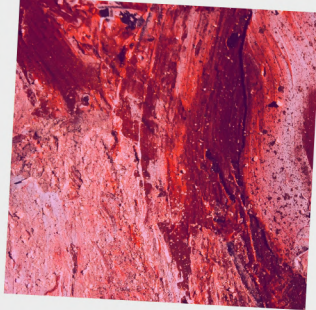




Good Luck Travelling

Dear Reader,
 With summer break right around the corner, I'm sure that many of you are excited to travel again - to visit family and friends, to go back to that one town you like so much, or to explore the open and unknown world that lies before us. Or perhaps you're more excited at the prospect of curling up in bed with a book or a movie, traversing into a world that we'll never be able to touch, hear, or smell. Or maybe, there's a more spiritual journey that awaits you, now that exams and deadlines can stop inhabiting your mind.
 But don't worry: after all the travelling, BAISmag will be back!

Rosalie - Editor in Chief



Travel Not



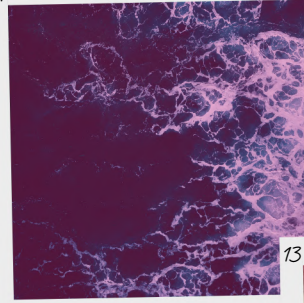
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Issue 33
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PLAN OF
VENTNOR
 AND
BONCHURCH
 Scale of 1/4 Mile

Travel Not

"Death is the aim and life is the struggle - And a man's aim has been this struggle itself." - wrote Madach.

To understand this struggle one does not go on a world-seeing journey.

To see places others haven't is a question of will.

There is no such thing as You deserve it; only the fact that You (might) will it. Ask yourself, why exactly You? Is it that You have done more? You are better than others? Luckier?

No.

Your so-called 'luck' is not an entity that accompanies only You. Nor is it Your right - with a star that shines upon that future path. Luck is what you take, what you will.

To get somewhere in, and with life, You can only use your flesh, this embodiment of Yours... the corpus of Your will.

This body is a mere tool, the thought of Yourself. Use this form to get where and what You want.

Only in this representation will You earn Your travel.

But never forget that there is no such thing as 'You deserve it' . Take it or leave it, but only Will shall be at aid on Your journey.

Anonymous

Aruba Dushi Tera



Every time I get asked where I'm from, and I reply "Aruba", almost all of the responses I get back are: "Where is Aruba? I've never heard of it." Since Aruba is not well-known, I always anticipate this, so my automatic reply would then be: "Aruba is just a small island in the Caribbean off the coast of Venezuela and it's an autonomous state within the Kingdom of the Netherlands". But truly, Aruba is much more than those mere words.

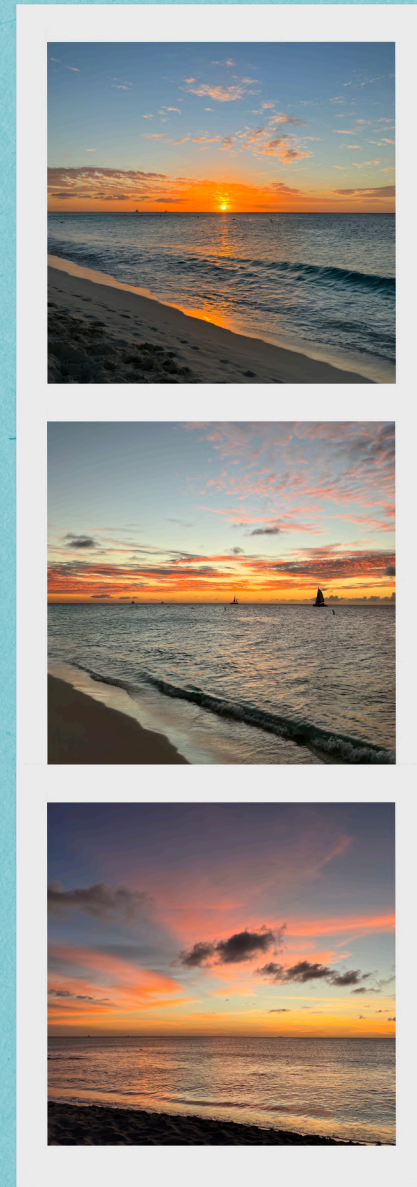
Aruba is multi-ethnic and multicultural. Throughout history, Aruba has been under colonial rule by the Spanish and Dutch, who married some of the indigenous people residing there, and also brought over African slaves. People from Latin America and Asia also immigrated to Aruba. So one can't simply distinguish who's from Aruba, because an Aruban could look like anyone from any country. This obviously influences the culture of Aruba; it's a blend of the many cultures from all the people who have lived on the beautiful island before. This is what makes the culture so unique.

Another remarkable trait of Aruba is that everyone is multilingual, they speak at least three or four languages, namely the two official

languages Dutch and 'Papiamentu', English or Spanish. The highlight here is 'Papiamentu', which is the local language that Arubans are very proud of. It's a creole language based on Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, French, and some African languages. 'Papiamentu' sounds the most similar to Spanish and Portuguese, but honestly it also doesn't really, because it's one of a kind.

Now, setting aside the basic information, on to the fun stuff that Aruba has to offer:

First and foremost, the beaches in Aruba are – in my opinion – the best in the world. Imagine sitting on soft white sand with the bluest seawater in front of you, sipping a (Virgin) Piña Colada, basking in the warmth of the sun with clear blue skies, and palm trees swaying with the gentle breeze. Sounds like heaven to me, that island life. Some must-visit beaches are Eagle beach, Arashi beach, and Baby beach. 'Mangel Halto', 'Tres Trapi', and 'Boca Catalina' are great for snorkeling. The sunsets in Aruba can't be beat, so after a full day of swimming and relaxing at the beach, stay for the sunset.



Second, the landscape of Aruba is vastly different. Aside from the amazing beaches on the southern coast, there is rugged, desert-like, and a cacti-strewn landscape on the northern coast. Here is where people go offroad-ing with their 4x4 vehicle or mountain biking to explore the off-the-beaten-path terrain. Another outdoorsy activity would be climbing 'Hooiberg', where you can

experience a panoramic view of the whole island. Also, going on hikes or bike rides at 'Parke Nacional Arikok' (National Park of Arikok). Most notable attraction there is the 'Conchi' (Natural Pool).

Third, 'Carnaval' season. At the beginning of the year, the vibrant and rich Carnaval is celebrated with various festivities, such as parades, festivals, and even 'Carnaval' pageant and music competitions. 'Parada Grandi' (Grand Parade) ends the 'Carnaval' season and it's always the wildest one. The spectators are dancing, drinking, and watching the people in their 'Carnaval' costumes in the parade.

Lastly, the best activity to do in Aruba is, of course, to eat the 'criollo' (local) food. Must tries are: 'stoba' (stew dishes), 'sopi yambo' (okra soup), 'sopi mondongo' (beef tripe soup), 'sopi oester' (oyster soup), 'pisca hasa' (fried fish), 'banana hasa' (fried plantain), 'keshi yena', 'funchi (hasa)', 'pan bati', 'pastechi', 'kroket', 'deditos', 'bolo di glas' (glass cake), 'bolo cashupete' (cashew cake), 'bolo di pistachio' (pistache cake), 'kesio' (flan). 'Sopi yuwana' (iguana soup) is a special mention because it's not sold anywhere legally, but locals find a way around it to make it, so if you ever have the chance it's a must try.

If I had to describe Aruba, it would be "warm breeze on sunny days and endless summer vibes". But words can't do Aruba justice, so you'll just have to go and experience this breathtaking island yourself!



Jenny Ho

Exploring The Netherlands Through Art

Exploring the Netherlands can be both an easy and difficult task. On one hand, the public transportation system can take you to any corner of the country. On the other, in addition to the expensive train tickets, choosing which Dutch city to visit can be a feat. However, by using Art Museums and exhibitions as your compass, you can discover beautiful cities, while witnessing the talent of the Netherlands' most creative minds.



Zwolle: Museum de Fundatie*

This museum is a combination of permanent collections and different exhibitions throughout the year. The museum carefully organizes the art collections into digestible sections and provides explanations in both Dutch and English. Make sure to climb to the top of the museum for an unexpected architectural choice. When you finish, grab some fries, browse through some concept stores, and walk along the old city walls.

The architecture of this funky museum is enough reason to visit. The museum showcases fabulous modern and contemporary artists that share the same funky vibe of the museum. If you find traditional art museums stuffy and boring, this museum is the complete opposite and the place to go. After the color overload, walk to Groningen's center and grab a drink. Feeling something more naturey, explore Groningen's hiking trails or go to the free petting zoo.



Groningen: Groninger Museum*



Amsterdam



Van Gogh Museum*

One of the most popular Museums in the Netherlands, the Van Gogh Museum is perfect for inexperienced museum goers to start their journey. The museum is a visual biography of Van Gogh, showcasing his talents and turbulent life. If you want a more in-depth experience, I recommend the multimedia tour - a €5 audio guide - to better understand Van Gogh's personal life. After the museum, stroll around Museumplein or slowly make your way to De 9 Straatjes. Make sure to annoy the Amsterdammers and be a stereotypical tourist by taking your time crossing a bike lane.



Maastricht: TEFAF

TEFAF is one of the most prestigious art shows in the world. While the tickets to the fair are expensive, and the art there even more wildly expensive, it remains an important cultural experience in the Netherlands. It is a great way to get a peak at the exclusive art world. If you (understandably) do not want to spend a lot of money to go see art which no student could ever afford, Maastricht is also home to cute galleries and to several churches that showcase skillful religious art. There is also a church that was transformed into a magnificent bookstore. Furthermore, the cute winding streets of the city and the plentiful cafe are more than welcoming to visitors.

Lelani

Easy, Cheap, And Tasty: The

Perfection Of Colombian Cuisine

There are two things that I deeply love about life: eating and travelling. However, like almost every other student, I'm deadass broke: travelling is a luxury I cannot afford. Additionally, something else I cannot afford is eating out; if I wanna get through the month, I'd rather cook. Thus, I am personally responsible for leaving the bland desert of Dutch cuisine; if I want to make my tastebuds happy, I have to initiate the journey. My first stop when I want to escape the lack of taste is generally Colombia. Why, you may ask. Well, the answer is quite simple: my partner being from this country, I have the recipes and training at hand. Here I will share with you one of her dad's recipes: frijoles. I really love cooking these red beans, because it is so easy and cheap, but still incredibly tasty. So, let's move to the recipe.



Let's start with a little list of ingredients:

- Red beans (if dry, use a handful; if in a can, go for a small can)
- 4 tomatoes (like the Roma tomatoes that you can find in any supermarket)
- 2 onions
- 2 plantains (you can find these either at the market or in any Asian supermarket)
- A branch of cilantro
- A teaspoon of cumin seeds
- A teaspoon of paprika
- Vegetable oil
- Salt
- Water

Stay focused! It's gonna be a bit long.

1. If you're using dry beans, start by letting them soak for at least 4 hours (if you can soak them overnight, it's even better).
Pro tip: add salt to the water ONLY if you have very old beans, to prevent the skin from detaching from the rest of the bean.
2. Rinse your beans thoroughly (regardless of whether it's soaked dry beans or simply a can).
3. Cut the onions.
4. Heat up some oil in a pot. Once it is hot, add your onions, cumin seeds, and paprika.
5. Chop your tomatoes and plantains.
How to peel a plantain? Cut the two extremities and then cut on the length to remove the skin.
6. Add the chopped veggies and beans to the pot with cilantro, salt and a bit of water for it not to burn.
7. Turn your stove on low heat and let it simmer for about an hour.
Just to be sure that nothing is burning, check the preparation once every 20 minutes and add more water if it looks dry.

You can serve this dish with simple rice or with arepas, a typical South American corn flatbread. And if you don't know how to make arepas, I got you covered! Here is what you will need:

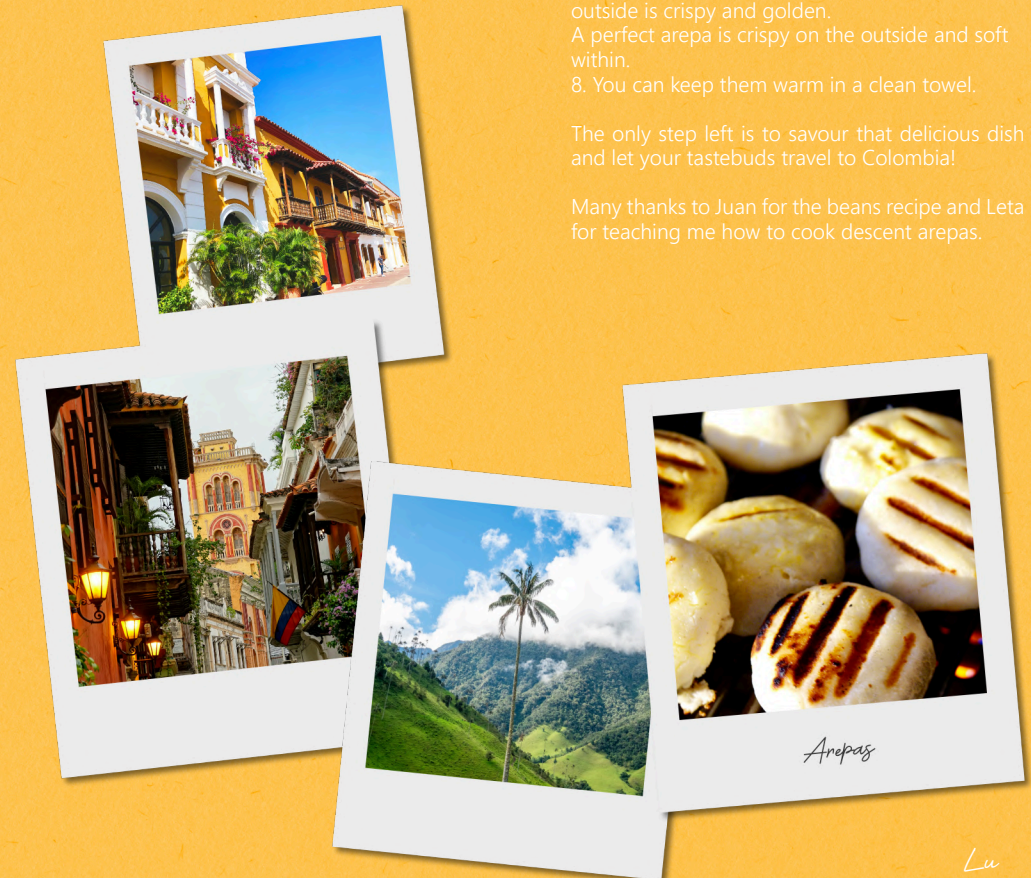
- A cup of corn flour (do NOT buy the corn flour for polenta! You can find some corn flour made for arepas in the Oriental supermarket – and regretfully this is not a sponsor)
- A cup of water
- Salt
- Vegetable oil

You'll see, on paper, arepas are super easy to make (in reality, it's a struggle: you need some training to reach that perfect round shape).

1. In a bowl, put the flour, water and salt.
2. Mix with your hands until you have a homogenous mix.
3. Separate the dough in smaller portions.
4. Form a ball with the dough and flatten it with your palms.
5. Using your fingers, round the disc.
6. Heat up a pan with a bit of oil.
7. Cook the arepas on medium heat until the outside is crispy and golden.
A perfect arepa is crispy on the outside and soft within.
8. You can keep them warm in a clean towel.

The only step left is to savour that delicious dish and let your tastebuds travel to Colombia!

Many thanks to Juan for the beans recipe and Leta for teaching me how to cook descent arepas.



Arepas

Summer Feels



Alicante

There is something truly wonderful about summer road trips. I don't know about y'all, but the feeling of getting up early one summer morning to go somewhere, anywhere, already gives me a good, warm and cozy feeling.

Two of my favorite places within my home country, Spain, are Alicante, the city where I was born, and Teruel, my father's home city. Taking road trips from Alicante to Teruel in the summer just hits different (to put it simply). You wake up, pack your bags, grab a comfy pillow, and sit comfortably in the car whilst listening to music and looking out the window at the view.

As I already mentioned, I'm from Alicante, so it's not really like I travel there, per se. But during the school year, I sometimes get caught up in schoolwork and I don't find time to truly enjoy my city like I do when it's summer. Alicante is a province in the Valencian Community situated on the south-eastern coast of Spain, so it is surrounded by beautiful beaches and coves to



Teruel

spend your whole summer in. Alicante has a variety of different beaches; there are 'normal' sand beaches, then there are pebbled beaches, and there is the famous ancient Roman fish farm called 'Baños de la Reina', where you can go swim and watch the sea life in it. The center of the city has the famous Castle of Santa Barbara, situated on Mount Benacantil, where from the top of it, you can see the beautiful view of the whole city and sea. In my opinion, it is honestly one of the prettiest places of Alicante. The city itself is vibrant, active and energetic. A city where you can walk around and enjoy viewing the port, the neighborhood of Santa Cruz filled with flowers, visit the island of Tabarca, and stroll through the famous promenade called 'la Explanada' - covered by tall palm trees and terraces on the side where you can have tasty meals wrapped with a lively ambiance. During the summer, street markets and stands are set up along the coast where you can find various items to buy like summer clothes, jewelry, beach equipment, and more. The best thing about them is that they are mostly handmade, which gives all your purchases a special uniqueness. Alicante in the summer is simply wonderful. You walk around the city center, eat some tapas, enjoy a cold drink, stroll next to the beach, and enjoy the spirited nightlife.

No matter how old I get, or how many times I experience this, there is one thing that makes summer for me in Alicante, summer. Waking up early, packing your bag and driving to the beach. Once you get to the beach, after stopping at the end of the walkway, you take your chandalas off and step on the cool sand. I don't know why, but this always feels amazing. Going to the beach early in the morning is great in many ways, like the fact that the sun does not hit your skin too strongly, but it is perfect enough to warm your body, and reflect beautifully on the sea. Another thing is the breeze. The fresh breeze coming from the sea. You can smell the saltiness and the coolness of the water in a way. This cool breeze doesn't usually last long before the strong heat hits, so you are very grateful whenever it is present. Usually, at this time there aren't a lot of people; some elderly people sitting down reading or people going for a run, so it is quieter, and you can only hear the waves crashing and the seagulls squawking. Then, you dip your feet in the water. That's it. That's all I need to be happy.

However, if you want to escape from the scorching heat that Alicante can have during the summer, Teruel is a great choice to visit instead. It is the capital city and province in Aragon, from the eastern part of Spain. During the summer, the days there are sunny and warm, but the nights are crisp and refreshing. When you walk in the city through the streets you can tell there is a story from the past within each street; from an old sign, an old-styled bar, the particular design of a door, a worn-out building... whatever the detail may be, it shows the uniqueness of the city.

'La Plaza del Torico' is the city's most famous square with a fountain situated in the middle and a small statue of a bull placed at the top of it. It is a square full of life and activity, with benches to sit on and numerous bars where you can enjoy a meal or drink whilst being in good company. The things that make this city so charming and alluring are all the historical and important buildings it holds such as the cathedral of Santa Maria de Mediavilla, the mudéjar tower of 'El Salvador', the San Pedro church, as well as tourist stops to walk through; such as the neo-mudéjar artistic construction of the staircase from the 'Ovalo', the ramparts of Teruel, the arch aqueducts and the viaduct of Fernando Hue. Lastly, there are numerous museums such as the Mausoleum of the legend of the Lovers of Teruel, the museum of the sacred arts and much more to make your visit more enriching knowledge-wise. This is a very long list of different places, I know, but they are worth visiting.

Last but not least, one of the best things about this city, in my opinion, is the gastronomy. Not only does it have spectacular ham and cheese, but also exquisite lamb, which can be either roasted or stewed, and fish which is collected from the nearby rivers such as trout, cod and eels. Teruel's gastronomy

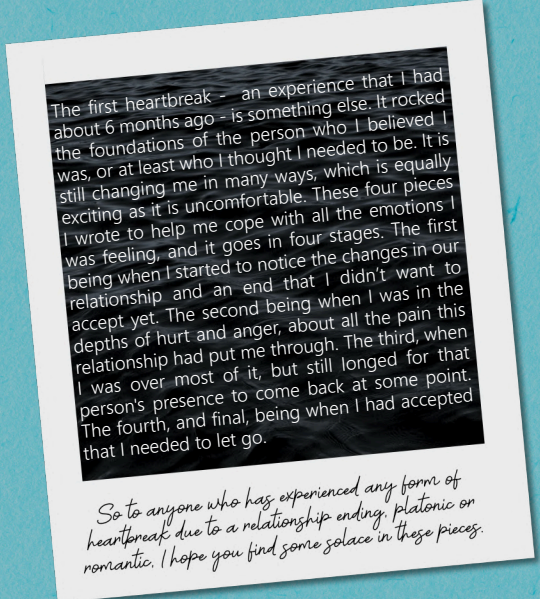
also includes sweet things such as 'guirlaches' (or nougats), the 'trenza mudéjar', which is a pastry product based on puff pastry and butter, and lastly the 'suspiros de amante', which are tasty tartlets of shortcrust pastry stuffed with cheese.

These are simply some of the many things that characterize these cities as truly unique. Both Alicante and Teruel are cities embedded with historical significance and stories, which make them even more captivating. They differ in some ways, but both possess the same home-like, welcoming, charming and refreshing spirit - which is why I love them so much.

Marina
Esteban
Jarabo



Navigating Heartbreak



The first heartbreak - an experience that I had about 6 months ago - is something else. It rocked the foundations of the person who I believed I was, or at least who I thought I needed to be. It is still changing me in many ways, which is equally exciting as it is uncomfortable. These four pieces I wrote to help me cope with all the emotions I was feeling, and it goes in four stages. The first being when I started to notice the changes in our relationship and an end that I didn't want to accept yet. The second being when I was in the depths of hurt and anger, about all the pain this relationship had put me through. The third, when I was over most of it, but still longed for that person's presence to come back at some point. The fourth, and final, being when I had accepted that I needed to let go.

So to anyone who has experienced any form of heartbreak due to a relationship ending, platonic or romantic, I hope you find some solace in these pieces.

Part 1 - the end before the end

Hi,
So today is the 16th of October,
the day after you finished your big deadline.
I've been home almost all of today - very tired and home alone.
I've been lying on the sofa since 4.
It's now 6:45, and even though I have work due tomorrow, it's been nice to have a relaxing day.
I looked it up and it takes 14 hours and 44 minutes to drive the 1,435 kilometers from here to you.
Time and distance I'd happily put in to see you.
I miss you, I really miss you.
I miss our lazy days on the sofa, binge watching a show, and falling asleep in your arms.
But, if this is how it has to be for a while until we get our lazy Saturdays (or anyday) back,
where we can watch the time slide by without worry or stress,
I'd take a million days of sitting on the sofa alone knowing our sofa days are coming.
It's starting to get cold and dark, busy and stressful here.
I know it's probably colder and darker where you are and you're probably just as stressed and busy as I am.
To be honest I don't even know why I'm writing all this down.
I guess I just miss you - I miss our lazy sofa days.
Anyways, I love you,
Talk soon X

Part 2 - Having weathered the storm

To You,

Once I had finally smoothed my seas,
You appeared at the side of the bay.
Taught me how the water was fun,
And safe to play.

I relinquished my power of seas over to you,
In trust.
I believed you could teach me how to feel safe in the water once more.

What I didn't realize was in that same breath,
I gave you the power to create riptides, swells, and hurricanes,
In my waters.

You were much more powerful than I expected,
And even more unpredictable.

I started to grow weary of you,
Your behavior, your mannerisms,
Always bracing myself for the next storm you would create.

But it was the last one,
The one where you gave me no warning,
And misled me into believing the waters were safe.

That was the storm that took me out.

And it wasn't only me,
It was everything I had built on my shores,
To keep me safe when the waters were to treacherous,
You took that down too.

When I finally awoke,
With drowning lungs,
Drowning in my sorrows, pain, confusion, and loneliness.

I still had to rebuild my shores,
Relearn how to tame my oceans,
And most of all,
How to feel safe at sea once more.

So how dare you.

How dare you try to return to my shores,
When you can't weather the storms you brought down on yourself.
How dare you try to seek a safe haven at my bay,
When you were the one who wrecked it.

I have rebuilt my shores,
Concurred my oceans,
Mastered my seas,
Without you.

And I refuse to be refuge,
Not anymore.

Part 3 - Someday

Now isn't the time I want to see you again,
But someday,
When neither of us are hurting or haunted,
By what once was.

When we can look back at our time together,
Gleefully, happily, with honor of what we taught each other,
About love, about caring for the other,
But most of all about ourselves.

When no pain or anger is lingering,
Only respect and gratitude.

I look forward to a time when we could sit in a pub,
"Chewing the fat" and get to know one another again,
Not for the same outcome as before,
Just to congratulate ourselves, and celebrate how far we've come,
As old friends.

To appreciate and see how we have implemented the lessons we taught each other,
And all the others we have learned in the meantime.

It warms my heart to think that could be possible,
Someday.



Part 4 - a change of investments

I wish I knew how to be nice to you,
Just nice.
Nothing more,
Nothing less.

But I'm still bruised,
By the hurt you caused.

I don't wish you ill,
But I don't wish you well.

Because I don't know how to wish you well,
While not caring,
While not getting involved,
While not getting dragged back into the whirlpool of emotions,
Of what we once were.

I don't want to be mean,
Or cold, or a bitch;
I don't want the role of the bitter ex in your story.

But I gave you everything I had for so long,
Exhausted all my energy on you.

That now, I'm reinvesting in myself,
I'm too cautious to invest anything,
Even wishes or hopes,
Into you.

Because those wishes and high hopes I had for you,
Made me hold on for far too long.

I held onto the investment - of us -
While it kept draining me,
Giving me sleepless nights, filled with freight,
Activating my fight or flight

So now I'm trying to release the investment,
Work my way out of my emotional debt,
And my self-neglect.

I've grown, I've changed,
I've shifted my investments into a more stable,
More beneficial economy:

The economy of me.

Anonymous





Underneath The Golden Sun

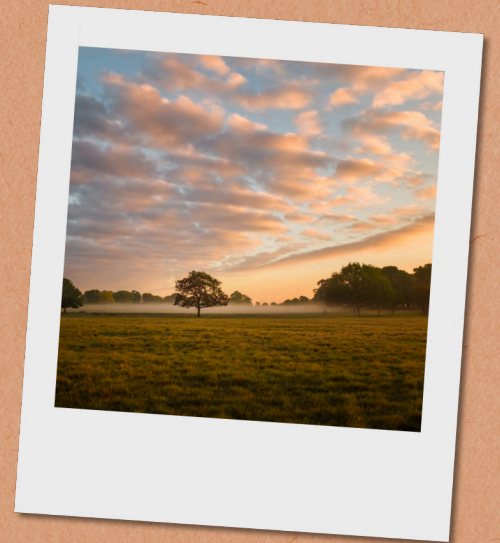


You were standing in the door opening while I was standing away from you with quite some distance between us. I could see your face, but I really had to focus and guess to see what emotion was engraved on it. However, at some point, something, somehow, kept dragging me further away from you. From quite a distance, I saw a saddened face, probably seasoned with tears pushed from the eyes as well. I was not aware of what was pulling me away, but before I knew it, you completely disappeared from my sight before I could properly console or reassure you.

Suddenly I found myself on a moving bike. I looked around, but I couldn't see anyone. The only things to be heard were seagulls in the distance and the gentle summer breeze whistling through my ears. It was weird. The bike was moving on its own and I was not even sitting on the saddle. I was just sitting on the rack of the bike. You would assume someone would be sitting in front of me trying to control the bike, but there was no one. In normal circumstances it would certainly lead to confusion and questions. Regardless, it felt calming and satisfying. Still being able to move forward without having to do much yourself or letting others do it for you felt quite liberating. The bike moved forward at a calm tempo. Not too fast and not too slow. Unimaginably perfect, especially when closing my eyes, making me smile effortlessly. Just the right speed to enjoy the moment of moving. The moment of traveling. After some time of enjoyment and feeling free, something suddenly struck my mind. The thrilling sensation of riding Underneath the Golden Sun had made me forget about everything. However, I suddenly remembered. The only thing that came to my mind: Your teary face before I got teleported on the rack of the bike.

I wish I could have said: "Don't worry, I am just going to travel." Of course, it is nothing that significant. When one goes traveling, one is expected to simply just return. However, it can often be uncertain when one returns to the point of origin. I am going on a trip, but I am not sure whether I will return to where I left you. One thing is for sure, though. I am not saying goodbye, as I am just traveling, and I will surely see you again. Surely, the accumulation of uncertainties leads to a feeling of sorrow and depression.

Whenever my departure seems to sadden you with sorrow and worry, just think of the Golden Sun, and it will surely make you at least feel a bit more at ease. It is selfish of me to say this as I know it may take an eternity, but I believe I will see you again. I may have just left you without saying a proper goodbye, but eventually we will see each other Underneath the Golden Sun, and we can endlessly travel together on the bike that accompanied me during my departure. And when that golden sunset ends everything, you can always travel back to the times we had where goodbye is a word only imagined. I will see you again in beautiful memories and you'll soon travel on the bike with me as this is not a goodbye, but a promise to each other that we are both moving from the door opening to our end destination; Underneath the Golden Sun.



Traveling Amid The First Year Of Covid In China

part 1: The Flight and the Quarantine

In the summer of 2020, my trip to my home in Beijing didn't start on the day of the flight, but with a WeChat program that would issue me a green health code with the icon of a small airplane in the middle. 15 days before my flight I needed to report my health situation on a WeChat program every day until the day of my flight. If I hadn't had any covid-related symptoms, then there would be an icon of an airplane in the middle of the health code—the permission of boarding. Compared with my Chinese passport in dark red, the green health code is virtually a golden passport for traveling to China.

During those 15 days, I was working to finish my semester and forgot to report to the program twice. So, I didn't manage to get the airplane icon on the day before my flight. I was worried as hell and started calling many agencies. I called the Chinese airline company, the Chinese embassy in the Netherlands, and Schiphol airport to ask them about whether I could still board without an airplane icon ready. The first two said no and the third call gave me hope. The Schiphol staff said they didn't know about it, but they could direct me to the airline company's crew working at the airport. In the final call, the crew said that it was fine if you forgot to report one or two days only. They would be lenient about it. Without the airplane icon I could still take the airplane. I was so happy.

On the day of my flight, I arrived at the airport, went through the security check, and walked to the gate. From far away, I sensed that the gate for my flight had a quite different vibe from the other gates I passed. It looked much whiter than usual. Waiting at the gate, many passengers had equipped themselves by wearing a full-scaled protective suit, a pair of covid safety goggles, a pair of medical gloves, and of course, a mask. White, white, and white. I felt like I was at a hospital rather than an airport. I didn't even know there was such a method to protect oneself on an occasion like this. It was an eye-opener for me.

The same scene repeated itself. This time it was the flight crew. After I boarded, I realized all the crew members wore the same—full-scale protective suits, safety goggles, medical gloves, and masks. White, white, and white. The crew members wrote their names on the back of the protective suit to distinguish themselves from each other. Some of them put cute drawings alongside their names, a cat, a heart, a dog. I could smell a strong sense of

sanitizers even behind my mask. The eleven hours' flight wasn't as comfortable as how it was before the pandemic. I felt a stiff spine and a sour back. Yet I doubt my uncomfortable feeling was nothing compared with the passenger sitting next to me who had equipped himself or herself fully and didn't drink or eat anything during the flight. Not a single drop of water. Many people adopted this strategy to protect themselves in a sealed environment during the flight to minimize the risk. I wonder if the aircraft crew adopted the same strategy.

Eleven hours later, the airplane landed in Guangzhou, and I already felt the humid and hot weather at the airport. The passengers got off the plane one after another, so the airport hall suddenly looked white. The hall was so empty that I suspected passengers from our flight occupied this huge airport. Some passengers started to take off their protective suits, but there were more people in white waiting for us. All the airport staff were wearing protective suits in the empty hall. Even whiter. The whole scene looked like a futuristic disaster movie where almost all human beings died out and only a few left to fight for the survival of the human race. A few of the staffs' tasks were to instruct us where to go. "This way, this way," they waved their arms. We followed their directions and then it was the time for queuing. We lined up for the passport check and for two covid checks, one nasal test and one blood test. After all the queues and lines, I arrived at the airport exit. A red banner hanging on the wall reminded me that the difficult journey to home was almost over. It wrote:

Welcome home! 欢迎回家!

A bittersweet feeling arose inside of me. I almost felt like this banner was an ironic compliment of how tough it was for all the passengers who made through the journey so far and would make it through the following 14-day quarantine. The complicated process was only half completed. All the passengers lined up again under the instruction to get onto the bus that would drive us to different quarantine hotels. Before getting to the queue to wait for the bus, everyone needed to line up for the personal information registration. When it was my turn, the staff in white asked me a question that I didn't catch. When I asked him to repeat the sentence, I subconsciously pulled down my mask to make myself sound louder. Apparently, he got frightened of my behavior and leaned backward, "you don't need to

take off your mask to talk." I wore my mask again, then his body went back to a normal position. "Go to bus 3."

Nobody knew where the bus would drive us to, which district, and which hotel. We were like products on an assembly line about to be dispatched—after the safety standards control measure, not knowing which warehouse we would be sent to. Thirty minutes later we arrived at a deluxe-looking hotel. We lined up again in the reception hall for checking-in and to pay the self-afforded quarantine fees. My room

wasn't bad, a spacious double-bed room with an elephant-shaped plastic slide for kids. From the window, I could see a small plaza where people in the neighborhood could take a short walk in. I already started to miss my freedom as I couldn't leave the room in the next two weeks in any single step.

My quasi-prison life started with a long, sweet sleep to get over the jet lag. Everyday the staff wearing protective suits knocked on my door five times. Three times for food and two times for covid tests. At the time of every breakfast, lunch, and dinner, they knocked on the door and put the food on a stool in front of the door. Twice a day,

they knocked on the door and walked in to take the PCR test in the morning and afternoon, morning and afternoon.

At the beginning, I felt extremely lonely and felt my quarantine life was endless and pointless. But the adaptive nature of humans was so versatile that I slowly got used to this kind of life—not talking to any human in person except for saying "thank you" to the staff five times per day, not seeing any sign of human life except for watching someone occasionally walking on the plaza from my window. I started to do sports every day to help me fall asleep quicker at night.

The weather in Guangzhou can easily make one drip with sweat. I discovered

that the delivery services were working at the hotel, so I bought three books online, one ethnography written by a Chinese

anthropologist, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and *The Brave New World*.

I spent most time reading, watching TV dramas, and chatting with my friends and family. Slowly, I became less aware of time. Is today Monday or Sunday? Is today the sixth day or seventh day of quarantine? It seemed that time stopped and only repeated itself by five door-knocking sounds per day. It seems that I can live okay with so little real-life connection to the outside world. Sometimes, I missed that kind of connection, so I secretly opened my door when there was no staff and let the heat wave in Guangzhou storm into my room. Breathing in the humid air from the hallway, and hearing that the

elevator nearby was beeping, I confirmed that the outside world was still running.

The final day of quarantine came quicker than I expected, and none of the thirty covid test results I took was positive. I was granted a Guangdong province health code, a green one. A free certificate. I didn't go to my family in Beijing immediately and decided to stay in Guangzhou to explore the city. When I was finally able to walk in downtown Guangzhou, noises, traffic, and crowds of people unstoppably stimulated my sense of hearing and sight. I had a feeling that I had entered a covid-free bubble zone. Life there was so absurdly and unrealistically real. Welcome home.

Ruihan Zhang

Postcards To No One

Carte Postale

Dear No One,

Thank you for leaving. You have more fun travelling, and my life is better without you in it.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française



Carte Postale

Dear No One,

Let's run away together.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française



Carte Postale

Dear No One,

I know that behind sunburned gates, adventure awaits. But I cannot find the key.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française



Carte Postale

Dear No One,

How do I tell my lovely, adorable, excited host family that I never want to eat pasta again?

Love, Rosalie



Carte Postale

Dear No One,

I want to go home.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française

Carte Postale

Dear No One,

Everything smells weird. Tastes off. Looks strange. Feels abnormal. I love it.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française



Carte Postale

Dear No One,

I'm here again. Same forest, same route.

And, I got lost again.

Love, Rosalie

Fabrication Française



Rosalie

Home

It had been a long two weeks.

By the time he got home, night had fallen and enveloped the forest in a blanket of darkness. The young man walked over the path that led to their cabin in the woods, guided only by the light of the moon.

Will shivered. When his travel had started, he had been accompanied by the light and warmth of the sun. But that had long since ebbed away, replaced by the darkness and cold of the night. The chilly air ran right through him and he pulled his jacket more tightly around his shoulders. Still, he could feel that the hairs on his arms were raised, as the bite of the wind left its mark. His blood ran cold through his veins, and his bones were chilled.

But he was almost home.

In the watery white-silver glow that the moonlight splashed down, he could see how fallen leaves littered the walkway, bathing it in dark red and orange. Will stepped on them with a satisfying crunch. A lantern stood illuminating on the veranda, and the familiar yellow glow made the little cabin feel warm and inviting. A flower pot to the right of the door - which hadn't been there when he had left - was filled with pink and yellow chrysanthemums.

The metal of the doorknob was cold against his palm and he twisted it with ease, entering the dark living room. Will stepped lightly over the threshold, pulling the door in a soft click behind him. He hung his jacket on one of the hooks on the wall, his backpack next to it. The cabin was completely silent, no sounds emerging from the forest either. It was an unholy hour, but Will suppressed the habit of making coffee. He was tired and didn't want to risk waking up Alyss.

So instead, he carefully walked through the living room, towards the bedroom, avoiding all the spots he knew would crack. He opened the door and closed it again, silently and slowly. He was greeted by another way of coolness that went right through him, making him shiver once again. He loosened his belt and laid it on the nightstand next to his side of the bed. A sliver of moonlight snuck past the curtains, into the room, and onto his chest and shoulders as he changed into his pyjamas. Then, he lifted the covers, laid down underneath them and smoothed them down again, making sure as little as possible of Alyss' body heat would escape. Will carefully rolled onto his side and looked at her. His wife. Her features were soft, her chest moved up and down slowly, and she looked peaceful

in the single beam of moonlight that illuminated her face. Her hair was messy from the sleeping, loose, rather than braided, like normally. But it was his Alyss.

Just as he yawned, his wife's eyes opened and she turned her head towards him. Her eyes were a soft silver in the moonlight, and for a moment, Will was speechless. She smiled.

"Hey." Her voice was soft, and full of sleep, but also sounded relieved.

"Hey." He grinned back, pressing a kiss on her forehead after. "I'm sorry for waking you up."

She laughed softly.

"No, you're not," she replied, her soft lips still pulled up into a smile. "You're sorry you didn't come home sooner."

Will's lips were now pulled into a smile as well, and he played with one of the strings of her hair.

"I am."

The tip of her finger softly caressed his jaw, massaging the tense muscles.

"Are you okay?"

Will's hand caught her finger. He shook his head and sighed.

"It's just been a long two weeks."

Alyss pulled her hand loose and aligned his face, stroking his messy hair out of the way.

"But now you're home."

She leaned in, so her forehead rested against his. They closed their eyes.

"For what?" he replied, his voice low and soft.

"For always coming back to me." Her voice wavered, revealing the words left unspoken. Alyss smiled lovingly at him, her soft hands finding their way to his face once more. She leaned in and landed a loving and intense kiss on his cold lips, then another on the tight muscles in his jaw.

"You're home now."

He wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her close, gently rubbing her arm. Despite the heaviness in his stomach, it fluttered at the feeling of her body pressed against his. She sunk into the warmth of his side. Her touch made the room warmer somehow, the future within its walls seeming a little less bleak.

Alyss was right, Will realised.

He was home.

