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Editor's letter

When we were working on this issue's title, the main idea that the stories evoked was vulnerability. However, "The Vulnerability Issue" felt a bit like a mouthful, so we kept brainstorming. We also noticed a theme of strength within each piece; take vulnerability and add some strength, and we landed on immunity.

In this issue, writers highlight the talented animators who work and study at ASU, discuss the changes with friendships that come with being in your early 20s and show how different the holiday season is for student-athletes versus non-athlete students. One reporter satirized the bizarre experience of shopping at Trader Joe's alongside its supposed antithesis, frat guys. Plus, get an exclusive look into a student's most personal item: their bag. Finally, a writer gives an insight into the extensive barriers they faced as a student at the Cronkite School with an invisible disability.

That's a wrap on 2023 — see you next year.

The editors of State Press Magazine

The Element Issue crossword answers

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. community | 9. Egypt |
| 2. more | 10. graduates |
| 3. health | 11. mandate |
| 4. Marchand | 12. disparities |
| 5. The Human Event | 13. Plummer |
| 6. two | 14. Khartoum |
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Insight

MAKING

FRIENDSHIPS

BRACELETS

Women are often told romance will lend meaning to their lives.
Why aren't our friendships given the same value?

by Audrey Eagerton
Illustrations by Andrea Ramirez

After 20 years of breaking up and making up with friends, here's the one lesson I've learned about friendship: You have to actively choose it.

Sure, maybe your best friend came to you in a moment of pure serendipity after you complimented their eyeliner in an Olive Garden bathroom and then proceeded to gush about the 2005 "Pride & Prejudice" movie together for 15 minutes. But everything after that is a choice.

That's because there are levels to friendship — four, to be exact. Scientists and lifestyle bloggers alike have done all the heavy lifting and constructed a friendship pyramid that I've broken down for simplicity:

- Acquaintances: The classmates and coworkers whom you ask about their day and share a laugh with. You know of each other, but you don't really know each other. You enjoy their company, but there's no driving force making you want to spend more time together.

- Casual friends: The people most likely to call you "bae" or "bestie." You'll hang out with them from time to time, typically to go thrifting or to people-watch at coffee shops. You leave exclaiming, "We should do this more often!" but never carve out the time.

- Close friends: The ones you spend a lot of your time with. They'll drive you to the hospital in the dead of night, they'll be there for you to cry on when your heart is broken, and they'll drag you

back to the world of the living when the time is right.

- Intimate friends: The platonic version of a soulmate. They have known you for years, seen every embarrassing version of you and still stuck by you regardless. They're your mirrored heart in every regard.

That's the beauty of friendship: It's what you make of it. In my own life, nothing has taught me more about myself, love and walking through the world than the women who have been my lifelong friends.

My best friend Maddie and I began our own kind of serious relationship in 2017 when destiny brought us together in the form of an oversized bag of kettle corn. Even though it's platonic, friendship is very serious to me, and if you look at what women get out of their friendships with each other, sometimes a romantic relationship doesn't even compare.

Our friends give us honesty, communication, vulnerability, trust, intimacy and a welcome return to childhood as we laugh hysterically over the same inside jokes. We don't have to speak to each other every day or even every month to know the other is just an "I need you," text away.

As I step into my 20s — a decade others have promised will be full of heartache, uncomfortable character growth and finding a place to call home — the uncertain journey is all a little less daunting when I remember I'll be

embarking on it with friends.

Soon enough, you're best friends

My best friends taught me that it's possible for me to be loved just for myself — that I should be unapologetically loud, that I should crawl out of my shell. They taught me it's okay to belt Taylor Swift and have a penchant for glittery nail polish. They taught me that when I needed someone to talk to, they would always be there to listen.

"Kettle Corn Maddie," June and I had known each other for years, but we became inseparable during our senior year of high school. June also crash-landed into my life freshman year after she ran up to me and demanded I decipher her terrible handwriting. When the pandemic began, our friend group of around 10 people gradually dissolved until we were the only ones who remained. I was alright with that because they were who I planned to spend the rest of my life with. That's the thing about best friends — you can't help but think in terms of forever when it comes to them.

But senior year of high school is not the most opportune time to form deep, emotional attachments with people who will likely be scattered across the country by next fall. This isn't to say you should flee from friendships because they come at an inconvenient



time — you should almost always embrace people who want to love you and be in your life — but know with poor timing comes grueling heartache.

The three of us spent senior year and the summer before college bouncing between each other's houses, going on long drives to chase rainstorms and trying to make the most of every minute before there were no more days left on the calendar to cross out.

Thankfully, Maddie and I would be attending ASU together and living in the same dorm. But in September, June would travel thousands of miles away to Northeastern University in Boston.

I couldn't process that I wouldn't be able to turn to her at a moment's notice and that the people who would frequent her day-to-day life would be strangers to me. The three of us were a wreck.

The first few months of college were the worst. I relied on Maddie to make new friends and clung to her coattails as we socialized with classmates. But I found it hard to simply be myself around these strangers — with Maddie, it came so easy, and with June, it felt as natural as breathing.

By October, I had fallen to an all-time low. I felt lost, I was probably depressed, and I just wanted to cry on June's bed. So I did. During fall break, I found myself in Boston in June's arms.

That whirlwind trip was eye-opening. We wandered around the city like kids on a playground, marveling at trees adorned with red leaves and pumpkins laid on centuries-old doorsteps. And just like that, I felt like myself again. That's another thing

about best friends: They can help pull you out of any impending darkness — even just before it swallows you whole.

A perfect storm

Most of my arguments with friends have sprung from a difference in expectations or a communication breakdown. The good news is both can usually be fixed by an honest heart-to-heart, followed by some pizza. The bad news is I'm notoriously a people pleaser with confrontation anxiety.

But up until college, I never felt like I had to make myself and my needs small around my friends. But things change — like your best friend starting a serious relationship a month into freshman year.

There is grief that comes when your best friend enters a new relationship. No matter how happy you are for them or how amazing their new partner is, there's no denying you may feel like you have lost something.

My freshman year was a matter of survival — it was about adjusting to new people on a new campus in a new city and trying not to spend Friday nights locked in my dorm room. I couldn't fathom adjusting to college while adjusting to a new favorite person at the same time. But June did it with her girlfriend and was practically living with her by the end of the semester.

Naturally, our friendship took a back seat — it was maybe even thrown in the trunk — as our calls and texts became few and far between and over 2,500 miles divided us. Summer travel

plans were chucked out the window, and our promise to live together for a semester in Washington, D.C., became an impossible dream. Little things that used to mean so much were long forgotten.

There was a palpable shift, and I mourned the days when we used to talk about everything and nothing on four-hour FaceTime calls. But I made do.

Maddie and I did what college freshmen do: We formed a new friend group. But our own friendship struggled too.

"Freshman year, there was a lot going on on both ends," Maddie said. "I think we couldn't find a way to communicate with each other, but we both shoved that down. ... But you were a piece of home and a piece of [June] that I didn't want to lose, so I guess that's why I never talked about what was bothering me."

By winter break, we were both ecstatic, yet anxious, to finally reunite with June. I thought the three of us would be the same as before. Of course our friendship could overcome any rough patch, I assured myself. It didn't take more than an hour to figure out we weren't the same people we'd been that summer.

June texted her girlfriend throughout most of our time hanging out over break, so I sat in an awkward silence that June occasionally broke with a funny story, a flippant apology or a complaint about how challenging long distance is.

I wasn't unsympathetic — of course I understood it was difficult for June to be away from her favorite

person. At first, I was content to just be in the same room again. But as Maddie and I noticed these changes seemed permanent, we became more and more frustrated.

It felt like she didn't respect us or our friendship enough to give us more than five minutes of attention. We had only a couple weeks to reconnect, and they felt like a wasted opportunity.

The heart of the issue was that we simply had different priorities and expectations for each other. We needed our ride-or-die best friend from the summer and fall, and she wanted the long-distance, low-commitment friends we had morphed into during our time apart.

Priorities and expectations are allowed to change in friendships — that's the key to making them last. But if you don't discuss what you need and how you can accommodate your friends in return when these changes happen, you'll likely end up hurting yourself and them.

I know that because June, Maddie and I never discussed these changes. For months, I suppressed my bubbling anger and jammed myself into the mold of the low-commitment friend I thought she wanted. Then I visited her in Boston again. We haven't spoken to each other since.

Breaking up with your friends

There are no convenient how-tos or cliché platitudes you can fall back on when ending a friendship. No flip phone snapping shut or dramatic storming off.

"I think friendship breakups hurt more than any other type of breakup," Maddie said. "You never expect to be stabbed in the back by your best friend, and I feel like there's never any closure. They either just fizzle out, or you fly to Boston and have a huge fight."

That's what happened between June and me. During the summer before our sophomore year, I tried

to spend every waking moment after work with her. But again, the awkward silence lingered.

The self-doubt set in: Did I have any right to feel annoyed and frustrated with her? After all, it's natural this would happen between anyone in a committed relationship and their friend who has no problem being single — right?

Toward the end of the summer, I started to snap. I stopped concealing my frustration and tried to initiate a conversation instead. But the problem is, when suppressing your emotions becomes your go-to coping mechanism, they end up jumbled and confused.

We did have a conversation, work through some issues and make promises to be better. June still wanted me to visit her that October, and I promised to try. On the surface, we were better, but I knew in the back of my mind nothing was completely resolved.

Before my second trip to Boston, I devised a plan. I was going to present my best self. I was going to befriend



June's girlfriend and friends. It'd be just like my first Boston trip: We would reconnect over a whirlwind weekend.

Everything went according to plan — for the first 24 hours. I greeted June's girlfriend with a hug, told her it was great to see her and meant it. We were staying at her girlfriend's apartment, which I wasn't aware of until I arrived.

June and I caught up over lobster rolls and an evening walk. In the morning, she introduced me to one of her close friends, and we all went thrifting. It felt like she was finally welcoming me into this corner of her life that she used to hide away from my eyes.

But after, she went home to her girlfriend, abandoning me and her friend to wander the city alone. He and I hit it off, so I didn't think anything of it until we reunited with June for lunch and she and I barely spoke. We didn't even have a full conversation until the two of us left for a Boston University tailgate, where I met more of her friends.

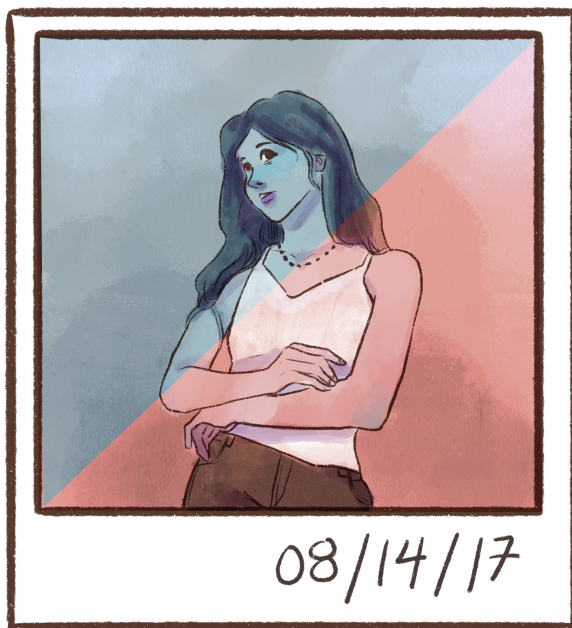
I didn't like this new group of people, I was starting to feel sick, and I didn't want to be there. My lukewarm feelings toward them soured even more on the train back to Northeastern when one of them turned to June — just June — and invited her to breakfast with them the next day.

Of course she'd decline, I thought, because I was staying with her and the invitation clearly wasn't extended to me. But she said yes. Hurt and embarrassment washed over me, but

again, I said nothing.

Later that night, I confessed my feelings to Maddie and asked if they were justified. She called me, equally upset for the both of us because she had noticed her friendship with June changing again too. I let myself cry, and Maddie dyed her hair pink.

"When you called me, I genuinely felt heartbroken for both of us," Maddie said. "It was all happening too much too fast. ... I didn't know how to make



a situation better, and how to make myself feel better, and how to make you feel better and how to make any of us feel better. ... I think that was the turning point."

While June left me for breakfast, I snuck out of the apartment to reflect on a walk. When she returned, I told her we needed to talk.

Before I go on, it's important to note that I'm terrible at arguing but

June was on the varsity debate team.

I began by attempting to calmly explain that it felt like she was intentionally ignoring me throughout the weekend and that it hurt when she abandoned me for other friends she saw more often after I'd flown across the country for her. She struck back, replying that everything we had done that weekend was for me and if I didn't like something, I should have spoken up. Not wrong.

But then things spiraled out of control. It's all a blur to me, but I clearly remember two things: June said, "You demand this intimacy of me!" shortly followed by a curt "I'm done." She struck home. She knew how to say the right thing to get me to shut down.

After that, we were able to talk it out. We explained everything we'd been feeling for a year, but we already knew it was over. We were different people who wanted different things from each other. I wasn't a good friend to her in the ways she needed, and she wasn't a good friend to me in the ways I needed. We stopped choosing

each other.

We were cordial enough to each other for the remaining day I was in Boston, like how strangers are when they make small talk, but not like friends who have crawled into the depths of each other's souls. And after that, our friendship fizzled out quietly with an "I love you, thank you for coming," and "I love you too," text exchange.

But for months, my mind never

moved on. I was frozen in a time loop, replaying everything I failed to do to fix us.

Now that we don't talk

Would I rewind to freshman year and still choose to befriend June after knowing we'd end up hurting each other? Resoundingly, wholeheartedly yes. When you choose to love someone, you also choose to accept any heartbreak that might follow.

I still love June and all the other friends I've broken up with. They taught me almost everything I know about myself as a friend and person.

But if I catch them in public, I'll probably cross the street to avoid them.

I came back from that trip heartbroken and lost. I invested so much time and energy into keeping one friendship alive, only for it to crumble in my hands. I felt like a failure. But instead of wallowing, I decided to double down on my existing friendships and let everyone in my life know exactly what they could expect from me: They were my priority, and I was set on making new friends.

But I've never been skilled at masking my emotions, so I can only imagine how terrible I looked when I walked into my first class after the trip. So terrible that my classmate, who I usually only talked to about homework, came up to me and asked what was wrong. Then she hugged me, and just like that, my world became a little less dark.

Flash forward a couple of weeks. I'm sitting at her dining room table when her roommate comes home, and we all get to talking.

Two months later, the three of us have moved from the dining room table to the kitchen floor, where we're all sprawled out, choking on silent laughter.

That's another thing I've learned about friendship — it starts out as small acts of kindness and somehow grows

friend, Kim, and her kids. At some point, we stopped, and I've never asked exactly why. But she once mentioned it was because they just lost touch over the years. Life gets busy as you get older, it turns out.

Recently, they reconnected, and I was quietly overjoyed for them. I think we need friends at every age, someone outside our family to give our lives meaning.

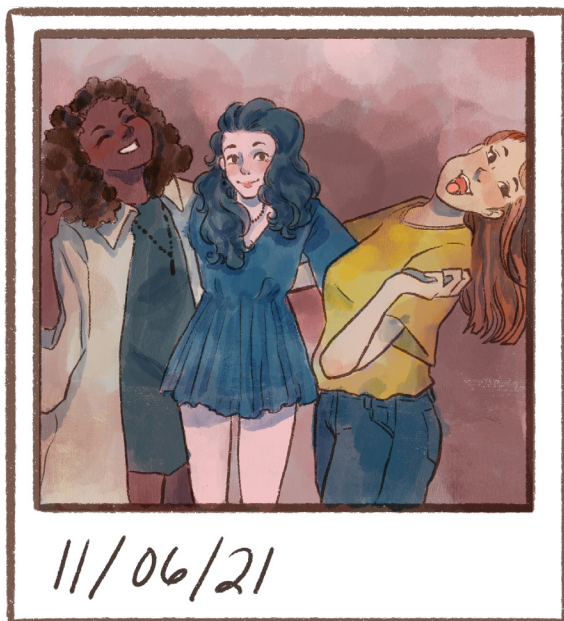
So if there are all these women reporting they find it difficult to make friends later in life, doesn't that mean they all want to make new friends? Or they want to reach out to their former friends but are too afraid?

If so, that means we're all just wanting to hang out, watch "Pride & Prejudice" and rant about the terrible people in our lives, but we're too in our heads about it.

If this is the case, it's bullshit. I get life becomes busier as we age — one day, we'll move to different cities, play adults, climb the career ladder, convince someone to marry us and start a family, but maybe not in this economy. That's exactly why we

need to hold on tight to each other right now.

Those major events are life-defining moments, even if the stress may make you wish you never had to experience them at the time. But they can be a little less stressful and a little more worth living through if the girl who's seen you bawling your eyes out on the bathroom floor is there to celebrate them alongside you.



into the people you didn't know you needed but can't live without.

Research shows that as women get older, it becomes harder for us to make new friends, and many of us will lose contact with our existing friends. This feels a little bit like a death sentence for my future self — until I think about it more.

Growing up, I remember my family used to visit my mom's best



Short story

Brain worms

by Claire Geare

Illustrations by Monica Navarro

The worms that live in my brain make themselves known in plenty of ways: My bitten nails, pounding headaches and bad thoughts all go back to the nuisances in my frontal lobe slowly chipping away at my sanity. On good days, they operate as a copilot, a second-in-command. On the bad days, they usurp their leadership. Usually, they manifest as random urges — swerve the wheel, hit your head, breathe faster, faster, faster until you can't breathe at all. Shake and cry when everything's okay. Do anything but what you're supposed to, and drag everyone down while you do it.

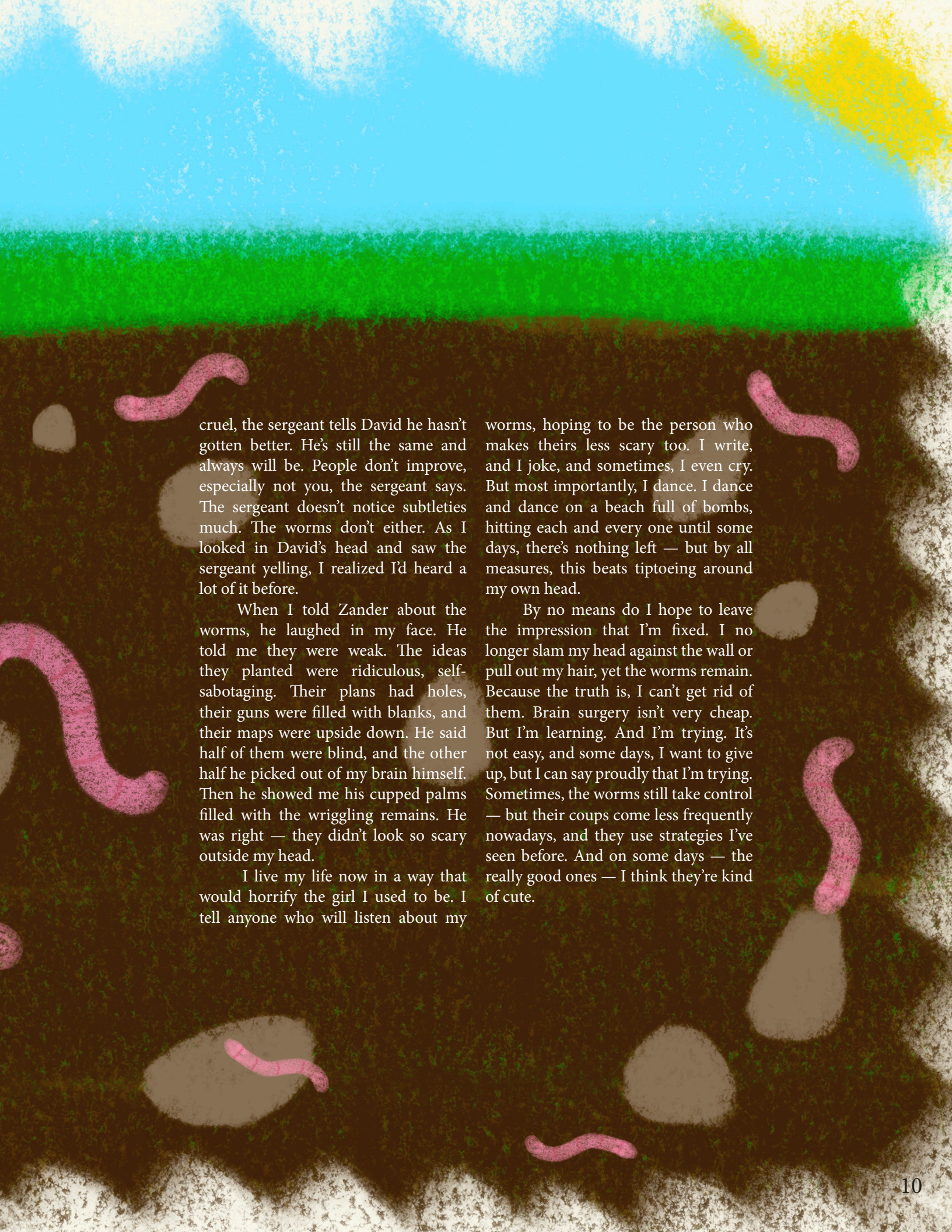
For a while, I treated my brain like a beach full of forgotten land mines, carefully sidestepping myself to avoid remembering. I lived carefully and quietly, unwilling to try a new path for fear of striking the land mines littering my insides. I shrank to make room for all these worms planting all these mines, picked up from a lifetime of

chaos — until I shrank so much I began to disappear.

One thing about the worms: They're very good at their job. Twisting middling memories and insignificant images into throat-closing remembrances, crafting perfectly wicked collages of the places in my mind I'd never dare visit. Asking me to keep them a secret, willing me not to tell. All part of their plan.

See, there's one important thing the worms didn't share before barging into my brain: The more secret I kept them, the more control they would have over me. Tricky, those worms. Like a supervillain in the final moments of the film, it's not until they're sure they've won that they'll reveal their greatest weakness. And last year, the worms were pretty sure they'd won.

The first person I told was David. David told me his worms aren't worms at all. Instead, he said his brain is run by a drill sergeant. Unforgiving and



cruel, the sergeant tells David he hasn't gotten better. He's still the same and always will be. People don't improve, especially not you, the sergeant says. The sergeant doesn't notice subtleties much. The worms don't either. As I looked in David's head and saw the sergeant yelling, I realized I'd heard a lot of it before.

When I told Zander about the worms, he laughed in my face. He told me they were weak. The ideas they planted were ridiculous, self-sabotaging. Their plans had holes, their guns were filled with blanks, and their maps were upside down. He said half of them were blind, and the other half he picked out of my brain himself. Then he showed me his cupped palms filled with the wriggling remains. He was right — they didn't look so scary outside my head.

I live my life now in a way that would horrify the girl I used to be. I tell anyone who will listen about my

worms, hoping to be the person who makes theirs less scary too. I write, and I joke, and sometimes, I even cry. But most importantly, I dance. I dance and dance on a beach full of bombs, hitting each and every one until some days, there's nothing left — but by all measures, this beats tiptoeing around my own head.

By no means do I hope to leave the impression that I'm fixed. I no longer slam my head against the wall or pull out my hair, yet the worms remain. Because the truth is, I can't get rid of them. Brain surgery isn't very cheap. But I'm learning. And I'm trying. It's not easy, and some days, I want to give up, but I can say proudly that I'm trying. Sometimes, the worms still take control — but their coups come less frequently nowadays, and they use strategies I've seen before. And on some days — the really good ones — I think they're kind of cute.

Report

Frame by frame

In ASU's animation program, students and faculty find their voices through different animated mediums

by Fatima Gabir

Artwork courtesy of Katelyn Bell, Andrea Bengé,
Ashlynn Dang, Sujin Kim and Tony Pham



By the hands of animators, the lifeless come to life. With every frame, a universe develops, brought to life by the whirlwind of intense emotions the characters experience as they embark on mystical adventures. Animated classics, like “The Lion King,” “Spirited Away,” “Shrek” and more, invite us into an illustrated world where fantasy has no boundaries.

ASU’s animation program in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts gives ambitious creatives the tools to draw their imaginations into life by allowing them to explore animation production processes, like figure drawing, 3D modeling and storyboarding. Students and faculty alike are putting their pens to the page to stretch the bounds of animation beyond the mainstream, from telling the buried stories of marginalized groups to following the forefront of new animation technologies.

While 2D animation has existed since the 1800s, new technological innovations are shaking up the industry. With the popularization of 3D animation in movies like “Frozen” and “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem,” moviegoers aren’t only

watching films when they come to the theater — they’re watching the future of animation unfold. At ASU, animation students practice a combination of 2D and 3D animation to familiarize themselves with both styles.

Katelyn Bell, a junior in the program, selected 3D modeling as her pathway to learn how to build character models for video games and animated movies. A 3D modeler designs the structure and appearance of characters and background props before 3D animators breathe life into them with motion.

Growing up, Bell dabbled in a range of art mediums. Drawing was her introduction to the craft, but then she joined a fashion class and finally a theater program, which opened her eyes to the possibilities of art.

After her director assigned her villain roles to help her “reach inside herself,” Bell realized art allowed her to experience a controlled catharsis by which she could express and understand her feelings.

“It gave me a kind of outlet to portray negative emotions in a space that wouldn’t be taken the wrong way,” Bell said. “I felt like it was healthy for me to be able to do that, and it taught me a lot about my personality.”

Despite her penchant for theater, Bell was always drawn to digital art, and she also believed she’d earn a more stable income as an artist by putting her technological skills to use. When it came time for college, she knew where she would go: ASU’s animation program.

But once she was in the program, Bell was disappointed by the lack of formal “structure” in her animation classes. She said it felt like animation was treated as a hobby or pet project instead of a serious industry.

“It feels like [the program doesn’t] really have a lot of faith in us to make it professionally,” Bell said.

Because the animation program is only a few years old, animation clubs like Women in Animation at ASU are working to further develop the program by planning town halls with faculty to discuss and resolve issues, Bell said.

“I feel like animation is such a wide topic of learning, and I expected to have learned every little detail,” she said. “It feels like I’m only brushing the surface of every type of animation.”

Exploring the art

Ashlynn Dang, a junior studying animation and vice president of Women in Animation at ASU, has always wanted her work to be shown on the silver screen — even if she’s operating behind the scenes. Her dream is to lead a crew, establish a film’s visual style and dazzle an audience as an art director, whose job is to hone the artistic vision of an animated movie and communicate it to the rest of their team.

Dang aspires to work at DreamWorks Animation, where she can help create movies like the studio’s critically acclaimed 2022 movie “Puss In Boots: The Last Wish,” a stylistic fairy tale film that a critic even nominated as the “best animated film” of the year, according to Rotten Tomatoes.

“The idea of making a universe for people to escape everyday reality would be sick,” Dang said.

A reviewer for Polygon compared the storybook-inspired animation style of “Puss in Boots: The Last Wish” to the Academy Award-winning 2018 film “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.” The “Into the Spider-Verse” film, which is the first movie in the Spider-Verse Saga, is highly praised for ushering in a new era of American animation due to its punchy, comic book-inspired animation style.

For every animated movie, there are thousands of animators working behind the scenes to “bring that



Artwork by Ashlynn Dang



Artwork by Katelyn Bell

fantasy to life,” Dang said. Over 1,000 animators worked on the second film in the Spider-Verse Saga, this year’s “Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse,” which is fitting for such an “artistically ambitious project,” according to *The Verge*.

“I want people to keep that in mind when they watch their favorite films,” Dang said. “It doesn’t take a team of five, but a team of thousands of animators to make [a film] come together.”

While Dang hopes to use her talents to make family-friendly movies that both adults and children may enjoy, animation isn’t just a form of escapism. In fact, it’s a powerful visual learning tool for people of all ages, but especially for some of animation’s most die-hard fans: children.

A 2022 study found animation is an entertaining means to enhance visual attention and cognition, especially among children. Animated characters and their well-crafted motions stimulate viewers’ visual attention and help them understand concepts better, demonstrating how animation goes beyond storytelling — it also impacts viewers cognitively and psychologically, with applications in advertising, teaching and communications.

But Tony Pham doesn’t need studies to tell him animation can be used as a powerful educational tool. As the founder of the Valley-based TKMV Studio, Pham and his company have been creating narrative content, including animated TV shows and illustrated children’s books, to educate children about diversity and inclusion for years.

TKMV Studio also provides its services, including filming, creating 3D animations and illustrating children’s books, to create content for clients outside the company.

Pham’s studio is currently working with Arizona PBS, housed at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, to create “Exploring with Yazzy & Jazzy,” the studio’s first in-house animated series. The show focuses on the science of

the Arizona desert “to provide lower-income youth an opportunity to find a new career path,” according to the studio’s website. It follows twin robot sisters who have landed on Earth for a scout mission.

“I want to be able to showcase all the beauty that Arizona has to offer in a 3D style,” Pham said. “The point of the project is to showcase that learning can be difficult but also fun, engaging and vibrant.”

Animation has always had a presence in Pham’s life, starting from his childhood. Along the way, he said he discovered this “expansive and vibrant” medium was the best way for him to showcase his creativity.

“Unlike filming, you don’t need to get on camera,” Pham said. “You don’t need a location. But with animation, you can download different assets to create your own world within minutes.”

Questioning the narrative

Animation isn’t just a medium of imagination used to create the fictional films of children’s daydreams. Beyond that, animation can also be used to tell stories about real-life social injustices.

Andrea Bengé, assistant professor of 3D animation in the School of Art, is a multimedia artist who “interrogates the gender grotesque, the idea that established gender roles and current power structures inherently connect sex and violence,” according to her website. Her films reference pop culture and contain imagery that evokes female nudity in order to reflect her experiences as a woman and how “people don’t let us own our own bodies,” Bengé said.

“The female nude itself is just a loaded ... image,” she said. “It gets censored a lot and has a lot of very strong reactions.”

Even though Bengé’s work presents adult topics, it draws inspiration from the airbrushed, candy-colored designs of toy company Lisa Frank Inc. by incorporating rainbows and childish, cartoony imagery. This paints a “superficial” and “seductive” veneer over her films that makes the

heaviness of the story more palatable to viewers, she said.

Benge's glossy, neon animations explore themes like adolescence, personal experiences, puberty and sexuality, with rabbits appearing as a recurring motif. She said it started as a reference to "Alice in Wonderland's" White Rabbit and how he "brings you down into another world," but she later layered this idea with the cultural symbolism of Playboy's bunny logo.

"A rabbit is a prey animal," Benge said. "Women are hunted sometimes, and you have to protect yourself from the predator. I find that the rabbit is a great kind of representation of the idea of innocence and how those things melt together."

Rather than platforming an

explicit stance on an issue, Benge's films depict and question existing social narratives. According to her website, her award-winning animated short film "Ambulance" served as an "uncomfortable reflection on police brutality and superficial youth" by telling the story of a party she attended growing up. By the end of the night, there was nothing to celebrate. Just down the street, an acquaintance was killed by the police, she said.

"Why did that happen?" Benge said. "What really happened? I don't know, and I still don't know. There was no answer to it. I never got an answer. I don't even remember the kid's name."

Like a true artist, what she did remember was the imagery. The jarring contrast between the wealthy, affluent

area and the senseless violence of her acquaintance's death has stuck with her since, a memory immortalized in "Ambulance."

"We need to question it, think about it," Benge said.

Amplifying marginalized voices

Sujin Kim, assistant professor of animation at ASU's School of Art and an experimental filmmaker, also uses animation to amplify the voices of those who have been neglected historically and socially — specifically, women in South Korea.

In 2021, she created "Unforgotten," an animated short film on sexual violence against Korean women during World War II for her MFA thesis at



Artwork by Andrea Benge



“It is very important, as a next generation, to understand your roles and duties to share those voices with people who’ve never learned or heard of them.”

— Sujin Kim

the California Institute of the Arts. That year, the film won a gold medal in domestic animation at the Student Academy Awards, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The film tells the story of Korean “comfort women,” a euphemism for women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army before and during World War II from 1932-1945. Many historians estimate between 50,000-200,000 were enslaved, but the exact number is still being debated. While the vast majority of the women were Korean, the women also hailed from the Philippines, Vietnam, China and other countries occupied by the army. Many died or committed suicide due to mistreatment and physical and emotional stress. It was one of the largest instances of state-sponsored sexual slavery in history.

The film’s visuals feel like a terrifying fever dream, with the women fragmented into bits and pieces, like broken figurines or a pile of scraps about to be scattered by the wind —

together, but never whole.

“Instead of re-traumatizing those victims through violent images, I tried to deliver what they experienced through surreal visuals,” Kim said.

In Korea, the women who survived to return to their hometowns were judged by the rest of society, as sexual-assault survivors there were generally ostracized. Many of the women even considered themselves “dirty” and “stained,” according to the Taipei Times. The stigma society imposed upon these survivors silenced them for decades, robbing them of the chance to tell their stories, Kim said.

It was not until August 1991 that their silence was broken when Kim Hak-soon became the first survivor to speak publicly about the atrocity. Just four months later, 35 members of the Association of Korean Victims sued the Japanese government in Tokyo District Court for violating their human rights during World War II.

“Just by revealing what they experienced, they clearly delivered a message to the next generation,” Kim

said. “Their willingness [to be on] the forefront of sharing their story is not something everybody can do. That was my focus.”

Animation can already be a long and arduous process, painstakingly taken frame by frame. On top of that, Kim said animators who tell the stories of marginalized groups have an additional responsibility to ensure accuracy and exercise care. Throughout the animation process, Kim constantly asked herself if she was presenting an authentic picture of the women and the tribulations they endured. With “Unforgotten,” she aimed not only to raise awareness of the atrocity but also to highlight how survivors later reclaimed the narrative and became activists.

“It is very important, as a next generation, to understand your roles and duties to share those voices with people who’ve never learned or heard of them,” Kim said. “Meanwhile, you should also be ready mentally to carry the pain.”

Feature

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The journalist's b

Insight: The Cronkite School's failure to enforce the incorporation of SAILS accommodations makes the program inaccessible for students with disabilities



Walter Cronkite School



ody...

by Claire Geare
Photos by Monica Navarro

ol of Journalism
and Mass Communication

I'm not a journalist anymore.

I may be writing this, and it may get published, but that's not what makes a journalist. At least according to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. To Cronkite, the "perfect" journalist has a healthy heart, mobile legs and a neurotypical mind. The "perfect" journalist doesn't need a service animal, or crutches, or a pacemaker, or the hospital, or sleep or even a tampon.

Cronkite's journalist is the symbol of physical and mental perfection. And unfortunately, I don't make the cut.

I'll admit something personal here: I'm not exactly well. With autism, heart conditions, heavy periods, bipolar disorder and a recent monthslong stay in the hospital, I'm certainly not the picture of ideal health. But I've always had a sharp mind. I've been writing since I was six years old. I've been published over 50 times, and I've served as editor-in-chief of two award-winning publications.

When the time came to apply to college, I knew exactly where I would go. I had the experience, I had the GPA, and I had the scholarships. I knew what I wanted, and I knew the Cronkite School could help me get there as a top-ranked journalism school.

I thought I had everything I needed to succeed there. I just didn't know I needed a different body.

What is an invisible disability?

Everyone gets sick sometimes. Maybe we miss a class, a club meeting or a deadline — it happens. But we get better. Our headache clears, our nausea disappears, and in a week, we return to our regular routine. It's the miracle of the human body. Everyone's bodies are designed to repair themselves after pain and illness, right?

Unfortunately, mine doesn't do that. Heart and neurological issues don't really heal like a common cold, but it seems people want me to get better after a week. What do you do when a "get well soon" card is only wishful thinking?

In some ways, I guess I could be considered lucky. My disability is invisible, so I can choose who I reveal my illness to. My very existence doesn't call attention to my disability like it does for someone whose disability is visible. I'm not forced to have complicated conversations about my disability during a job interview, first date or some other one-time event. I get to ignore that aspect of my identity — for a little while.

But I can't avoid my symptoms forever. Eventually, I miss too many classes, appointments or plans I made with friends. People start wanting answers. Everybody gets sick sometimes, that's easy to accept.

But what do you do with somebody who is sick all of the time?

Necessary accommodations

That's the core question ASU

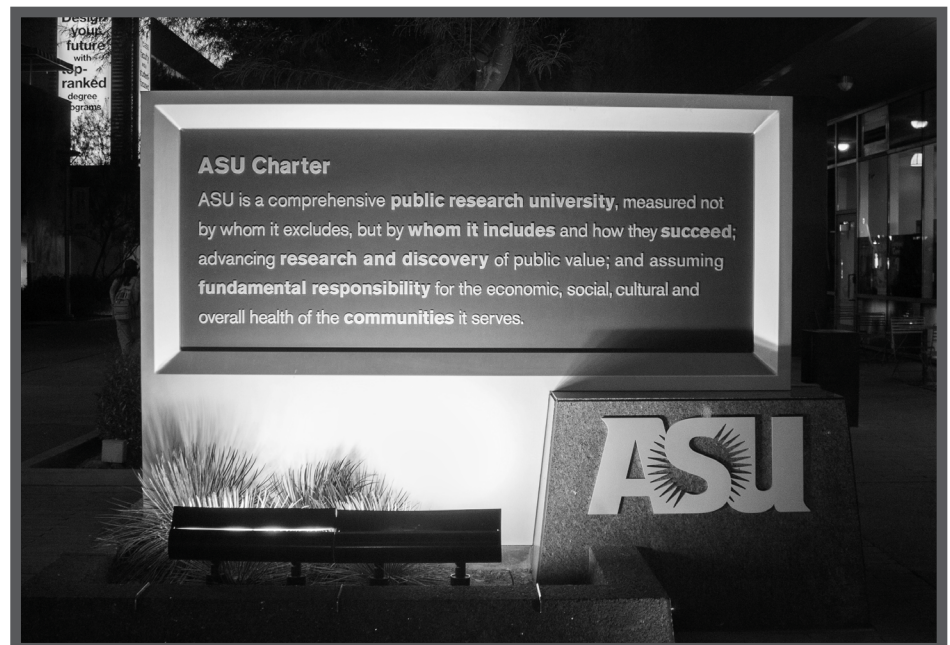
faculty face when teaching students like me.

A student with disabilities may have accommodations to miss class, but how many missed classes is too many? Maybe a student needs a deadline extension because of their disability, but is that fair to everyone else? After all, who wouldn't want an extra day for assignments?

Could a student with disabilities be using their accommodations to take advantage of their professors?

No, they're not. That's the short and long answer. And to even suggest that a student with disabilities is abusing their accommodations for the everyday challenges they face is offensive. Everyone with disabilities has good and bad days. Some days I function just fine, but others, I wake up completely unable to move. Life for us is unpredictable, and this unpredictability frightens people.

This fear may not be explicit — nobody has ever said to my face that I'm abusing my accommodations. But it manifests in the exasperation in faculty's eyes, their curt emails, the subtle resentment that builds whenever you ask them for help.



Some people naturally assume the worst in others, it seems, and without concrete, physical evidence of our disabilities, they jump to the conclusion that our struggles don't even exist.

I might not look like I have disabilities, but since when do people appear the way they're stereotyped to look?

Would an ethical journalist assume a source's sexuality, gender or race based on appearance? No. It's completely against journalistic ethics, and the Cronkite School knows it — since last fall, all undergraduate Cronkite students are now required to take Diversity and Civility at Cronkite, a course dedicated to raising awareness and promoting acceptance for marginalized groups at the school and in the media.

Yet, I found the course fails to supply any in-depth information on how the media industry — and the Cronkite School — may better accommodate those with invisible disabilities. I know firsthand from taking this class only one year ago, when I was part of the first cohort required to take the course.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act are two key federal laws aimed at reducing discrimination against students with disabilities in academic spaces. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by any entity receiving federal financial assistance while Title II prohibits such discrimination by state and local governments. These two laws make it illegal for a public university, like ASU, to discriminate against people with disabilities.

ASU may point to its Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services — which, according to its website, is “the central campus resource for students with disabilities to ensure access to their education

and help increase awareness in the university community,” — as a way to tout its accessible accommodations for students with disabilities, but SAILS has yet to help me. In my experience at the Cronkite School and ASU in general, the incorporation of approved SAILS accommodations in courses by faculty members is poorly enforced.

ASU's Student Services Manual states that “approved [SAILS] accommodations are determined on an individual student and course-by-course basis with priority given to a student's preferred accommodation.” But in my experience, I've received little prioritization.



“It's SAILS that determines whether the accommodation is a reasonable one,” said Sarah Bolmarcich, an associate teaching professor at the School of International Letters and Cultures who has worked to promote awareness of people with disabilities at ASU. “What faculty can do is say, ‘This doesn't suit my course. We're going to have to work out an alternative.’”

Throughout my time at ASU — both inside and outside the Cronkite School — not all my professors have been sympathetic to my situation. Some faculty members have deducted

points for my absences despite my SAILS accommodations, blaming me for failing to consistently attend class. The Cronkite School in particular maintains an absence policy stating that “Students must attend all classes for their full duration,” even though other colleges at ASU do allow absences.

No matter how I explained my disability to these faculty members, even though I legally only have to disclose my disability to SAILS to receive accommodations — not my professors — they still would not believe me.

But how do I prove an invisible disability? How can I be more consistent with such inconsistent health?

The answer is I can't. For starters, it's called an invisible disability for a reason. You simply cannot see it. Secondly, consistency just isn't physically possible for me. That's one of the defining aspects of life for people with disabilities.

‘Why are you not looking at me?’

In my experience, people generally feel comfortable dismissing the medical concerns of those they cannot physically see hurting, and that includes many faculty members. One of the most disappointing things I've noticed is this issue pervades regardless of whether a student's disability is visible or invisible. It seems some Cronkite professors simply don't care either way, even going so far as to deny opportunities to students with disabilities that those without disabilities may enjoy.

“I've had professors that, [when] I have been just as good as other students, ... they're like, ... ‘You can't do this internship because it's too many days of the week or it takes too much effort,’” said Madi Wolff, a Cronkite junior studying journalism who uses a

“Everybody gets sick sometimes, that’s easy to accept. But what do you do with somebody who is sick all of the time?”

— Claire Geare

wheelchair. “And I’m like, ‘I can. That’s exactly what I do. I’m the best at that. Why are you not looking at me?’”

Personally, I’ve been denied accommodations, and an ASU counselor even recommended that I drop out of the Cronkite School after hearing my concerns, explaining that it may be my best option amid the challenges I was experiencing there.

So I did.

I didn’t want to switch my major from journalism — I was thriving at Cronkite. I was able to create content for both of ASU Student Media’s organizations, I was realizing my passion for audio and video production, and I even had a 4.0 GPA. But all of that wasn’t enough.

Try as they might, this counselor couldn’t give me any advice other than to leave Cronkite entirely, as they said its curriculum is not designed to accommodate my disabilities, which would only leave me to continue to struggle in silence. A journalist, according to every Cronkite faculty member I’ve spoken to, never misses a day. In theory, this logic may make sense — if a journalist is consistently absent, they may not always be available to cover breaking news. After all, journalists can’t control when and where news breaks.

But people with disabilities know their limitations. It’s a fundamental

part of our existence. I didn’t attend the Cronkite School to cover breaking news — I’m well aware that I’m not a top candidate for the breakneck life of reporting live.

But I don’t report live; I write satire for magazines. I applied for Cronkite with satire, I wrote satire during my time at the school, and I never said I would do anything different. I’m not built for a nine-to-five job, I know that. What I am built for is sitting in my room and writing — which I thought I could do. Cronkite told me differently.

The school’s blanket policy promotes only one style of journalism — the traditional around-the-clock live reporter — which is highly ableist against any student with health concerns, even something as routine as menstruation.

In the subtleties

Most of the harm that comes to students with disabilities at ASU stems from subtle actions — imperceptible on the outside, but glaringly obvious from an insider view. Professors reluctantly accepting accommodations after a quick up-and-down glance at your seemingly non-disabled body, the frustration in their voices, the constant reminders that you’re missing assignments or lessons without providing any help with catching up. It’s discouraging, and

it makes me reluctant to even use my SAILS accommodations.

“I had a professor where the class was just not set up to where I could get to anything,” Wolff said. “I was like, ‘Can we maybe just move this table forward a little bit, just so I have a little walkway?’ And they’re like, ‘Oh no, that messes up the flow of the class.’ So I’m like, ‘Okay, I guess I’ll just sit in this corner.’”

We’re clearly not alone in our frustrations. From 2009-2016, only 37% of college students with disabilities disclosed their disability to their school, according to surveys by the National Center of Education Statistics.

In a study published last year, researchers graded 50 top undergraduate institutions’ inclusion and accessibility for students with disabilities on an A to F scale. Of those 50 schools, just three universities received an A rating while 60%, or 30 schools, received a D or F grade.

These statistics paint a picture of a very grim reality: Students with disabilities don’t feel comfortable in higher education. Despite the ASU Library housing some leading texts on academic ableism, no meaningful steps have been taken to resolve this issue at the University.

On Oct. 19, the University rang in its first ASU Accessibility Awareness Day with a conference hosted by

faculty members who specialize in accessible education for students with disabilities. At the event, these experts outlined ways to make the University — and higher education in general — a more accessible and inclusive place for students with disabilities.

The conference reeked of irony. This event proved one thing to me: The University is failing to take advantage of the wealth of resources and experts available to it to improve accessibility for students with disabilities. The conference lasted for over eight hours, and a slew of solutions to the exact issues this story is about were presented. Yet, here I am, writing this story anyway.

I told a Cronkite professor of mine last year that I had changed my major from journalism, mostly due to my health conditions and the counselor's suggestion that I switch out of the school. Instead of showing concern, pleading that I remain in the program or making the slightest attempt to address this issue, she exclaimed, "Thank God."

Even though Bolmarcich does not work at Cronkite, she was aware of the struggles students with disabilities face at the journalism school as a member of the University Senate, an elected governing body consisting of ASU faculty.

"My committee last year, Student-Faculty Policy, was actually looking at this question — problems with implementing student accommodations by faculty [throughout ASU]," Bolmarcich said. "In fact, they're still looking at it."

When even faculty outside the journalism school recognize how challenging it is for students with disabilities to remain at Cronkite, isn't

that a sign it's time to change?

While I reached out to the University for comment, it did not provide a statement for this story by the time of production.

Educating universally

I'm not asking the Cronkite School to water down its curriculum or expectations — I admire the school's commitment to fostering the next generation of journalists. But I am asking Cronkite to make its program accessible for talented students who just happen to have disabilities. Right now, Cronkite is missing out on the incredibly skilled would-be journalists who are unable to meet its sky-high standards due to circumstances beyond their control.

Sure, it would take a massive overhaul of the Cronkite School to fix such a deeply ingrained issue. But not all is lost. If we can raise our voices loud enough to finally be heard, these changes will happen.

Part of the solution is for Cronkite to better implement the principles of the Universal Design for Learning, a framework designed by education research organization CAST that's becoming increasingly widespread in the classroom.

As defined by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, UDL is "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability."

UDL uses a three-pronged approach to foster an accessible educational environment for students

of all backgrounds. First, it mandates that curricula include multiple means of engagement for students, such as group projects and solo work, so that lessons are stimulating and interesting for all types of learners.

The second component of UDL is incorporating multiple means of representation, meaning that information should be presented in different ways to reach as many students as possible. For example, I have sensory issues because of my autism. This means I get overstimulated easily, so it's often difficult for me to digest information auditorily. Teachers can reduce this overstimulation even just by providing a written version of the information for me.

UDL's final principle is providing students with multiple avenues to act and express themselves. Students interact with a learning environment in different ways depending on their abilities, backgrounds and experiences. For example, a student may struggle with writing but not speaking or vice versa. UDL gives an equal opportunity for each student to be an active learner.

While I have taken a few Cronkite classes that have strongly incorporated UDL's three principles, they don't carry across the entire school. This means some classes are not built to be accessible for all students, creating a system of exclusion against students with disabilities in the very courses they're required to take.

If Cronkite really expects such an impossible standard of "perfection," then it is complicit in developing only one type of journalist — one with the journalist's body.

What's in your bag?

We asked ASU students about their bags and what they carry in them — this is what they had to show.

by Leah Mesquita
Photos by Hajin Lee and Wendy Maddox

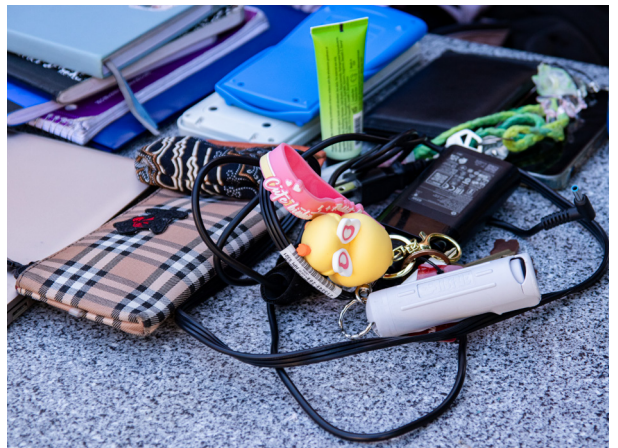
Hatzel Escorcia Arciniega (below) - environmental engineering sophomore

Bag — “I got [my bag] at a Dia de los Muertos festival in Downtown Mesa over the weekend.”

Geneva Feng (right) - mechanical engineering sophomore

Bag — “This backpack is actually my mom’s. It’s really old. It was my mom’s, then my sister’s, and now it’s mine.”

Keychain — “I have these cute charms that my friend gave me. I also have a matching keychain with them, but she lost hers, so now it’s just me.”



Mason Manetta (top left) - electrical engineering graduate student

GPS rescue beacon — “In case I ever get stranded somewhere and don’t have cellphone service, this is what I’d use. ... I do canyoneering sometimes, and when you go into the canyon, you lose almost all cellphone coverage. But this has a direct line of sight to the sky.”

Birth certificate — “I just did my HR verification.”

Engineering calculator circa 1991 — “I think I should only use calculators that are older than myself. ... This was actually my father’s when he went to ASU, so I guess I’m continuing the calculator lineage.”



Mya Parrott (bottom right) - family and human development junior

House keys — “I have three house keys. One is for my house, my friend’s old apartment and my friend’s new apartment.”

Keychain — “My favorite part is my MayMay’s handwriting. She passed away back in 2018, so I like to carry a little piece of her around.”

Sophie Warnock (bottom left) - fashion sophomore

Flyer — “I have this flyer for what I think is a pyramid scheme. This guy on the light rail gave it to me.”



What's in the editors' bags?

Camila



Madeline



Savannah

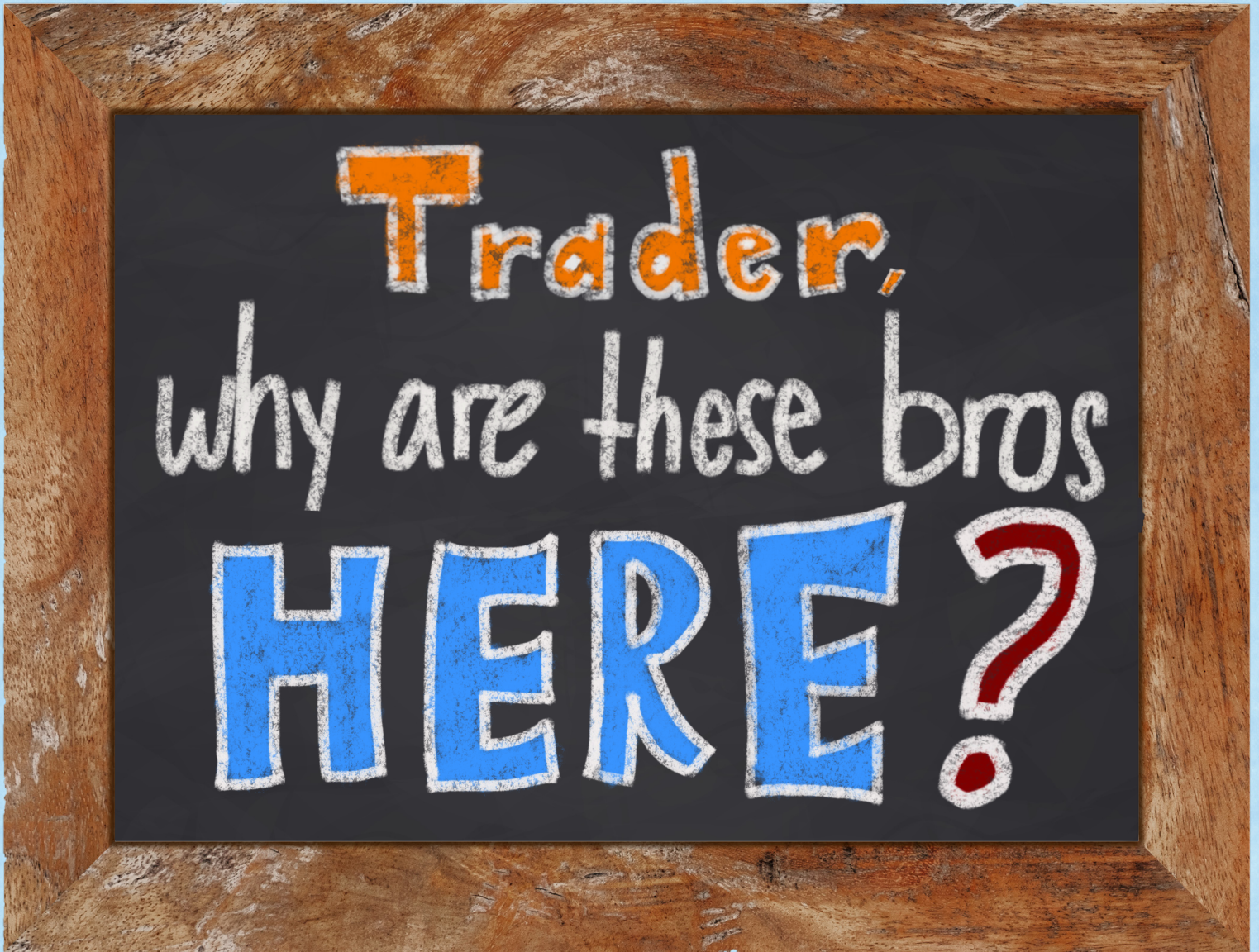


Sydney



Monica





A scientific look at one of the rarest finds at
Trader Joe's — frat guys

by Audrey Eagerton
Illustrations by Monica Navarro



Trader Joe's isn't where I go to make smart financial decisions. It's where I go to buy frozen meals when I've procrastinated too much to have time to cook, restrain myself from stockpiling seasonal novelties and roam the aisles fantasizing about an employee who looks like their main food group is granola.

All of this aligns with Trader Joe's mission statement of wanting shopping in its stores to be "rewarding, eventful and fun." But I didn't know I had the same version of fun as the fraternity-T-shirt-and-Crocs-with-socks-clad bros I spotted perusing the cheese section.

The first time I caught a frat guy in Trader Joe's, it was like an episode of "The Twilight Zone." I wasn't sure if it was some sick joke or a glitch in the Matrix, but later, I'd discover this is a frequently spotted specimen native to the Trader Joe's on University Drive and Rural Road, just blocks away from the Greek Leadership Village.

I stood frozen in horror as one picked up my favorite lemonade — Italian blood orange — and chucked it in the cart he shared with two other frat guys. What were they going to do with it? Be refined and pair it with a spicy vodka pasta or charcuterie board, as it should be? Or use it for mixed drinks and chasers?

I subtly tracked them from the

corner of my eye as we happened to wander down the same aisles, trying my best — and failing — to remember my mental grocery list. But at one point, probably when one of them shouted, "No way, I love sourdough!" I stopped pretending this display of what I can only call "modern hunting" didn't spark my keen scientific interest.

I felt like Steve Irwin marveling over a colony of wild crocodiles — not that I'm comparing bros in frats to modern-day dinosaurs. But for all my observing, I was only left with more questions than answers.

Do they like Trader Joe's because of their relatively cheap, yet tasty, frozen meals, or is it simply the closest grocery store nearby? Do they adore the seasonal pumpkin bread too? Or is it a matter of nostalgia — do they feel comforted by this place because it reminds them of when their parents used to drag them to the store?

Once I noticed my intended 15-minute shopping trip had stretched into half an hour, I tore my eyes away from the pack of frat guys on the prowl. But of course they ended up behind me in the same checkout lane, all but forcing me to eavesdrop on conversations about how the Chili & Lime Flavored Rolled Corn Tortilla Chips (TJ's superior spin on Takis) "slap" and how the lemonade I had seen them pick up earlier would make an excellent chaser — they have taste, I'll give them that. But does it really even matter when it'll just be used to wash down the most vile vodka you can buy

at El P's?

When it was finally my turn to have my food scanned and bagged, the checkout clerk with a sleeve of watercolor tattoos and I quietly shared a grimace. It's clear rowdy college men were not who she thought she'd be helping when she was hired — but working at Trader Joe's isn't just restocking endless holiday novelties and frolicking by the flower section, it seems.

Once I escaped the store, I thought my character studies and scientific endeavors were finally over. That is, until I saw the scooters parked outside. Two electric scooters for three fully grown men to lug their bounty back to the GLV.

I watched in shock — and, admittedly, some awe — behind the safety of my car's window as two of the men jumped on one scooter Jack-and-Rose-on-the-Titanic-style and balanced their double-bagged groceries on the handlebars. Then, they set off into the sunset to, I assume, do what we all do after a Trader Joe's run: feast.

Until then, I won't lie, I never would've thought frat bros were the ideal demographic for a grocery store that's long been praised by women of varying age groups as their idea of a fun night out. Now, I say, they absolutely are.

I can explain, I swear.

I've returned to this Trader Joe's several times since this first encounter. Call it morbid fascination or scientific research, but I had to test my hypothesis.

While it might be horrifying for the Birkenstock-wearing community to enter their supposed safe space — a store with cartoon turkeys painted on the windows — and see frat bros chucking organic bananas into their carts, this is what's best for society.

First, even frat bros need a break from basement beer pong and cannonballing off roofs. They, too, should be allowed to sip kombucha and daydream about escaping to the woods to open an organic farm.

Trader Joe's also serves their escape from the straight, cisgender, male paradise they inhabit. Instead of basking in the glory of the latest Tempe Barstool Barstool ASU post they were featured in, they have to talk about loose-leaf tea blends with an elderly woman named Crystal and her emotional support bichon frisé, Winston. I'm not saying Trader Joe's is where to go to be immersed in a different culture or community, but it is a good steppingstone to realize there's a whole wide world beyond the GLV and Tempe.

Beyond that, these three men who most likely spend their weekends drunkenly roaming Mill Avenue decided to embark on a sober group shopping trip. Instead of chugging buckets of booze at C.A.S.A., they were squabbling over whether to buy the dark or milk chocolate peanut butter cups. They chose to do this with their free time, and that's a triumph in itself!

None of their parents or partners forced them to be there. They didn't

take the lazy way out by having a cute Starship robot or an overworked DoorDash driver deliver their meals. They're growing up.

It's the bare minimum for them as full-grown adults, and quite frankly, the fact they get to have a fun time shopping is an unacknowledged privilege. They should be grateful that they can afford to buy groceries from Trader Joe's when some people find shopping stressful because they have to count every penny.

But progress is progress, and in the long run, this might even be beneficial for their development.

Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool. It helps teach kids to read, train dogs to sit and, in this case, turn Crocs-clad boys into future grocery warriors.

Here's my finding, which I've meticulously deduced after hours of field observation: If frat bros form a positive association with grocery shopping and it becomes fun and exciting for them, they'll jump at the chance to do it in the future — say, when they're married and their partner asks them to grab a couple things on the way home.

Who wouldn't want a husband who uses reusable bags and doesn't blow up over a request as simple as a grocery run?

If they can be trained to love grocery shopping, what else can they be conditioned to love doing? Dishwashing, folding laundry, vacuuming? The possibilities are endless. The key to building the perfect

husbands might be to introduce these tasks to them as a competitive game or team mission. My findings indicate it may be helpful to even incorporate scooters somehow, but that's a question for later research.

When Trader Joe's opened its location by the Tempe campus, it knew it would be a moneymaker, but I don't think it could have guessed the store would turn into a training ground for immature boys to turn into men who know where to buy the most gourmet lemonade.

So if you're looking for a way to get the behavior of frat bros in your life under control, start by inviting them to meet you at Trader Joe's, but then show up late. Leave them to their own devices. Let them explore the environment, experiment and learn on their own, but step in when guidance is needed. This will most likely happen at the register when the cashier with dip-dye hair and a septum piercing starts making friendly conversation with them. After that, life becomes easy.



Make or break

Student-athletes juggle practices, holiday festivities, family time and mental recovery over Thanksgiving and winter breaks

by Zach Bradshaw

Illustrations by Sydney Huyge and Monica Navarro



After months of racing from class to class, hunkering down in the library and working nonstop, the highly anticipated Thanksgiving and winter breaks give stressed students a welcome reprieve.

Thanksgiving break, which took place from Nov. 23–24 this year, offers students a two-day intermission from classes before they cap off the semester with the last week of classes and finals week, which concludes on Dec. 9.

Then winter break begins, giving students the opportunity to travel away from campus until Jan. 8, 2024, when the spring semester kicks off.

These over four weeks of holiday celebrations can be a whirlwind of family, friends, food and festivities, completely free of academic pressures — a chance for students to finally catch their breaths.

But not for many student-athletes.

While much of the student body flees campus during the Thanksgiving and winter breaks, many student-athletes remain for team practices or sporting events.

Twelve ASU athletic teams' seasons overlap with at least one of the two breaks: football, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's swim and dive, ice hockey, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, wrestling and volleyball.

The women's basketball team is scheduled to play a game against UA in the Territorial Cup series over winter

break on Dec. 17 while ASU football played the Territorial Cup showdown, a school staple, the day after Thanksgiving break on Nov. 25.

This leaves these student-athletes with significantly less time to rest before another semester rounds the corner, perhaps robbing them of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner or holiday spent at home.

'Tis the season to work out

Even though student-athletes don't attend class during the breaks, this doesn't mean their schedules aren't still jam-packed with training.

From mid-November to New Year's, the cross-country team will keep attending practices to "focus on strength with an introduction of speed work," head coach Ryan Ray wrote in an email. "They will increase volume and add 2 workouts per week."

While the swim and dive team doesn't have any meets in December, the month marks the season's midway point, a time when swimmers ramp up the intensity of their workouts.

The swim and dive team doesn't take any days off for Thanksgiving, and it continues to practice its typical six days per week over winter break until Dec. 21, according to head coach Bob Bowman.

"[These practices are] by far the hardest practice[s] because [the swimmers] don't have school," he said.

"Once the exams are done, we'll kind of get into it, and there'll be, like, a solid month of really hard training.

"We look forward to that because that's where they really ... make the most progress."

After these intense weeks, there are six days when the team doesn't have any practices scheduled, but most swimmers continue doing high-intensity workouts on their own, Bowman said.

"It's not much of a break for them," he said. "After that brief break, the team restarts its normal practice schedule on Dec. 27."

For some coaches, the offseason is the most important time of the year.

While winter teams use the break to prepare for matchups in the new year, spring sports, like softball and beach volleyball, use this time to prepare for their first games of the season in January or February.

The beach volleyball team worked out roughly 20 hours per week until Thanksgiving but is enjoying a break from practices until January, according to Kate Fitzgerald, a beach volleyball player and senior studying biological sciences.

According to Matt Thurmond, head coach of the men's golf team, the offseason is a time for student-athletes to "differentiate themselves from their competition." Some spring-season teams don't hold formal practices during the Thanksgiving and winter

breaks, so it is up to the student-athletes to maintain a diet, practice schedule and workout routine.

"Over the years I've seen many come back [from break] very sharp, benefitting from an off-season of focused work," Thurmond wrote in an email. "I've seen others come back flat and sloppy from lack of work."

Though it's crucial for student-athletes to remain in shape, Fitzgerald said finding motivation can be a challenge when all the other students are resting over break.

"I've had some winter breaks where I didn't want to look at the volleyball; I didn't want to look at a weight — I wanted to do my own thing," she said. "I know that's why coaches, I'm sure, have the biggest frustrations with breaks."

But she said this is just one of the "ups and downs" that come with being a student-athlete. To steer clear of distractions, she never lets her eye stray from her goals. Winter break doesn't have to hinder student-athletes if they're able to adapt their practice schedules, Fitzgerald said.

"I think so much of it is just building a lifestyle around [winter break practices]," said Herbie Behm, associate head coach of the swim and dive team. "You kind of get into a routine of training, sleeping, eating well."

Behm isn't one to advocate for strict diets or cutting back holiday treats over the breaks. He wants his swimmers to enjoy a holiday feast too — in moderation. But he said they should never take a break from workouts, as it's nearly impossible for student-athletes to return in January with the edge they had when they left if they completely stop working out. The body requires a level of consistency with practicing and working out to stay in shape.

"One step forward, one step forward," Behm said. "We want to at least stay in the same spot over the holidays."

'We don't have a normal holiday'

For swimmer Andy Dobrzanski, a sophomore studying construction management and technology, winter break is filled with countless practices, team meetings and workouts, even when he travels home to Monroe, Michigan. Though it's a hiatus from his obligations in the classroom, the grind in the water never stops.

"I get only a week [to visit my family]," Dobrzanski said. "But I mean, it is what it is, and it's just about all the training."

During his weeklong trip, Dobrzanski may be nearly 2,000 miles away from ASU's Mona Plummer Aquatic Center, but he's never really away from his coaches. He still follows their intense workout schedule, even on Christmas Eve. Like many other swimmers, Dobrzanski practices with his hometown's club or high school team when he's visiting his family.

Yet the breaks — although brief — still provide student-athletes with a needed "reset" from classes and their normal practice schedule, Fitzgerald said.

"It allows you to come back more excited to play again," she said.

Fitzgerald spends winter break in her hometown of Scottsdale with her friends and family, but practice never stops. She continues to work out with her coach, and she's also able to access ASU's facilities.

For some student-athletes, including Fitzgerald, winter break is also a time to mentally de-stress and avoid burnout.

After nearly four years of intense team practices and workouts galore, Fitzgerald said allocating time for activities outside sports and school helps add balance to her busy beach volleyball life.

"It can get repetitive [doing] the same thing every day, five days a week,

and the same workouts," Fitzgerald said.

During winter break, when she isn't working out, she bakes holiday treats, unwinds by the fire and spends quality time with her family. She doesn't allow the break to overturn her practice schedule, but she still comes back in January feeling refreshed.

"It's the holidays," Fitzgerald said. "I'm going to have a Christmas cookie. I'm going to sit down and have hot chocolate with my family by the fire. I'm not going to be like, 'Oh no, this is ruining my possibility of playing.'"

The practice-free days of Dec. 21-26 are some of the swimmers' busiest, as they must cram family time, hangouts with hometown friends, holiday festivities and practices into just six days. For Zoe Summar, a swimmer from Franklin, Tennessee, the time spent at home seems to fly by even though time may slow to a crawl for other students.

"I'll go home, and my friends are like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm ready to go back to college. We've been home for a month now,'" the sophomore studying kinesiology said. "I'm like, 'Alright, this is my second day at home, and I leave in three days. That is not what I needed to hear.'"

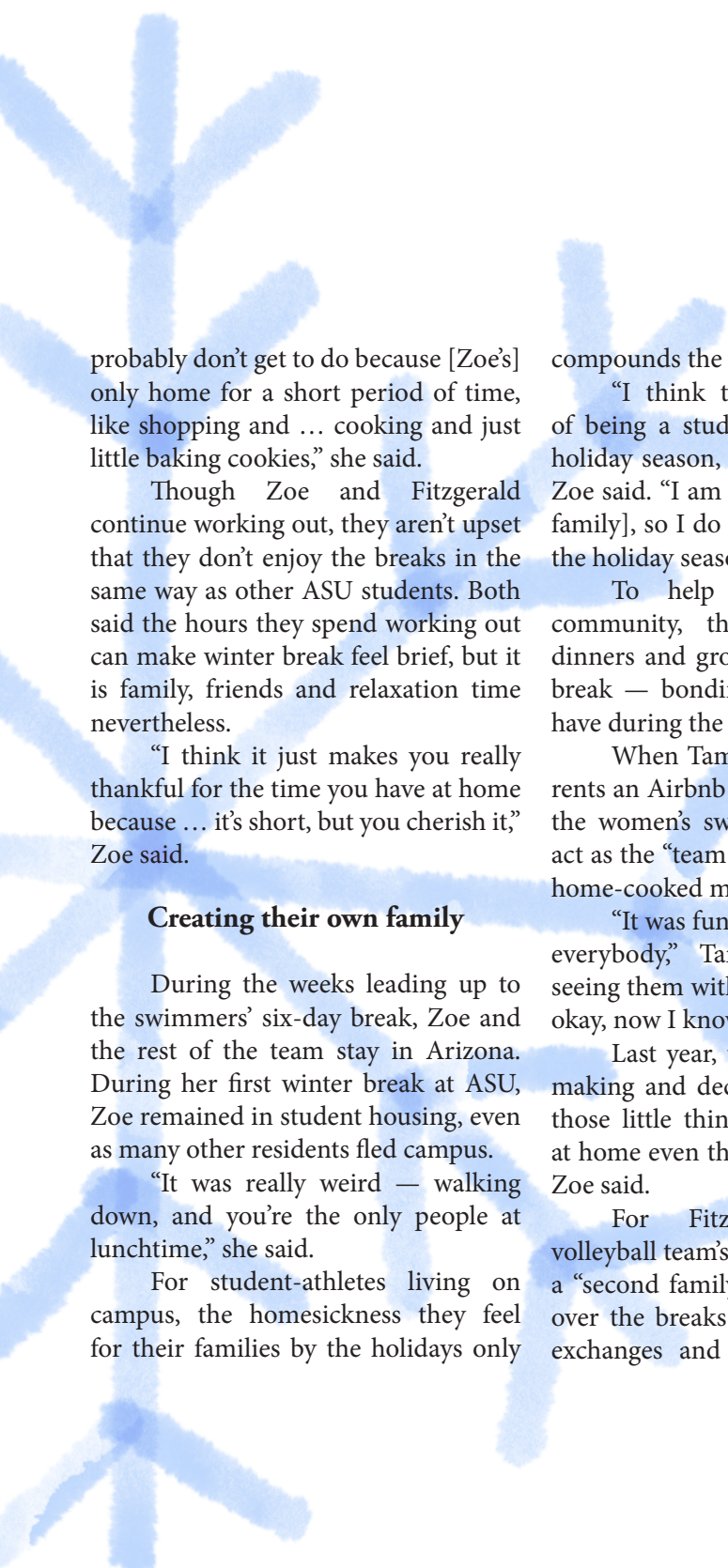

Visiting her family during break allows her to return to hometown comforts she's far away from during the semester.

"It's a short amount of time, but it's also a nice little reset to be with family and to get to train at home, do what you need to do, eat the good home-cooked food," Zoe said.

The hustle and bustle of the holidays cuts into the time the swimmers can spend with their families, according to Tammy Summar, Zoe's mom. "That ... six days they're home is pretty rushed," Tammy said.

But regardless, Tammy tries to prioritize seeing "the center of [her] world" as much as possible.

"There were ... traditions that we



probably don't get to do because [Zoe's] only home for a short period of time, like shopping and ... cooking and just little baking cookies," she said.

Though Zoe and Fitzgerald continue working out, they aren't upset that they don't enjoy the breaks in the same way as other ASU students. Both said the hours they spend working out can make winter break feel brief, but it is family, friends and relaxation time nevertheless.

"I think it just makes you really thankful for the time you have at home because ... it's short, but you cherish it," Zoe said.

Creating their own family

During the weeks leading up to the swimmers' six-day break, Zoe and the rest of the team stay in Arizona. During her first winter break at ASU, Zoe remained in student housing, even as many other residents fled campus.

"It was really weird — walking down, and you're the only people at lunchtime," she said.

For student-athletes living on campus, the homesickness they feel for their families by the holidays only

compounds the loneliness.

"I think that's the hardest part of being a student-athlete during the holiday season, is everyone's at home," Zoe said. "I am just really close to [my family], so I do miss them a lot during the holiday season."

To help foster a sense of community, the swim team hosts dinners and group outings during the break — bonding time they may not have during the rest of the season.

When Tammy visits Arizona, she rents an Airbnb for Zoe and the rest of the women's swim team, where she'll act as the "team mom" by whipping up home-cooked meals.

"It was fun to see and get to know everybody," Tammy said. "We like seeing them with dry hair. It's like, 'Oh, okay, now I know who you are.'"

Last year, the women bonded by making and decorating pizzas. "That's those little things that make you feel at home even though you're not there," Zoe said.

For Fitzgerald, the beach volleyball team's outings remind her it's a "second family." The team celebrates over the breaks with Secret Santa gift exchanges and holiday dinners, like

Friendsgiving.


"It brings everyone back together," Fitzgerald said. "Hanging out with one another ... outside the area of competition, ... I think that's really important."

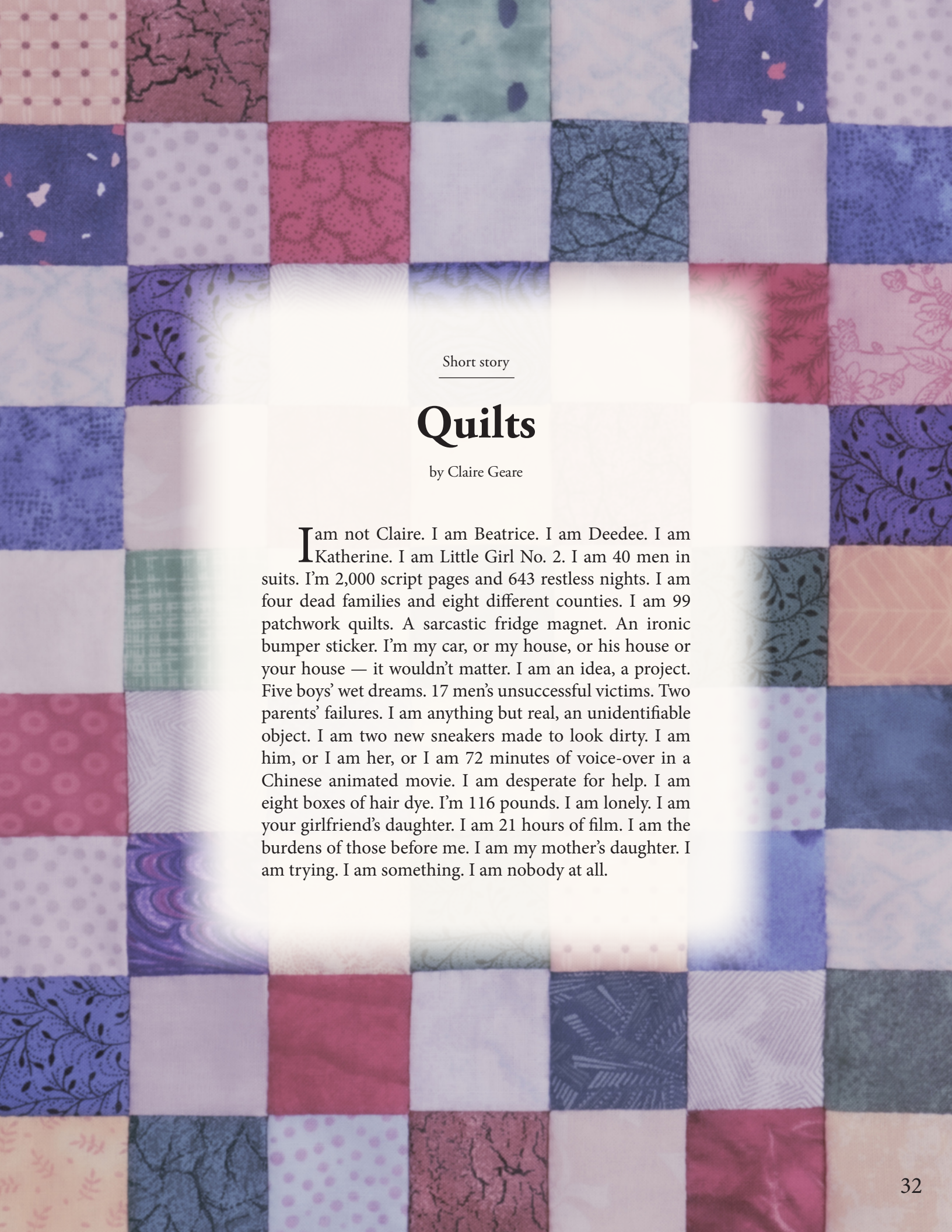
But there are numerous international student-athletes who won't travel home during the breaks. Though they too may long for home, they may not have the means to amid high airfare prices and their busy schedules.

During the 2021-22 academic year, out of ASU's over 650 student-athletes, 90 were international. It can feel isolating for them to stay alone in the States when they could be celebrating the holidays in their home countries with their families according to their traditions.

Luckily, team outings can be a small, yet meaningful, way for them to also share in the holiday joy.

"The international students who don't get to go home at all, ... it helps them have a home-cooked meal," Zoe said. "These girls are ... like ... my sisters."





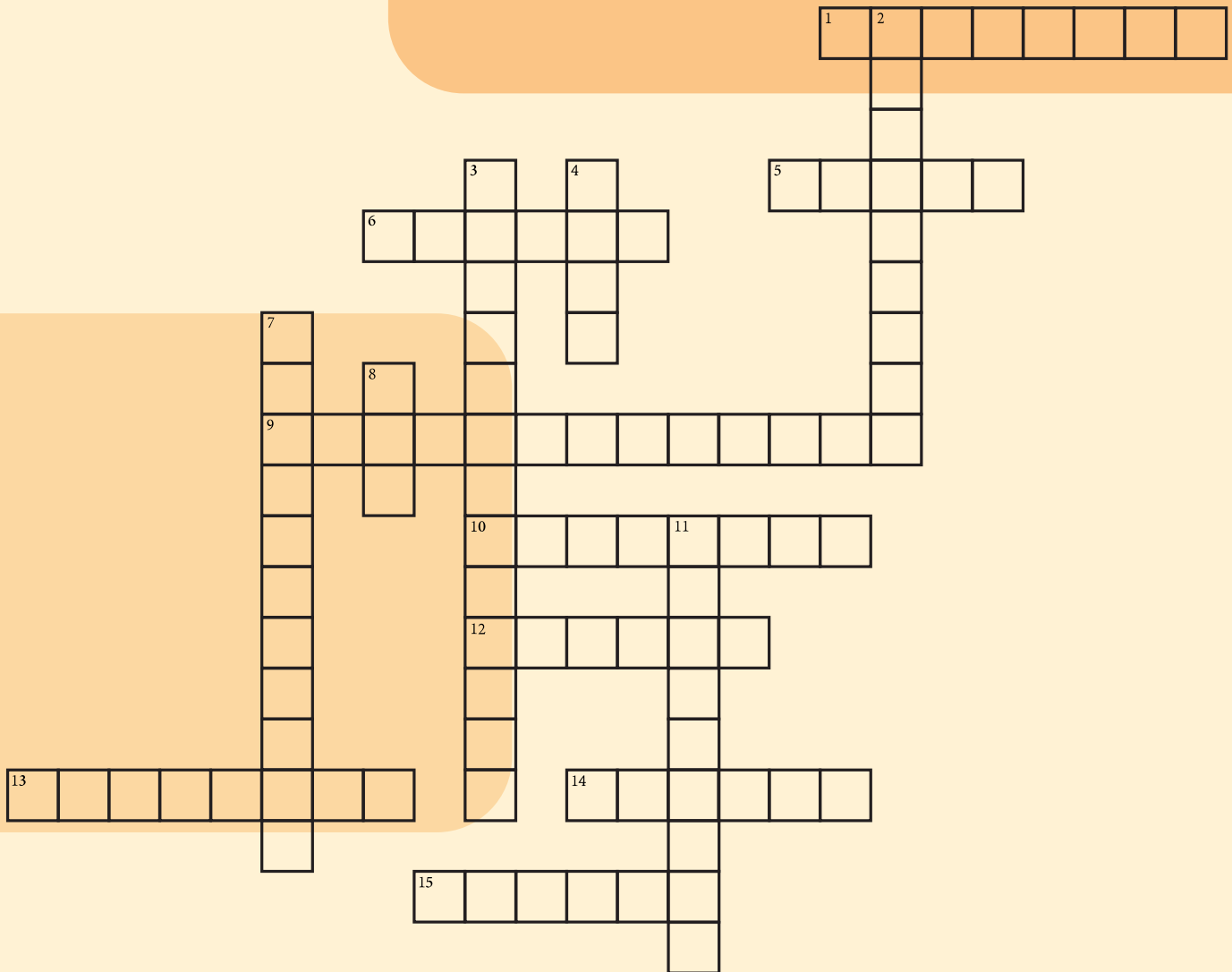
Short story

Quilts

by Claire Geare

I am not Claire. I am Beatrice. I am Deedee. I am Katherine. I am Little Girl No. 2. I am 40 men in suits. I'm 2,000 script pages and 643 restless nights. I am four dead families and eight different counties. I am 99 patchwork quilts. A sarcastic fridge magnet. An ironic bumper sticker. I'm my car, or my house, or his house or your house — it wouldn't matter. I am an idea, a project. Five boys' wet dreams. 17 men's unsuccessful victims. Two parents' failures. I am anything but real, an unidentifiable object. I am two new sneakers made to look dirty. I am him, or I am her, or I am 72 minutes of voice-over in a Chinese animated movie. I am desperate for help. I am eight boxes of hair dye. I'm 116 pounds. I am lonely. I am your girlfriend's daughter. I am 21 hours of film. I am the burdens of those before me. I am my mother's daughter. I am trying. I am something. I am nobody at all.

the SPM crossword.



1. In ASU's Student Services Manual, it's stated that "approved [SAILS] accommodations are determined on an individual student and course-by-course basis with ___ given to a student's preferred accommodation."
2. As part of Trader Joe's mission statement, it wants its customers' shopping experience to be ___, eventful and fun.
3. According to the insight piece, most of the author's arguments with friends have sprung from a difference in expectations or a ___ breakdown.
4. According to the satire, what word did the frat guys use to describe Trader Joe's Chili & Lime Flavored Rolled Corn Tortilla Chips?
5. According to the satire, what do we all do after a Trader Joe's run?
6. As defined by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, the Universal Design for Learning is "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all ___ regardless of their age, size, ability or disability."
7. The title of Sujin Kim's animated short film on sexual violence against Korean women during World War II.
8. The number of days ASU swim and dive has for a break from practices in December.

9. During the holiday season, the beach volleyball team celebrates with Secret Santa gift exchanges and holiday dinners, like ___.
10. According to a 2022 study, animation enhances visual attention and cognition, especially among ___.
11. All undergraduate Cronkite students are required to take a class dedicated to raising awareness and promoting acceptance for marginalized groups at the school and in the media called ___ and Civility at Cronkite.
12. The number of ASU athletic teams whose seasons overlap with at least one of the Thanksgiving or winter breaks.
13. According to "Making friendship bracelets," a thing the author learned about friendship is that it starts out as small acts of ___ and somehow grows into the people you didn't know you needed but can't live without.
14. The kind of friend you see once every few months, and it's typically to go thrifting or people-watch at coffee shops. You leave exclaiming, "We should do this more often!" but can never find the time after.
15. This animal is a recurring motif in Andrea Benge's animations.

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