaguely recognise his initials in the three tall spikes. Without any loops, this signature takes quite a long time to sign, and even though he takes time to carefully make each angular letter, they end up looking somewhat the same anyway.

We give it a 9.17/17 for style. It has a certain charm to it, even though it is reminiscent of childhood drawings of grass fields. For simplicity, this gets a 6/9, even though it is not particularly efficient. Repetition makes it flow much better. And finally, this is a 7/11 for safeness. It's not easy to count the number of strokes while maintaining your fluency.

TL;DR

Style: 9.17/17

Simplicity: 6/9

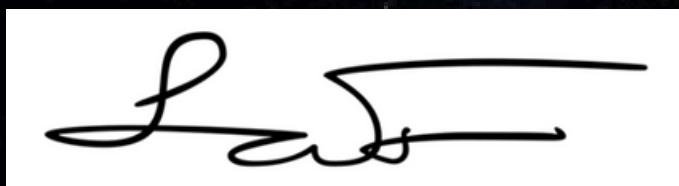
Safeness: 7/11

Total: 22.17/37

Cursive? Embrace the Zigzag.



Lawrence Wong



Woah! Our new Prime Minister has made the list! His signature consists of a very long cursive L, followed by a 'u' acting as an 'a', then a square root of another square root, which square roots nothing. For style, if we're being honest, nothing much goes for it. We find that the signature feels empty, and not very eye-catching among the crowd. Hence, this signature receives a 5/17 for style.

For simplicity, this signature is probably one of the easiest to write on this list, save for the 'a' that has its top completely blown off. Although, a lot of the complete u-turns the pen must go through must make it quite dizzy. This signature receives a wonderful 7.5/9 for simplicity.

In terms of safeness, however, this signature is severely lacking. As the square root is a mathematical function you learn at the age of 10, even kids aspiring to become the new PM will be able to recognise and forge this signature with relative ease. The open spacing of the signature is another huge pitfall, for it allows much room for error and increased chance of fluidity, making any forgery even more believable. Hence, this signature is bestowed an impressive 1/11 for safety.

TL;DR

Style: 5/17

Simplicity: 7.5/9

Safeness: 1/11

Total: 13.5/37

Perhaps he should go back to square one.

Johann Carl Friedrich Gauss



We refuse to believe that pi overlaid on top of e and ending with the symbol for an integral is a coincidence here, because it is not. The chaotic but intricate spirals at the tips of the S makes it slightly harder to forge and slightly more stylish. We give a score of $5\pi/17$ (roughly 16) for style, $2\pi/9$ for simplicity and an entire pie for safeness.

TL;DR

Style: $\sim 5\pi/17$

Simplicity: $\sim 2\pi/9$

Safeness: $\pi e/11$

Total: $\sim 7\pi + \text{an entire } \pi/37$

Making full use of our irrational scoring system.



Ms Gordon!!!



WOOOO!! We have a guest appearance signature from our dearest Ms. Gordon! Honestly, one of the better signatures we have out of the bunch. It has a simple yet refined style with cursive handwriting that is quite hard to replicate. The Nike tick is a nice touch.

In terms of style, this signature scores a solid $12.5/17$. It has many refined elements within it, such as the zagged tick and the large C encapsulating the main content of the name.

In terms of simplicity, this signature scores decently, at a $6/9$. It has many elements that are easy to put together, kind of like Lego.

Finally, for safeness, this signature scores a great $7/11$. Although the cursive and making it natural is on the more difficult side, the room for error on the signature is pretty wide, which hinders it from getting a perfect 11 on safeness.

TL;DR

Style: 12.5/17

Simplicity: 6/9

Safeness: 7/11

Total: 25.5/37

Sponsored by Nike.



As a final note, we wish that your signature signing skills shall swiftly skyrocket, taking inspiration from some of the examples here, and probably not others.

Ciphers and Crime

by Celeste

Ciphers are cool. Crime is cool.

Put crime and ciphers into an equation and that gives you “super cool and rad” as the answer, which is essentially what this article would be about. Are you a mad cipher and crime obsessed person? If not, dig deep into your soul to find that hidden criminal inside you, and enjoy this list of 4 criminals who use ciphers to baffle the detectives into ci-lence.

Get it? Cipher, Ci-lence? Let’s just go.

Coming in at fourth place is... D.B Cooper, although more widely known as Dan Cooper. Trust me, he’s cool, but skyjacking ranks lower than murders. Cooper was the first skyjacker, and he hijacked a Boeing 727 in 1971. To coerce the plane’s crew into submission, he told them that he had a bomb on him and wanted two hundred thousand USD as ransom. Why did he do it? Apparently, he had a grudge.

Note to all readers, please do not take such drastic measures when you have a grudge.

Allegedly, Cooper sent multiple letters with ciphers to different news outlets, and most had random strings of numbers and letters at the end of the letters. One of them includes a nine-digit code, which seemed meaningless at first. No one has been able to crack the code, other than Rick Sherwood, who was recruited by long-time investigator Thomas Colbert. The main suspect, Robert Rackstraw, who is a 73-year-old former Vietnam War paratrooper, denied all claims.

To think that a paratrooper, with all the possible PTSD from the war, would do this. But you never know.

In third, we have Henry Debosnys, whose true identity is unknown. Given that he has murdered only 3 people (mind you, his wives, but still.), it doesn't fare well for him, which puts him low on the ranking. Debosnys lived in the 19th century, and was a genius, or so he proclaimed. According to him, he was an ornamental painter who had a flair for drawing, all while being able to speak six languages; he even made preposterous claims that he participated in the North Pole Expedition and had volunteered for several wars.

If there was any semblance of truth to whatever he said, I'd be kneeling in a shrine for him, hoping that I could have even half of his intelligence.

Debosnys was arrested only after the murder of his third wife, although he also murdered his previous two wives. If he had been sneakier, he would not have been caught, as he was caught for acting suspiciously around a forest, which is a wonderful but cliched corpse burial ground. In the forest was his wife's dead body, with two bullet wounds in her head and a deep gash across her neck. His first two wives were found drowned in a river and starved, respectively.

During his incarceration, he spent most of his time writing poems and cryptograms, in English, French, Latin, etc., before finally being hung on April 27, 1883; when he died, he stated that he was innocent, as reported by the hangman.

If you want to find him, his skull and the noose used to hang him can be found in Adirondack History Center Museum in Essex, Massachusetts.

Source: <https://www.oddthingsiveseen.com/2012/10/the-new-york-grimpendium-skull-and.html>



The notes were sent to the FBI, but the codebreakers there were unable to crack the code, leading to the notes being released to the public, hoping that codebreakers out there could help.

Drumroll for two seconds, because our third criminal is... no one? That's right, no one. No one here was found to be the direct instigator of the crime, but the codes allegedly belong to a deceased Ricky McCormick.

Ricky McCormick was a deeply troubled man, who was suspected to be schizophrenic and was non-verbal.

Quoting a psychiatrist, he had a brick wall in his head, saying that McCormick had an active imagination.

I guess, if McCormick was treated for his psychosis, delusions, or "active imagination", it would be called "breaking the fourth wall"...? Fine, I'll escort my pun-ny side out.

McCormick was convicted of rape at 34, which sentenced him to 13 months in jail. After being released from jail, he worked at a gas station in St. Louis, USA, where he met some suspicious people (slim shady people, for all the Eminem fans out there?) that may have played a part in his death.

The two brothers who managed the gas station were notorious, and McCormick started traveling to Florida, allegedly smuggling weed for them. Shortly after his last trip in June 1999, he visited two different emergency rooms for chest pains and shortness of breath within three days, before being last seen on June 27 at the gas station.

No one noticed that he disappeared, until his decomposing corpse was found in a field on June 30. Although no one knew how he died, the police suspected foul play, and his death could have been overlooked, until they discovered two handwritten notes that seemed to be coded.

The code had multiple E's, which could stand for spacings, and they seemed to be random strings of letters. Although one family member insisted that McCormick could not spell, write, let alone write a code, while other members recalled that he used to write codes as a child. The code is said to be about reminders to take his medication, medical terms, and the name "Seth".

Intriguing, but how about our top criminal? (Top... gun, anyone? Crimes? Guns?)

The top criminal may not be surprising for most, but still, here we are, with the notorious Zodiac Killer! Maybe a little anticlimactic, but can you blame me for putting such an intelligent man at the top of the list?

The Zodiac Killer's killing streak lasted from 1968 to 1969, having murdered at least five people in California. The first known murder, credited to the Zodiac Killer, is the killing of a teenage couple near their car, where both were shot.

The female, Betty Lou Jensen, was found dead, with five bullet wounds in her back; the male, David Faraday, was found next to his car with a bullet wound in his head, still breathing but near death. Bullet holes were also sound in the car's roof and back window which may mean that the killer fired shots to force the two out of the car. The last known murder involved a 28-year-old student and husband, who was a cab driver in San Francisco, being killed.

Paul Stine, the victim, was shot in the head with a piece of his shirt removed; the Zodiac Killer was almost caught, but the police radio broadcast accidentally said that the suspect was a black man, which lead to officers dismissing a white man resembling the accurate description. A letter was found from the Zodiac Killer, which wrote “I am the murderer of the taxi-driver.”, along with a bloody piece of the shirt.

The Zodiac Killer sent out four ciphers, and two have been solved: one in 1969 and one in 2020. The first cipher was quickly solved within a week, and the second was only solved in 51 years; the latter was a transposition and homophonic substitution cipher.

In pop culture, the Zodiac Killer inspired multiple shows. For all the Batman fans (really, REALLY big fan of our best friend, the Dark Knight), the Zodiac Killer inspired Matt Reeve’s Riddler (The Batman, 2022), where he communicated by codes and ciphers; additionally, the Riddler communicated freely and openly with the public, often providing clues, which largely resembles the Zodiac Killer. For the movie buff who does not have a preference to superheroes (please become a Batman fan?), The Zodiac Killer inspired Dirty Harry (1971), a killer named “Gemini Killer” in The Exorcist III (1990), etc.

His most renowned movie biography is Zodiac (2007), with Robert Downey Jr., Mark Ruffalo and Jake Gyllgenhaal (no, I will not make an Avengers comment.).

An extra fun fact is that the Zodiac Killer’s famous logo was inspired by the Swiss watch brand Zodiac; additionally, it was worn by a suspect for the Zodiac Killer, Arthur Leigh Allen. And no, it is not the other way around, the Zodiac watch brand was established in 1882, almost 8 decades before the Zodiac Killer emerged.

Thanks for reading, and when breaking a code, always ci-ft for more clues. You got that? Ci-ft, instead of “sift”. Fine, I’ll go. Bye.

Signs You're Overcooking Your Egg

by Sze Yin and Jarrett

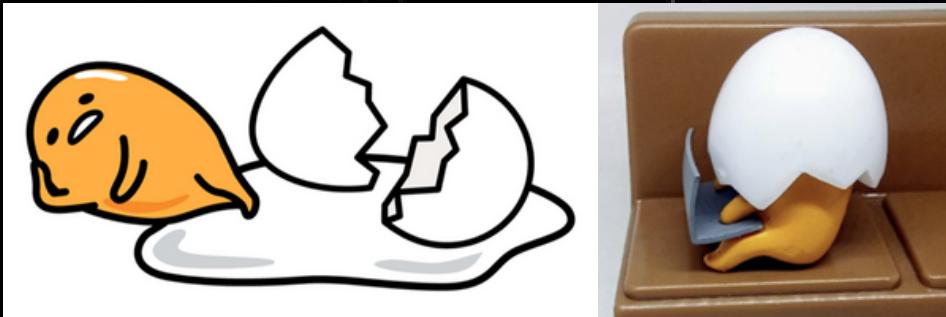
Eggs, humble yet profound, embody the essence of life and the marvels of nature's design. Within their fragile shells lies the potential for both sustenance and creation, a symbol of beginnings and infinite possibilities. In the kitchen, eggs transform with remarkable versatility, their nature shifting seamlessly from the silken smoothness of a custard to the airy peaks of a meringue. They serve as a binder, a leavening agent, a thickener, reflecting their inherent adaptability and resilience. This transformative power mirrors life's own ability to adapt and flourish in varied circumstances. Just as life, the egg, too, must be handled correctly, or one risks the unthinkable – an overcooked egg. But if this tragic possibility worries you, fret not – for we've consolidated a list of signs you're overcooking your egg for you to identify your grave mistake.



Green or Grey Ring Around the Yolk

A common sight for the novices of hard-cooking eggs, is the dreaded green-grey ring. Circling the yolk of the egg, it originates from a reaction from two halves of the whole; the sulfur of the yolk and the iron of the white. An edible, yet unsightly concoction. Afraid? The chalky texture and ghastly appearance can be resolved easily; simply submerge the egg in an ice bath after cooking and watch as the yolk reverts to its original yellow perfection. But enough of that, let's segway to a story on the dangers of the fabled green grey ring.

Shelldon's Perfect Eggs



Every afternoon, Poachie stood in the long, winding queue for Shelldon's Eggs. Renowned for their perfect, gorgeous, hard-boiled eggs, Shelldon's attracted a throng of patrons every day.

To Poachie, however, Shelldon's was more than a stall – it was the only saving grace, the only solace offered to him from his dead-end job. Throughout the day, as he scrolled through endless Eggscell sheets, keying in values into column EGGS, the fantasy of the soft yolk, the tart egg white dissolving in his mouth, had kept him sane.

After queuing for an hour, the owner handed him his eggs. It had been five years since he first ordered from Shelldon, and he was handed his bowl of eggs without even so much an utter, only a shared nod of approval, a symbol of recognition for a long-time patron. Poachie's lingering thoughts of his boss's limitless demands vanished instantly, as he eagerly carried the bowl to his seat.

One day, Poachie was standing in queue, as per usual, bent over his phone fretting over his research paper due for SSEF (Singapore Scrambled Eggs Fair). As he neared the front of the queue, something strange happened.

“What would you like to order?” He heard an unfamiliar, coarse voice call out.

As his eyes darted from his phone to the storefront, he gasped in shock. Shelldon had vanished, and in his place, a scrawny man stood, haphazardly boiling each egg.

He looked up. The sign read, Burnedict's Eggs. He scrutinised Burnedict's cooking techniques, analysing the drastic difference in expertise, sighing as he reminisced Shelldon's graceful handling of each egg. Still, not wanting to be disappointed, he got his usual set of eggs, carrying high hopes for their quality.

He cut open the first egg and was immediately greeted by a gruesome copper green ring around the yolk. An egg-solute disaster. He remained in his dead-end job, every day still visiting the grave of Shelldon's eggs, where Burnedict had now stood with the hope that one day Shelldon would come back. But with every passing day, his hopes had atrophied, as he had to put up with the disappointing, lacklustre eggs produced by Burnedict. Likewise, his job took a turn for the worse, and every day as he queued, he would be frantically replying to the infinite flood of emails in his inbox. Yet, he could not leave; what if Shelldon returns? Shelldon's eggs was all he had known, all that got him through these past five years.

However, as he trudged through the increasingly drearier days, no sign of Shelldon emerged. How could Shelldon leave him? After five years – without telling him? And so, what was initially sorrow turned to spite. The simmering spite was eventually brought to a boil – and with that, he resigned in a fit of rage, vowing to leave Shelldon behind once and for all. After a period of mourning over Shelldon, he found himself in a new office, next to another storefront – Delicieux's eggs. With the first bite of Delicieux's eggs, Poachie found himself falling in love with eggs again, recounting the characteristic crispness and freshness of Shelldon's eggs.

Sometimes, as with Sheldon's eggs, some eggsciting things must come to an end. And sometimes, instead of dwelling on the past, one must learn to move on and appreciate the past eggsquisite moments. When life scrambles your plans, remember that you can always start afresh with a new recipe – and who knows, maybe one will find at the end of the journey, you'll find whiter and yellower pastures, and an egg that's truly Delicieux!

Rubber, Tough Egg Whites

Overcooked egg whites are rubbery and tough instead of tender and soft. This is especially noticeable in fried or scrambled eggs.

This transformation happens when the heat causes the proteins in the egg whites to coagulate excessively, resulting in a chewy, less enjoyable texture. The perfectly cooked egg white is delicate and tender, a balanced texture that enhances our overall eating experiences.



The Goose and the Golden Egg Whites

Once upon a time, there lived a farmer, Benedict, who discovered a goose that laid golden egg whites. These egg whites were legendary for their perfect texture, tender and soft, a marvel in the culinary world. The goose, however, only laid one golden egg white per day, ensuring each one was treasured.

As a financially struggling overachiever, Benedict was ready to seize his chance. Every day, he cooked and cooked even more, trying to find the best way to cook the golden egg whites in record time. Yet as he cooked, the golden egg whites turned rubbery and tough, losing their prized texture. Frustrated, Benedict decided that it was a problem for future him to deal with and turned in for the night.

The next morning, he woke up to an epiphany. That day, instead of cranking up the heat, he lowered it and cooked with patience, focusing on the process rather than the outcome. He began caring for the goose, ensuring it had a comfortable, stress-free environment.

As Benedict continued to care for the goose and cook with balance and patience, something unexpected happened. The goose started laying two golden egg whites a day, then three. The more Benedict respected the process and cared for the goose, the more it rewarded him. It was as if the goose sensed his newfound balance and reciprocated in kind.

Benedict's fame spread beyond his small farm. Chefs from across the land wanted to learn his secret. Benedict, now wiser, shared his journey, emphasizing that the magic wasn't just in the golden egg whites but in the harmony he found in life. He realized that true success wasn't just about the hustle and grind, but about finding peace and beauty in life's natural twists and turns the natural flow of things.

Inspired by his experience, Benedict turned his farm into a sanctuary for people seeking balance. He taught others the importance of patience, care, and moderation through cooking workshops centered around the golden egg whites. His farm became a symbol of inner peace, drawing visitors who wanted to learn the art of balanced living.

In the end, Benedict's journey with the goose and its golden egg whites became a legend. It wasn't just a story about culinary perfection but about finding a rhythm in life that allowed prosperity to flourish naturally. And so, the tale of the goose and the golden egg whites lived on, reminding everyone that the sweetest rewards come not from rushing, but instead from nurturing and balancing the delicate moments of life.

Dry, Crumbly Yolks

Overcooked yolks, whether in hard-boiled or scrambled eggs, become dry and crumbly, losing their rich, creamy texture. A yolk, when cooked perfectly, is a luscious, smooth delight. Seasoned perfectly, a wondrous amalgamation of flavours rests on our tongue. It embodies both perfection and balance.

Yet, if subjected to excessive heat, proteins and moisture breakdown within the yolk, and it literally pales in comparison – a mere shell of its former glory, dry and oh so brittle.

Eggstra, eggstremely yummy eggs – a fire tutorial (tm)

Eiggs was always a trend chaser. He was a famous TikToker with a solid and steadily growing number of followers. One day, he decided to add some seasoning to his feed and upload a new (spicy) video. Considering the viral nature of literally every other food video, he decided to upload a short showing off his culinary prowess, and him whipping up the most fire scrambled eggs ever.

Since Eiggs intended to upload a short, he cranked the stove up to maximum heat, thinking he would speed through his brekkie. Instead, he ended up with yolks so dry and crumbly, you'd think he was cooking in the Sahara Desert. Ironically, the eggs looked like yellow confetti despite Eiggs taking no Ws and only Ls.



Eiggs, like any other post-millennial, immediately gave up as he (unfortunaetly) had the attention span of a bad egg.

Just then, his one and only saviour and best friend, Bacon, walked in on the disaster.

Bacon raised his eyebrow skeptically. "Eiggs, what happened? Those eggs look as dry as my skin feels. Aren't they supposed to be wetter than this? They look like they got ghosted by moisture."

Eiggs, curled into a fetal position on the floor, shrugged helplessly. "I thought I'd speedrun breakfast, but I feel my last few brain cells frying away more than the eggs."

Like a true friend, Bacon laughed almost maniacally at Eigg's misery before offering some advice. "Eggs need finesse dude. Don't rush the process, trust the process. You can easily go overboard and overcook them. You need to be zen and find that perfect balance to get that eqqsquisite scramble."

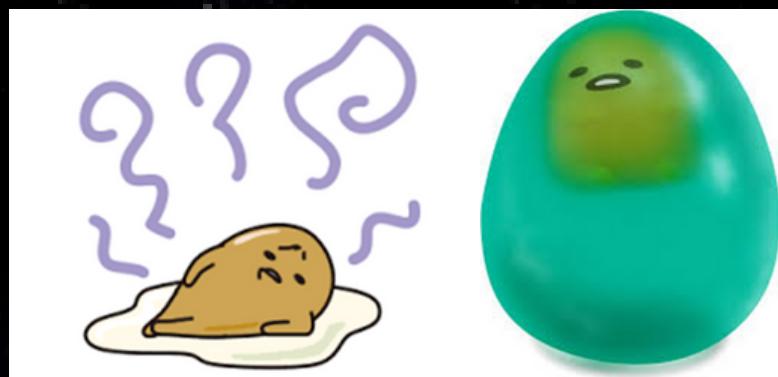
From then on, Eiggs mastered his breakfast game and became the #1 pro at it.

He no longer got cooked but cooked instead. He even ended up uploading a proper video instead of a short because he was a true homie who wouldn't clickbait and trick his viewers into thinking that eggs could be cooked in such a rushed manner.

Applying the same egg-y wisdom to life, he learned to take things slow and steady, savoring every bit of the process. Just like cooking eggs, when it comes to life: you need the right amount of heat and patience to get it just right. The end.

Unpleasant Sulfur Smell

Sulfur; used in fertiliser, batteries, pesticides. You wouldn't want that in your food, would you? Unfortunately, overcooking your eggs can introduce an unpleasant, pronounced sulfureous stench in your eggs. Be sure to watch out for this awful stench which, while harmless, is definitely unpalatable for your esteemed guests, who much prefer not eating batteries.



Eggatha's Egg Egg-diction

Since she was a wee child, Eggatha has only eaten one thing her whole life; eggs. Walk into her house, and you'll be met with the lingering aroma of eggs, enclosed by walls of cartons stretching to the ceiling. Anything that wasn't scrambled, soft-boiled, hard-boiled, poached, fried, or an omelette, would be met with vehement refusal, a tantrum of shattered plates, and a retreat to her room for a few hours.

A long time ago, Eggatha's parents and friends had tried to offer her different foods; rice, noodles, meat, vegetables, soup; anything that offered a glimmer of hope at expanding her palate. Yet, after years of constant tantrums and retreats, increasingly exotic and desperate dishes offered, "here comes the airplanes" escalated to "Eggatha PLEASE eat the noodles PLEASEE for my sake", they had thrown in the towel and resigned to their fate. Eggatha would never eat anything other than an egg, they believed.

And so, Eggatha's parents had grown accustomed to her egg-diction. They stockpiled their house with eggs, learnt to boil, scramble, prepare eggs in every permutation possible, so they at least had some variety to enjoy.

At least eggs offered some versatility in preparation, and over time, they got used to the initially nauseating, perpetual scent of eggs in the house. Maybe it wouldn't be too bad that Eggatha would never taste a chicken wing, or bowl of soup.

Then, mayday struck. "A new disease, EGGS, has been rapidly spreading across egg farms and supermarkets; it may even linger in your groceries now! Even though harmless, it causes eggs to exhibit an unpleasant sulfur smell," the tinny speaker from the television played out, surrounded by egg cartons. Eggatha immediately Googled the phenomenon in shock, only to find it true; her beloved eggs were succumbing to this infectious disease and releasing unbearable fumes. Shaken, she pushed the thought to the back of her mind, hoping that the eggs would find a way through.

Unfortunately, she could not escape the EGGS. Shortly after a grocery run, the newly welcomed cardboard boxes brimming with eggs began emitting a strange, foreign smell. As the days flew by, every new shipment was met with a growing, intolerable stench. Eggatha was horrified, and she commanded her parents to search for an unaffected egg source, while they gasped for air in the suffocating house. Yet, they could not locate a single carton of untouched, pristine eggs.

Eggatha was left in an intoxicating room, enclosed by stacks of unappetising eggs, and a pair of parents begging her to put an end to her egg-diction, to their misery. With each mounting day of coughing up fumes, of stomaching the tarnished eggs, the pressure grew for her to end the reign of terror EGGS had.

With tears of yellow viscous liquid in her eyes, she held her breath, running out of the house to find her friend, Eggward. Between consoling her, Eggward opened a pack of salted egg-flavoured potato chips and began feeding it to her slowly. Distraught, Eggatha finally opened up, taking a bite of the crunchy, salty chip, slowly acclimatising to its unfamiliar texture. Sampling another, she marvelled at herself. Her first step towards a more diverse diet, towards saving her family from the egg paradigm.



As she chewed a chip in front of her parents, showcasing her newfound skill, they leapt in joy. Slowly but surely, she learnt to eat all kinds of foods, adapting to those far out of the ranges of eggs; ice cream, hamburgers, salads. And so, they were freed from the shackles of egg cartons and sulfureous air. Eggatha learnt not just to appreciate other foods, but the importance of diversification. And since then, she vowed never to constrain her dietary choices to a single food, to crack open new opportunities, and never put all her eggs in one basket.

Egg-knowledgements

At the end of the day, eggs are always yummy. Eating overcooked eggs isn't a big deal – at most, one simply gets a stomachegg. But what's the pain of a stomachegg compared to the pleasure of an eggceptionally crisp, beautiful egg? As egg-sian parents say: a bit of indigestion hurts no one! See you next time 😊 in an eggciting issue where we egg-splore and egg-xamine the signs you're over-toasting your bread! We shell always love you mwah



Signs of a Burnout

by Tyra

Do you know someone who's burnt out? Or what if you're that someone?

What is burnout? According to the Cambridge dictionary, burnout refers to the extreme tiredness or mental or physical illness caused by working too hard or having too much on your plate. In simple terms, it's when you get exhausted from overworking.

Why should you care if you're burnt out? Burnout can lead to dreading work, making you feel detached or withdrawn from the things and people you are committed to. It can also increase risks of depression, insomnia, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Wondering if you're burnt out? Well, here are some common signs and symptoms which occur in those who are burnt out:

1. Feeling fatigued or drained frequently
2. Recurring pains, headaches or muscle tension
3. Changes in sleep habits or appetite
4. Difficulty concentrating or taking longer to complete tasks
1. Feeling a sense of failure and self-doubt
2. Avoiding responsibilities

How to prevent or recover from burnout:

1. Identify the (potential) sources

What's making you feel this way? Finding the reason as to why you feel burnt out is the first step to recovering from it. Some common sources include having excessive work pressure (this could be having not enough time and/or having too much work

to do), feeling undervalued/unappreciated (perhaps you're doing most of the work in a group project, but nobody thanks you and you're being taken for granted?) or even, unclear expectations. (Is the same task being done twice? Is there a lack of communication which ends up in being unsure of what to do or what's expected of you?).

2. Delegate tasks

If you have ever gotten grouped with loafers for a project and tried to do it all by yourself, you would know that this is a close to impossible feat. To prevent it, you can assign tasks to each group member, making sure that the workload is split almost equally between everyone. Oh, and don't forget to say thank you when they're done!

3. Take regular breaks

Studying for hours on end makes you less efficient over time and will often take a toll on your mental state. If you find yourself working non-stop, try taking a 5-minute break every 25 minutes, or a 15 minute break every 90 minutes to improve your productivity.

4. Try Journalling, think about or even do something which makes you happy :)

Keeping a journal with you to write about how your day went, what made you feel happy, something that went right or wrong, or even just what you accomplished today is a great way to feel gratitude and happiness. This can help you be more appreciative of the people and things around you, which helps uplift your mood.

5. Create and follow a healthy sleep schedule and diet.

Sleep is often underestimated but truthfully, it's a crucial factor in recharging your body and mind. Food is also essential as it has many benefits, for example, improving your mood, or even having better mental health in the long run.

6. Get enough exercise

Exercise helps to enhance your mood, decrease stress, and even improve your sleep. The suggested amount of exercise is around 150-300 minutes (about 5 hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, so let's try to aim for that!

So, if you're certain that you happen to be exhibiting some of the signs of burn out, try the above methods to recover from it.

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The Subconscious Signs of Body Language in Communication

by Ryan

“Ok”.

A familiar response that everyone has heard in a day-to-day conversation. Despite its frequency in our communication, this innocuous, short, two-letter word carries a million meanings, and I think by now all of us know that this “exclamation used to express agreement or acceptance” according to Google is not restricted to merely doing so.

Tone in communication is important. Are they being sarcastic? Making a joke? Do they really agree with you? Context is also crucial. Are they being forced to agree in a context where disagreeing would inconvenience everyone? Or are they giving in to a request?

We thus can see that there are many factors that can influence the true meaning of communication, and we must be aware of all of these to accurately interpret what the other person means. However, an aspect of communication which is sometimes overlooked is body language.

Let’s revisit the “Ok” example again. Assuming that you are talking face-to-face with the person (“Ok” was not just a dry response online), we can use a person’s body language alone to evaluate whether that “Ok” was really an “Ok”.

There are many aspects of body language, and the easiest part to start off with is the eyes. Indeed, the eyes are the window to the soul, and the same can be said when evaluating body language. If they are blinking at a rapid rate and constantly avoiding eye contact with you, they could be in distress or discomfort. That “Ok” may not truly agree with the

statement at hand - it perhaps was something said just to get them out of a situation or conversation they do not feel at ease in.

Our legs are 40 to 50 percent of our body height. Our arms carry us through the many tasks of our day. Similarly, both are key players in expressing body language. Back to that “Ok”, clasped hands behind the person’s back might indicate that they are feeling anxious, and clenched hands could signal frustration. These gestures may indicate that the “Ok” may not be genuine. The legs are also an equally important part of body language. Sitting down, are their legs in a position with their knees crossed? If so, perhaps they are anxious, and that “Ok” might not be so real or forced after all.

This example is just one of many about body language in daily conversation, and so much more can be written about how other forms of body language can change the meaning of the simple word “Ok”. If there can be so many factors to interpret the real meaning of this, imagine how much more there can be to interpret in a day-to-day conversation! Thus, the importance of body language is evident as a key element in communication (along with many other equally important factors) to determine the actual meaning of spoken words.

With this knowledge, be more conscious of how you carry yourself in scenarios like interviews where communication is key - through not only your words, but also your actions. It’s small details like this that are the crux of communication.



Nonverbal Signs in Psychology (And Their Applications in Life!)

by Isabelle

Understanding Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication, simply put, is the communication of information without words (you should know this). Just a few forms of commonly utilised nonverbal communication include:

- Body language and posture
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact

Practical Applications

Such nonverbal communication can be used in daily life, like talking to people with good posture, steady eye contact and a smile to give a good impression. It can also be used in interrogations to determine whether a subject is telling the truth, or in psychotherapy to gauge how comfortable a subject is with talking about a certain topic, etc.

Gauging feelings

For example, hands covering one's mouth, leaning back, looking at the floor, fidgeting, crossing legs and folding arms are all closed gestures which is a negative form of body language where the person seems to be protecting their body and may not be willing to communicate honestly and completely. Open body language is whatever isn't closed (yup!).

Detecting Deception

This may be used in interviews or interrogation.

A machine called a polygraph can measure physiological arousal factors, including heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, perspiration, and skin conductivity. The theory of the lie

detector test is that these physiological responses will be different when the subject is truthful versus when the subject lies. Other than with a polygraph machine, there are also various techniques that are used frequently to find out if someone is lying or make them more comfortable to tell the truth.

Here are just some:

- Mirroring body language

Mirroring is about subtly matching another person's body language and tone in a genuine way. It's not copying everything they do, but rather tuning into their style and energy. By paying attention to how they talk and move, and then gently echoing it, you create a comfortable and friendly vibe.

- Deception

An example of deception during an interrogation is law enforcement falsely claiming they have DNA evidence when they do not. The use of deception is a generally accepted technique, but it has a few limitations.

- Moving closer

This makes it harder for the other person to detach from the situation and lie.



If you are interested in further studying this topic, you can also read up on the Nicholas Browning case* here (<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna28815861>) and look at the interrogation of Nicholas Browning and his friends with the analysis of a qualified team, including a licensed attorney and former Criminal Prosecutor and a licensed clinical psychologist. (<https://inv.us.projectsegfau.lt/watch?v=MtNASztI83c>)

**Nicholas Browning was charged with four counts of first-degree murder. He has antisocial personality disorder/ experiences sociopathy. Nothing gory is explicitly shown or described here. Interrogation record is available on YouTube, but some parental controls may restrict it so the website above is a similar alternative.*

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- https://www.tutorialspoint.com/body_language/body_language_open_closed.htm
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/nonverbal-communication.htm>

Dreams, Culture and Everything in-between

by Ri-Yen and Sahana

You were about to write your ICA. Just then, a giant rabbit bursts through the whiteboard, engulfed the teacher (leaving no traces), picked up the broomstick and started teaching Special Relativity.

“Your teacher is in spacetime coordinates x,y,z,t -” “Gasp! Alpha Centauri A?” someone says. “No, B?” Another argues like everything was perfectly normal. The rabbit continues, “Can you argue that me arriving, and your teacher disappearing are causally connected?”

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL?

Dreams are common to all humans and are often seen as signs of what will happen in the future or rather our hopes or dreams for the future. However, their content and emotional significance can vary across cultural contexts. To validate this, researchers conducted a comparative dream study between the people in tribal societies and people in Western societies.

The tribal societies such as those in Tanzania and Congo emphasized equality, cooperation, and communal sharing, crucial for their survival and social cohesion. Their dreams typically start with threats reflective of daily dangers, concluding with resolutions involving social support. In contrast, European dreamers experienced scarier, open-ended narratives with fewer positive resolutions and more negative emotions, possibly due to the individualistic nature of urban life.

The way dreams are interpreted also differ greatly across cultures and religions. For instance, the Greeks viewed them as divine signs from the god of dreams, Morpheus. Famous Greek philosopher, Artemidorus described dreams as omens in his extant five-volume Greek work, "Oneirocritica" (The Interpretation of Dreams), with symbols like snakes representing transformation and water signifying spiritual cleansing.

The Chinese similarly relied on symbolism but focused on animals, as with their zodiac signs. An eagle in a dream symbolized career success, while a rat suggested potential trouble with a close friend.

While writing this piece, we asked each other what was the most recent dream that affected us. One of us had a dream in the December holidays about going to school as per normal and greeting a classmate, only to enter Level 5 and it looked like Level 1 of her primary school, with NUSH corridors. When realization hit her, the staircase morphed into a flimsy bridge with broken wooden steps with sharks swimming beneath and storm raging the skies. In panic, she tried to grip onto the handles only to be pushed down by the classmate she just greeted. She interpreted it to mean a happy last year of school by reverse psychology.

The other one dreamt of encountering a giant ten times her size with a giant club and a loincloth. She tried to fight it but was picked up and her hits did nothing. However, she woke up before being pounded to death. She interpreted it as having to keep a better lookout for potential dangers or conflicts in her family, and to stay away from tall people.

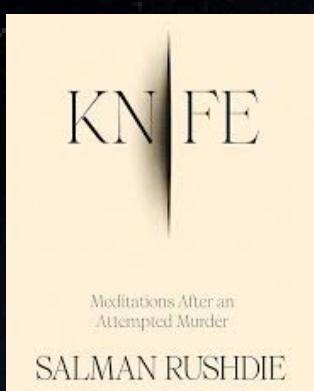
However, some believe that dreams are not signs of the future but serve a different purpose. In 1895, Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud theorized that dreams were a connection between the unconscious mind and our sleeping self, reflecting repressed

desires, wishes, or conflicts. He called dreams the "royal road" to the unconscious, suggesting they were signs that reveal more about us than about the future.

With evolution, humans sleep the least among primates but experience the most REM sleep – a state associated with dreams. This preservation of REM sleep hints that dreaming might have a protective function for our species. They reflect the challenges and values of waking life, offering insights into how we process our past, current and hypothetical situations, emotions and threats.

Presently, dreams are universally regarded as mental imagery that occurs during sleep, though its specific purpose remains unknown. Dream interpretation still exists- alongside similar concepts like horoscope signs and angel numbers, although not (yet) a concrete science.

So, what is your interpretation of the rabbit dream? Or can you dream a crazier dream Post about it on instagram and tag us [@nushjournalism](#) with your crazy dreams!



Sidenotes:

Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder, an autobiography by Salman Rushdie, describes his encounter with the Grim Reaper after a Fatwa (a form of formal ruling based on Islamic law) was issued against him. In his case, his dream was a sign to flee – a warning - and it might just have been a coincidence that he was an author!

Read more here: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19934484-knife>

Source: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_do_dreams_look_like_across_cultures

Signs of Humour

by Ming Zhe and Zachary

A collection of different street signs all around the world, humorous, mundane, average or sentimental.

1. Exit 192: Bad Route Road



Bad Route Road, a road in Montana, United States. CREDITS: Google Street View

Ever had a bad day? You can take a ride on the amazing Bad Route Road and get a taste of just how bad the route of the road is! It's completely unpaved and mostly just sand, and it seems whoever named it knew that.

2. Welcome to Accident!



Accident, Maryland, United States. A sign that welcomes you to the town of Accident!

CREDITS: Google Street View

Want to experience exactly how an accident occurs? Fear not, there's a town just for you! Located in the American state of Maryland, this small city with a population of around 350 will greet you with open arms while you undergo the true Accident experience.

3. Useless Lane



I can't believe they actually named a road after us. Located in Alabama (of course it's in Alabama), this road guarantees the peak uselessness experience.

Useless Lane, a road in Alabama, United States.

CREDITS: Pinterest

4. Twiggly Wiggly Road

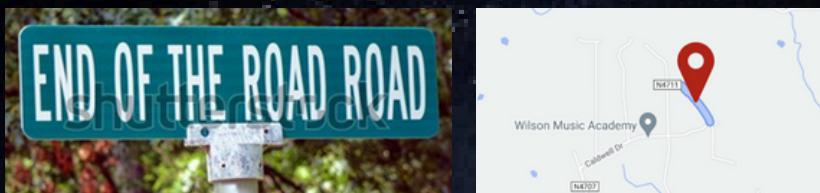


Located in Canada, this road certainly has a strange name, like something out of one's childhood. How straight the road actually is we don't know.

Twiggly Wiggly Road, a road in British Columbia, Canada.

CREDITS: CTV News Vancouver

5. End of the Road Road



End of the Road Road, a road in Oklahoma, United States.

CREDITS: Shutterstock

It's the end of the road, and this sign wants you to know that. It's not lying, either – the second photo shows that this is, indeed, where this road in Oklahoma ends.

6. Chicken in the Woods Road



Chicken In The Woods Road, a road in Wisconsin, United States.

CREDITS: Reader's Digest

There's a chicken on the road? Wait nope it's a CHICKEN in the WOODS! This creative and interesting name for a road, seems just like a perfect mix of humour and functionality.

7. Captain Bacon



Ahoy mates! Its Captain Bacon coming to you live on
Oops, he's not on television, but on a big green signboard, up high in the sky, standing proudly like a statue.

Captain Bacon Road, a road in Massachusetts, United States.

CREDITS: Daily Mail

8. Hard to Find Drive



Hard to Find Drive, a road in North Carolina, United States.

CREDITS: Pinterest

This road is hard to find, indeed. Smack in the middle of North Carolina, in the rough and deserted jungle, there lies a road called Hard to Find Drive! Living up to its name, it is hard to find, such that even Google maps was unable to 3D map it on Street View.

9. Eating Carpet Strictly Prohibited



Sign in Chennai International Airport, Chennai,

India

CREDITS: Reddit

This is not a road, but it's still rather humorous as designers got lost in translation which causes some grammatical errors.

Want to experience exactly how an accident occurs? Fear not, there's a town just for you! Located in the American state of Maryland, this small city with a population of around 350 will greet you with open arms while you undergo the true Accident experience.

10. Beware of Smartphone Zombies



Sign in Mulberry, Florida

CREDITS: WFLA

Smartphone zombies have taken over our world, haven't they? From the streets of Florida to ones here in Singapore, Their population have skyrocketed since the development of smartphones. Are you a smartphone zombie?

Witty, Ridiculous, Hilarious Signs

by Yvette

Signs are everywhere in life, but how many have caught your attention to slow down and be read? Scattered about in random places, they patiently wait for a glance, eliciting a chuckle; by scrolling, you're signing up for more ironic, funny sign shenanigans.

1. True to form.



All too typical of the target audience of the sign, one such member of the audience took the bait and bit. One can only hope that the original text on the sign won't hold as true as the personality has!

2. How did they know?!



We've all been there. Double-scanning an item, clicking the wrong option, even raising the item from the basket a hair too early, there seem to be a million paths all leading to calling service staff embarrassedly to help you out of the sticky situation. Why even call it self-service if we need the staff to save us this often?!

3. Don't knock it til' you try it



Might look childish, ludicrous, say what you want about it, but it works! Much simpler, cheaper and much easier to check- so long as it's on a stable surface to begin with.

4. Sound advice.



5. Is this really the right place??



Meme songs and kitchens don't exactly go together like peas and carrots. I would not want to be the unsuspecting chef who doesn't know what they unwittingly stepped foot into.

6. Doesn't matter who you are, just that you're clean



The 8-genders: Female, half n' half, male, wheelchair-bound, baby, alien, conjoined twins, and warrior. Only the ones who wash hands count, though.

7. The Four Horsemen of the Bathroom Closet



"Good morning, I'd like some I HAVE A UTERUS, please." Quite the smart idea, admittedly; an injured person who didn't know what exactly to use to take care of themselves would surely find something to help in the labelled boxes.

8. IKEA Snowman??



Seems Mother Nature has taken some clever marketing technique inspiration from IKEA, notorious for making its buyers build their own paid-for furniture. "Some" assembly required, they say...

9. The Last Laugh



The artist, probably at it for a long while due to the need for a graffiti removal ad, couldn't resist one last masterpiece.

The crudely painted advertisement on the wall surely has to count as graffiti too, doesn't it?

10. Art Mimics Life



Looking at this sign is enough to induce the dizziness commonly associated with being drunk, worsening as more alcohol enters the system. I'd love to see a rendition of this sign as seen by a person who has had the respective number of drinks shown!

Credits to *r/funnysigns* on Reddit for providing some images; feel free to head on over for even more laughs!

Look out for more signs while outside, you just might find one just like these, lurking till the moment they can shine.

Horoscopes for the Holidays

by Cheng Jie

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Horoscope: These holidays, your boundless energy will have you charging ahead. Take some time to explore a new hobby or sport before the term starts!

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Horoscope: This is your time to indulge in some well-deserved relaxation. Treat yourself to a cosy day in, perhaps baking some treats or watching your favourite movies.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Horoscope: Your social calendar is waiting to be filled. Spend quality time with friends, catch up on the latest trends, and maybe even organise a small get-together.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Horoscope: This holiday is all about self-care for you. Create a calming environment at home, perhaps with some light reading or binge-watching your favourite childhood shows.

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Horoscope: You're in the spotlight this week. Bring people together for some last-minute holiday fun, whether it's a small party or a creative project.

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Horoscope: Your analytical mind is already in prep mode for the new term. Start organising your study space and create a plan for the upcoming exams.

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Horoscope: This is a time for balance. Enjoy a mix of socialising and peaceful alone time filled with activities like drawing or writing.

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Horoscope: Dive deep into a passion project or a book you've been meaning to read. Your intense focus will make it a fulfilling experience.

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Horoscope: Your adventurous spirit beckons. Plan a short day trip or an outdoor activity to satisfy your wanderlust, and feel invigorated by the fresh air.

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

Horoscope: Time to get practical. Set some goals for the new term and maybe even pick up a new habit that will help you stay productive.

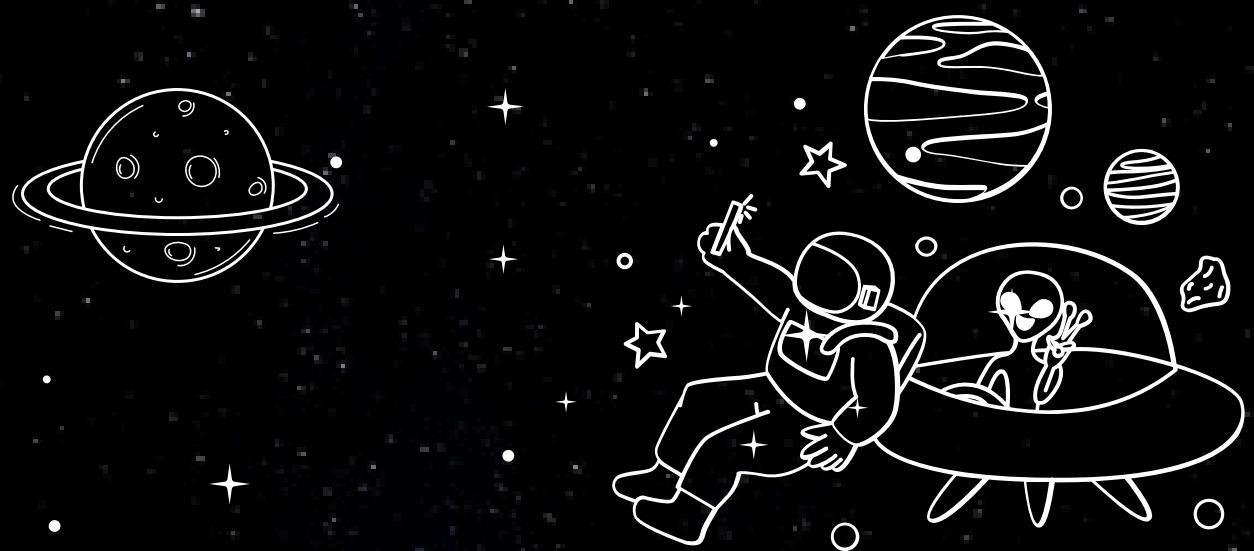
Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Horoscope: Let your creativity flow! Experiment with new ideas, whether it's through art, music, or brainstorming innovative solutions to everyday problems.

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Horoscope: Try to immerse yourself in your imagination. Write a short story, draw, or simply daydream about the future.





The End





JOURNALISM