

2023/2024
Edition 2



Nuclear Energy: A Threat to Communities? **2**

Travelogue: Into Vedanta **3**

The Art of Making Music From Music **8-9**

Sleeping Techniques of Athletes **14**



NUCLEAR ENERGY: A THREAT TO COMMUNITIES OR CLIMATE CHANGE HERO?

Our world has been divided on the issue of nuclear power ever since the first commercial nuclear power plants opened in the 1950s. Decades and many years of research later, we are brought to today – nuclear power plants provide around 10% of the world's electricity, sourced from 440 power plants worldwide. While nuclear power is considered clean, many hesitate to rely on it, considering past events. Nonetheless, the technology behind nuclear power plants has gotten safer and safer over the years, which forces us to ask: are nuclear plants safe to rely on? Or are we setting ourselves up for potential destruction?

Before diving deeper, we must establish a clear difference between nuclear energy and nuclear power. Nuclear energy is the energy found inside an atom's core (or nucleus) and exists all around us. Nuclear power are controlled reactions that stem from nuclear energy. Plants use these reactions to generate electricity. Most power plants use the reaction called nuclear fission, a process involving releasing energy during the splitting of an atom's core, usually plutonium or uranium, into two smaller units. These reactions generate heat that produces the steam used to generate the electricity we use throughout the day.

In the past couple of decades we have observed some rapid changes in the environment around us – the summers keep getting hotter and hotter, winds are getting stronger, and extreme weather has been challenging communities worldwide. Climate change is undeniably one of the biggest threats to our existence and the survival of our planet. However, nuclear power may be one of the ways we can battle it.

The use of nuclear power plants brings many advantages. Firstly, they are considered a clean energy source since, during their operation, the plants do not produce any emissions or harmful greenhouse gases, meaning it is 'cleaner' to use/burn. In addition to that, nuclear plants are, as Our World in Data describes, one of the safest energy sources in the world – millions die every year due to pollution caused by fossil fuels. In contrast, only a small group of people, in comparison, has died as a result from nuclear accidents. Furthermore, nuclear power plants have a high-capacity factor: the plants require less maintenance and can operate throughout the year without any limitations, which is a significant difference considering wind and solar plants have limited timeframes during which they are the most efficient. Finally, the use of nuclear power plants might aid in unburdening our planet, as they could potentially replace the fossil fuel plants that prove to be doing severe damage to our planet.

Furthermore, nuclear power plants have a high-capacity factor: the plants require less maintenance and can operate throughout the year without any limitations, which is a significant difference considering wind and solar plants have limited timeframes during which they are the most efficient. Finally, the use of nuclear power plants might aid in unburdening our planet, as they could potentially replace the fossil fuel plants that prove to be doing severe damage to our planet.

The development of nuclear power plants brought on new challenges. In the last decade, several social movements arose protesting their use. One of the main arguments against nuclear stems from the produced radioactive waste. Now radioactive waste isn't a massive problem since it is safely contained, however if it were to leak into the outside world it could have devastating effects on the environment around the plants. We can observe these effects today by looking at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear accident. As J. Vives i Batlle reports in his study, "sea-water contamination near Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant has decreased," however, it "remain[s] elevated." Another important disadvantage is the high cost of building these plants and lengthy construction process. On average it takes around 6 to 8 years to build a nuclear power plant (according to Hannah Ritchie, author of the article '*How Long Does It Take to Build a Nuclear Reactor*') and the average cost is around \$15 billion. Furthermore, the construction of these plants requires skilled workers, ranging from construction to the math behind the operations, which prolongs the entire construction process.

Whatever the pros and cons, our world needs urgent actions to combat climate change. Nuclear power plants might be a way to redress the impact of fossil fuels and limit their usage. Their greatest strength is undoubtedly generating large amounts of electricity without harming our environment; nuclear power plants are one of the cleanest electricity sources in the world. Nevertheless, there is a certain danger lurking around this matter, especially when it comes to radioactivity exposure. In this case, it is important to realize that radioactivity is all around us and in the case of these plants, it is controlled and watched, whereas in our 'normal' world it is uncontrolled. Ultimately, it is a decision to be made and carefully considered by our governments. We can argue about the dangers of nuclear accidents and radioactivity, but at the end of the day it is just like comparing it to why we fly airplanes or drive cars.

Calista Maříková



TRAVELOGUE: INTO VEDANTA

Deep within the mountains of India resides a small village populated with only a small group of monks who hold an ancient closely guarded secret. They go on about their life in sheer isolation, protecting these ancient ways, following the path of their ancestors. Just kidding, none of that is true.

About 2 hours outside of Mumbai, next to a village next to a town, lies a modern and peaceful complex. Founded back in 1988, the Vedanta Academy is not a set of shanty huts in the heights of the Himalayas, but rather a gated community of 10 buildings with working AC, running water, electricity, amazing sanitation, modern amenities, and everything else a member of the modern world may want or need.

Walking along the Academy grounds, you're starkly reminded you're no longer in the Western world. You're surrounded by a beautiful panoramic backdrop of mountains and fog, surrounding and isolating you in your little utopia, the friendly smiling faces of your fellow community members offering a stark contrast to the cold facades of strangers you'd pass on a day-to-day basis, or the general feeling of peace, calm, and tranquility that is always out of reach in the hustle and bustle of school, work, relationships, and everything else that can weigh a person down.

However, the Academy isn't about prancing back and forth, but for study. As the name would suggest, the Vedanta Academy studies and teaches its pupils the philosophy of Vedanta. Based on the Vedas, the earliest sacred literature of India, it aims to answer the questions of the afterlife and human fulfillment.

The basis of Vedanta makes a vital distinction in the makeup of all people and, as a matter of fact, all living creatures. Each and every human is made up of 3 parts - the body, mind, and intellect. The body is simply an instrument of action, and so its role is to enact the will of the individual. The important actors are the mind and the intellect. Both fight for control over the body. The mind is brash and instant. It houses your likes & dislikes, impulses, and desires. Its polar opposite is the intellect, which reasons, judges, and decides. Most people in the modern world only use their mind and abandon their intellect. They have a mentality of "I want to do this," "I don't like that." The result is a tragic life driven by impulses with no reasoning.

This never-ending hunger starts when you're young, however, there it stays harmless as the stakes are not that high, only deciding on one's love for ice cream and distaste for vegetables. However, with time, the stakes increase, and following their impulses can have life-altering ramifications. As people get older, following their compulsion without reasoning can lead to poor financial choices as people buy the first thing they see. It can lead to affairs as people get bored and chase their primal instincts, or it can be a cause of addiction as it becomes easier to chase a high instead of dealing with reality. This chase that most of us indulge is due to the mind. It's like a wildfire; it is never satisfied. It always wants more and will never stop. Just as a wildfire never says to itself "I think I've had enough, 9 burned houses is enough for me," the mind is also never satisfied. After you impulsively buy one thing, the mind wants a second, and then another, and then another. For a real example of someone who chased and chased and chased and only found despair, take John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the Standard Oil Company, the first American billionaire, and once the richest man on Earth. Once, he was asked by a reporter, "How much money is enough?" He calmly replied, "Just a little bit more."

Vedanta, over the span of a three-year degree of study, discipline, yoga, and community service, teaches its students the art of empowering their intellect and using it to control their mind. This balance can be summarized in a metaphor as such: the mind and the intellect are such as a parent and a child. The mind, personified by the child, is allowed to play with free reign. However, the intellect, personified by the parent, is constantly watching over it. When the mind wants to engage in harmless activities, such as maintaining a healthy and well-considered relationship or buying a long-desired item without it comprising other more vital needs, the intellect allows it. However, when the child reaches for the scissors, the parent steps in and reigns in the child, making sure it doesn't hurt itself or others.

The control of the mind and the building of the intellect is a lifelong skill in which Vedanta specializes. The founder of the Vedanta Academy, Avula Parthasarathy, put it best when he said: "Living is an art, a skill, a technique. You need to learn and practice it as you would a game or musical instrument." And it is exactly this that the Academy teaches you to do.

Daniel Adamec



OG CHRONICLE INTERVIEW: MR. DEVINE

Michael Devine is teaching English at Open Gate for the sixth year. He used to teach History as well, which was his favourite subject in school. What convinced him to move to the Czech Republic from the United States? Which books, movies, and music is he interested in? He answered those and many more questions as we sat together for this year's second *OG Chronicle* interview.

Was teaching always your dream job or did you think about studying something else?

As a young child, I had a non-realistic dream of playing basketball, then when I was older, during my time in high school, I liked studying History, and I wanted to study it, but I did not know what I wanted to do with it. I moved to Europe after college and teaching was one of the easier jobs for me to get at the time, so I started to teach, I began to like it, and year after year, it's what I kept doing. In my twenties, I became interested in literature more, so it was a natural transition then. It was never my dream, but it was what was available to me at every step of my life.

You teach English and you used to teach History. Were those your favourite subjects in school?

History definitely. I always liked English, and I took some literature classes at university, but it was not after I finished school, and I had more time to do what I wanted to do when I started to read on my own. With literature, it was something I did on my own.

How many schools have you taught at?

I have taught at two Czech high schools, before that I taught in America at a language school. I began to teach mostly English as a second language, and that was to older students. But here I taught only at high schools.

Did you or do you see differences in American and Czech schools, in general?

I think it is hard to say, because my experience teaching in America was with college students, who were older and abroad, they were not American. My only experience at a high school in America was when I was a student, and the experience in the Czech Republic is only at schools like Open Gate, which I do not think Open Gate is typical, so it is hard to compare. I went to a school, which in America was not really big, but in my graduating class we had one hundred thirty kids, so in the school it was something around six hundred people, like I said, it is hard to compare.

Is it more challenging for you to teach younger students (e.g. Prima) or the older ones (e.g. Kvinta)?

It depends. I think the younger students have more energy, sometimes they have a better attitude. With the older kids it takes a little bit more to motivate them, but that being said, I enjoy the topics more with the older students, because you go more in depth with the topics. Both have their positives and negatives, like everything.



https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Gate_-_gymnázium_a_základní_škola#/media/Soubor:Open_Gate_-_gymnázium_a_základní_škola.JPG



How did you end up in the Czech Republic?

It is because of my wife, who is Czech. Originally, I moved here by myself, because after college I have studied for a semester in London, and I wanted to live in Europe again. I met a lot of people from Czechia in the United States when I was a university student at the time, and I did not know where to go, but because I knew all these people here, I chose Czech Republic. Through this network of people I met my wife, we lived in America together for four or five years and then we returned. If my wife was not Czech, I probably would not have come back.

How many years have you lived here?

Fifteen years.

Do you have a favourite book?

No. Typically I like 20th century American literature – Hemingway, Fitzgerald...

We read a lot of books in our English classes. You as a teacher read these books each year again and again, so is it still entertaining, or does it become boring?

We try to give it variety. We have a list of books from which we can choose for each year group. I think the ideal number of years is three, the first year you figure it out, then the second and the third year are perfect, but the fourth year is when you start to get a little bored. It is a good question, and you are totally right, we try to switch it up. Because as a teacher if you are doing the same thing over and over it can get boring.

What about music?

That is more diverse. I listen mostly to older music from 60's, 70's, also to classical music, jazz... When I work, I like listening to quieter music.

And movies?

Kind of similar, I try to make it diverse. I keep a spreadsheet of all the movies I watch. If I see that lately I have been watching movies from a specific time, director, country, I intentionally choose something different. The only genre that I am not a fan of is horror, but if it is good movie, I will watch it.

Ondřej Galyáš



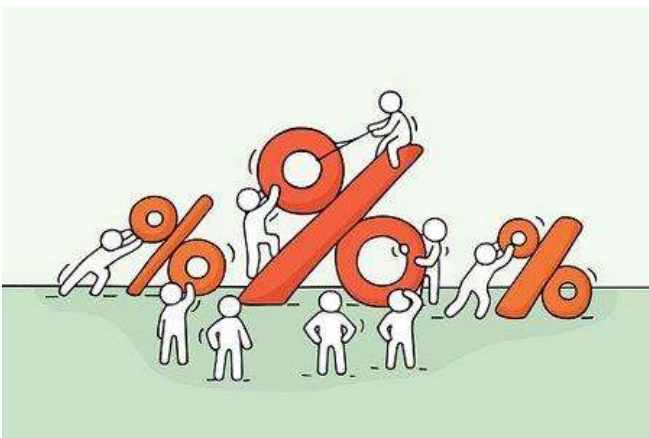
<https://aaww.org/texts-and-authors-for-teaching-asian-american-literature/>



CRISIS CORNER: CAN YOU COMPREHEND INFINITY?

Do you recall your favourite topic from school that, despite the occasional struggles, held a special place in your heart? For me, it was percentages, an interesting favourite topic amidst my somewhat tumultuous relationship with mathematics. It was about 5-6 years ago, and we started learning about abstract mathematics. I was, and still am sometimes partially opposed to this abstract branch of math. During that time, we shifted to percentages, the tangible world of statistics. I was always glad when we did something like statistics. It felt less hypothetical, more concrete.

However, even percentages can become abstract. But I did not look deeper. Perhaps it was because I felt like I could finally understand and cling to something. But even that something can be explored more thoroughly. If you decide to explore it, perhaps you'll find more options, more ways to approach that problem, or perhaps you'll find out that sometimes, you don't, can't and won't ever get the complete picture of that problem with percentages. The problem is that percentages are inherently tied to the finite, so they operate in tangible amounts. In many ways, infinity is an exciting area in math because it is here where mathematics meets philosophy most often. Here is where we question what we can truly comprehend. And in some scenarios, we don't, can't, and won't ever comprehend it. This is the Crisis Corner, and this is Infinity. Will you comprehend it?



<https://www.freeimages.com/premium-clipart/sketch-of-working-little-people-with-big-percent-sign-4883791>

Now, let's deconstruct this infinity. Imagine you're lining up objects in a row. It could be books on a shelf, or some numbers on a line. When you line them up, you put one object after another, creating an order. Imagine you keep going, adding more and more objects to the line. No matter how many objects you've already lined up, you can always add one more. This process goes on forever, without stopping. So, in a sense, ordinal infinity is like the idea of reaching the end of this infinite line. But the thing is that there is no end. Even though you keep adding more and more objects, there's always another object after the one you just added. It's an endless line that stretches out forever, without ever reaching a final object. In math, we use ordinal numbers to talk about the order or position of objects in these endless lines. Ordinal infinity represents the idea that no matter how far you go down this line, there's always something more to add, and you never run out of positions to fill. So, ordinal infinity is like the never-ending line where you can keep adding more and more objects, and there's always another spot to fill, no matter how far you go. It's the idea of endlessness, where the line stretches out infinitely, without ever coming to an end.

Understanding both concepts, and in general understanding infinity, can be quite challenging, but I think that that's precisely the point of abstract thinking—it pushes the boundaries of our comprehension. Infinity adds to this complexity; after all, grappling with the infinite stretches the limits of our imagination and challenges our intuition.

Now, there is this thing called a paradox. A paradox is (and I thank my TOK class for this) something like a statement that tends to contradict itself and common sense.



However, upon a closer look, it can contain a more profound truth or a much more complicated logic. And one of the most famous paradoxes is known as the liar paradox. Imagine that you have a statement that says "This Statement is False." Well, that's easy, right? It states that it is false; hence, it must be true. But if the statement is true, then it must be false. But if it's false, then it must be true. So, there is no clear-cut answer because every answer goes against the statement, leading to another answer. It's probably one of the best-known paradoxes to date. So, what if I were to tell you that there are many other paradoxes regarding infinity? It makes sense if we think just how infinite an abstract concept is, so there are bound to be loopholes here and there for paradoxes. And at the core of Infinite Paradoxes stands Zeno.

Born around 490 BCE in Elea (that's an ancient city-state), Zeno was a guy in ancient Greece who was devoted to paradoxes. He became a paradoxical thinker thanks to his mentor, Parmenides, as Zeno became his disciple. See, Zeno lived in a time when Greek civilization was blossoming. People were thirsty for knowledge, eager to uncover the mysteries of the universe. And that's where Zeno comes in, he saw this hunger for understanding and thought, "Hey, why not stir the pot?"

And so, he did. Zeno came up with these mind-bending paradoxes that transcended his time, as they still puzzle humanity to this very day. His ideas were a slap in the face to the assumptions and beliefs of his fellow Greeks. I like to think of him as "the first troll" of philosophy, followed by Diogenes, Socrates and many more. Nevertheless, I digress; we don't really know much about Zeno's personal life.

There are a lot of stories about him—but there really is nothing that is confirmed. But even though Zeno might be a bit of a mystery, he left a mark on the world of philosophy that's still felt today.

I realized that perhaps the answers we seek are forever beyond our reach. Infinity, after all, is a concept born from the depths of our human imagination—a symbol of our quest to comprehend the incomprehensible, to grasp the ungraspable. But in our pursuit of understanding, we often find ourselves confronted with the reality that some truths are simply beyond our capacity to comprehend. Infinity has a boundless depth and an unfathomable complexity; it honestly may forever elude our attempts at full comprehension. And yet, it is in this very recognition of our limitations that we find recognition that, in the face of the infinite, we are nothing but a tiny speck adrift in an endless sea of uncertainty. And so, perhaps one day, we may catch a fleeting glimpse of the true nature of infinity. But until then, we should embrace the mystery, because it is in the pursuit of the unknowable that we find the essence of what it means to be human. But now I want to ask you. What do you think infinity is? Or more so, what is your infinity? I hope this mentally insane piece of writing has left you with something to ponder, and I eagerly await your response. After all, each of you is as unique as infinity itself.

This is the crisis corner, where every crisis throws us into an infinite search for answers. Help.

Mikuláš Bolcek



<https://stock.adobe.com/cz/images/bright-abstract-drawing/284573899>



THE ART OF MAKING MUSIC FROM MUSIC

I have written about music sampling in the OG Chronicle before, but that took a more negative look on the current trend of pop stars sampling older and nostalgia-infused music in order to gain hits. While I did comment on how sampling can be used well and artistically, I do not feel like I properly expressed my love for the art of sampling, which, when done correctly and with an artful intention in mind, can yield incredible and inspiring results. Sampling music in your own music will always ultimately be as effective as the effort you put into it, and some artists go above and beyond, making that sampling the central idea behind their music. This article is more of a love letter to my favourite projects that are entirely based around sampling than anything else, and I hope that me indulging in some uncritical praise will inspire some of you to check out these projects, because they truly deserve your attention.

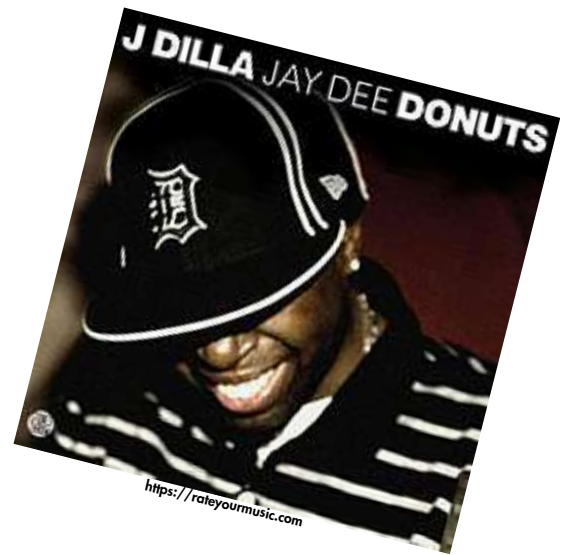
In 2004, MF DOOM had what may just be the best individual year in Rap history, releasing three albums, two of which are considered masterpieces, or at least close to being. Releasing something considered a masterpiece is generationally rare, releasing two is nearly unheard of, releasing two in the same year is a day in MF DOOM's life. Those two albums, MM..FOOD and Madvillainy, a collaboration between DOOM and producer Madlib, create the first layer of our focus on music based on sampling. Being Hip-hop albums, they obviously feature MF DOOM rapping over sampled beats, so we cannot fully say that the albums are fully sample-based. However, where they differ from other Hip-hop albums is the number of samples used and how often they actually take over the songs. Madvillainy in specific is lauded for its ability to create a smooth and cohesive experience, where it feels like all the samples, no matter how chaotic, bizarre, or abstract they may seem, still connect to each other seamlessly.

My favourite example is the way the end of Accordion teases the beginning of the following song, Meat Grinder, which ultimately is not even the main beat on that song. On MM..FOOD this is even more clear as most of the samples (and DOOM's rapping) involve, well, food. In fact, the middle portion of it, from Poo-Putt Platter to Fig Leaf Bi-Carbonate, is purely instrumental with samples that all revolve around eating. Adding in DOOM's unorthodox flow and extremely verbose vocabulary, it all culminates in two projects that thrive on entertaining you through the element of surprise, as well as genuinely skilled rapping and beat-making.

Staying with Hip-hop but going two years into the future and removing vocals from the equation, we get J Dilla's Donuts. Though its reputation as the swan song for a legendary producer before his untimely death at 32, merely three days after its release, precedes it, Donuts is an excellent instrumental Hip-hop album, partly owed to its self-awareness of being one. Similarly to Madvillainy, it is a chaotic project that seems to pick its sonic palette out of any and every direction it can, but its range does not take away from the pure love letter to Hip-hop that it is. Samples of other Rap songs appear constantly, vocals coming in and hyping themselves up but ultimately no rapping is fully heard on the album. Examples of Hip-hop songs being sampled includes The Beastie Boys being sampled on The New and Dilla sampling B.R. Gunna's Do Ya Thing (on which he was featured as a rapper!) on U-Love. As other writers have pointed out, this could be Dilla invoking the concept of "beat tapes", tapes that are given to rappers from which they choose beats to rap over, but as the creative direction for an entire album. This allows the instrumentals to breathe and having the freedom to go into weird directions for its 44-minute runtime and it is a pure testament to the range of the Rap genre and J Dilla as a producer.



My last example is an album whose scope music listeners are still digesting to this day, and which is perhaps the greatest example of how to combine accessibility and technical prowess in music. It is the debut album from Australian electronic duo The Avalanches, *Since I Left You*. On a pure listening level, the album is a joyful journey around the world that is danceable to the max. This is only aided by the album's cohesive and seamless transitions between each song, which gives it the feeling of an immersive DJ set that further encourages you to dance and enjoy yourself. On a technical level, even a slightly concentrated listen will reveal the bonkers volume of samples on the album. It is not the case that the songs on the project are made up of one or two samples that are twisted throughout, instead the samples act more like individual instruments in the orchestral arranging of all the samples that the group uses. To use just one example, according to the database WhoSampled, the opening title track contains... 17 individual samples in its 4-minute runtime, and the rest of the 18-song tracklist maintains this level of density. It is a marvel that feels truly accessible to be marvelled at by anyone who comes across it, meaning that everyone can find a song off this album to enjoy. Whether it is the unparalleled cheeriness of the opening title track, the absurdist comedy of *Frontier Psychiatrist*, or the endless disco party that is *Live at Dominoes*, you will be hard-pressed to find a single person gloomy enough to not let the life-affirming energy of this project take over them for the hour that the LP takes to listen to.



One of the things that I find most important to stress about music sampling is that even these examples I have provided, often considered some of the best examples of sample-heavy music, really only scratch the surface of what is possible with the transformation of other pieces of music. Plunderphonics, a genre that is defined by taking older music and creating new music out of it and under which *Since I Left You* falls, has only gotten easier to produce with the openness of the internet and the ease with which one can find a sample, and play around with it in an ever-increasing multitude of ways. This can even approach more conceptual territory, as evidenced by projects such as *Himawari Gazou* by Weather Forecast or *Everywhere at the End of Time* by The Caretaker, both massive, long, avant-garde projects that use their nostalgia-inducing samples to create terrifying soundscapes in a unique way that would not be possible with other instruments on their own. All this to say, sampling is yet another beautifully human expression of the love that we have of music and how it transforms over time and creates new music purely out of the inspiration that musicians find within it, continuing the endless cycle of creation and inspiration that we as creative beings are destined to keep up.



R.I.P. MF DOOM, R.I.P. J Dilla

Ivan Pavlovec



WHY THE ABUSED BECOME ABUSERS

The effects that abuse has on one's brain are immense. It changes the way you view and react to certain situations emotionally. It also causes trauma to the person being abused which later on has many other negative impacts such as certain mental illnesses (PTSD or C-PTSD) or in general fear of it happening to them again. So why is it that one-third of people who experience abuse as a child become abusers themselves later on in life?

Experiencing abuse at such a young age, when the brain is still not even fully developed, can be confusing since the victims do not understand what is being done to them. The children being abused do not know what abuse is, which makes them think it is a normal thing to do when you love someone. That leads to love and abuse forming a certain connection in one's brain as the person that is supposed to love them unconditionally abuses them. This all evolves into them needing to either work hard to 'reprogramme' their brain not to connect them and view them as something that belongs together or ending up in a relationship where they are the abused or the abuser. Because the brain is wired to think that a person truly loves you when there is abuse. Of course, it does not have to be what that person is actively thinking but rather their subconscious mind, which is why it is so hard to change and far more dangerous. That is one of the reasons why people who are abused early on in their lives end up being abusers; a healthy, loving relationship feels quite wrong and as if something is missing because it is all love, no abuse.

On a similar note, the feeling of abuse, as it is all connected to their home and the people who 'love' them, may weirdly feel safe. It is a safe choice when something goes wrong because what else should that person do? They have been taught to act like this their whole childhood, however, now when they use violence, for example, people look at them as if they are monsters. The whole world gives them a label of a 'villain' before they even have a chance to change. How is that in any way motivating? All they are, are victims, who do not know how to act in complicated situations due to only seeing wrong examples growing up. This leads to more anger which leads to more violence. The lack of motivation to change and 'rewire' their brains due to the world being against them is another reason why they might find themselves in the cycle of abuse.

Lastly, the victims may feel unworthy of a 'healthy, loving relationship'. That is because they know their past and are possibly aware of the chances of ruining that relationship because of it. Then there are two scenarios. The first one is them leaving the person possibly for the reason of not feeling loved by them because of the earlier mentioned connection between love and abuse or they will start being the abusive one; not simply because they want to. Another reason why the victims leave that stable relationship is because they do not think they deserve that relationship and that person. They become an abuser due to not knowing how to act in a relationship with a person who does not have the intention to hurt them. The victims brain becomes self-destructive as it does not feel worth the love and then further on uses the abuse or violence to protect themselves as the victims are 'asserting dominance' so the other person does not hurt them. That is the reason why it is so dangerous to experience abuse; you are stuck in this cycle out of which your brain cannot easily escape. That way, without professional help, you are almost unable to be in a 'happy relationship'.

Many other horrible impacts of abuse are not yet discussed. We as a society often view these victims as 'villains' or 'monsters' due to their actions, not knowing or understanding why they are the way they are. However, it has to be stated that just because a person had a traumatic past does not mean these actions are justifiable, only slightly more understandable. It also does not mean a person's future has to be defined by their past. It is simply beneficial to understand why some people act a certain way before judging them or immediately labeling them.

If you, or anyone you know, think you may be experiencing abuse in any way go to www.findahelpline.com and enter 'czech republic'. It then shows you numerous anonymous helplines where you can call and even chat online. Or if you happen to be interested in this topic and want to find out more you can research more about it (it is always better to be educated on such sensitive topics).

Andrea Grossová



<https://news.sky.com/story/pilot-fund-will-give-domestic-abuse-victims-in-scotland-up-to-1-000-to-leave-relationships-12986151>



THE VOICES AROUND US

Prologue

The story is set around the 1950s-1960s in Atlanta, Georgia and Washington D.C. in the United States of America. It revolves around the famous speech of American Baptist minister, Martin Luther King Jr., entitled "I Have a Dream" and delivered at the marble steps of Lincoln Memorial on 28th August 1963. This speech went down in history as the most prominent and influential spoken work, not only because of its content, but also because of the language and rhetorical techniques use. It remains a significant part of history concerning issues such as racism or equality of civil rights.

Maebell Johnson, the protagonist, is a young black woman, who has been visually impaired since her early adulthood. She had faced discrimination and suffered inequity from her surroundings due to her handicap and the color of her skin. Her thoughts and ideas were not heard and she felt that she had lost power over everything. She was not certain about anything in her life. Everything felt ambiguous and therefore she was left only to her own interpretation.

But there was a moment that changed her perspective. A moment that changed everyone. Everything. And that moment felt like a dream.

Chapter 1: From the Very Beginning

'1938—Brunswick, Georgia, United States'

My name is Maebell Johnson and I was born on January 6th 1938 in a small American town, Brunswick, Georgia. I grew up with both parents, my mother Daerlla and my father Jack. They both took care of me even despite the fact there was not much to take care of. I did go to school, yes, but the school for Afro-American children was not the ideal place for children.

Lots of violence, disrespect and prejudices went on there and it was not a nice place to spend my childhood years at. I remember that I once saw a young white woman walking, or rather running, past our school with her 4-year-old son, holding him tightly by his small hand, almost dragging him by his petite fingers, just to get swiftly across our neighborhood. I never understood why she did it, but as I was getting older, I started to notice it more often. Why did they never speak to my mother in the same nice tone as they did to the beautiful, yet pale woman who was standing in the line in front of us? Why did the streetcar driver shout at my dad when he sat down at the opposite side of the streetcar? The way people spoke to us just made me feel sad and disappointed. Were we something less? Were we different?

However, my parents never made me feel like this. I was at home when I was with them. We were the Three Musketeers, although there was originally four of us. My younger sister died when she was two, due to her asthmatic strokes. So I was left as an only child.

My parents and me got along well. There were some arguments of course, but they taught me things I cherish till this day: "Always be responsible for yourself and value what life gave you. Use the power you have wisely but do not take advantage of it. Whenever somebody tells you something, always think about it and interpret it, because it might not be the whole truth. Other people will often leave you in ambiguity, so the certainty you will be searching for, you must find within yourself."

I was lucky that I took their advice close to heart before their passing. It was the saddest and most melancholic season of all. It was in the middle of January, I had just turned 19 and I was getting ready to go out and celebrate my birthday. That afternoon, my parents planned to visit my aunt Rita, who lived in Atlanta.



They packed a few things because they were going to stay overnight. I watched them get into our old dilapidated car, which my dad was lucky to buy from one suspicious man for the price of his all retirement savings. He started the engine, the car made a terrible sound and a little gas from the back of the car dissipated into the sky. I waved as they were leaving. They left.

They left and never came back. That was the last time I saw them. As they went to see my aunt, a snow storm occurred and they got into a car crash. Both of them passed away instantly. I never felt such a sorrow in my life. Everything fell apart. With no time and no money, I was evicted from our small flat, which was a rental. My only solution was moving to Atlanta to my aunt. I packed all my belongings, not that there were many of them, and headed north-west.

The only thing I expected less than my parents' car crash was the cold shoulder I received from my aunt. When I finally made it to Atlanta and spent several hours searching for her small apartment, I received a very harsh welcome. She told me that I couldn't stay and she wanted nothing to do with me. I knew we were never close, but this was like a knife to the heart. I had no parents, nowhere to live and nothing to start from.

As a last reserve, I had some money left from my part-time job's savings that I had made last summer. After a week, I managed to rent a small bedroom and get a job at a local factory, where I worked for approximately six months. During my working months, I noticed that something was wrong with my eye, like I had caught an infection. The infection moved to my second eye as well. I wanted to visit a doctor, but I truly could not afford healthcare at that time; it was indeed a really hard time. The infection worsened and few months later I have lost my sight for good.

I was 20 years old and everything changed for me. I was living on my own, with no-one to help me, sightless. From that moment forward, I became completely responsible for myself and nothing in my life was ever certain for me again. With the loss of my sight, I could not work at the factory anymore, which meant I was unemployed. Again. My only way out was to stand on my own feet and even despite my handicap, find a way to secure myself.

With time, I joined the newly opened center for the visually impaired and got a job focused on how language and hearing is significant for the blind, their behavior and emotions. Eventually, I learned to live with my disability, gained new values, priorities and a completely different interpretation together with perception of the world around us.

Chapter 2: It Was Like the Blind Leading the Blind, or Was It?

'1958—Atlanta, Georgia, United States'

After I permanently lost my sight, hearing became the most important sense for me, and it lead me out of ambiguity. It allowed me to gain power again through listening to what others were saying. Hearing helped me orient myself in a large and loud city, exactly like Atlanta.



<https://emuseum.mfah.org/objects/6724/blind-woman-reading-braille>

A person can find out so much through language and spoken words. The intonation, dialect, tone, everything. Together it all made sense. It truly was like a sixth sense.

It was difficult for me at the beginning, since it is naturally challenging for a blind person to address others by speaking. People are usually occupied with themselves and unwilling to help. Therefore, I decided to use some psychological strategies on people to gain more assurance and certainty in the world. Firstly, I focused on the language to orient myself around the city. For instance, if the person I have addressed was willing to help me and had an accent, I would not fully believe the direction that person had given me.

I shared this little experiment with my colleague Eliza, who was also blind, but her reaction somehow caught me off guard. "You do realize that you should be aware of the bias towards these people, which you are currently creating, right?" She was right. I was creating a bias, but I had a reason for it. "Yes Eliza, you are right, but this belief was the only thing that gave me certainty and it presents a certain point I can at least somehow rely on," I replied.

However, apart from her opposite perspective on this experiment, Eliza had praised my techniques, for example the one in which I learned how to recognize city streets by how bright the city lights shine on them in the dark. It was the only thing we saw, the light.

I often relied on psychology to test people's nature and behavior. For instance, sometimes I would throw a valueless belonging out of my bag on the street ground on purpose and I would wait for somebody to pick it up. Many times, I waited for good ten minutes until somebody helped me.

Another situation happened when I was waiting at the post office to pick up a package. I always asked the people behind me what number they had, before they knew mine, and afterwards I asked what number they saw on my ticket. The trick was that I was very well informed what my number was before they even answered. Often people switched my number with theirs just for their own advantage to get in-front of me in the line. They would try to persuade me that what they were saying was the truth. However, this was only a pure display of them trying to manipulate me by their words based on my condition which portrayed me as somebody at a disadvantage, when in reality I was more aware of what was going on around us than they were.

Public transport was also an excellent example of psychological experiments on people's nature. Sometimes when I used streetcars, I would ask whether there was any unoccupied seats. I knew there certainly was, I could tell from the loudness inside. Nobody would answer and the incoming passengers would casually occupy the free seats. I felt like this limited my power of being able to use all of my senses fully and I was deprived the "privileges" of people with all senses. I knew exactly that people were going to behave this way, it only left me in complete confusion why. Why did they treat me differently?

Nikita Jetmarová

Read the 2nd part of *The Voices Around Us* in the next edition of the *OG Chronicle* in May!



SLEEPING TECHNIQUES OF ATHLETES

If there was a drug that would guarantee you better brain function, reduce fatigue, improve mood, speed up regeneration, improve memory, better digestion, and improve hormone production, you would say that it is the best drug in the world. But you might also think that something so exceptional cannot exist. However, it does exist, and it's called sleep. In this article, we will explore how athletes have managed to get the most out of their sleep.

We as humans spend a third of our lives sleeping, so why not get the most out of it. We should educate ourselves more about it and focus on improving it. Sleep affects people, especially athletes, who depend on physical performance and quality regeneration.

Athletes, thanks to the various experts, research, and modern technologies, can optimize their sleep, harness its benefits, and this is why we too should learn from them. Improve in this area and enrich our daily lives. Each athlete has a different technique and sleep preparation. Some sleep in special chambers, while others sleep for only 6 hours. It all varies depending on the type of sport and the athlete. However, for the purpose of this article, Cristiano Ronaldo will serve as the best example.

How do peak athletes like Ronaldo and Haaland sleep and how you can copy them and benefit?

Ronaldo, not only a soccer superstar but also someone who takes great care of himself, his health, and his appearance, has hired a sleep coach named Nick Littlehales many years ago. Ronaldo follows an extremely strict sleep routine, and it obviously works for him. Every day he sleeps in new sheets every day and always sleeps alone. He has a separate room dedicated solely for sleeping, with a slightly reduced temperature to ensure ideal sleep. He avoids using any electronics for an hour and a half before bed and instead tries to calm down with meditation or quiet music.



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/693976623803325501/>



<https://www.ladbible.com/news/sport/football-erling-haaland-tapes-mouth-shut-sleep-697296-20230905>

Ronaldo, like most people, gets the recommended 8 hours of sleep. However, his sleep is divided into five one-and-a-half-hour cycles throughout the day. It is proven that one sleep cycle lasts 90 minutes, and it is optimal to have 5 of them per night. This is also the reason why waking up to an alarm clock often leaves one feeling groggy, as the body is often awakened during a cycle. This style of sleeping is very demanding, and it will take a long time to get used to it, of course it is not for everyone, but if you are patient and gradually get used to it, you will find tons of benefits.

Now, let's look at the more achievable sleep routine of young soccer star Erling Haaland. He also prioritizes proper regeneration and quality sleep as he sleeps the standard 8 hours, but just like Ronaldo, he prefers sleeping in a cold room. Haaland also has his own tricks, such as wearing red glasses two hours before sleep to block blue light and achieve a more natural and higher quality sleep. He also tapes his mouth shut at night, this may seem strange or unnecessary, but there are valid reasons for it. During sleep, many people unconsciously breathe through their mouths and snore, which carries the risk of cardiovascular diseases, breathing through the nose is much more beneficial, which is why Haaland tapes his mouth shut before going to bed.

Try some of these techniques and include them into your routine. Sleep hygiene is incredibly beneficial, so try to focus on it for a few weeks. Start by putting your phone down and it's best not to have it in the room where you sleep, control your breathing and sleep in a room where it's not too warm. Then you can add much more and as you will see for yourself even these small changes will improve your life incredibly.

Frederick Bawia



YOUR VALENTINE

Pheobe:

I start slowly walking up to Damian as my heart beats wildly. I'm starting to rethink my life choices; maybe I should have just texted him. Damian's fangirls are glaring at me as if I'm doing something wrong by just walking 2 meters away from him. I finally get the courage up and tap him on the shoulder. He springs his head around to see me standing in front of him, keeping my head down, looking at the ground, while I show him my Valentine's card. He scoffs in disgust while giving me a judgy look. In his eyes I see confusion. Shit. I don't think he knows me. "W-we have English together, and I thought m-maybe u would want to be my Valentine?" I say while stuttering and completely avoiding eye contact. "If I throw a stick, will you leave?" he says, looking me up and down. His fangirls start laughing and I can feel everyone staring at me. As I turn around in tears, I bump into someone. I look up and I see Matheo, my brother's best friend. He steps in front of me. "Aren't you tired of always rejecting these poor girls? Maybe you should start focusing more on your own appearance," Matheo says calmly. "Piss off!" Damian hisses in fury as he storms off with his group. "Thanks Matt. I didn't know you could be nice." I'm surprised but also kinda humiliated. "Don't worry about it. I only did it because Damian is a pain in the ass," he says. He must think I'm so naive. "Ha, I knew you can't get a valentine. You're lucky Matheo was here to save you from more humiliation," my brother Jamie says. What was I thinking? Even Matheo doesn't want to have anything to do with me. At least Yuri is on my side. And I guess she'll be my valentine like every year.

Matheo:

"You don't have to save her like this for me again." Jamie tells me. "It's fine bro, I'm just glad she doesn't have to deal with Damian anymore, besides she's not that bad."...kinda cute actually..." Wait what am I thinking?

1 hour later...

"So, she comes to me and asks me on a date, which really doesn't usually happen because — wait bro are you even listening to me?" Jamie says while getting his lunch. I stare into the room full of people looking for someone, but I don't even know who I'm looking for.

Then I see her. Her eyes are as captivating as a storm waiting to happen, waiting to burst and destroy everything around it. She's so plain, yet I want to find out more about her, about what food she likes, what her favorite movie is, what kind of music she likes. I want to know everything about her. "Bro, why are you staring at my sister?" Jamie says in confusion. "Nah man I'm looking at Yuri," I lie. "If u say so," Jamie says while giving me an unsure look. We're sitting down at our table, and I spot Pheobe. "Aren't you gonna invite Yuri to sit with us? You gotta take your shot," Jamie smirks. "Yeah...Yuri..." I mumble under my breath. As I invite Yuri to join us, she brings Pheobe along. "Matheo has been wanting to tell you something," Jamie says. "So, Pheobe, would you want to go on a date with me?" I say confidently. "Are you serious man?!" Jamie says confusedly, but I can also see a slight anger hidden behind his expression. "Of course not, Pheobe isn't even that pretty. Anyway, Yuri I really like your shirt today," I say with a slight smirk. I can see Yuri's face turn red. I continue the conversation and when we hear the bell ring, I feel a weight lift off my shoulders. "Sorry gotta go to class."

Pheobe:

For some reason I felt kinda hurt when I realized that Matheo was only talking to me as a joke. But I guess I should've known better than to just assume he wanted to talk to me. The fact he saved me from Damian doesn't mean we're friends now; I don't know what I expected him to do. Just start talking to me out of nowhere? Maybe I did...I have to take my mind off things. I'm gonna go to the park and get some fresh air. That'll surely help me.

I'm walking up to the park and see someone sitting in my favorite spot, the swing. I start approaching the person on the swing, and as I get closer, I start to recognize the person under the hood. It's Matheo, the person I was trying to get my mind off. He acknowledges the presence standing beside him and looks up at me. His face lights up, which kind of startles me. "Listen Phoebe I didn't mean what I said back at lunch, I just couldn't afford to say something like that in front of your brother," Matheo says sincerely. "What do you mean you couldn't afford to say something like that? Does my brother control what you do, or something? Can't you just decide what to do for yourself? It's always Jamie, Jamie, Jamie. You're a grown-ass man, act like it!"



I turn around and start walking away. Oh my god did I really just say that? I have never confronted anyone like that in my life. I'm kinda proud of myself. My feeling of sadness turned into rage in a split second, which was kind of unusual for me. But I can't say I didn't like feeling in control for once in my life. I have to go home, it's getting late. When I get home, I surprisingly don't hear Jamie screaming at his computer, which is weird since when he gets home, he automatically goes and plays video games. I search the house but no Jamie anywhere. Weird.

Matheo:

I really messed up, didn't I? I guess there's no point in just sitting here. I better go home. I start walking home past some local shops. But when I'm walking past a dark alley, I get a weird feeling. Suddenly I feel a hand pull me back into the alley. Before I know it, I'm pushed up against the alley wall and someone's holding a knife to my neck. When I focus more on the face of the person, I see no one other than... "Jamie!?" I shout while trying to break free of his grip. His eyes widen while he tightens his grip. "Matt, Matt, Matt, we have known each other for over 10 years; don't you think I would know when you like someone, when you stare at someone, when you lie?" I see nothing in his eyes; complete darkness. "Jamie. Have you taken your meds lately? Why don't you lower the knife so we can sort this out?" I say trying to stay calm. "You wanna sort this out? Well I'll sort this out all right. First let me ask you a quick question though. What do you want with Pheobe?" he says, his voice getting more serious by the second. I feel my stomach drop. "I swear I didn't do anything," I say while looking around for any kind of escape. "Maybe you haven't done anything yet. But how do I know you won't do anything tomorrow? Next week? Next month? The point is I don't know. That's why I'm kindly asking you: stay the hell away from my sister." I feel his hands let go, and I fall to the ground. In a blink of an eye, he's gone.



<https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/valentine-roses-and-hearts>

Pheobe:

The next day, I get a text from Matheo saying: "Don't talk to me again." I respond with: "Is this because of what I said?" And he responds: "No." Then he blocked me. What is going on? I have to find him. Maybe he's hurt, I should probably ask Jamie first if he knows what's going on. The following day I wake up to the computer screaming as usual. I knock on Jamie's door and walk in. He's home. For some reason he looks kinda tired. I wonder what he was doing last night. "Hey, where were you all night?" I ask getting worried. "Oh, I just slept over at Matheo's," he answers quicker than I expected. "Did you see something off about him?" I ask. "Not really," he says, still looking at his computer screen. "Oh okay..." Something is really not adding up.

I get my bag and start going to school. The halls seem quieter today. I go around the halls trying to find Matheo and finally figure out what the hell is happening. Suddenly I feel someone's presence behind me, and I turn around sharply. "Matheo are you okay? Why did you block me?" I yell. "I can't talk to you right now. I can't have him see me with you. I have to go." His eyes search the room as if he's expecting someone to be standing right behind me. "You can't have who see me with you? Did you and Jamie get in a fight or something?" I wait for an answer, but he says nothing. "Are you even listening to me?" I grab his face to make him look me in the eye. He stares for a minute before pulling away. "You don't understand. I just can't!" he shouts. Everybody awkwardly stares at us because we are literally shouting in the middle of the hall. Matheo pulls me into the janitor's closet. "He can't see us," he says coldly. "Why?!" This is the moment I realize how close to each other we're standing. He looks me in the eye and starts talking. It's like I can't focus on anything but his eyes. They're so mesmerizing. I can barely understand anything that comes out of his mouth but then I snap out of it when I hear "Jamie raised his knife an-" he says out of nowhere. "Wait, what?" I push him away. "Okay don't freak out, but your brother kinda threatened me and don't take it the wrong way it's not his fault," he says. "What!?" I scream. "Jamie is bipolar."

Alžběta Čapková & Ivana Orlichová

To be continued in the May edition of the *OG Chronicle!*



THE SOCIAL CREDIT SYSTEM IN CHINA

Imagine living in a country where your whole existence depends on a point score. In a country where the government is behind your back and watch you wherever you go, whatever you do... You have no privacy. Whatever you do, the government may know before you even did it.

The country China itself is known for many things. Some of them are good and innovative like education, economics, or technical innovations. But most of them are not, like violation of human rights, the one-child policy, territorial disputes, and others. One of their most controversial features is the so called 'the social credit system' which is also unique to this country.

Unexpectedly this project is not that old as some of us might think. It has been under development for several years. The idea was firstly proposed in the early 2000s, but all the innovators started working on it in the mid-2010s. In 2014 Chinese government outlined their plans for the system in a document titled *Planning Outline for the Construction of a Social Credit System*. Since then, they made innovations and implementations for it. Most people think that this project is already finalized, but they are wrong. It is still under development. They make changes and do new innovations from time to time.

If you are a country whose intensions are not as good as other countries, you need your society to trust you, to trust your intentions. And who can you influence better than people? And a country obviously as full of citizens as China is not going to have a trouble with influencing. Those people need to trust you so the country's system will be stable. And this is what this system is all about. Its purpose is to create a trustworthy public opinion environment. To reach their goal of trust they invented this system in which a regular person can gain and lose their credits.

How can something like this even work? How can you evaluate someone's trust when trust itself is a very subjective thing? The system itself is a complex mechanism which involves collecting, analysing, and evaluating data to assess trust of individuals and business. The basis of this system is data collection from all the sources you can think of, such as government records, online and social activities or behaviour, financial transactions and more. It is taken from public and private databases like surveillance cameras, internet monitor tools and others.

These aspects define your point score which is given to you by the government. Sources say that your starting point score is two thousand and then the government takes or gives you less or more points. And other sources say that there are no such things as starting point scores. Only after you start doing various 'good' or 'bad' things are you rewarded with or lose points and are in minus. You can perceive that as your 'starting point score' is a zero.

What are the 'rewards' and 'punishments' for your behaviours? There are various things and some of them have a slightly bigger impact on a person overall, such as better healthcare, better access to loans, or better employment opportunities. From the other side there are things such as limited travel, a higher cost for financing, a threat to the family name, restriction of access to services and others. On the other hand, some things with a lower impact are privileges or limitations that are not that big like more discounts, faster or slower internet or various others.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China#/media/File:CHN_orthographic.svg



How do I as an individual know what my score is? The government will send you a notification or a warrant about your points, but the country does not provide a thing such as an app for you to keep an eye on those numbers.

Some locations or regions are trying to be more transparent for individuals to provide them the number of their score, but the rest of the China does not provide them with this information. Those people can only find it out from how some institutions, companies and others are treating them. The Chinese government did not standardize any 'guidebook' or anything like that for their citizens.

But they are engaged in public awareness and education campaign and to encourage positive behaviour, using public announcements, promoting laws, online websites and various more. They are focused on every individual to understand the system.

In conclusion the entire system is about analysing and collecting data about you wherever they want or can. Just because they want to find out if you are credible for their system. If you are, you have a lot of privileges and if not, they have no problem with banning you from anything they want.

Eliška Bastařová

VALENTINE'S DAY AROUND THE WORLD

You may think, that people from around the world celebrate Valentine's Day in the same way, but the opposite is true, and I will briefly tell you how.

We will start with the west. In the US they celebrate Valentine's Day with actions of affection, and they're given presents such as flowers or chocolates.

In South America lovers exchange small gifts called "cariñitos" also Gifts from men to women, parties and romantic dinners are also popular.

In Europe, it is like US, but we don't take it as seriously as people from the United States. But there is a tradition called "love spoons", It is a beautiful wooden spoon which you give to your loved one.



<https://blog.gaijinpot.com/honmei-choco-with-love/>

In Africa it is relatively different, for example in South Africa, people there have mass weddings which is a marriage ceremony in which several couples are married at the same time.

In Asia we have Japan, and they have *honmei choco* (本命チョコ, "true feeling chocolate") -chocolate given by women to men whom the giver has romantic feelings for. This is often given to husbands, boyfriends, and desired partners.



<https://thepharcyte.com/1309/culture-and-entertainment/how-valentines-day-is-celebrated-around-the-world/>

Danny Smíšek



UNNOTICED

This poem is for the unnoticed souls
lost in the crowds
whose words
were always too
Quiet.
for the poets
hiding their art
in the deep corners
of the night
for the shy lovers
keeping their affection
in love letters
for the observers
who know everyone
but nobody ever
noticed them
for the people
who were told
they are too ugly
to be loved
for the kids
that never had
any friends
and for everyone
who feels like they are
transparent

Andrea Kočová



<https://www.mapsyadistance.com/expatriation-impatriation/>



<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/old-man-reading-letter>

LETTER TO AN OLD FRIEND

We meet seldom
But with warm welcome
Ever present and yet not enough
We've had it rough

I've known you all my life
All your imperfections, mistakes and lies
Faces and changes, struggles, the phases
So much agony and pain, and yet I remain

It has never been easy
Seeing the sole human being
The more complex the soul the deeper I go
As perplexing as we are, we are one

And so, I walk the path among your company
As you never fail to surprise with your subtlety
With grace, with pride, with care
Old friend I thank You, Me and I

Sergej Žukov





Words have the power to change the world, so we've been choosing them carefully for seventeen years.

Contributors

Daniel Adamec
Eliška Bastařová
Frederick Bawia

Mikuláš Bolcek
Alžběta Čapková
Ondřej Galyaš
Andrea Grossová

Nikita Jetmarová
Andrea Kočová
Calista Maříková
Ivana Orlichová

Ivan Pavlovec
Danny Smíšek
Sergej Žukov

Student Editors

Matěj Marek

Calista Maříková

Adam Chára

Sergej Žukov

Design Editor

Jakub Kubín

Staff Advisors

Ms. Larsen

Ms. Naidoo

Mr. Witt

Ms. Yule

Ms. Zmolek