

Issue: June 2020

CAYEY STUDENTS WRITE

"IT'S THAT TIME OF
THE YEAR...

THE ONE THAT
NEVER ENDS..."

SUMMER

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The Uncertainty Within Your Eyes

Under Construction

Oh, Summer!

Grenadian Nights

AND MORE!!!



And Now a Word from the Sponsor

In closing out the year, the editorial board of the Alpha Zeta Alpha chapter of Sigma Tau Delta once again, produces a unique and innovative issue of our Cayey Students Write creative newsletter at the end of the anomalous 2019-2020 academic term; one marked by multiple disruptions stemming from earthquakes to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that led to the suspension, alteration of academic activities, as well as cancellation of many extracurricular activities at our university. Classes in face-to-face mode were placed on a brief hiatus and mandated an abrupt transition to remote learning, amid orders for quarantine, curfews, daily or nightly alarms reminding one to stay indoors, closures of public and even private spaces, decimation of social interaction and physical contact (under the guise of social distancing to avoid contagion and spread), and the new reality of sitting hours without end in front of computers and/or cell phones engaging in class meetings, assignments, reading material or recordings of group or individualized work, in what seemed like a never-ending semester that sparked fear in students' minds that when next looking upon the computer screen a brand new assignment would miraculously appear like a rabbit pulled out of a magician's hat or sleeve! **DUE WITHIN THE NEXT FOUR HOURS...and...ONCE RESPONDED, THERE'S NO TURNING BACK!...somewhere Rod Sterling's voice echoes, "WELCOME...to the Twilight Zone!"...**

It became the term like none other, one where there were no student get-togethers, no commingling in university spaces—whether on or off campus, no sleeping in hallways (in fact, no sleeping at all, in some cases), no coffee break meetings, no killing time in the cafeteria or student center, no universal hour concerts, plays, or events, no student organization activities, no initiations or ceremonies, no sports activities (live or on TV), no Justas, no such thing as Spring Break... maybe Spring BREAKS YOU!... No Dean's List ceremony, and sadly, No June Graduation for the Class of 2020—for the first time in the university's history there will be a Winter Commencement Ceremony, uncertain about how many of the members of the outgoing class will be able to attend as they continue with their academic and professional pursuits and goals, whether on the island or abroad. Yes, it was such an anomaly in many ways, and the thought: Will it ever be or feel normal again? When will this end? Will we survive? Will we see the Summer? And some might have even hummed that Greendaysong, "Wake me up when September ends..."

Yes, there was so much uncertainty (there might still be...). Nonetheless, the student editors of Cayey Students Write did not permit any of these circumstances to deter their pursuit to produce a final issue; a much anticipated and aptly chosen themed issue: Summer, which at one point everyone speculated if there would actually be such a thing amidst everything that was occurring. But true to their cause and purpose they managed to place the call for papers, received submissions, and came up with a slim issue comprised of essays, short stories, and poems that speculate about, commemorate, reminisce on, or celebrate summertime memories and activities, or whatever they might associate with the season. This edition consists of approximately seven entries that address the theme in different manners and vantage points. Each writer shares ideas that they reflected about during these trying times and express themselves within this edition, which despite its brevity, we hope you enjoy, and that it may serve to make you recollect and reflect upon the time that encroaches without our realizing it.

David Lizardi,
Sponsor

The Uncertainty Within Your Eyes

By Madyanis Santiago

In these times where words flow leaving lessons behind,
The uncertainty of your eyes surfaces outside your mind.

While our eyes seek an answer to pacify our flowing tears,
Your daring lips pronounce it in the silence of your fears.

There is more risk to lose our humanity waiting for recovery,
Than wasting our life hoping for the renewing love's sorcery.

The dungeons of anxiety strive to break our golden hopes,
So, I chose to ignore the connection this uncertainty beholds.

And with a benevolent air I make my way through this
darkness,
Aiming to the grandeur of the purity of a heart unafraid of
madness.

Because through hardship we turn our madness into
braveness,
And the depth of love surpasses uncertainty, leaving us
breathless.





Under Construction



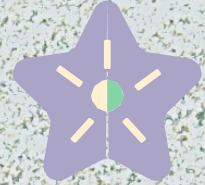
Surrounded by seashore pebbles,
a collector is granted the chance to choose,
freely, which ones to keep.

It is of no importance to others the reason why
they were chosen to be kept, just the collector.

With pieces in hand, observing each one,
the collector starts to build.

A balanced tower, a path or even a mountain
of pebbles, it is inconsequential.

Some will be taken out for they do not fit
or make everything fall.



Building with seashore pebbles comes
with no instructions, it is just the collector
and the chosen pebbles.

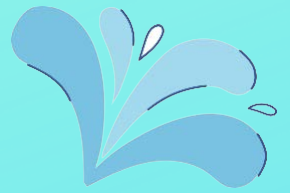
It is entirely trial and error,
and, at some point (whenever that may be),
the results will be of satisfaction
to whomever built.



Oh, Summer! Where Art Thee?



By Jacqueline M. Rivera Mejías



When I think about what summer looks, what comes to my mind is the temperature, the sun shining, people planning vacations to the beach, mostly. And me, well, I just stay at home daydreaming: lying on a hammock, drinking a piña colada and breathing the fresh air of Bora Bora. So far, I do have a small pool for my son to play and have fun, but it is almost impossible for me to enjoy a single splash because I have to cook for him and satisfy all of his cravings. Here, the fresh air comes from the banana plants. However, I am not quite sure that this year's summer season will be like others on the splashing aspect, and the traveling or the vacation plans.

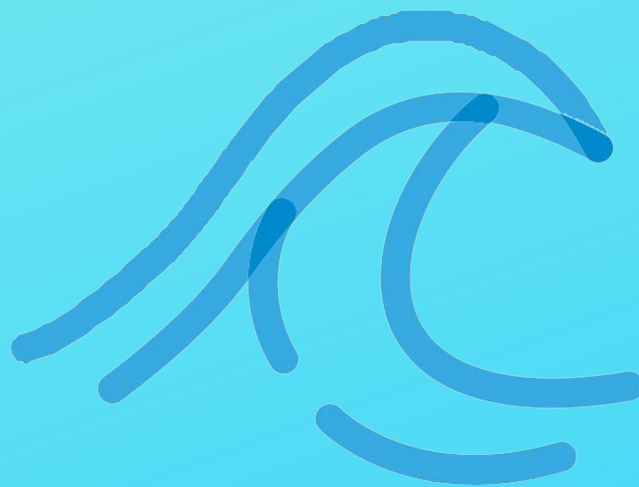
Well, I mean, right now there are a lot of people spreading a virus around the globe. It all started on a beautiful Chinese day, as some so firmly attest, when a group of people thought it would be fun to swallow bat juices from a Jacuzzi of flavors. They chewed the bats little bones down to the core, where the little coronavirus particles were minding their own business, until the humans decided to interrupt the party. Turns out that, now we are facing the consequences of someone else's intrusive actions. We are facing a pandemic which requires everyone to stay at home for the human race's safety.



However, it has not been all negative. Nature is recovering from all the harm and pollution we condemn it to, because of our selfishness and arrogance. It is more like a lesson that nature itself is trying to teach us; to value the essential resources it provides for free. Moreover, animals are coming out from hidden places where they had to confine themselves for protection. They are being able to enjoy the world they likewise deserve to inhabit. Who knows if maybe now we get to see those species we thought were extinct like dinosaurs, for example? Can you imagine a beautiful red-throated wood-rail flying around the Machu Pichu looking for a yummy snack? Or a cape lion extinct in 1876 fighting a regular lion to prove who is the king of the jungle? I bet you know who would win that "battle".

The hardest part of this situation is trying to keep people off the streets, unless essentially necessary. I strongly believe, since I have observed animals' behavior, that Noah did not have it that hard when getting a pair of every animal species from around the world, inside the ark of salvation. You know, he must have performed some hypnotizing act to keep them relaxed while in there for so long. Perhaps he hired a dart-shooting sniper to shoot tranquilizer darts to each animal and he and his sons carried them inside. Or maybe he had a flute like Hamelin's Pied Piper. He played it and animals followed. We might never know. The important detail is that they obeyed him or followed their instincts.

What I am trying to say is that people are harder to control, even if it is for their own good. The “irrational” species are teaching us a valuable lesson, yet we are hesitant to comprehend. Hence, I dare to say that this summer we will see people going around the beaches and pools, because, come on! We must have fun, no matter what! As for me and my son, we will do nothing different from every year. This time I hope I can cook and have a buffet around the pool for him to grab whatever the heck he wants, so I can have my splash too and satisfy my own cravings.





Grenadian Nights

by Natalia Rivera Pagán

I am currently on my 37th night reading *One Thousand and One Nights*. Being stuck home day after day gives me no excuse to skip reading, and so I may be able to read the famed Arabian Nights in 1,001 nights. This has nothing to do with what I have written below. I just wanted to mention my plans for this summer before remembering last summer's adventures... which, coincidentally, is as close as I have gotten to experiencing Arabian nights.

Grenadian Nights

The first time I got drunk was drinking *tinto de verano* at a gay bar in Granada, Spain. I was with a group of students participating in a summer research program across the country where the last stop was the home of the magnificent Alhambra. After enjoying the vivacious nightlife of previous Spanish provinces, hanging out in Granada (or, trying to hang out) was significantly different. Specially in the summer, Grenadian nights are mostly quiet (and so warm you wake up drenched in sweat).

Our entertainment consisted of strolling around the city or the occasional flamenco show in Sacromonte; which is why, we (students) went a bit crazy when someone discovered a solitary bar celebrating pride month. Still, though seemingly silent, nights in Granada were vibrant and full of opportunities.

There is a book of essays by Ángel Ganivet called “Granada la Bella” (“Granada the Beautiful”) and even though it is not really about the beauty of this province but about the changes it went through the years, I bring it up because I kept thinking about that title during my stay. Granada, to give an insight on the place, is a mix of everything: old sectors (like the Albayzin, the ancient Moorish quarter of the city) and modern ones, religions and people from numerous nationalities. All of these factors make this territory seem like many worlds in one, and to me, they add to the beauty and peculiarity of the location.

One of the seemingly surreal features of Granada is that basically the whole city has a view of the Alhambra. Nevertheless, there are some places where the panorama is notably more impressive; for example, in the mosque. I chose to focus my research on the importance of the use of language in the Mosque of Granada and therefore spent many days and nights studying that area.



I met people who helped me learn not only about the Islamic community, but also about the general Grenadian population. Due to my countless hours spent there, whenever I think of Granada, I hear the *Adhan* (the Islamic call for prayer; Muslims pray five times a day) that resonated through the outskirts of the mosque.

Something that also spread around me while walking through the Albayzin was the scent. There were so many tea shops and hookah lounges that you were engulfed in exotic aromas while walking in the unsteady cobbled streets. Amusingly, as you stepped into the metropolitan part of the city, it weirdly started to smell like oranges. Unlike the rest of Spain, that to me smelled like cigarette smoke, Grenadian streets have an orange fragrance because of sidewalk orange orchards. (Warning: these are bitter oranges. They're like the forbidden fruit: tempting, but not for juice.) Having described the appearance, the sound and the smell of Granada, I feel the next step is to elucidate on the taste. Yes, *tinto de verano* is on the top of the list, but being a food fanatic, one of my favorite aspects of Granada (or any traveling experience for that matter) is the food. The present multiculturalism gave way to restaurants of different cuisines and foreign dishes.





There was another book that inevitably crept into my mind while wandering around Granada: “Granada para Perderse y Encontrarse” (“Granada to Lose and Find Yourself”) by José Emilio Ubiña. I admittedly got lost a couple of times, and I am glad, for the best moments happened when I got off-course. On a particular Grenadian night, while asking for directions I struck up hour-long conversations with two different street vendors (Jadiya and Omar), both of whom gifted me with “Fatima hands”, which, when received as a present is supposed to bring good luck and protection. One of my friends told me that, since I had gotten two, the luck cancelled out... words of envy. From visiting mosques, befriending street vendors, watching gypsies dance flamenco, to getting drunk and singing with drag queens, I will never forget my summer nights in Granada.

I undoubtedly fall short in comparison to Scheherazade, but hopefully you enjoyed this story.



A JOURNEY TO MYSELF

by
Madyanis Santiago

Ever since the aim of life has been to show us the importance of our path, and to lead us towards realization; I decided to become an artist, but an artist that can touch people's souls with the proper use of words. Well, part of my journey has always been about helping and healing people. Healing can be done physically, mentally and emotionally. That is why I consider the art of writing one of the most beautiful and equally emotionally connected talents. However, these days have not been quite successful for the realization of my goals in this year. After an intimate introspection into my subconscious, I thought that a nice trip to a historical but tranquil place would be great for me, and maybe I could get some inspiration after all.



It was the middle of the glimmering month of June, my flight arrived a little early and I went straight to my hotel to leave my luggage and move freely. The staff was attentive and very friendly. Hence, in a few minutes I was out of their sight and started to explore my surroundings. Oh! What a beautiful place; the buildings of this city that was called like an extension of wild land in the titan Africa, "Savannah" was really inviting for adventurous people like me. I could see an almost extinct rail track extension in the middle of the road and there were many cutely decorated shops of artisanal candy and ice cream. It was like a dream, so tempting and calming for my soul, at the same time. Many people from different ethnic backgrounds and races were all together, exchanging experiences. We were all forming each other like a giant web of niceness and happiness. My Puerto Rican blood pushed me to taste various delicious treats that I found attractive from behind the market glasses. All of that was like an ecstasy. Then, while walking on the streets, between a large multitude of excited guests, a tall and classy lady called me "beautiful". I smiled and replied with a "thank you". She told me that I should not thank her for saying the truth. It seemed that around that place, being a black Latin-American woman was attractive and exotic, so I was thriving.



After the hectic hours of that afternoon, I heard a group of people talking about some interesting group tours that were happening in the heart of that city. And as I said before, I am an adventurous young woman. That is why I went and bought a ticket for a very attractive tour that was supposed to take us in an ornamented type of bus, around the city but with an emphasis of historical and old architectural structures. That was a part of my numerous interests, since I really like arts, history, and also architecture. So, as expected I walked reluctantly to the maroon and gold bus and started the journey for a whole day. Those clean and intricately decorated streets were bathed in a historical aura, it was clear that they were created many years ago. Some of them had old creepy lamps in their front porch, walls and doors with effortlessly hidden traces of the olden history that permitted their existence. In my mind, I could picture the bold pages of my book being filled with a great story that could reflect the enigmatic essence of this place, this historic portal to another kind of dimension. I could see the readers enjoy my writings with the desire of reading more of it; that kind of art that flows through your heart, brain, nerves, to your magic hands and gets ultimately imprinted on an eager piece of paper.

We started the trip, and my eyes were enjoying everything around them, they scanned every single place which was catching enough to draw their attention. I saw majestic churches, old looking houses, beautiful streets, older trees and even, incredible forgotten pieces of furniture on the porch of some abandoned houses. They were a little bit creepy but mysterious and that trapped people's attention. That was the moment I saw a very pretty and kind of familiar house, it was of a sky blue and ivory color combination, it also had a small porch with some white flowers. That house was looking too familiar for me and it was open for visitors, so I decided to go visit it sometime later when alone. I took many photos of the historical treasures we visited and then, went back to my stay, to continue the adventure on the next day.



Next morning, I woke up and had a light breakfast to continue my adventure, this time I was going to see that pretty house that caught my attention during yesterday's tour. As I got to the pretty house, I stepped on the porch and a chilling feeling entered through my feet and filled my entire body. It felt known but melancholic, I did not know what it was. Then, I entered the house and saw some nice wooden furniture, other older items and a group of photos over the wall of the living room. Some of the photos were in color, others in black and white. While my eager eyes were moving over the nearly fifty photos, one of them in black and white made them stop and act surprisingly shocked. In that particular photograph, a lady was alone, standing in front of the house and wearing a light-yellow dress that looked really old. She had dark skin and long curly hair twisted into a big hair bun and was also wearing some kind of hat. But, that image was practically my own reflection. She looked exactly like me. I swear, I had just seen my reflection in another time in history.



It was like looking at myself into a mirror. Immediately, I wanted to get information about the people who owned the house or whoever could know them or knew the lady from the picture. So, I turned the photo to check for any name, signature or something that could give me an answer. And for my bigger shock, it was signed by a Lira, but that is my name. I just freaked out and nobody was near me, only an empty hall, a staircase and a big living room. I called for someone, nobody responded. I shouted: "Hello! I need to speak to the person in charge of this place! Hello!" No one answered. Not even a sound or a whisper. I took the picture and started walking towards the front door and then proceeded to exit the house.



While walking out of that place, a gentle but cold breeze caressed me, it was strange that the movement of that breeze was of a twirling sensation. After that, I turned back around to the house to look at it again so I could take a picture of it. And this is the most shocking part of my adventure, the house just disappeared in thin air! Instead of that pretty house, it was an old and abandoned ashen gray kind of building that was looking like in ruins of a previous structure consumed by a fire. After that, I searched for the photograph of my look-alike and noticed that I was still holding it in my hand. This was something incredible! Then I thought, what will I tell people? Will they believe me? Should I show them the photo? They might think it is fake.

I started to walk towards the city submerged in a great desire to write a story, to create something that would marvel my readers and I think I have the perfect story, now. My laptop and my chai latte were waiting for me at my chamber, so I would start my journey connecting spaces between the layers of my thoughts. All that, happening while I gazed at my own reflection once existed in the past. Maybe at that time, I wanted to do exactly what I was about to do now.

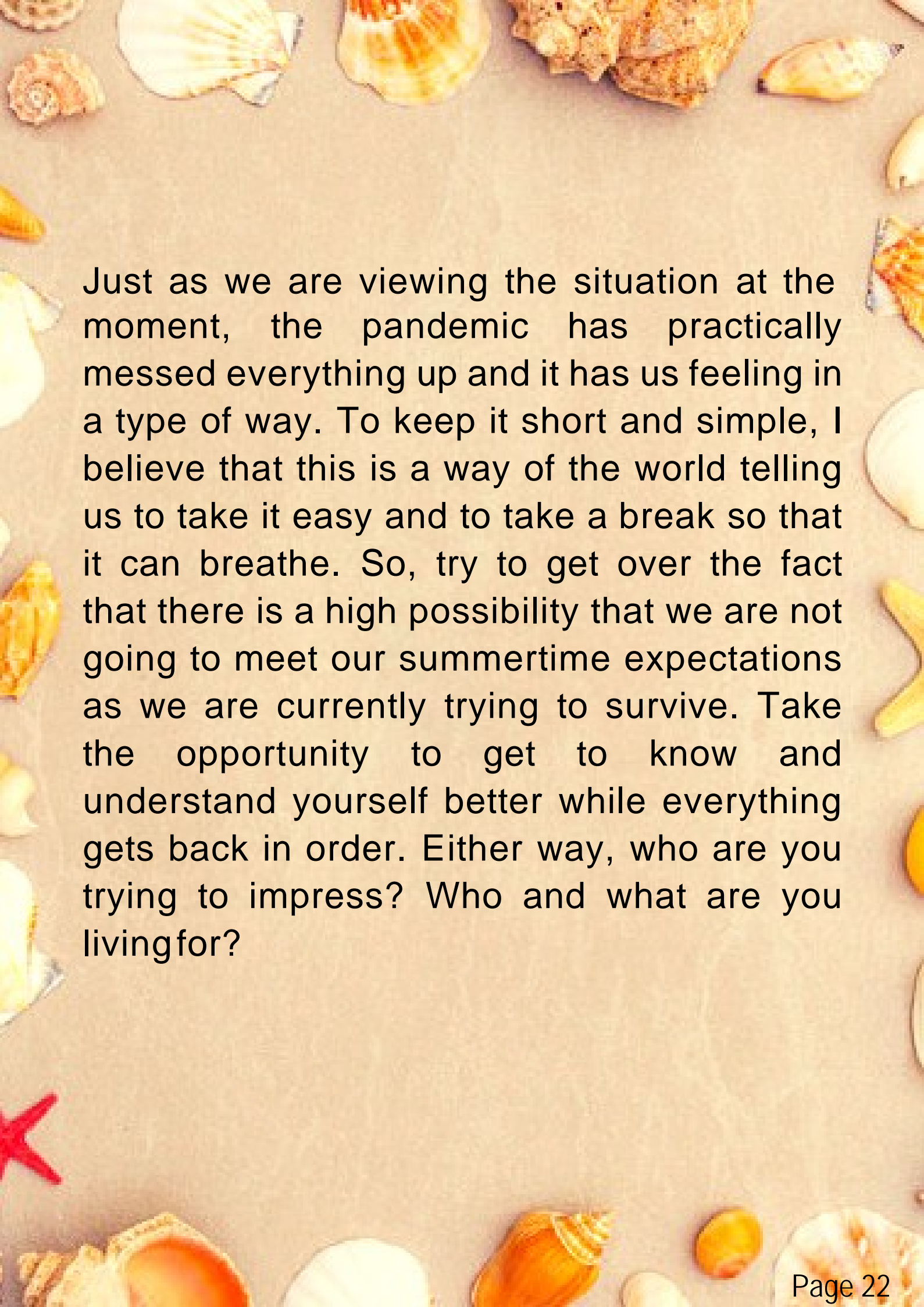


EXPECTATIONS

BY PAULA S. DE JESÚS

The Summer of 2020 was supposed to be one of the best summers of the century after most of the world had the time of their lives in the Summer of 2016. Speaking as a collective, some of us have been planning what we are going to do this upcoming season. Most of this feeling is influenced by the fact that we are beginning a new decade that motivates us and give us reasons to party. However, as the year of 2019 was coming to an end, a weird feeling, or vibe, was arising.

Possibly, many thought it was a sign of cleansing, but it was only a warning and preparation for the unfortunate events that we were about to encounter.




Just as we are viewing the situation at the moment, the pandemic has practically messed everything up and it has us feeling in a type of way. To keep it short and simple, I believe that this is a way of the world telling us to take it easy and to take a break so that it can breathe. So, try to get over the fact that there is a high possibility that we are not going to meet our summertime expectations as we are currently trying to survive. Take the opportunity to get to know and understand yourself better while everything gets back in order. Either way, who are you trying to impress? Who and what are you living for?




Summer Breeze


By Alexandra C. García Aponte

Even in sleep, I could feel droplets of perspiration drip down my temples. Sweat made my thighs stick together. Summer was in full rage. I opened my eyes to glance out the open window to the dawn's light beyond. Once the sun rose, the heat would worsen. Soon, I would have to close the windows and content myself with the rattle of the ceiling fan as it attempted to circle a nonexistent breeze through the room. It wasn't enough- it would never be enough. The air would continue to filter in and fill the space with the smell of summer. One year ago, I would have left the windows open to the breeze and the sweet scent of mangoes and sunblock. Today, closed windows were the only way to pretend everything was alright.

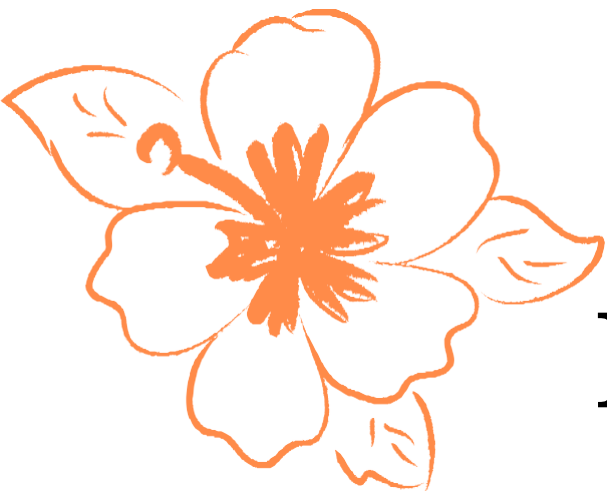


A year was all it took for the world to end. Centuries of progress and civilization crumpled in the face of human greed and arrogance as always. World leaders were confident they could handle the crisis caused by a virus we never managed to understand and opted to save the economy instead of lives. They couldn't. The number of infected continued to grow and grow. People stopped going to work, school, and finally wouldn't go outside at all. It was too late for most. There are no longer doctors or nurses. Medical supplies are non-existent. The infected are left to rot on hospital cots, their own beds, and the streets. We dared not go out to bury our dead. My mother told me the dead used to haunt us at night. Now they rise with the sun and crawl into our homes with the heat.





The fan stopped spinning. The power had finally gone out. Sweat coated my back, arms and legs. It stung my eyes and salted my lips. It would soon be hard to breathe. I gave in to the heat and open the windows at last. I had been alone for six months and thought it was time to let the summer breeze in and embrace my family at last. The hot breeze kissed my cheeks and summer kept whispering death.



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