

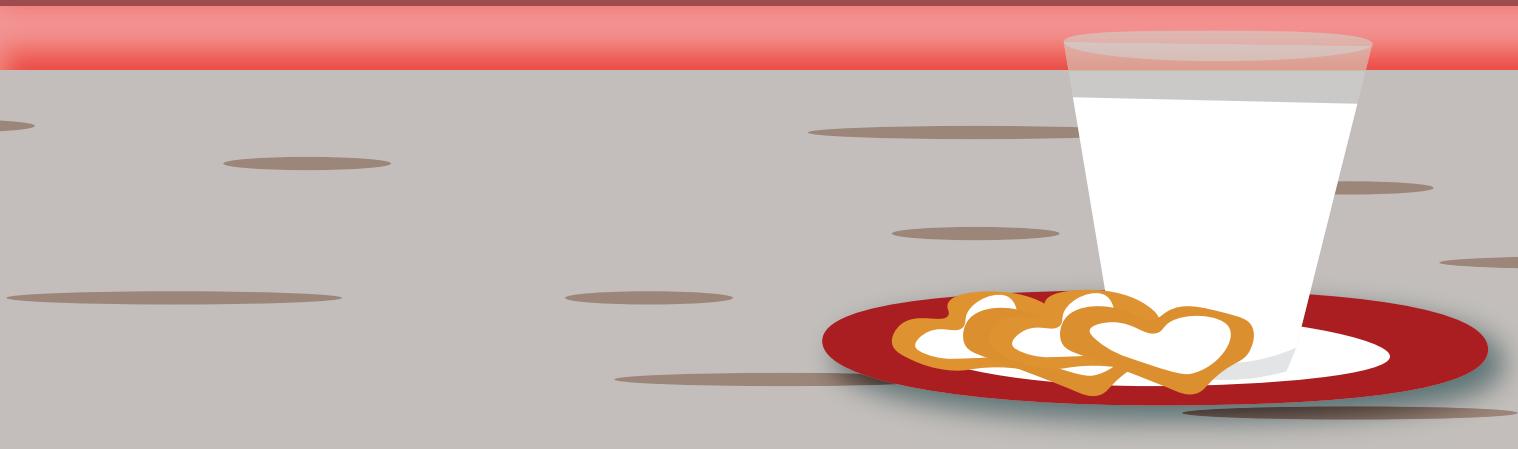
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AUK® STUDENT MAGAZINE



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For The Students, By The Students.

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What's
Your
Favorite
Winter
Tradition?





Nuha Alsahli, Editor-in-Chief: "For me, winter season means baking and cooking various comfort foods. If I am not working, I am probably in the kitchen baking cinnamon buns or roasting vegetables for soup. In this chilly weather, there's nothing more comforting than enjoying a warm meal and binge-watching sitcoms while the rain pours outside."



Omar Al-Yousef, Co-Editor: "My favorite winter tradition is going to an outdoor coffee shop with friends and talking about life. I like to enjoy the weather and to enjoy some good coffee, so why not have both at the same time with my favorite people!"



Taibah Al-Husain, Graphic Designer: "While I enjoy countless winter festivities, my favorite thing to do would be to go to the beach every Friday with my family for a winter picnic whilst soaking in the beautiful scenes."



Safeia Mubarak, Reporter: "Every winter, I enjoy hanging up all different kinds of fairylights throughout my home. I also love to make a little simmer pot. In it I put cut up oranges, lemons, rosemary, and cinnamon sticks. It smells amazing!"



Ahmed Al-Yousef, Reporter: "For me, a winter tradition I enjoy is going out to the desert! Enjoying the company of friends while bundling up in comfortable warm clothes, cooking delicious food, and watching movies in the starry night is the perfect way to spend this season."

How

to

Enjoy

the

Winter

Season



Winter Joys

By Safeia Mubarak

As the Winter season arrives there are those who prepare their camping gear and get ready to go out on a windy adventure, while others prepare their blanket, hot beverage, and set up for a long and comfy hibernation period filled with reading books or watching cozy movies.

Outdoor Activities

★ Camping (Kashta): A great place people often enjoy camping is Multaa Ridge which is the only hill desert in Kuwait, and it offers a full view of Kuwait Bay. Regardless of where you decide to camp be sure to clean up after yourself.

★ Visit Failaka Island: Some activities you can do at Failaka Island includes a visiting the museum, boating, and fishing, swimming, and taking ferry rides. Don't forget to take loads of pictures!

★ Rent a Chalet: Get the whole family involved and enjoy a weeklong getaway.

★ Fly a Kite: This can be done at any of the aforementioned locations as well as at the beach of the park. You could even try to build your own kite and test it out.

★ Attend the Camel Racing event: hosted by the Kuwaiti Camel Racing Club at Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah racetrack.

★ Attend Winter Wonderland Kuwait: located in Al-Sha'ab Leisure Park. Visit a winter themed amusement park.

★ Visit new Cafes and try new types of teas or coffee.

★ Go on walks, take the whole family!

★ Volunteer and help support others.

Indoor Activities

★ Bake: Cookies, pies, or gingerbread.

★ Read as many books as you can, set a new personal record.

★ Watch movies to get you in the winter vibe.

★ Get into pottery and make mugs for you and your loved ones.

★ Learn to crochet, make the biggest blanket ever, break a record; or knit a cute hat or scarf to wear out and about.

★ Make a candle and gift it to someone you love.

★ Learn to make the best coffee or tea recipe. Have each of your friends make a different recipe of their choice and have a tasting party!

★ Redecorate your home. Fill every corner of your home with fairy lights or make a dried fruit garland (they smell amazing.)

★ Reflect on the year you've had so far, start a journal.

★ Go through all of your belongings and declutter things that no longer serve you.



Wintery Items to gift your loved ones or yourself:

- ★ Mugs and Tumblers.
- ★ Blankets.
- ★ Sweaters, hats, and scarves.
- ★ Coffee beans, tea leaves, hot cocoa.

(These could be added to a little kit along with a personalized mug.)

- ★ Cool looking lighters.
- ★ Books for your bookworms.
- ★ Candles and Candle kits for your candle lovers.

(These sets usually include a wick cutter and a candle snuffer.)

- ★ A cute umbrella for that friend that loves going out in the rain.
- ★ Snow globe.



My favorite things to do in the winter:

I enjoy curling up in front of a heater with my fuzzy socks on, soft pajamas, a hot drink, and watching movies, reading a book, or writing. There is something special about being all warm and cozy and reflective while enjoying some hot cocoa and writing my thoughts down onto paper, it's the only time I will ever willingly use pen and paper as opposed to typing on a keyboard. Another activity my family and I have turned into our little tradition is spending one day out of the week roasting chestnuts and corn in our yard while we enjoy some music, light chitchat, and the wonderful cold chill that blesses Kuwait around this time of year.

Regardless of how you decide to spend your winter break, just remember that this is a time of relaxation so do your best to take a break from work, classes, and the overall concept of productivity and have some fun.

Seasonal Rituals

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

Tis' the season! Well to some...As the leaves fall off the trees (to an extent in Kuwait) and the cool winds come in, Winter is definitely here! With it comes the heavy rains and the intense fog. Also, our semester is coming to a close soon, giving us some time to explore locations and activities we haven't done and would wish to do! So, wear your comfy oversized sweaters and cover yourself with the largest of blankets because I'm going to suggest some seasonal activities that people do or should do during the fall/winter season, either in the warmth of your own home or outside!

Make Homemade Hot Chocolate

There is nothing like sipping some delicious hot cocoa. it's the easiest and honestly the most fun activity to do either alone or with some friends! Just imagine yourselves either successfully creating a new take with your special hot chocolate or miserably failing while creating memorable moments together! Some recommendations I would give out would be some Red Velvet Hot Chocolate or Pumpkin Coconut Chocolate.

Go Bowling!

Sure, bowling can be done at any time of the year. But bowling during the winter season is a great way to escape the cold weather outside. The Kuwait Bowling Club in Salmyia is one of the largest in the region. Go with your loved ones and get some strikes and brag to your friends that you way better than them at it.



Experience Sailing or Learn to Windsurf!

Since our weather is getting cooler, it gives the opportunity for Sailing to thrive again. Kuwait Offshore Sailing Association is a great way to experience this activity for those who have never done it! you'll get the perfect view of kuwait city while being on the beatiful gulf of kuwait!

They do not require any sailing experience since the club can provide someone to help you around.

As for windsurfing, this sport is very much an 80s one, which is why I think it would be great fun to get into.

The Kuwait Sailing School offers classes for all levels of experiences and encourages people to learn new things!



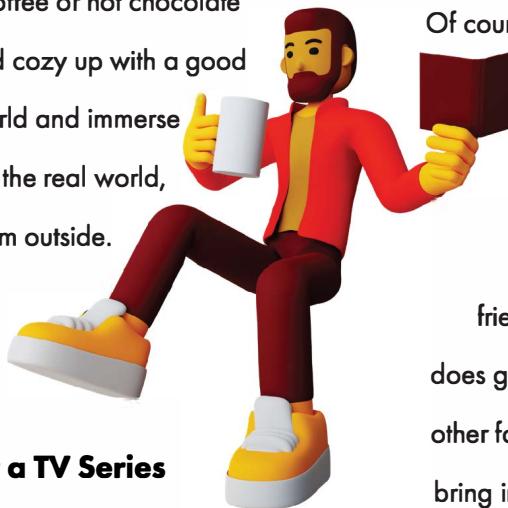


Have a Game Night

Stay in for the evening and gather your friends, get cozy in your pajamas and have a game night marathon. There are a lot of games for different age groups, such as of course there is Monopoly (which might end some friendships) or Jenga. I would definitely recommend some spy games since they are really fun to a lot of people! You can even make it more fun by adding prizes for the winner or some challenges for the losers too.

Read a Good Book

Make yourself a cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate and grab a comfy blanket and cozy up with a good book. Escape into another world and immerse yourself without the worries of the real world, especially when there is a storm outside.



Binge Watch a Movie or a TV Series

Spend some time binge watching a fun movie or a tv show! This is an easy way to spend time together with your friends and family or even solo!

From comedy to suspense, Netflix and other streaming services have everything to offer!

I suggest binge watching the Harry Potter series and imagining yourself becoming a wizard, or even Narnia, where a bunch of kids find a wardrobe that takes them to another world where they can be kings and queens! Some TV shows such as Grey's Anatomy, Friends, and Brooklyn Nine-Nine are a must watch in my opinion.

Learn Dancing in many ways

Dancing for a lot of people is a way of expressing themselves when words can't. The Haraka Center for Movement Arts (HCMA) in Kuwait is a new dance and movement center for women that opened last year! Their classes focus on ballet, modern contemporary dances and other dance styles and movement based classes. It's for all ages and levels! if you are ever interested check them out!

Desert Getaway

Of course, everyone here is bound to know what a Kashta is. This picnic style set up often located on the beach or the desert of Kuwait is a popular activity done in the winter season. Gather your friends and bring some heavy clothes as it does get very cold, drive up to Mutla or any other famous desert/beach locations here and bring in some food, games and of course make a bonfire. You could also bring a projector and play some movies or a speaker to play music! But please do clean up after yourselves to keep our desert clean!



The Warmth of Food

By Safeia Mubarak

It is during this cold season that families and friends come together to enjoy the cold weather, celebrate the beginning of the new year, and enjoy warm, hearty, and delicious food that gives us that warm and fuzzy feeling. Here is a list of some recipes from different cultures that you should try this wintery time of year to surprise your family, delight your belly, and travel through your taste buds.

French Onion Soup, France

While soup is a common food to eat during winter, France's onion soup makes the top of the list in terms of what soup you should make this year. Onion soup has been a popular dish as early as the 8th century BC. It was commonly made among the poor people of the time because onions were easy to come by as they were planted often. The modernized version of this dish originally comes from 18th century France.

There are two different stories explaining how this soup became a French staple. The first story explains that King Louis XV was out hunting and when he returned to the cabin, he was staying with his great aunt. They looked through the kitchen cupboards only to find they were mostly empty save for some onions, butter, and champagne. They tossed all these ingredients into a pot, and so that combination became the first recipe of French onion soup.

The other story sets the original creator of the recipe to be Nicolas Appert, who was known in 18th century France as the father of food preservation as well as the inventor of canning. Nicolas was the chef in a hotel where the duke of Lorraine Stanislas Leszczynski was staying.



<https://kristineskitchenblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/french-onion-soup-1200-square-122.jpg>

Chef Appert made the onion soup for the duke, and he loved the soup so much he insisted on learning the recipe. Upon visiting his daughter Queen Marie and her husband King Louis XV, the duke made the soup for them, and the royals loved it so much, it became a popular recipe throughout France.

Regardless of which story you choose to believe, there is no denying that French onion soup is a winter must.

Tagine, Morocco

The word Tagine is used to refer to both the clay pot as well as the recipes that are made within it. The history of Tagine is most often attributed to date back to its earliest appearance in the 9th century in One Thousand and One Nights. The cylindrical shape of the Tagine's lid allows for the steam to go up, hit the top, and drip back down which then leads to everything being cooked evenly. It also aids in tenderizing the toughest of meats and allows all the natural flavors to come alive, leading to a perfectly cooked dish.



<https://travelfooddallas.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/moroccan-tagine-2-1.jpg>

Hot Pot, China

The creation of the Chinese hot pot is believed to date back to the Jin Dynasty, about 1000 years ago. Historians note the earliest use of the hot pot was by Mongolian horsemen who rode into China. The horsemen were believed to have used their helmets as bowls to simmer the broth then cook chunks of meat within it, and in turn giving us the hot pot. The dish made its way into China and now has become a winter must have. Today the hot pot is a huge bowl filled with broth which is placed at the center of the dining table, then the people enjoying the dish can dunk different things into it such as various vegetables or thinly sliced meats.



<https://thewoksoflife.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/hot-pot-13.jpg>

Undhiyu, India

While the historical origins of this dish are unclear, it has managed to become a staple food in Gujarati homes throughout India. The ingredients include a large variety of mixed vegetables such as green beans, yams, gourd, and fenugreek leaves to name a few. The name of the dish Undhiyu comes from the Gujarati word "undhu" which means upside down. This is because the dish is made in a clay pot with the flame being above the dish which makes it so that the dish is being cooked upside down.



<https://www.secondrecipe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/undhiyu-final.jpg>

Borscht, Ukraine

There is great debate over the founding of this dish but the most accepted one is that its conception was brought about in Ukraine in the 14th century. The word "Borscht" comes from "Borschivik" which means hogweed. In early Slavic cuisine hogweed was cooked into a soup which has evolved into what we know today as Borscht.

There are various ways to make Borscht. It can be served cold or hot and can be made into a thin liquid or a thicker one. Most people imagine it to be beetroot infused because that is how it is most known, but it can be made without any beetroot at all. This dish has evolved greatly throughout time, but it is usually served in Ukrainian households as a warm beetroot soup.



[https://www.foodandwine.com/thmb/QJDlNY0W2okAelxyrBGa00gYQ=/1500x0/filters:no_upscale\(\):max_bytes\(150000\):strip_icc/|Borscht-with-Buttermilk-and-Grated-Cucumber-FT-RECIPE0822-2000-15c400a9033a4e58bfbc4dfbbab0bd7.jpg](https://www.foodandwine.com/thmb/QJDlNY0W2okAelxyrBGa00gYQ=/1500x0/filters:no_upscale():max_bytes(150000):strip_icc/)



Coping with Seasonal Depression

By Safeia Mubarak

Around this cold and wintery time of year, many of us feel sluggish, tired, and unproductive. Some people refer to this feeling as “seasonal depression,” but the more accurate scientific term is “seasonal affective disorder” or SAD. It’s defined as a type of depression that fluctuates depending on the change of season. This makes its rise and fall predictable.

General symptoms of SAD include:

Feeling down most days

No longer being interested in activities you once loved

Feeling low energy

Oversleeping

Craving carbohydrates

Struggling to concentrate

Insomnia

Contrary to common belief, seasonal depression occurs in summer and spring as well as fall and winter; certain people get seasonal depression in different seasons. Some may suffer from it in summer, while more commonly people are known to suffer from it in winter. There are symptoms that are more common in summer and spring, and others that are more common in fall and winter.



Winter & Fall Symptoms:

Oversleeping

Moodiness

Low energy

Feeling sad most days

Summer & Spring Symptoms:

While Seasonal depression in Summer and Spring is less common it still has its own symptoms, such as:

Agitation and restlessness

Anxiety

Decreased appetite and weight loss

Episodes of violent behavior

What causes SAD?

Researchers are still attempting to answer this question, but it is obvious that lack of sunlight is a main trigger for most. When our biological clock changes due to the sun being visible less often in the winter it causes a shift in one's sleep, mood, and hormones. Brain chemical imbalances have also been speculated to have an effect; people who suffer from SAD may have less serotonin activity. Another cause may be a vitamin D deficiency which is made more severe during the winter, the lack of sunlight may also cause a Melatonin increase which causes the feelings of sluggishness and sleepiness. It also may be genetic.

Who is at risk of getting SAD?

Seasonal depression is common in younger people and women. Although you're at high risk of suffering from it if:

You live in a cloudy region

You have relatives who suffer from a depressive disorder

You suffer from a different mood disorder

How does medicine advise, and how can one cope with seasonal depression?

Medical experts suggest that those with seasonal depression seek out treatments such as:

Light therapy: This can be done by using a special lamp that gives off similar lighting to that of the sun. Although this method contains some side effects, such as eyestrain, fatigue, headaches, and irritability.

Cognitive behavioral therapy or CBT: This is a type of talk therapy which researchers have noted seems to positively assist those suffering from seasonal depression.

Spending time outdoors: Going outside during the day could help keep your biological clock operating correctly and increase the amount of sunlight your body gets.

Vitamin D: Taking a vitamin D supplement could help with the symptoms of seasonal depression.

How does one go about preventing seasonal depression?

Begin using light therapy when your symptoms first begin to surface.

Go outside every day.

Exercise to relieve stress and anxiety.

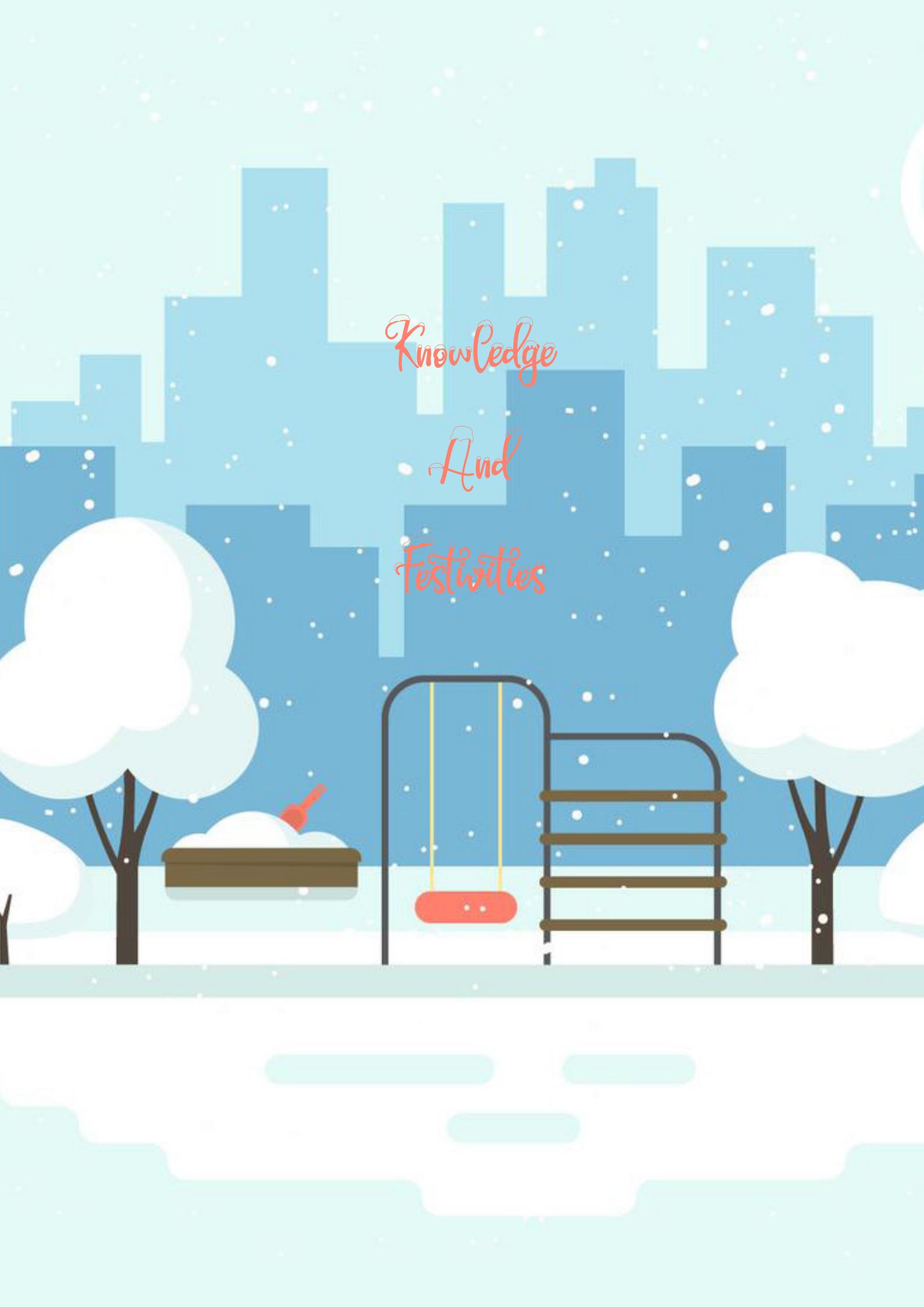
Eat a well-balanced diet to be sure that your body has all the vitamins and nutrients it needs.

Try to keep a healthy sleeping schedule so your internal clock stays accurate.

Gentle Reminder:

If you live with seasonal depression, be extra kind to yourself during this time of year, you're doing your best which means you're doing a wonderful job. Focus on your mental health and physical wellbeing more than normal, and keep in mind that you have loved ones who will support you if you reach out. This time will pass and hopefully soon you'll fall back in love with all your favorite activities, have the energy to engage in them, and feel like yourself again!

If you suspect that you may have severe seasonal depression, please seek out and consult with a medical expert before attempting to self-diagnose or self-treat.



Knowledge
And
Festivities

DEVELOPING REAL LIFE SKILLS WITH DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

Dungeon Master:

"As you reach the mouth of this cave that is surrounded with lush tall grass and massive trees with large canopies obscuring most of the light, so it's a bit hard to see. You now notice that the entrance made by the torches you are holding, and it's actually carved like an archway that's built in the corners of the entrance itself. On the archway there are two hooks on either side, seemingly to hold something, but you're not sure what it is at first sight. From what you're seeing, the cave tunnel seems to go quite far, around 65 feet before it's complete darkness. what would you like to do?"

Player 1:

"Because my character is a dwarf and I have a backstory of working in mines and caves, does the archway strike me in any way? Are there any writings on it or maybe how old it is?"

Player 2:

"While he does that, can I please see what those hooks could be used for? While also being a bit careful? I don't want to trigger a trap"

Player 3:

"While they both do that, I'm going to be on the lookout, I'll be listening for any sudden noises or movement that aren't from us."

Dungeon Master:

"Sure, both of you roll an investigation check please, and you can roll a prospection check!"

What you just read was a very basic scene of what Dungeon & Dragons could look like.

What Is Dungeons & Dragons?

D&D (for short) is a roleplaying game that focuses on storytelling. It's where the players form an adventuring party that explore fantasy worlds together as they embark on epic quests and level up in experience.

The Dungeon Master (DM) is the game's referee and storyteller. There is no winning or losing in D&D, at least not in the conventional way. The game includes some dice to roll. Those rolls decide almost everything, but almost everything is also your decision. With the way you look, act, and what happens next in the story that the DM is telling. The collective creativity in your D&D game builds stories that you'll tell again and again ranging from the stuff of legend to absurd incidents that'll make you laugh years later.

Can D&D be seen as more than just Dice and Exploring fantasy worlds?

People who are not familiar with the concept of roleplaying games like D&D may see it as nothing more than just a carefree game based on living out dreams of exploring fantasy lands with your friends. However, for some players, D&D is more than just fun battles with make-believe dragons; they see it as a mental health tool since it allows them to fight or flee from their problems for a few hours, bringing them closer to people when they are less likely to be social out there in the real world, as it can serve as a lifeline during hard times... an escape from reality. Some would describe it like how listening to music or playing music can be incredibly therapeutic.



Fun Facts!

- ☒ Dungeons & Dragons was originally created by American game designers Ernest Gary Gygax and David Arneson and published by by Tactical Studies Rules, Inc. (TSR) in 1974.
- ☒ D&D Started Out As A Companion Piece.
- ☒ There's Actually A D&D Stage Musical.
- ☒ Dungeons and Dragons uses dice with many sides to decide the results with actions. Most used are 4 sided, 6 sided, 8 sided, 10 sided, 12 sided, and 20 sided.



My Experience with D&D:

I've been a fan of D&D since COVID-19 hit us, and we were all trapped in our houses doing nothing at all. I discovered it by scrolling through YouTube and found a channel called Critical Role, one of the most well-known D&D streaming shows out there, where a group of nerdy voice actors sit around and play Dungeons and Dragons. Ever since then, I've been hooked on their weekly 3.5-to-4-hour episodes of a story that is between friends. Ever since I discovered D&D it has helped me in so many ways. I became way more social and less introverted as opposed to the very silent kid that I was, it has also helped me with my anxiety in ways that can only be described only when playing the game.

An example I could use is during a campaign in the show Critical Role, Liam O'Brien's character died and ended up making a bargain with the aspect of death to be resurrected for just long enough to save the world with his in-game friends, when the heroes defeated the major villain, his character "died" again, for good, getting taken away to serve as the aspects champion for all eternity.

You're probably asking, what does this have to do with real life? well, In the real world, while this scene had taken place in their game, O'Brien's mother had passed away. He mentioned in an interview, "I was really struggling behind the scenes." But his character's story was "one of accepting a fate that he fell into," and that helped O'Brien process the same problem.

Some other Benefits of playing D&D :

Improve Listening Skills

Your DM throws information at you, and you're expected to remember the key points. You might take some notes, lock some in your memory and you do your best to recall the information.

Boost Creative Thinking

Dungeons & Dragons will boost your brain and force you to start thinking outside the box, whether you're the DM or a player.

If you're DMing, you'll need to come up with worlds, characters, and other things for your players to enjoy.

Even if you're running a pre-written adventure, you need to make creative adjustments to the story so that it's better suited for your group of players.

As a player, you'll be coming up with backstories for your characters. These backstories can be detailed and complex, just like real people. The more characters you create, the better you'll be at creating deep and interesting characters.

Practice Problem Solving

This entire game is basically a series of fictional problems that you, the players, need to figure out and solve somehow. The DM needs to adapt with each problem, so that it's challenging but not impossible.



OUR STRANGE YET SPECTACULAR UNIVERSE

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

We live on a small blue rock within a universe that is so vast, like a grain of sand within a massive beach front, but it is instead filled with a void of darkness that is ever expanding with billions of galaxies, stars, and planets. When you look up at the stars, what do you think about? That we may not be alone? the vastness of it all? when will we fully embark on a journey to explore other planets? To some, space might be terrifying and scary and to others it is a beautiful wonder.

I'm going to present you with some mind-boggling space facts and stories of what humanity has discovered.

Space is completely silent

Sound needs a medium to travel through, since there is no atmosphere in the vacuum of space, the realm between stars will always be eerily silent. Remember "In space, no one can hear you scream" because our world has atmosphere and air pressure, it allows sound to travel, hence why there's plenty of noise on Earth and likely other planets as well.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/87/LH_95.jpg/640px-LH_95.jpg

The Apollo Astronaut footprint will stay there for at least 100 million years

Since the moon doesn't have an atmosphere, there is no wind or water to erode or wash away the mark on the moon. that means, all the footprints and the roverprints and any discarded materials will stay on the moon for a very long time. what's interesting is micrometeorites are constantly falling and bombarding on the surface of the moon, so there is a dynamic environment happening and erosion, but it's happening very slowly, so they won't stay there forever.



https://www.nasa.gov/images/content/62043main_Footprint_on_moon.jpg

"THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND."

-Neil Armstrong

If two pieces of the same type of metal touch in space, they will bond and be permanently stuck together

This effect is called cold welding. It happens because the atoms of the individual pieces of metal have no way of knowing that they are different metal pieces, so they basically conjoin together. This doesn't happen on earth because we have air and water separating the pieces.

A light year is the distance covered by light in a single year

Light moves at the velocity of about 300,000 km/second. So, one light year equates to roughly 9500000000000.527 km (math can actually be cool sometimes)

There are 79 known moons floating around Jupiter!

Within our solar system, Jupiter has the most moons and houses one of the largest moons in our solar system. That moon is called Ganymede and is 5,262 km in diameter. We can actually see it with a pair of binoculars!

We know more about Mars and our Moon than we do about our oceans

We have sent many rovers over to mars and have mapped 100% of the surface of it and earth's moon too! However, we have only been able to discover roughly 5% of the ocean floor. I wonder why we stopped...

We detected a radio signal in outer space

In 2016, scientists discovered a signal from a source 5 billion light years away. (now if we do the math for that...) That means when the signal was sent out, Earth didn't even exist yet. this signal was detected by using the Very Large Array of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory.

Saturn's Hexagonal Storm

Yes, you heard that right, its northern hemisphere has a six-sided storm! it's basically a multilayered storm and has been there for hundreds of years. It was discovered in the 1980s and it's 300km tall while being 32,000km wide, with winds moving at about 200 km/h... terrifying.

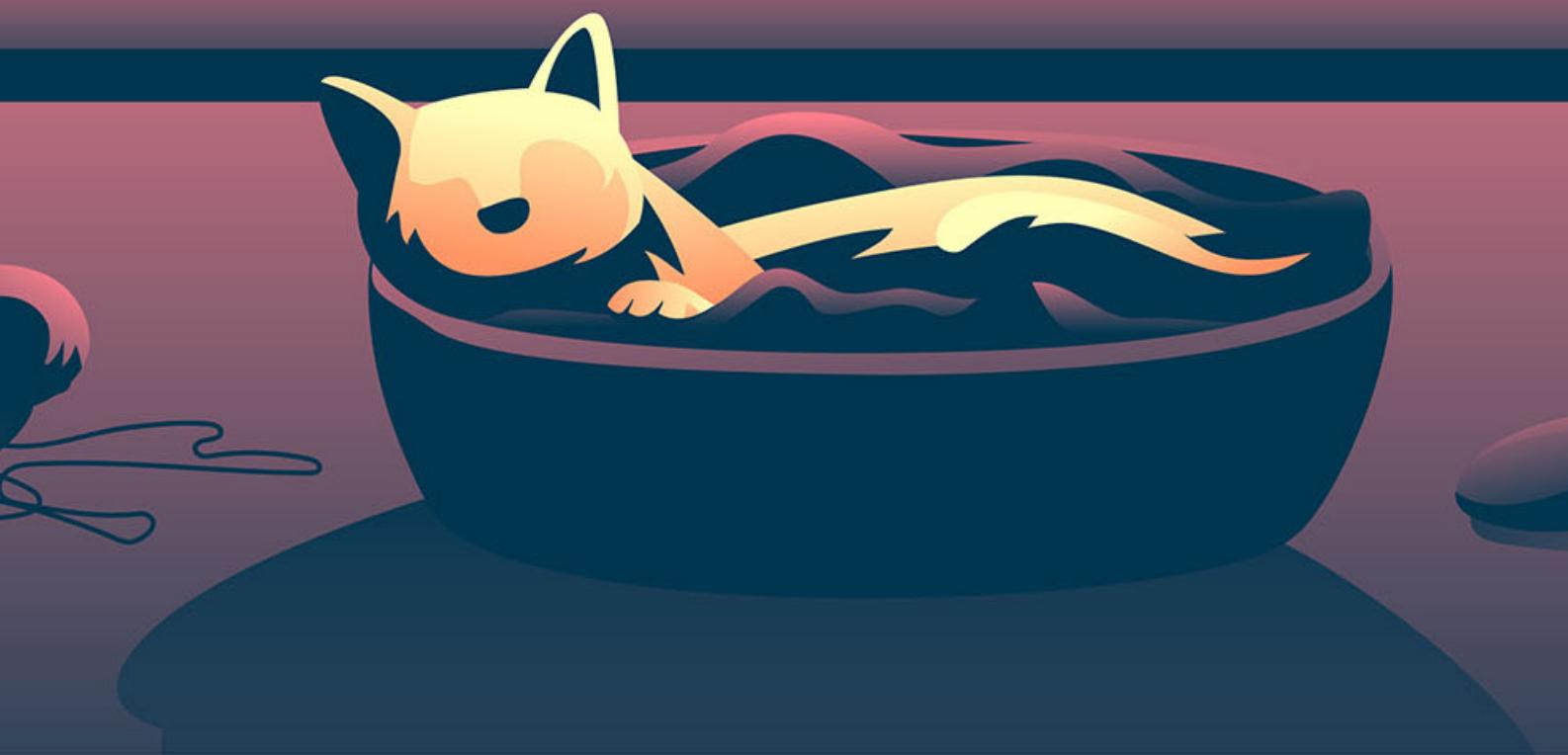
Planet Nine

see what I did there? heh- there are two theories of why this Planet exists. First of all, scientists conducted mathematical calculations and simulations based on some weird movements of objects in the Kuiper Belt, an icy collection of objects beyond Neptune's orbit. Another theory is that this "Planet Nine" could be a grapefruit sized black hole!

Mountains on a Dwarf Planet

Poor Pluto that was denounced as a part of our solar system has mountains on it! Scientists assumed it's just a crater packed environment, but their view was heavily altered when the New Horizons spacecraft flew by in 2015, Revealing massive towers that reach 3000 meters. Research says that there is geological activity happening on Pluto, confirming that there is energy within it. But no one has figured out what energy is inside Pluto and is still a mystery. The Sun is too far away to generate any and there are no large Planets nearby that could disrupt the gravity. Planet Nine? Black Holes?

Holiday tales



Snow

By Safeia Mubarak

When I was little, about nine or ten years old, I was sitting in the living room with my mother. I looked over at the television and I saw all these people playing in this white dust. It was everywhere, on the cars, on the street, on the sidewalk, on the trees. I asked, "Mama what's that?" as I pointed at the television.

My mother looked over in the direction I was pointing. "That's the TV."

"No. The fluffy white stuff on the TV."

She looked at the screen and responded, "Oh, those are people playing in the snow."

I looked at her confused. "Snow?"

She nodded and laughed. "Yes Sweetie, snow. It's powdery ice that falls from the sky."

That's when I first learned about snow. It never snowed where we lived. The weather is always hot and dry.

The Polar Express, Nick and Noel, Rudolph are all Christmas movies I adored. What else does a dreamer do when they can't live their dreams? They let themselves get carried away into the land of movies, books, and fantasy. Snow was a real concept, I knew that much for sure, but I've never actually seen it in person. Who's to say the movies don't use flour? Or some other powdery, sandy material? It's insane what can be made for movies these days. They don't call it movie magic for nothing.

Every time summer rolled around, I would ask my mother if we could take a trip, somewhere cold and snowy; it may have been summer but based on my research there were still places that had snow. I was always met with "I'm sorry Honey, we can't afford it this year, maybe next year." I despised this sentence, as it became one that was uttered constantly in our household.



Years have gone by; I am now a high school senior and today is my last day within what was once the most daunting place to be. This school has challenged me on every level, and I have survived it all.

I get home to find mom's car packed to the brim with suitcases. I rush inside.

"Mom?!" I yell out, but she's nowhere to be found. "Mom? Where are you?!" I go into the backyard.

"In here sweetie" I hear her voice from the shed.

"What're you doing? Why is the car all packed up?"

"We're going on an adventure"

"What? What do you mean? I need to start applying to colleges"

"No no, all that can wait. Don't you want to see the snow?"

My eyes widen as confusion turns to surprise, turns to excitement. "Of course, I want to see snow!"

"We're all packed up; I'm just trying to find my old winter coat. Here it is, alright we're out of here!"

Mom grabbed my arm and rushed me to the car, and we were off to see the snow. I could not contain my excitement!

Mom refused to tell me where we were going. I couldn't figure it out until we got to the airport, and we were boarding the plane that was heading to Alaska. Can you believe it? Alaska! The coldest, snowiest place of them all.

The plane ride was interesting because there weren't that many people onboard. Mom fell asleep while we were watching a movie and I just couldn't doze off. I was way too excited and was making a list in my head of all the things I planned on doing with snow.

When the plane landed, I immediately shook mom awake. She made me look down as we left the plane and once we were in the car, she made me keep my eyes closed. We drove for what felt like forever but according to her it was in fact only 30 minutes.

"We're here."

"Can I open my eyes yet?!"

"Not yet." I hear mom say as she steps out of the car and my side door is opened. I feel her grab my arm and guide me out. I can smell the cold and my body is freezing, and I feel my patience begin to fade.

"Can I open my eyes now?!"

"Yes, you can."

I am greeted by a blanket of white surrounding me from every direction. I reach down and poke the snow; my finger goes right through. I look up at my mom and she nods and smiles encouragingly. I put my palms together and lift what snow I could scoop up with my two hands, and I squish it; its easily condensed into a ball.

Suddenly, a ball of snow hits me in the face and I look in its direction to find my mother laughing as she piles snow into a ball, hoping to get in a second shot.

The snow feels nice and cool on my face. It looks so white, fluffy, and clean. Even the air smells different. As I prepare myself to get into my very first snowball fight ever, I think to myself:

This is it. This is the happiest day of my life.

A Christmas Nightmare

By Ahmed Al-Yousef

I'm writing this because no one believes us...

Last year during the holidays in the UK, I had found a cool ornament in a box filled with a plethora of decorations and such assortments that go on Christmas trees. It had a built-in camera to record a unique perspective on your holiday celebrations! Being the "cool" dad that I am, I remember grabbing it and bringing it home for less than 8 pounds. I forgot it existed and it remained collecting dust in the decorations box until my wife reminded me that it's time to decorate the tree with the kids. So, here we are sitting and bonding as a family over the tree and filling it with colors. I told my daughters about the ornament and how we would secretly catch Santa in the act.

Little did they know that I had an old costume in the attic and my intention was to deliver some gifts, place them under the tree and play Santa in the full view of the camera. My girls were so happy and excited as they ran to the box and had gotten the ornament and were debating on where to place the tiny ball on the tree.

One of them exclaimed "we need to find the best spot so we can see Santa and his reindeers!"

My wife and I chuckled together.

"How would the reindeers fit in here honey? They're going to be on the rooftop waiting with Santa's huge red bag of presents!" She said.

They, being kids, had positioned the ornament in a horrible spot so I waited until they went to bed and repositioned it to catch the living room with a good angle.



In the nights that lead up to Christmas, I activated the camera to ensure that everything is working properly.

The morning after, I previewed the footage to confirm that this 8-pound plastic ball wasn't a scam and thankfully, it was working!

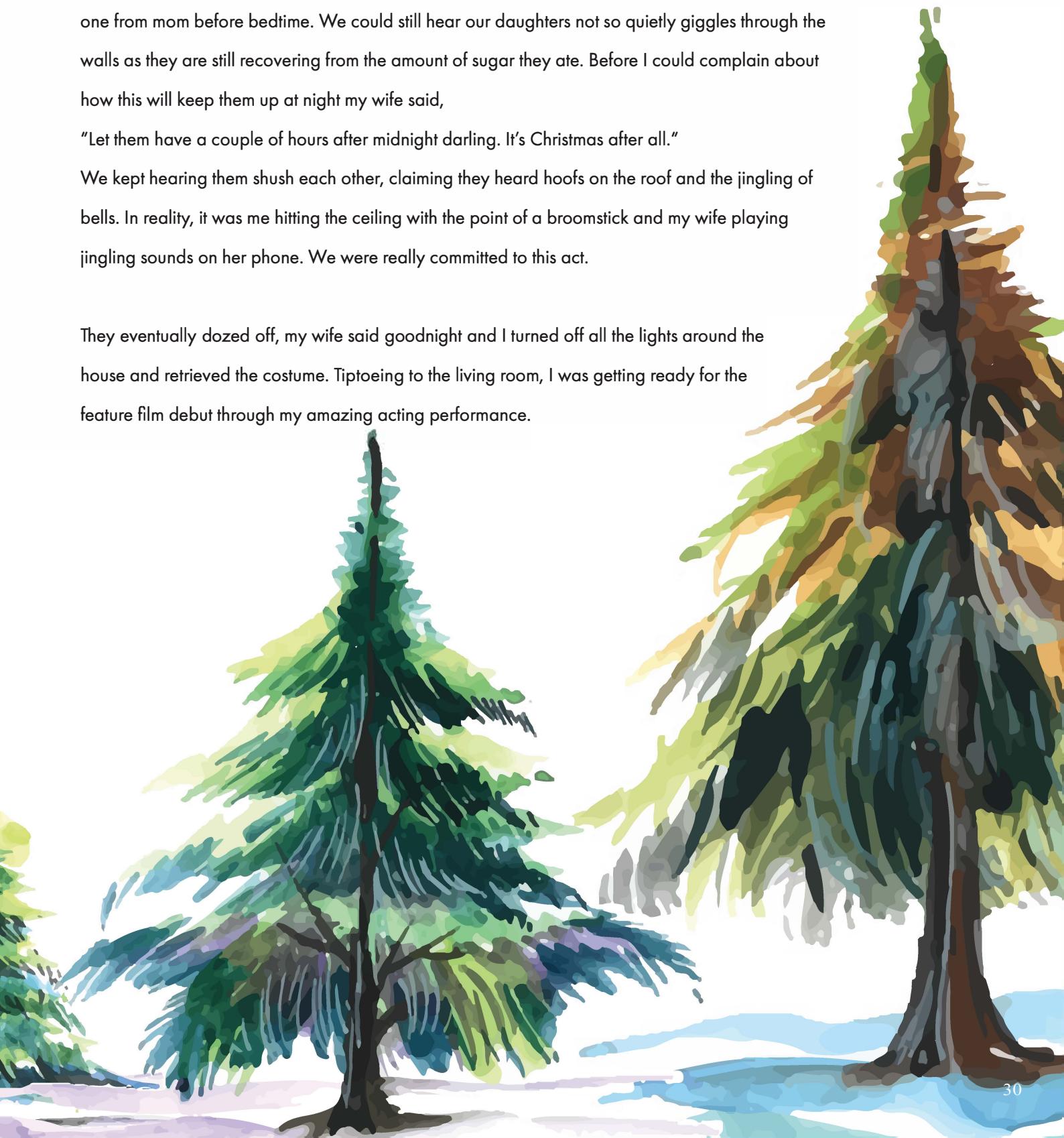
I inserted a new SD card so it can record for long hours, slipped in a double AA battery and anticipated the big night.

We enjoyed Christmas Eve as any family does; lots of board games and delicious food that overfilled our stomachs and of course, lots of candy. My wife and I let our daughters open one gift from dad and one from mom before bedtime. We could still hear our daughters not so quietly giggles through the walls as they are still recovering from the amount of sugar they ate. Before I could complain about how this will keep them up at night my wife said,

"Let them have a couple of hours after midnight darling. It's Christmas after all."

We kept hearing them shush each other, claiming they heard hoofs on the roof and the jingling of bells. In reality, it was me hitting the ceiling with the point of a broomstick and my wife playing jingling sounds on her phone. We were really committed to this act.

They eventually dozed off, my wife said goodnight and I turned off all the lights around the house and retrieved the costume. Tiptoeing to the living room, I was getting ready for the feature film debut through my amazing acting performance.



I did everything anyone would expect Santa would do; Indulging in the milk and cookies the kids left out while rubbing my large stomach, and chanting "Ho Ho Ho!"

I placed a couple of presents under the tree and made large footprints using the fake snow I bought. I would humbly say I did an amazing job.

On Christmas morning, my daughters came running excitedly into my wife and I's bedroom to wake us up. They dragged us out of bed in our pajamas and told us to look at the scene in the living room. I, of course, was secretly patting my own back. I pulled out the laptop and started to play the video, skipping to the part where "Santa" came in. My daughters squealed like squirrels with delight and happiness. They waved at the screen frantically while blocking the video from my view. I had forgotten to stop the video as I sat the laptop aside, and we started unwrapping the gifts out. I had then spotted a box I didn't see the night before. It was small and wrapped in blue wrapping. My name was on it, but my wife seemed as surprised as I was to see it here. One of my daughters noticed my confusion and said, "Dad! That's from Mr. Elf!" as she was jumping while holding her new toy.

I was going to dismiss what she had said, thinking that little kids just create scenarios in their head, but my wife wasn't going to ignore it.

"Honey, what elf?" she asked.

My daughters brought the laptop to me, the video had ended, and it had recycled back to the first frame.

"The one that came in with Santa! I saw him sneaking in the dark, so maybe he's scared and not brave like Santa!" she answered.

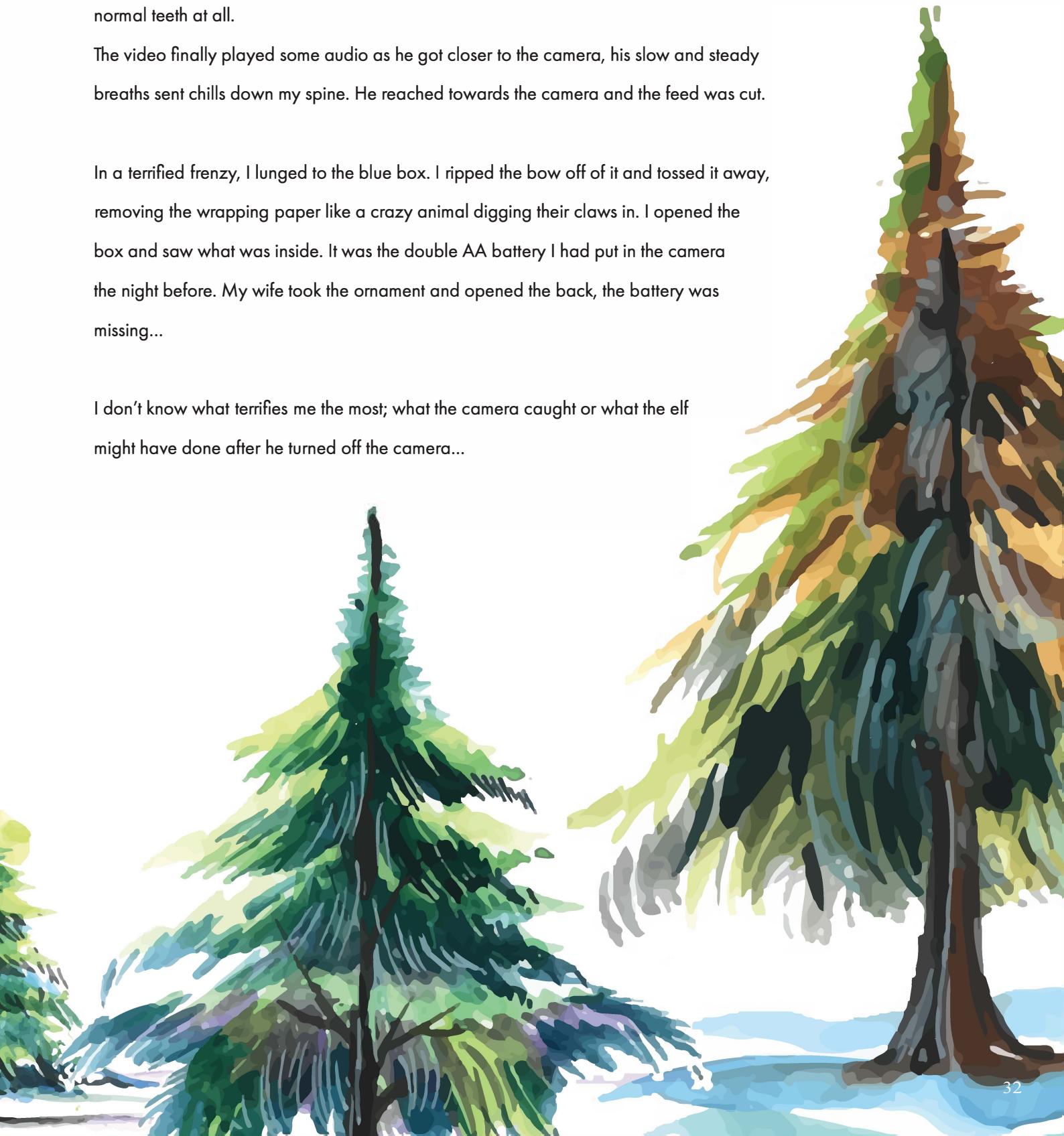


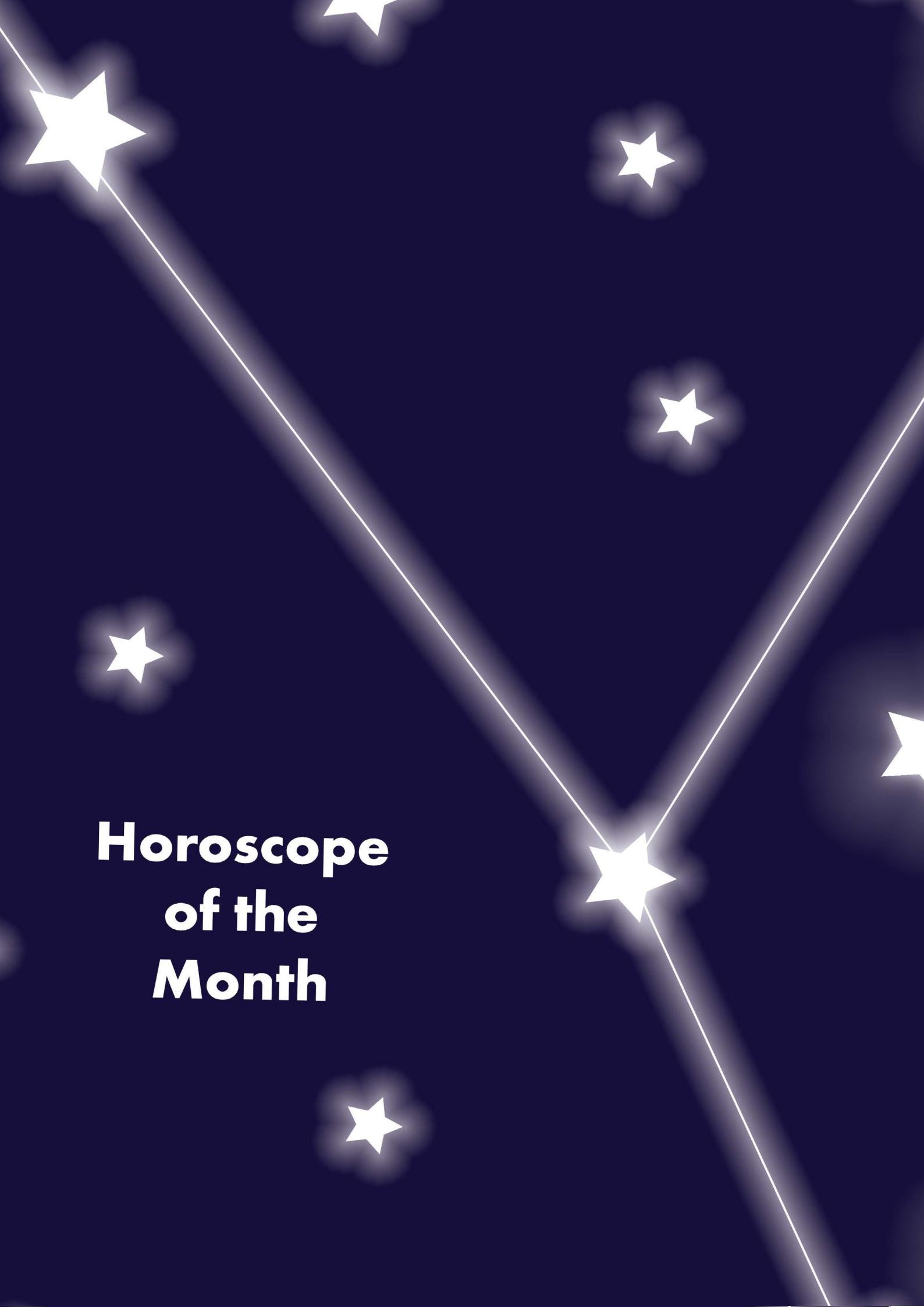
At this moment I started to panic. My heartbeat was going fast, as I started playing the video and fast forwarding to see what my daughter described. Granted, there was someone with me in the living room. He walked into the corner after I had turned the lights off. He stood there watching me parade around as Santa. The video went completely silent after that, as though the camera had failed to capture sound. This strange lengthy man in an elf costume stood perfectly still for over 3 hours, staring down the camera from a distance. His eyes were striking. They were glowing faintly of a white color. After a while he walked over to the plate of cookies and bit the head of the gingerbread man. My eyes quickly moved to that cookie on the plate and saw his teeth mark on it. Pointy, definitely not normal teeth at all.

The video finally played some audio as he got closer to the camera, his slow and steady breaths sent chills down my spine. He reached towards the camera and the feed was cut.

In a terrified frenzy, I lunged to the blue box. I ripped the bow off of it and tossed it away, removing the wrapping paper like a crazy animal digging their claws in. I opened the box and saw what was inside. It was the double AA battery I had put in the camera the night before. My wife took the ornament and opened the back, the battery was missing...

I don't know what terrifies me the most; what the camera caught or what the elf might have done after he turned off the camera...





Horoscope of the Month

The Language of Astrology

By Safeia Mubarak

We began the fall semester by looking at Virgo, all the way to Aquarius. As the fall semester ends and we prepare for the new year and the start of the spring semester, let us touch up on some of our astrological lingo.

What is Astrology?

It is the study of the movement and positions of celestial bodies perceived as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world. More specifically, to be able to tell us more about ourselves and the type of experiences we may have throughout life.

What are the 12 Horoscope Signs?

The Horoscopes form a belt in the sky that defines the presumed path of the sun among the constellations. The constellations represent the different times of the year. These times are divided into 12 equal signs which are the 12 horoscopes. Planets also move through this belt. This explains when you hear someone say, "Mars is in Capricorn today."

What do the planets have to do with your horoscope?

Each planet and what horoscope it is in the day you were born, tells a piece of your story and your personality.

★Mercury tells us about the way we communicate.

★Venus tells us about our passions and relationships.

★Mars explains how we act, our expression, and our courage.

★Jupiter tells us about our prosperity and luck.

★Saturn focuses on our boundaries, rules, and discipline.

★Uranus explains our breakthroughs, rebellions, and sudden life events.

★Pluto focuses on transformation, such as the death of certain personality cycles and the rebirth of new ones.



Then there's the Sun and the Moon:

The Sun tells us about our sense of self and identity.

The Moon explains our emotional more hidden sides, such as what gives us a sense of safety, our values and intuition.

What is a Rising sign or Ascendant?

This is the sign that was ascending on the eastern horizon when we were born. This sign explains the version of ourselves that you project into the world, the way we let others see us, or people's first impressions of you.

What do the elements have to do with the horoscopes?

The twelve horoscopes are sorted into the four elements (fire, water, air, and earth) based on their characteristics; each element houses three signs.

- ★ Fire Signs: Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius
- ★ Water Signs: Pisces, Cancer, and Scorpio
- ★ Earth Signs: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn
- ★ Air Signs: Libra, Gemini, and Aquarius

Each element has certain characteristics tied to it, and while there are always outliers these traits are the agreed upon attributes for each element.

- ★ Earth Signs: dependable, adaptable, and persistent
- ★ Fire Signs: Independent, enthusiastic, and thrill seeker
- ★ Air Signs: Communicative, reasonable, and driven by knowledge
- ★ Water Signs: creative, intuitive, and introverted

What is a Birth Chart?

A birth chart is your astrological story, and is based on the year, month, day, time, and location you were born. It is believed that through your birth chart you can understand several things about yourself; from your personality, certain types of people you'll meet, to certain types of situations you'll experience. There are many different online websites where you can plug in your information and pull up your birth chart, along with a picture of how the sky exactly looked the day you were born.

How did the horoscopes come to be?

The concept of the horoscopes comes from ancient Greece and Babylonian times in which they often uttered the phrase "as above, so below" which is to say that the stars above us have an influence upon our lives on earth. Whether you believe in astrology or not this phrase does hold some scientific truth when you consider the fact that the Sun is a star, and it greatly influences our lives as it informs our social construct of time. It is difficult to put an exact date on when humans began using horoscopes but the closest, we can get to narrowing it down is to the earliest published work in which horoscopes are mentioned. The published book was by astronomer and mathematician Claudius Ptolemy who published the book "Tetrabiblos" roughly 1,800 years ago

Utilizing all this information, equipped with your birthdate, time, and location; hopefully we can all now look up our birth charts and manage to read them without being lost or confused, but rather with the newfound knowledge that has been obtained.

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