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THE BROCKWOOD  
 OBSERVER

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The Newsletter of Brockwood Park School  
*founded by J. Krishnamurti*

# EDITORIAL

By Samara Prabhakar

As vast tableaux of white and sun-soaked azure flutter across overhead, another year at Brockwood has gone by. The skies have lightened and darkened and then lightened again, wiping the world clean.

We watched the leaves fall as the wind took them. We saw the snow turn our trees white. The days grew shorter, snow drops began to bloom, while the rest of nature held its breath awaiting its silent revolt.

The sun rose a little sooner each day and, in a heartbeat, life rushed in to reclaim itself.

It's strange to see how things have unfolded since the first term. A collaboration of a hundred plus human beings, relating, exploring, and living together. Events have taken place this year that most of us had never dreamed of; only in hindsight do we see the steps that led to them, and we can only guess what visible and invisible influences they will have on us all.

Not only one hundred human beings at Brockwood, but almost eight billion all over the world. Each one intimately affecting the others, unbeknownst to the web of action, experience, memory and thought that sets the stage for us all.

CHANGE.





“When you are observing, seeing the dirt on the road, seeing how the politicians behave, seeing your own attitude towards your wife, your children, and so on—transformation is there. Do you understand? To bring about some kind of order in daily life, that is transformation; not something extraordinary, out of this world.

When one is not thinking clearly, objectively, and rationally, be aware of that and change it, break it. That is transformation. If you are jealous—watch it, don’t give it time to flower and change it immediately. That is transformation.

When you are greedy, violent, ambitious, or trying to become some kind of holy man, see how it is creating a world of tremendous uselessness. I don’t know if you are aware of this.



Competition is destroying the world. The world is becoming more and more competitive, more and more aggressive, and if you change it immediately, that is transformation. And if you go very much deeper into the problem, it is clear that thought denies love.

Therefore one has to find out whether there is an end to thought, an end to time, not philosophise over it and discuss it, but find out. Truly that is transformation, and if you go into it very deeply, transformation means never a thought of becoming or comparing; it is being absolutely nothing.”

J. Krishnamurti  
Excerpt from Meeting Life

# FRAGMENTS IN PASSING

'We live and

By Ayla Halewood and Chris Lewin. Art by Ayla, pictures by Ayla's family and Aurelia.

"Chris, if we are just images that we make of each other and ourselves, that would mean when I'm dead, you'll actually be deader than me... excellent."

It started with an uneasy feeling and a swelling on my leg. It was mid-pandemic and we were given an instant appointment for a CT scan. They gave me crutches straight away, I didn't realise at the time what a big thing they would become in my life.

"Ah that's great!" Mum said when she was first told that her child had cancer. Her ears had missed a vital word in the Doctor's sentence: "It's not good news." I didn't hear anything else that the doctor said. I just remember we were crying. There was no time to get to grips with the situation. The practical questions just took over instantly. I kept thinking about my dad, my family, everyone that wasn't there. How would I tell them?

Mum. It's like my body is using all of its resources to fight the cancer. I have no energy for other things. Except my sense of humour which remains unwavering because without this we would all be in trouble (little chuckle).

"Don't say her name. I swear to god. If you say her name one more time." "The students can talk to a nurse if they are struggling." "I didn't know. I just wish that I knew." "I sometimes wonder how you made it to adulthood, let alone was allowed to be a teacher."



She's excited, talking about pancakes mainly. But definitely she is weakening. x



"Take her name out of your mouth."

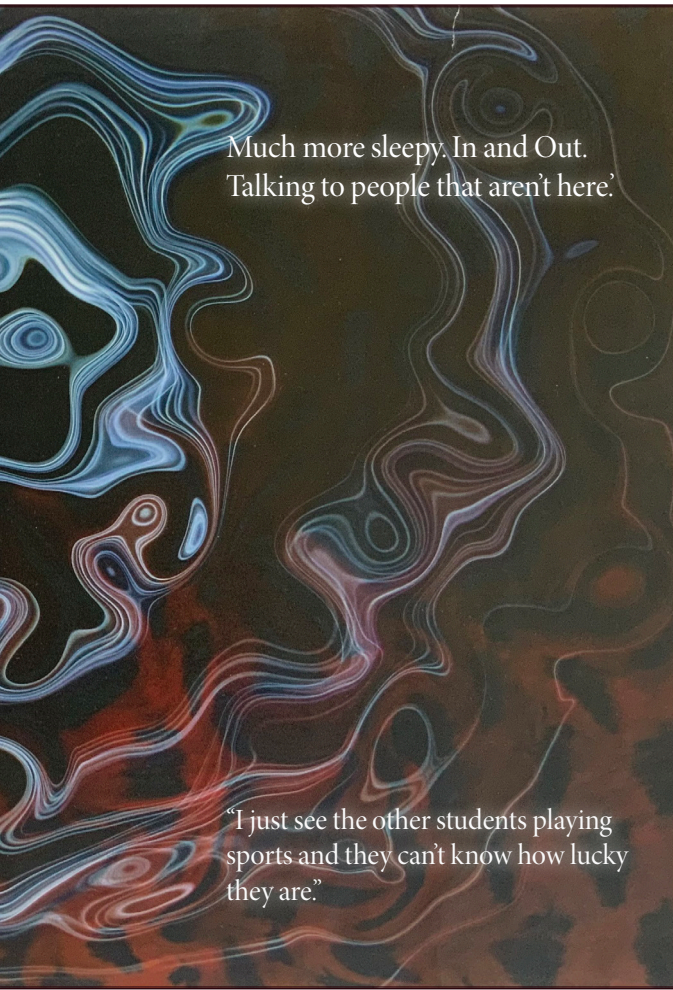
"Yeah my dog was literally trying to chew on my amputated leg."

"I really don't know if I can do this Chris."

When Ayla was in her last few days, she was struggling to drink water from her water bottle and she was really thirsty. We thought to see if it would help her to use Sofia's, my daughter's sippy cup to drink water from. She drank from it easily and it seemed to relieve her. I felt so happy and I said, "wow, well done Ayla" and of course, Ayla responded by saying, "shut up...dont be so patronising" and we all cracked up.



we die. We know not why. But i'll be with you when the deal goes down.' Bob Dylan.



Much more sleepy. In and Out.  
Talking to people that aren't here.

"I just see the other students playing sports and they can't know how lucky they are."

The tumour on my leg was humongous, like *fat* fat, you know. You couldn't miss it. It made me chuckle when the hospital drew an arrow on it so they wouldn't lop off my regular leg by mistake!

When I woke up they tried to force feed me fish. I nearly hurled.

Then it was chemo. Chemo was brutal and played havoc with my plans for a keto diet! I just remember sickness, day in and day out. Once I couldn't eat anything for one week.

It was a literal hell but even within that time there were occasional bouts of joy. I remember one particular day, deliriously telling my family that I had only needed to throw up 3 times and that it was the deepest of thrills.

The cravings as well. You want some weird crap when your body is like that. Olives were my particular delight. Mum used to diligently provide an entire fruit bowl each morning. She made it look pretty. I really love her.

She's saying her goodbyes. She says she is ready now. She is still being really funny. x

Dear Tim and Anais. I wrote an update to the parents of my advisees and I would like to do the same for you.

After helping us to show you around the school and spreading her possessions, Ayla retreated into her room, which had moved from the Pavilions to a corner of many Brockwood minds. Sensitive that for some people that knew Ayla less well it might not be helpful to dwell or to create an 'I should be more affected' feeling, this is where her closest friends have spent time with her. When any of us have tried to show others this room, it has been very difficult. It has felt raw and exposing, maybe there is a fear that the new visitor might tell Ayla that she can move out. Even when you suggested that a professional cleaning company offered to help spring clean these rooms, the thought was too much for many.

"Yanna has said she would walk with me whenever i want to try on my prosthetic."





No one knew how to put a bandage on my leg! IT WAS AN AMPUTATION HOSPITAL...you would think they knew how to put a bandage on.

Ayla seemed to express that something has moved for her, that she is not in the same place as she was last term and that it might be time for her to move out of her corner room in our minds. It was limiting to her and seemed to be keeping us from going outside and feeling the cold reality of the Winter breeze.



“When you told me it hit like a hammer in my guts.”

“Go to running club next week? That’s mental. I don’t have the legs for it! I love it..” “I wish I could say something helpful but I don’t know if I can do this either Aurelia.” “I’m not talking to you. I was telling you psychically that I wanted you to come over and help me with my plate and you completely ignored me.”

Dear Chris. I am so sorry to hear about your diagnosis. Remember that there are so many people who technically have cancer and are living normal long healthy lives. And although it is so difficult, try to think of this as an opportunity for change and growth rather than just bad luck. Thinking of you. Ayla.

In conclusion, quoting my mother. “We can heal anything. When you are stressed you don’t enjoy life, which could be described as not wanting to live. It makes you vulnerable. So disease can be necessary as a warning sign for blocks that need to be seen.” I believe if more medical practitioners began to notice these links between our mind and our body it could change the whole medical industry for the better.

“I promise I’m awake Chris, come and speak to me.”

**My leg hurts. Not that one; the one you can’t see, no matter how hard you look. It’s like a sharp stabbing pain in my second toe. I love having one leg. It stops me from doing so many things I wish I could do and now never will be able to, and yet I love it. My little leg. It feels like a boob and who wouldn’t want a third boob. The more the better - the bigger the better. I have a feeling this phantom pain I’m feeling is linked to something psychological but I can’t place what it is. I feel like I have been through so much but this is only the beginning of my journey, not to sound cliché.**

**If all my feelings are valid then... I need to get out of my room. I’m lying. I’m actually sitting by the fire feeling productive for writing this; I just thought adding that joke would make me seem relatable.**

**I feel like if i get too comfortable everyone will leave. Like if i show them who i actually am they won’t like me.**



Being at Brockwood has made me conscious of my abandonment issue, seems like such a typical issue to have, couldn't I have something more interesting, like cancer... Oh wait. What do you think the best way to tell someone you have cancer is? I haven't mastered it yet. I just want to hug my younger self and tell her everything is going to be okay.

I think taking responsibility is a big part. Not just saying you can't handle it and handing yourself over to the doctor, and asking him to 'fix you', i mean there is definitely a place for western medicine and the NHS, but i think one has to come to terms with the fact that there is no one there to fix you, that you have to work out your own path.

'The I ching' says ' If you are sincere, you have success in your heart, and whatever you do, succeeds.' I struggle with sincerity. Even at this moment i'm trying to write this how how my sister would and not being sincere to myself.

The single worst thing about my illness...the impact on my hair! I couldn't cope, day after day finding clumps on my pillow. My hair had this kind of nostalgic power for me. It brought back so many memories of connection and calm with family members or friends. I watched a girl across the hospital room who was determined to hold onto hers. It's awful to admit that, for me, she just looked like Golum. I did the only thing that seemed sensible, shave it off and buy a hat.



*Setting. Hospital. 6 people sit around a teenager in a bed. Talking about a funeral.*

Mum: Did you say you want your body to be eaten by sharks?  
Ayla: No. I said I want to be buried at coed (home).  
Chris: I'm glad you double checked  
Anais: Could have been a fun funeral.

Ayla died this morning at 6.19am xx It was very peaceful x

What happens when you lose someone by death? ...when you come out of a state of shock there is what we call sorrow...the happy words, the walks, the many pleasant things you did and wanted to do together - all this is taken away in an instant and you are left empty, naked, lonely....this is what the mind objects to. Now what matters is to live with that emptiness with your whole being, without any reactions...and step by step you will find there is an ending to sorrow.

J. Krishnamurti, The Book of Life



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# STEPPING OUT

Written and illustrated by Jule Fischer Petersohn

Brockwood changed my life. Let me explain how.

Before, school for me was the complete opposite. 700 students, 6 subjects per day and many tests and exams. I had previously tried alternative schools, which were a better fit for me, but in the end chose what all my friends chose; a German mainstream school. I wasn't happy there, stressing a lot about grades and what people thought of me.

In 2020, when the pandemic started, I suddenly didn't have a teacher telling me what to do and when to do it. I was given a topic for the week and had to structure the days on my own. It was scary at the beginning but it didn't take long to realise that this type of learning gave me more freedom to progress at my own pace.

In the first lockdown I had to make a reading diary about a book the whole class was reading. I started journaling about every chapter, explaining what happened and how the characters are related to each other. I had this realisation, peering into that green folder of work, that I was actually really enjoying this. If I had been in school, I doubt I would have had that same feeling. There was no teacher to put me under pressure, or classmates telling me it was stupid to read the book and do the assignment when I could just copy it from the internet.

## I learned how to cook lasagne

This lockdown didn't just give me the time to learn more but also to explore new things. I rolled out my yoga mat every morning in front of the TV and every week got a little more flexible and stronger. I also spent more time in the kitchen preparing meals for my family and learned how to cook lasagne. I tried all those new things simply because I could. I had time and no one telling me that it was stupid or useless.

But then we had to pick up our masks and go back to school. It was hard, not just because I was used

to my own rhythm, but also because my closest friends moved away or went to boarding school. I wanted to be like them – to leave school and learn in a different way.

As I write this, all those memories of how scared of school I was are back. How I sat in maths class trying to be invisible to the teacher. I can feel that silence now. I know he wants me to say the answer, because I haven't said anything in a long time. But I don't know it, so I pretend to write in my book and just wait. Eventually he will say a different name... but he doesn't. He says mine. I don't know the answer and I can't say a word. It's just silent until my teacher gives up. This was me almost every day.

## I used to sit in Maths class trying to be invisible to the teacher

Now I ask myself why did I never do anything about that? I already knew the root of the problem. It was me not understanding anything he tried to explain. I could have told my teacher about my anxiety of speaking in front of people.

But my attitude towards school has always been, 'Just three more years and then you can do the things you want to do'. I never had the thought that there could be a different type of school, a place where I don't have to be scared and where I could actually learn something, instead of trying to pack information into my head.

I remember the moment exactly. Sat in my room, home alone. I was scrolling through my phone and so I immediately saw the text from my Mom. I open the chat and there's a link to the Brockwood website. I looked at it all, every detail, all the photos and videos. I thought it was incredible. I text back: "That's the school I want to go to!"

I applied. I had my prospective interviews. I was so nervous. Antonio even asked me if I was nervous, which made it worse!

But in the end, after a stressful week of waiting, Brockwood offered me a place. After some visa issues, many days of packing, and my first flight, I came to Brockwood.

For the first time in my life I was at boarding school, surrounded by a big community and sharing a room. At first I couldn't imagine that I'd be close with my roommates. But now, a few months later, I am really glad for the experience. It taught me to adapt to different types of people, whom I probably never would have talked with if we weren't roommates. But the most important thing is that I am never lonely.

The biggest change is in my learning. Looking back, I'm not actually sure if I learnt a single thing at my old school. Of course, I had many subjects and I received a lot of input, but it didn't stay in my brain. I just studied to get a good grade whereas now I study because I'm actually interested in a topic. Like right now – I am not writing this article to pass any exam. I am doing this for me. I am doing it because I want to get better at writing and to show what it is to come to Brockwood as a new student.

Brockwood gives me a lot of time to study by myself. To plan my own time and the freedom to learn things I really want to learn.. And I can say that what I have learnt in lessons here stays in my brain for a lot longer. I'm really learning, not just listening to a teacher talking about something I don't care about. Learning here is so much more than academics. It is so many things that I cannot explain in detail.

But most importantly, I can really say that I am happy here.

Brockwood is showing me how it is to live so

**I'm really learning,  
not just listening**

far away from home, how it is to live without a phone, what you can learn about yourself and that there is so much more than just exams and grades, and I am really thankful for that.





# CHANGE

By Elizabeth Mapel Brunner. Illustrated by Lorena Magallanes



I want to go to a place  
Where change is in a glimmer

Of a trail,  
Left by a snail;

Where change is in an echo  
Of the past,

That creeps and crawls,  
But doesn't last.

I want to go to a place  
Where change is a sound.

A sound you can't hear.  
A place you daren't go near.

A silky embrace,  
Seen as a tangled trap,  
A spider's web.

Be still.

Quiet.

It's a cocoon,  
protecting you.

Holding you.

But you don't hear it.  
With you, here, neither will I.

So I must leave.

I must unravel my roots,

Pry them from the ground.  
Raise my hands,  
Reach up to the sky, unbound.  
Breathe.

So I can hear it.  
Calling me  
To fly.

# A FAITHFUL FRIEND

By Emma Diaz Villarreal. Pictures by Emma Diaz Villarreal

The sun tapped on my window and the reflection of green leaves painted my flowered bed sheets. My body felt heavy as I hopped out of bed. The impact of my bare feet on the cold wooden floor stopped my heart for a second. I looked around; was it too loud? Will he hear?... The silence answered my questions: Stillness, no one coming into my room.

Perfect, now was the time.

I left silently through the back door, walking as fast as I could down the stone trail that led up to the garden. Mosquitoes and bees tried to stop me, but I swatted them away, whilst the rotten tomatoes that squashed under my feet hurried my step with disgust. I knew I had to get away before he came.

The wall at the end of the garden was made of big grey stones that looked as if they had been stolen from a castle. The stones were covered in vines, so it was hard to find that small wooden door. I was in a hurry. I had to find it before he reached me. He always catches up eventually. I don't know how.

I looked back and, letting out a sigh of relief, finally felt a wooden knob, but before I could twist it, a meek "Hello" sounded. My heart got nervous and, when I turned around, there he was.

He had a grey polo shirt on, black shoes, black pants and a navy blue hat that appeared black in the sun. His eyes looked like they had been dipped in the deepest parts of the ocean. His skin pale as sand on a virgin beach. The only thing that looked like it had been taken from someone else was his smile. It was warm and compassionate.

"Can I come with you?" Though he asked in a gentle voice that sang with the sweetness of birds, the ball in my throat clogged my words.

My heart remembered the cut from yesterday.

My eyes went down to my feet before tears made them glassy.

"I guess?" I said unsurely.

I turned around and he followed my muddy footsteps. As we went through the door my heart slowed. I looked at the immensity of the trees that towered over us, the leaves that hugged each other, making an arch that looked as if we were walking through a sacred temple.

There was utter silence, only the sound of the tree trunks could be heard, and our footsteps slowed, trying not to disrupt the peace. When we came to the end of the temple, the grass blew in the wind showing the way.

As we were walking I was trying to divert my attention by looking at the large purple flowers







that covered the ground.

“Why am I here now?” he asked. My heart wanted to spill its tears onto the ground, my lips quivered and I wanted to hide. This was how it felt whenever he was around.

“I don’t want to talk to you” I said. Hostile. “Why?” he asked, his eyes were like water in summer. “Because I don’t.” Why does he have to talk so much? I thought, I don’t even want him here. As if he heard my thoughts he stayed quiet for a while.

### His eyes were like water in summer

We arrived at a big wooden bridge, arching over a turquoise river and, before he could say anything, I sped-walked to cross the bridge. While the wooden floor beneath my feet creaked, his hand grabbed mine. It was so cold, my instinct was to let it go. But when I tried, he wouldn’t let me.

“Stop.” I said desperately but he still wouldn’t let

go. The sound of the water drowned my words out. I felt angry when he didn’t listen to my commands.

My voice tried to catch up with my thoughts, my chest started to move quickly, making it hard to breathe. One tear spilled, two tears spilled, and then, a whole family of tears ran down my face. My face and throat were wet and burning. The sun blinded my eyes, the sound of the water was coming in too loud through my ears. My sobs matched the intensity of the current that flowed beneath us and the wind was slapping my body too hard.

What does he want now? Why doesn’t he let me go?

While those thoughts made a tornado in my head, my sadness started to slowly take over my body. My chest caved, making my back hunch. I was still holding his hand but this time I didn’t try to let go, I didn’t even back away, I went closer to him. He wrapped his arms around me and the tears on my face soaked his grey shirt.

Remembering when I dropped my dad’s favourite mug, my mom looking at me with

distant eyes and how shame had pricked my heart with a needle for what was only an accident.

We sat for a while on the edge of the bridge, watching glowing orange fish swim beneath us. I leaned my head on his shoulder, the rays of sunlight reflected in the water soothed my body.

### The rays of sunlight reflected in the water soothed my body

“I understand why it made you sad,” he said, smoothing out my back and looking at me with warm water eyes.

“No you don’t, you don’t understand.” I said with anger stuck in my throat “It was awful, she always gives me that look.” I said, wiping the snot from my face with my shirt. I was mad at him most of the time, but funnily enough, even with my snappy attitude, he was never mad at me.

“Yes I do”, he said, more intensely now. “You hate it when he makes you feel guilty, it makes you sad that you really think his screams are your fault, and that your mom’s stares make you wonder if you are doing well enough.”

His words stung against my skin. What he was saying was true, and my eyes kept pushing the salty tears that danced on my face.

We were silent for a while. Thinking of what he had said, letting everything wash away. He did understand, I thought. We stood up. I grabbed his hand as we made our way back home.

We arrived at my house and entered through the back door, we went to my room and he waited outside my bathroom while I showered. It was already night time. I brushed my teeth, and still he waited patiently outside. I made him a warm cup of Moroccan mint tea and sipped on my own raspberry leaf tea.

Perched on my window sill, we both read. I read my favourite book ‘Tom Goes to School’, a story about a bunny afraid of his first day of school.

He read Harry Potter. We lay on my bed as the black of the night slowly lulled me between sleep and reality before, finally, I slipped into my dream world.

I suddenly appeared in a secret garden. We’re standing together, looking at a beautiful river with pink and yellow flowers. This river, unlike the other one, has a small waterfall that releases its water towards us.

The blue eyed boy looks over to me and tries to take my hand. “Let’s go in” he says.

“No, i’m terrified” I say, my eyes growing wide.

The water looks so deep it’s scary, and it feels as though it will suck me in to its depth. “It’s okay, it’s not as deep as you think it is”, he says with a genuine smile and soft eyes that wrinkle at their sides.

I take his hand, still with panic in my heart, my eyes closed and my body tense, but when we submerge ourselves into the river, the water only goes up to my shoulders. It’s at a perfect height. I start to, without willing it, form a smile and laughter slowly takes over me. My chest fills with relief when I know that I’m not drowning.

### My chest fills with relief when I know that I’m not drowning

He dips his head in the water and when he comes back I stare at him. The drops of water are more visible on his face as they are illuminated in the sun. He smiles at me with even more softness than his eyes had held a moment ago.

Relief turns into joy when we start playing with the water. Then the dream is over and I wake up, my eyes blurry with sleep and only after they adjust I realise he is no longer here. Harry Potter firmly shut beside my pillow, I sigh, and once again, the sun taps on my window while green leaves paint my flowered bed sheets.



# WHAT REMAINS

By Arjun Tandon. Illustrated by Jule Fischer Petersohn

Everywhere I go, everywhere I roam  
a feeling envelopes me.  
It's strange,  
makes me feel deranged.  
However hard I try,  
it cannot be explained.

Why is it so hard to turn a new leaf?  
Am I not tired of reading the same  
chapter again and again? To never  
forget?

Saying goodbye to the people I  
know.

It's time.

Time to stumble onto moments,  
uncertain. Embracing whatever it  
brings, even if it is just pain and  
pain.

I am not alone, I know.  
Even if everyone leaves me, I am not  
alone. I know because every step  
I take, bone on bone, makes this  
strange feeling grow.

Oh, I wish I could accept this  
strange feeling. I could be like a ship  
in calm waters but then this feeling  
takes over as a storm  
and I can't help but falter.

It could all be so easy if this feeling  
went away with nothing left but

comfort and the safety of everything remaining  
the same.

Nothing changes. Every day goes by the same,  
exactly the same, driving me absolutely insane.  
Why do I resent this feeling when it is with me  
in everything I do? Or would I resent my life  
without the excitement of this feeling?





# HOME AWAY FROM HOME

By Lilli Appelt. Illustrated by Lorena Magallanes

“We bought a caravan and we’ll go away and live in it for a year”.

I laughed. The idea of that actually happening seemed about as ridiculous to me as a short trip to the moon, but when I saw my parent’s faces I could tell they were dead serious.

What confused me a second ago now made sense. All the new camping equipment laid out on the floor. This whole situation came totally out of the blue which made it seem somewhat funny, not to mention the fact that we’ve never been camping before.

Once the haze of the first shock had faded I realised what this actually meant. While I was still processing what felt like a bad dream, my sister started crying, giving every possible reason why she didn’t want to leave, but once it was decided, it was decided: We’ll leave.

Over the next 2 months you could feel the stress in the air because of all the things that still needed to be organised. What happens to the house? Where do we put all of our stuff? How do we explain this to the school?

We stored all of our belongings in boxes, taking only the necessary things, watching the house get emptier and the car fuller by the day. Then it was time to say goodbye to friends and family, which was the hardest thing. It’s fine though because it’s only for a year, right? Now we were left with an empty house and a car packed to the roof. Ready to go. What we didn’t know then was that one year would turn into two in the blink of an eye, with many more to come.

The first weeks were hard on all of us; cramped up in a small van in the summer heat, there was no way of escaping one another. Living so close to





each other, my sister kicking the back of my tiny bunk bed every night, my dad snoring and the whole van shaking as soon as someone moved.

We went from living in the same house for fourteen years to never being in one place for more than a few weeks, being in a new country every few months and never staying somewhere long enough to make friends. The days just blending together to create one big blur. People asking “Where are you gonna be next month?” and the answer always, “I don’t know.”

## In the end our closeness made us drift apart

The genuine reaction when I tell people about this, is usually something like “Wow, that’s so cool.” or “I wish I could do that.” but the reality is not all rosey. At that time it was more like a trap and learning to appreciate it and see all the great opportunities that it brought along took me quite a long time. Don’t get me wrong, I love travelling, meeting new people and exploring new places but it can quickly become very lonely.

Being that close to one another, really took a toll on all of us. In the end our closeness made us drift apart.

The months went by and nothing really changed until one day during dinner, my parents decided to drop a bomb. They had sold our house. Things were going to stay like this indefinitely.



And so it went, for what felt like forever, and this time there was no end in sight. Just when I was starting to accept what I had hated for so long I heard about Brockwood. It was a normal day, somewhere in Portugal. It seemed almost too good to be true but 3 months later I found myself in the Assembly Hall, looking at all the people I was going to spend the next year with.

The weeks leading up to coming here, I started to have doubts. What is the place like? How will I make new friends? Do I really want to go? It was not until the opportunity to go to school again, with friends and stability so near, that I started to finally see the beauty in the things that I already had. It’s funny how we only start appreciating things when they are slipping away.

## It’s funny how we only start appreciating things when they are slipping away

Coming here was scary at first, like a big surprise box where you don’t know what awaits you but after a week it was clear that it had been the right choice. The days just flew by from that point on and before you know it, the year is almost over. If you would’ve asked me three years ago where I I’d be now, I would’ve guessed any place but here but that’s okay because you can never know what’s going to happen.

In the end, it’s often the changes that scare us the most that bring the most opportunities, but accepting those changes can feel impossible.

# CHAINS OF MADNESS

By Gaia Camino Diaz Mercado. Illustrated by Maya Camino Diaz Mercado

They say my tormented mind defines me.  
Then why judge me so?  
Is it the shadows coiling around my ankles at  
every step,  
or the constant whispers, the watchful eyes I can-  
not shake?

They believe I am insane.  
Do they not know my mind has always been this  
way?  
The screams, unwavering,  
urging me to surrender, tearing at my ears when I  
resist.

In that endless battle I stand  
undefeated,  
but invisible wounds  
tear me apart.  
Their claws rend  
my skin, my mind  
fills with agony.  
Blood everywhere.  
Is it mine?  
I ask myself  
every day, but  
when I need the  
voices the most,  
they are not there.

My most faithful  
companion;  
At first, I fled from  
it like the plague,  
But now I  
welcome it as a  
friend.

A friend who has never left me,  
always by my side.

But those screams deafen me,  
and my mind becomes chaos when I see  
all the pain that is unleashed.  
When I let my darkness out to roam.

Why is it so hard to live day by day?  
Perhaps it's because I must walk dragging chains  
made of thorns.  
Or the gag covering my mouth is to blame,  
To silence my screams, they say.

“Are you an angel or a demon?” I whisper  
into its welcoming arms.  
“A curse and a blessing,” it replies.

Its presence does not  
bother me.  
It embraces me  
and gives me light  
for a while. But  
then my  
faithful friend  
madness, returns,  
And accompanies  
me to the end  
of time.

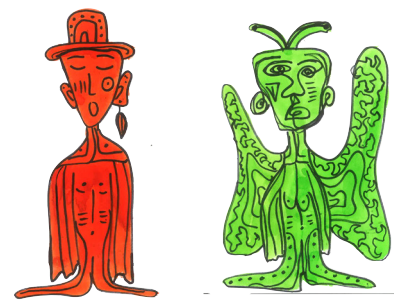
Trapped in its embrace,  
a personal hell,  
a never-ending pain.  
My soul tormented, in  
darkness lost.  
Forevermore, in its  
grip, I'll remain.





# ON RACISM

By Sandhya Beaucarne. Illustrated by Mia Sinzinger



The thing about racism is that most people don't know what it actually entails. In all the schools I've been in (including Brockwood) I've noticed that several people don't really know what they're talking about. As a person of colour who grew up in a predominantly white area, I didn't know anything about race or racism either until I started developing an interest in social constructs and problems.

My journey with learning about racism was kick-started by the Black Lives Matter protests during the pandemic. That is when I started realising a lot of things.

First of all, there are different types of racism ranging from the open, apparent type to the unconscious, more hidden type. The first type is easy, it's the one that everyone knows and shuns. People generally agree that, for example, someone shouting racial slurs at a person of colour for no apparent reason is a bad thing. This type of racism is more prominent in certain parts of the world than others. I think this is why the USA is seen as a country where racism is more present than others, which is true in a big part because of their whole history of slavery.

But what people tend to overlook is the more hidden type of racism. This type is just as much of a problem, especially because it tends to get overlooked. This type of racism is in all of us, simply because of the society we live in. We have all been brought up with harmful stereotypes and unconscious biases, which are incredibly difficult to notice.



For example, landlords are less likely to welcome a tenant if they have a foreign or unfamiliar name.

Isn't this a normal response, though - to gravitate towards the familiar? It's true we all have this tendency, and we shouldn't demonise it. I believe we must be aware, however, that a subtle thing such as our unconscious bias can cause huge disadvantages to people of colour. This is how opportunities can get taken away from them, without anyone noticing, even the person of colour themselves.\*

## Our unconscious bias can cause huge disadvantages to people of colour

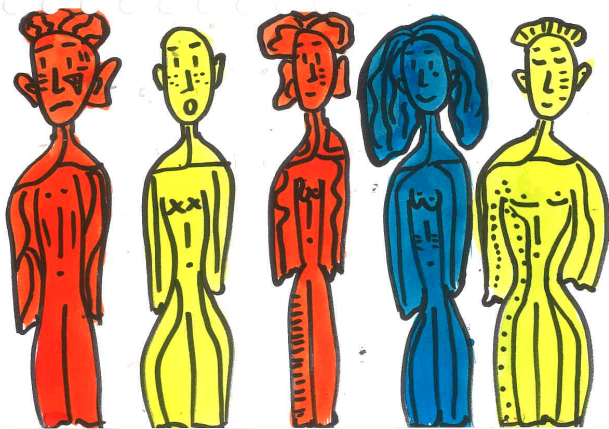
Personally, I started noticing my biases when I heard about the following study. It revealed that when a black person tries to cut open a bicycle lock, most people think that they're trying to steal it and confront it. On the other hand, when a white person does the same thing, people easily think that they've just lost their key or forgotten the code. This study opened my eyes, because I realised that I would have had the same thought process in those situations.

*\*It's important to note that there aren't any bad connotations linked to white-sounding names. So this doesn't work the same way the other way around. There definitely have been negative stereotypes surrounding white people in parts of the world. However, (partly*



*because of colonisation) whiteness is still, ultimately, widely associated with wealth and power, so these negative stereotypes haven't had the same impact that harmful stereotypes have had on the lives of people of colour.*

To give another example, in Belgium there is a lot of discrimination against people who are called 'Moroccans', which refers to any person with



Middle-Eastern or North African roots. After hearing about that study, I noticed I also unconsciously held some racist stereotypes. As a girl, I'm naturally a bit wary when I walk past a group of boys at night, but I noticed that I am far more so when it's a group of Middle-Eastern looking boys than when it's white boys. Now, because I'm aware of this bias, I try to stop myself from thinking that way.

## The media teaches what the norm is

How do these unconscious biases come about? We are fed stereotypes from a very young age. It can be through our parents and social circles, whether they either act openly racist or unconsciously upon their biases. In education we learn history mostly from a white, often colonial, point of view. But most importantly we learn through the media; the media teaches what the norm is, so it holds a lot of power. It's easy to absorb gender and racial stereotypes, beauty standards and so on.

When we keep seeing white characters on TV who are the popular kids in a sitcom, or the ones in power in a political drama, we associate these traits with white people. In the past, people of colour weren't often the main characters in TV

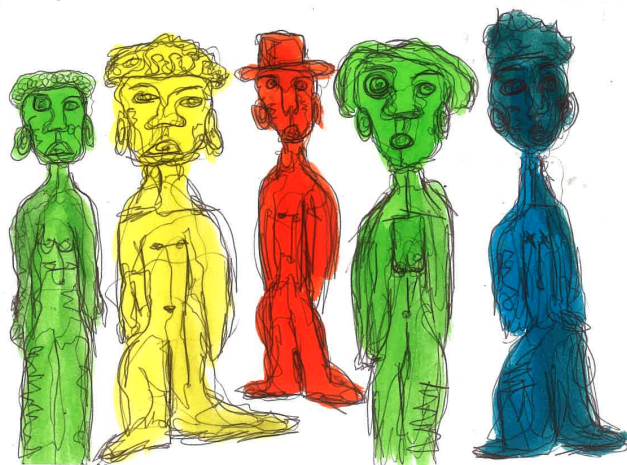
shows. Even while I was growing up, if there were characters of colour, they were usually typecast as a side character. This resulted in me feeling like I could never be pretty or important when I was a child. Fortunately, this is changing nowadays and people of colour are beginning to be increasingly given main roles. However, there is still a long way to go.

When trying to talk to people about it, a lot of them are so scared to be called 'a racist' that they just stay quiet

I feel it's very important to talk about racism, but it's so tiring as it is a topic close to my heart and talking about racism has been made difficult by many factors. For example, by the fact that it's a taboo in mainstream Western society. I've noticed when trying to talk to people about it that a lot of them are so scared to be called 'a racist' that they just stay quiet.

White people often feel like they can't say anything, which is a shame. Whether it comes from a place of ignorance or curiosity, it is always good to ask questions and I'm always happy to see that there are conversations about racism being held in a respectful manner. A lot of people feel attacked when I try to insinuate that they have some racist tendencies - but this isn't my intention. We all have them, and we can all work past them.

I also think that schools are not sufficiently educating students on racism, as a consequence of it being taboo.





Something I've heard being said by students at Brockwood is the opinion that we should all just stop talking about race altogether, because it shouldn't be a problem. This is dubbed the 'I don't see colour' sentiment. It would work in an ideal world. But this is not an ideal world at all. Our world has a whole history, and it would be wrong to ignore that. In the past people did very much care about race.

This has brought so many problems into our modern world that we can't just stop caring about it now as people of colour are still living the consequences of the past. The feeling that people of colour are below white people was heavily present in the past, because the more industrialised West was of the opinion that, what we now call 'third world countries', were uncivilised. This exact sentiment and many more like it, have directly resulted in the harmful stereotypes of people of colour today.

For the same reason that stopping to talk about race is a bad idea, so is neutrality. Neutrality enforces racism, as you are not saying that racial inequality is a bad thing. Plus, when taking a neutral stance, you are putting fighting injustice and enforcing injustice on the same level. This way, you are treating these two concepts as equal. Because a lot of people seem almost neutral about

racism (often to not aggravate the situation), it makes talking about it also more difficult for me as I can get hurt by that.

### When taking a neutral stance, you are putting fighting injustice and enforcing injustice on the same level

What I'm trying to stress is that racism can be conscious or unconscious, and intended or unintended. Racism is also a spectrum; there is no clear line between being racist and not being racist. Even if you don't mean something derogatively, it can still be disrespectful or hurtful. If you're not sure if something is racist, please ask someone or do your own research.

Racism is ingrained in the system seeing as it is ingrained in all of us. Yes, in you and in me. The only way to make racial inequality disappear completely is to notice or be aware that we, growing up in this society, have these biases. And to change our behaviour, based on that awareness.





# JOY LONG

By Arin Harpur. Illustrated by Lorena Magallanes

It's funny, but when I was twenty  
She was the last person I thought I'd still  
think about now  
In college days I shared a flat with my friends  
Above which she rented a room for herself

Her name was Joy Long. We'd often discuss  
Her strangeness, her spiky pink hair  
with grey roots  
We figured she'd talked all her friends away,  
and now compulsively changed things to help  
herself through

One week we heard the ceiling screech  
She was shifting her sofa to see what  
would happen  
Not much did, except she'd injured her hip,  
So the boys next door had to move it back again

Twice we met at the foot of the stairs  
She heading out, and I heading up  
Her darting black eyes didn't see me at first,  
Then she slapped on a smile and adjusted her step

Both times she stopped to chat  
'Bout some pet or diet, her next colour of hair.  
"I've been training the rats, now I'm off for a run.  
And good for you, keep on taking the stairs!"

Oh Joy. We gave her names, making  
Fun of the hobbies and lifestyles she hunted.  
Now, I think she just  
Craved the clarity about who she was  
Which we so easily sculpted.

She moved away then. I'm told she died  
Not very long after. That left me startled.  
To me she seemed healthy - did her obsessive  
Somewhere-else-ness escalate a little too far?

And now I feel I understand her, and she stays in  
my mind for reasons that most would not want  
Reasons I feel more painfully, now that I'm  
Older, and everyday more like Joy Long.





# THE ECHOING BEAT

Written and illustrated by Yanna Bonvin

The shade of the evening intensifies as her heart speeds. She wants to feel the sound against her skin, like hooves beating down on the cracked earth, raising clouds of dust and leaving a restless trail behind. Daughter of the sun, apprentice of the moon; she spins round and round, losing herself a little more in each step. Perhaps time will pass and movement will cease, but, even if we are balancing on the shore of reality, aren't we always in the shadow of an illusion? In pursuit of answers, she finds more questions. The rhythm catches her again and all thoughts evaporate.

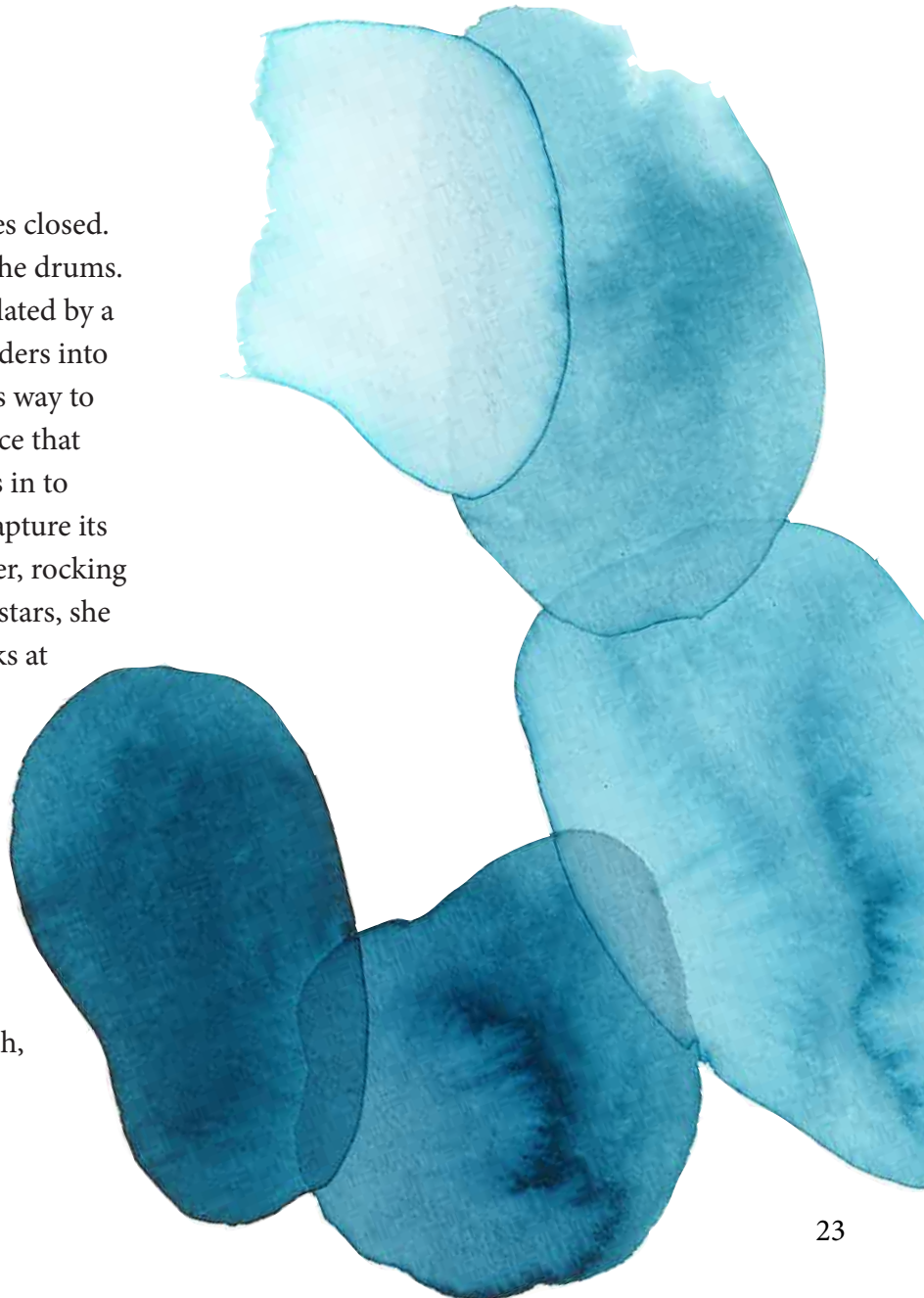
In pursuit of answers,  
she finds more  
questions

Music calls and she follows with her eyes closed. Blindly she goes, matching her step to the drums. Moths flutter against her arms, manipulated by a dance of their own. On and on she wanders into the night and gradually hard earth gives way to soft sand. The tide is rising, a steady force that pulls her towards the horizon. She gives in to this quiet rhythm, listening, trying to capture its essence. In gentle arms, the sea holds her, rocking slowly and cooling her skin. Under the stars, she surrenders to its embrace. The salt pricks at her face and the waves comb her hair, while deep blue eyes watch over her. The sea wipes away her tears with a loving touch; claiming them as her own.

On the edge of her vision she can see the mountains guarding the coast. Massive rocks that slowly roam the earth,

their inner force constantly changing its boundaries. Their presence feels safe. Mountains are the edge of the world, they won't let her fall into the chasm of her thoughts.

When she closes her eyes, she still sees the outline of their shape at the end of her mind. As she lays completely still, resting in the blue, she synchronises her breath to the waves. In and out. She finds herself again. So Alma walks home.



# ONE DAY TO SAVE MANKIND

By Abhijit Padte. Picture by Maria Diaz Villarreal

“The greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand exponential growth.” - Albert Bartlett

It was a lovely sunny day in Brockwood with inconspicuous flowers surprising me at every corner. My mind was worrying, though, about the single most important factor in recent AI developments. What occurred to me was our collective weakness at understanding the concept of exponentiality. ChatGPT, if learning at an exponential rate, will soon overtake us in almost all areas of intelligence. In what way will it impact us? To explore these questions, we must understand what exponential rate means.

## ChatGPT will soon overtake us in almost all areas of intelligence

Most people are accustomed to thinking of growth as a linear process. A quantity is growing linearly when it increases by a constant amount in a constant time period. For example, a child who becomes one inch taller each year is growing linearly. If somebody hides \$10 each year under his mattress, his horde of money is also increasing in a linear way. The amount of increase each year is obviously not affected by the size of the child nor the amount of money already under the mattress.

A quantity exhibits exponential growth when it increases by a constant percentage of the whole in a constant time period. A colony of yeast cells in which each cell divides into two cells every 10 minutes is growing exponentially. For each single cell, after 10 minutes there will be two cells, an increase of 100 percent. After the next 10 minutes

there will be four cells, then eight, then sixteen. The amount of cells added to a yeast colony is not constant. It continually increases, as the total accumulated amount increases. Such exponential growth is a common process in biological, financial, and many other systems of the world.

Exponential increase is deceptive because it generates immense numbers very quickly. Common as it is, exponential growth can yield surprising results—results that have fascinated mankind for centuries.

A French riddle for children illustrates another aspect of exponential growth—the apparent suddenness with which it approaches a fixed limit. Suppose you own a pond on which a water lily is growing. The lily plant doubles in size each day. If the lily were allowed to grow unchecked, it would completely cover the pond in 30 days, choking off the other forms of life in the water. For a long time the lily plant seems small, and so you decide not to worry about cutting it back until it covers half the pond. On what day will that be? the twenty-ninth of course. You have one day to save your pond.

## You have one day to save your pond

In November 2022 something happened that created a huge storm, comparable to the Industrial Revolution and the creation of the printing press, and its real significance is yet to sink in. ChatGPT, an AI chatbot, was released to the public. For the



first time we were exposed to the shocking potential of an AI product. Since then, the pioneers in the field of AI have called for a moratorium as they are not sure where this development will take us.

In Brockwood, where we challenge the very way in which we think, is it not imperative that we pause to reflect why we human beings have failed

to address some of the most pressing problems of Humanity? Why do we continue to feel that we have time?

Krishnamurti very passionately kept impressing upon us the Urgency of Change. With AI at our doorstep we simply do not have the liberty to procrastinate. Just one day to save mankind.





# THROWAWAY FASHION

By Clementina Compostela. Pictures by Alexander Spencer

“I want your trash”.

That’s what I proclaimed to a hall of confused faces in a school assembly. At the end of my second year as a student I came up with a project idea, a way to involve the community and show the connection we all have to a major problem, waste consumption. I wanted the school to contribute their trash so I could create a fashion show of garments reusing these items.

It was a way for me to combine my passion with something that has affected and surrounded my childhood. I grew up living these issues first hand and I was taught to think that garbage is dirty, disgusting and not something to keep or reuse but simply to forget. I wanted to challenge this idea by giving it a sense of beauty that usually isn’t associated with it.

**Not something to keep or reuse but simply to forget**

I chose fashion to showcase waste because it’s been a part of me since I was born. My mother involved me in her

wonderful creations and exposed me to patterns, fabrics and colours at a young age. My inspiration from my childhood helped me explore my creativity and question the boundaries surrounding fashion. Within this I also explored beyond the reaches of my comfort zone and was surprised at what my hands could create. I learned to sew for the first time and work with trash, which taught me how to use our waste to our advantage and mend it to its limits.

**I explored beyond the reaches of my comfort zone**

The discipline and motivation that I had during this process still surprises me to this day. It was a very challenging journey. I had to switch my attention between this and my A levels, which was the hardest part of my project. My mom helped bring laughs and ideas into this show which is why

I am forever grateful for her help and I wouldn’t have got to where I am now if it wasn’t for her. The biggest thanks of all goes to the students of Brockwood for all the chips they ate,







the packages they ordered and the bags they asked for.

All the models helped bring out the beauty and delicacy of the garments and fitted them perfectly.

**I wanted to portray an extra layer of sensitivity**

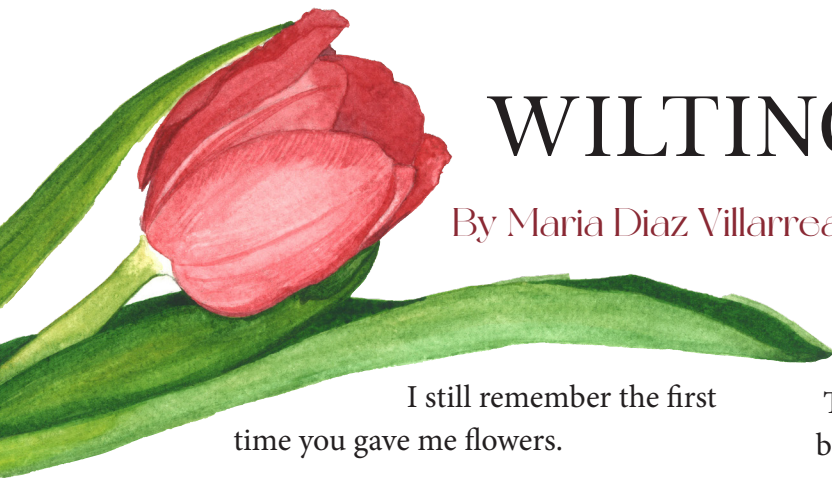
You could tell the models had a real connection to what they were wearing, I couldn't have chosen them better.

I wanted to portray an extra layer of sensitivity to our day to day lives through this project, but most importantly I want you to notice what you do with your own waste and whether you ever give anything the chance of a second life.

I invite you to really look and recognize the amounts we consume and appreciate what our waste can become.

I  
WANT  
YOUR  
TRASH





# WILTING ECHOES

By Maria Diaz Villarreal. Illustrated by Lorena Magallanes

I still remember the first time you gave me flowers.

My cheeks blossomed into the same colour of those tulips you handed to me, ever so delicately. Their breathtaking beauty created a knot in my throat, holding back my words that didn't want to remain just as thoughts.

Tulips have a beautiful yet intriguing cycle that would infiltrate my mind, with the slightest bit of care, a tiny bulb would start to bloom so fine. Fragile flowers that were slow to upset, their vibrant hues would consume my eyes with no regret. Their discreet scent would haunt me everywhere I went.

I still remember our laughter flooding every corner of the room, drowning other conversations as ours would endlessly bloom.

What we both knew they would eventually perish. Our beaming smiles met all the time, while our ceaseless conversations made me constantly lose track of time.

Hours together melting away like snow on the sunniest winter day. Time simply slipped away.

Why couldn't things just stay that way?

Just like a tulip, all good things must come to an end, this beautiful cycle must eventually descend.

You managed to pervade my mind day-by-day,

and I desperately hoped it would soon go away

The conversations we once had still echoed in the back of my mind. Once you were gone, I craved to experience you at least one last time.

I had nothing left of you except those last three tulips that I hopelessly tried to keep alive. My chest tightened while I watered and watered them, but as their petals faded, they started wilting from side to side.

I felt powerless as I realised my inability to bring them back to life. For all I know, this was not something perpetual. We could not have stopped it even if we tried.

Looking back, I now realise I should've got myself new flowers instead of blindly trying to keep yours alive.

Although this cycle died, just like a tulip, you left a legacy of ineffable beauty in my mind. Yet I'm here once again, with the ceaseless thought of you, in the absence of two.

Even now in a field of daffodils, I can still remember your red tulips wilting down my window sill.





# CATCHING AIR

By Mariya Halai. Illustrated by Yanna Bonvin

Now, what to speak of the heart?  
Writing about change, waking me  
up from my long slumber. But  
you come and call me with your  
manners, your manners remind  
me of the past, from which we  
have changed.  
I have loved;  
I love the moments we've  
had together.  
You might have come  
to the wrong door, you might be mistaken. But  
your gaze, your eyes like vast skies return. Let  
me share then.  
I'm more scared than I was, more cautious to say  
the sayings I'm sure of, but am I sure of them?  
You see how unsurety secures me so?  
I have missed you, to be fair, and I miss you still.

You've joined me today and for a long time I have  
not had company. Such circumstances demand me  
to dust off my old china and bring out the teas  
I brewed when it was spring. I am not,  
however, saying it is winter. I do not want to sing my  
complaints to you, I cannot lament here; I do not  
know if we have such intimacy.

But  
you're listening,  
aren't you? You're  
here with me now, and no  
logical truth can turn this into  
a fallacy or such. I have to be  
truthful, say I do not know  
you. But how could I  
possibly lie? You  
stand here with  
me.

But  
you're listening, aren't  
you? You're here with me  
now, and no logical truth can  
turn this into a fallacy or such.  
I have to be truthful, say I do not  
know you. But how could I possibly  
lie? You stand here with me.

You turned me into a romantic, or to  
maintain the formality of the current  
moment, I'll say in your relation, I have become  
a romantic. Therefore, dealing with the worlds of  
binary isn't easy for the likes of me. But you've also  
made me honest, and in that honesty I've let myself be  
suspicious of all that was us, and I saw the possibility of  
realness in my calculated living.

Yes, I am  
being subjective and  
implying certain skewed views, but can't I? Won't  
you let me? With trembling hands and a  
tenderness in my soul, I say you will. I say you will  
let me gently lift my feet off this beloved ground,  
and take part in the risky actions of poetics.

Mohabbat, I hope you will respond.  
Look how the times have changed! I  
used to be a king with demands as  
big as the mountains, in my  
ivory palace. Here  
you have me,

dusty  
shoulders,  
tired eyes,  
praying in your  
shrine, with a low,  
unwavering whisper  
suggesting you may not  
live still, you may have  
flown away into unfamiliar  
faraway lands.

Despite your cold  
unbiasedness, I implore you  
to understand that my  
readers cannot be left  
without a sweet aftertaste in  
their mouths. Please? For old  
times' sake. For the times  
which are swiftly slipping  
off our human skin and  
fleshed fingers, let  
me hold  
something  
of you.

You may  
leave now, with  
your manners,  
with your silent dew  
and dawn sounds, winds  
and seasons. My moons  
shall miss you, my eyes shall  
long for you, my self shall  
understand you.

# THE FIRST CONVERSATIONS

Written and illustrated by Rebecca Elis Felszeghy



Can you see my hands shaking, my heartbeat  
racing  
while I speak to you?  
Am I speaking out loud? Can you hear me?  
or am I talking to myself again?

Am I saying something meaningful?  
or are they just blank words covering up,  
so I don't have to let you in  
To see me?...

Such little things have an impact on making  
assumptions.  
Hidden gems in that soul of yours.  
Yet  
no one is focusing on that.

Somehow it's always about fitting into someone's  
liking.

Still,  
No one barely even looks inside.

Are they afraid of what they might find?  
Or is it just the laziness of a naive mind?

At the end of the day.  
You don't know me,  
And I don't know you,

So my question is...

Do you really want to know?

For now, I'll show you,  
But not so much...

So you don't damage  
What I've been repairing.



# MY VERY OWN POOL

Written by Rowan Davies. Illustrated by Mia Sinzinger

Lying on the road to halt factory farm animals from going to the slaughterhouse was the image of my childhood fantasies. And for some reason, I only ever identified with being vegan.

As soon as I had my first instagram page, I would incessantly post, demanding people join my insular community, instead of being out in nature like other kids. Anything I read became my reality as I fell into the stream of misinformation, drowning in the countless lies spat at me and so many others. With too much to handle, I became angry with everyone and found myself posting roadkill on social media while chained to my phone, replacing the outside world with cellular walls and boundaries.

## What I read became my reality

I made myself a little pool on the side of the river of life and dwelled. I was stagnant, I did not accept change. I was separate from the flow of life.

External pressures loomed. Uncertain that humans would still exist in 10 years, I turned my indescribable passion for cooking into a fear based lust, a race against the clock. I labelled it 'food truck', indulged in business plans and pitches and the idea that I was going to save the world. I was blinded by ambition entirely.

For a year I denied life itself and convinced myself I would be unhappy until the food truck manifested, and naturally, I let fear consume every living fibre of my being. I used to make myself feel pain. It was like I was to blame for all the terrible things humans do to this planet. I would force myself into a bit of a depression.

This ended slowly as I came to Brockwood and learnt how

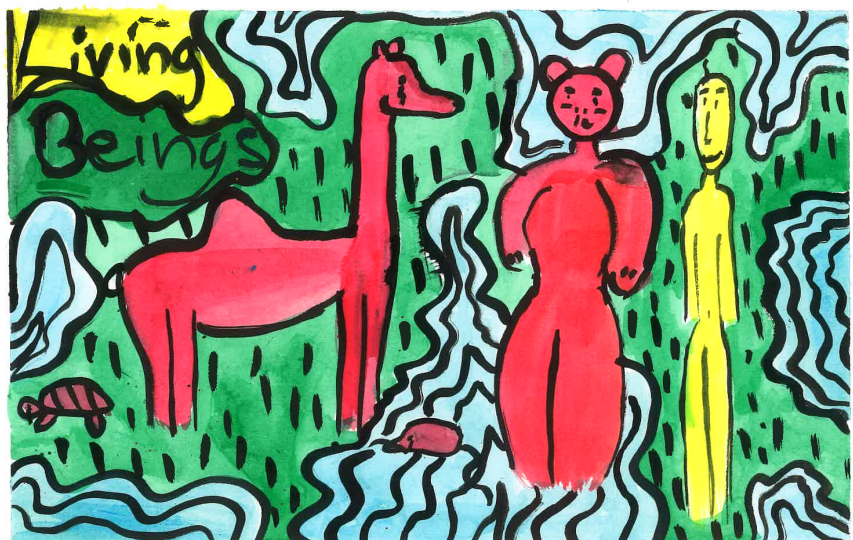
to apply critical thinking, something which I am still learning to this day. I started to gain some distance and looked at it from another angle. In other words, I saw that there was more to life than identifying with ideas, a truth we sometimes forget.

## I saw that there was more to life than identifying with ideas

As my stream of thought shifted to the future, I considered other possibilities and how I saw the world began to change.

In my second year at Brockwood, I put the food truck on ice and decided to rejoin the river of life. Free from the grasp of fear, I noticed, among many things, that I was feeling less affected by environmental destruction. I realised that even if, somehow, everyone turned vegan and the climate issue was resolved, my mind would still find another problem to fixate on. I found that the world was not the problem, but rather my lens.

I am still vegan and I still aspire to create the food truck but I have grown tired of trying to feed the fire within. I realised that the time to slow down is always now, to really feel life.



# DEAR PAST

Written and illustrated by Ric Heitmeier

Dear past,

So I won't catch up in your net,  
I will try to untangle the knot  
and this time  
we will catch up in words

The shadow you throw  
I see when the sun sets low  
and my own grows long

I've come to ask why you follow me so  
why you're stuck to my feet wherever I go

To or fro  
your shadow is blinding  
And yet all i know

In a store window when I  
pass or in a stilled lake by  
the grass

My eyes see through you,  
yourself

You are my filter, my  
perception,

my reflection.  
The clearest,  
cloudiest, only  
Truth

I am told to let you  
go like Peter did

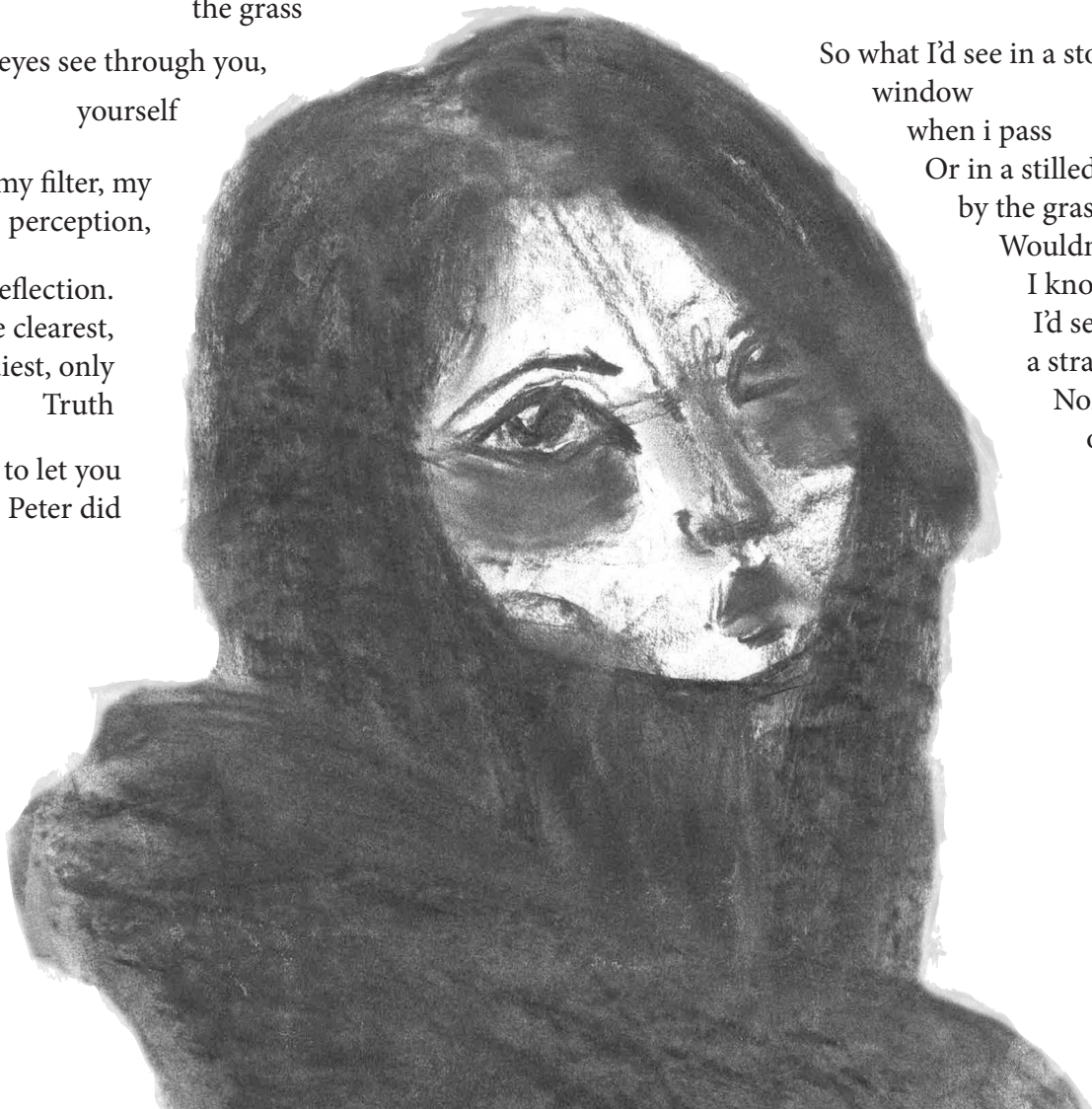
And fly free.  
But I am no Wendy  
And this no fairytale  
For I'm afraid  
I'm too frail

You're too much me  
And I you  
You'd be lost  
And I see-through

You've made me  
You shaped me  
You cradled me  
You never failed me

You keep me in  
comfortable habit  
You are the only constant  
My oldest and wisest friend

So what I'd see in a store  
window  
when i pass  
Or in a stilled lake  
by the grass  
Wouldn't be what  
I know  
I'd see only  
a stranger  
None of my  
own







# NIGHT AFTER NIGHT

By Anonymous. Illustrated by Amy Ivana Cervantes Cifuentes

“It’s okay, boys will be boys.” “Cross your legs.”  
“Don’t dress like a boy.” “Boys hit, it’s okay.”  
“Cover up.” “Eat less, boys don’t like fat girls.”  
“Eat more, boys like something to hold at night.”

Sex objects. Is that what we are?

These phrases, angry whispers, discreet death stares from your mother, disgusted looks from your aunties and interested looks from your uncles. This is what most girls have grown up with. A constant recurring need to please men. To this day, I crave validation from men. I crave to be able to please a man, any man. Our entire lives we have been preparing to be the perfect girl. Look the way he wants, dress the way he wants, be the woman he wants. I’ve got to change the way I laugh, sit, talk, walk, sneeze, be...anything.

## This is what most girls have grown up with

In a society where men’s pleasure stands with so much significance, where do women stand? Do we have a place? No, the truth is we don’t, we never have had one. Today I am going to talk about three generations of women who all have a condition, and how each of them have dealt with it in an ever-changing society.

Vaginismus.

It is the involuntary tightening or contraction of the muscles around the vagina when trying to insert something into it, causing immense pain.

Vaginismus is largely considered to be a physical problem of the vagina, when in truth it is caused by traumatic sexual experiences, believing sex is a shameful act and many other things. It can travel down through generations.

So, three generations, three societies, three stories, three women.

## India, 1950s

A strict Christian, patriarchal society, where ideas of purity are deeply rooted in every woman.

Women are taught that sex is a sinful act and its only purpose is reproduction. However, for men it is an act for pleasure and it is a woman’s duty to provide her husband with this pleasure. Sex is a forbidden word for young girls until they are married and the time comes for her to please her husband’s desires and provide children. Until then they are only told that God uses magic to put the baby in the mother’s stomach, if she has been good to her parents and husband.

Geetha, born and brought up in such an Indian society, knew nothing about sex or masturbation and only believed in sex after marriage. When Geetha had come of age and was married off, she was told that one night her husband would come to her, talk real sweetly, kiss her and touch her, and that it would hurt really badly the first time but no matter what he does she should let him do as he pleases. As this is her duty as a woman, she has to please his sexual desires, so that God would bless her with a child in her belly.

Now, when this day came, she knew it would hurt, but it hurt a lot, and the pain never stopped. It hurt her more than it hurt other women. She decided that it had to be like this. Maybe she had committed some sins that had not yet been forgiven by God. So, she shut her eyes tight and she let the tears flow down the curve of her cheeks as he pressed down on her, night after night. Although that wasn’t the problem, she didn’t commit any sins, no god was trying to punish her.

She had vaginismus, there was a reason for this suffering, she didn’t have to go through this torture. Sex being such a taboo in society, Geetha never mentioned the pain that it caused her. She was never diagnosed, she never knew that sex could be pleasurable for women.



Sex was and stayed painful all her life contributing to her idea that sex is only to please the man.

### **India, 1990s**

The times had changed, society had changed. Cameras were big, phones were new and the world was moving forward. Kapur, Geetha's daughter, was about to get married. Kapur is extremely passionate and hard-working. She had dreams and ideas that she wanted to bring to life. Kapur, like her mother,



knew nothing about sex. When Kapur was married, her husband was the one to tell her everything she needed to know about it.

Kapur's sexual life, like her mother's, caused her a lot of pain, but Kapur, unlike her mother, knew that sex shouldn't be this painful and that it is something enjoyable for women as well as men. After Kapur's

first child, even her husband started to realise that something was wrong, the pain should have subsided. She was finally allowed to visit gynaecologists. She talked to several doctors for several years, all of whom told her it was due to the stress or her weight. Kapur started losing weight and tried to take on less stress from work. Nothing seemed to be working out; right before her second child Kapur decided to go to one of the most well-known gynaecologists in India. Kapur was the first woman in her family to be diagnosed with vaginismus, only to be prescribed numbing cream, giving her no pain or pleasure. It helped, but it was overlooking her chance of feeling any sort of pleasure, ever.

### **She was the first woman in her family to be diagnosed with vaginismus**

Kapur didn't have much desire for sex and had never been exposed to the different types of sex. So, now she had no pain, no pleasure, no desire, no passion. She was just numb.

### **India, 2000s**

In the 2000s, there was a lot more exposure and awareness around sex. Porn, literature, movies, - there was so much erotica out there. Porn may still be male-oriented, but female pleasure is now represented. Society now can now acknowledge that sex should be pleasurable for women as well. Kapur's daughter, Zoha, at around 16 decides that she wants to have sex. Zoha, unlike all the women in her family, was having premarital sex with her boyfriend. She realised that something was wrong, sex was too painful for her - maybe because she was having sex for her own pleasure. A few years later, when Zoha was in college, she was able to go to a gynaecologist with her boyfriend. She was diagnosed with vaginismus and was given the option for treatment to help her have penetrative sex. The options were physical therapy using dilators, sex therapy, or, if matters were too serious, surgery. But it was a long process consisting of a lot of pain. Zoha and her boyfriend, aware of the different types of sex and satisfied with their sexual life, didn't opt for treatment.

This is not just another story, it's the truth. A truth that is still prevalent in many misinformed households.

# STAFF MESSAGE

To Brockwood Park School Alumni

Wherever you are in the world as you read this, we hope that life continues to hold for you the promise, intensity and delight that your years at Brockwood offered. As you are aware, for some years now, society at large and Brockwood in particular, have faced extraordinary challenges and undergone a great deal of change. Covid involved major disruption for us, requiring the closure of the school, and taking it online, twice; Brexit has affected our recruitment of staff significantly; inflation and the rising cost of food and utilities has been a blow; and increasingly punitive over-regulation of schools, and society in general, is requiring an additional investment of our resources. All this has meant that various programmes planned at Brockwood have been postponed and critical work across Brockwood (such as required buildings and grounds maintenance) were delayed.

For the above reasons, we have come to the decision that we are not in a position to host an alumni reunion in 2024: the date that you may be expecting it to happen based on a five-year cycle. We will make a decision in the academic year 2026-27 about a possible reunion at some future date, and announce it soon after. However, Brockwood can welcome you throughout the year as it now runs a variety of programmes: the Young Adults Retreats; a summer Krishnamurti gathering; a volunteer programme; a wide range of theme weekends; plus individual retreats at the Krishnamurti Centre throughout the year.

Brockwood has met all the challenges outlined above and is in good health and spirits despite them. The profile of the school has risen; we are receiving the largest ever number of student applications; we continue to enjoy widespread support and appreciation from parents, students and well-wishers; and importantly, Krishnamurti's teachings and intentions remain at the heart of the school and key to our approach. We hope that you will keep in touch and will make Brockwood a destination for a visit sometime in the coming years if you can.

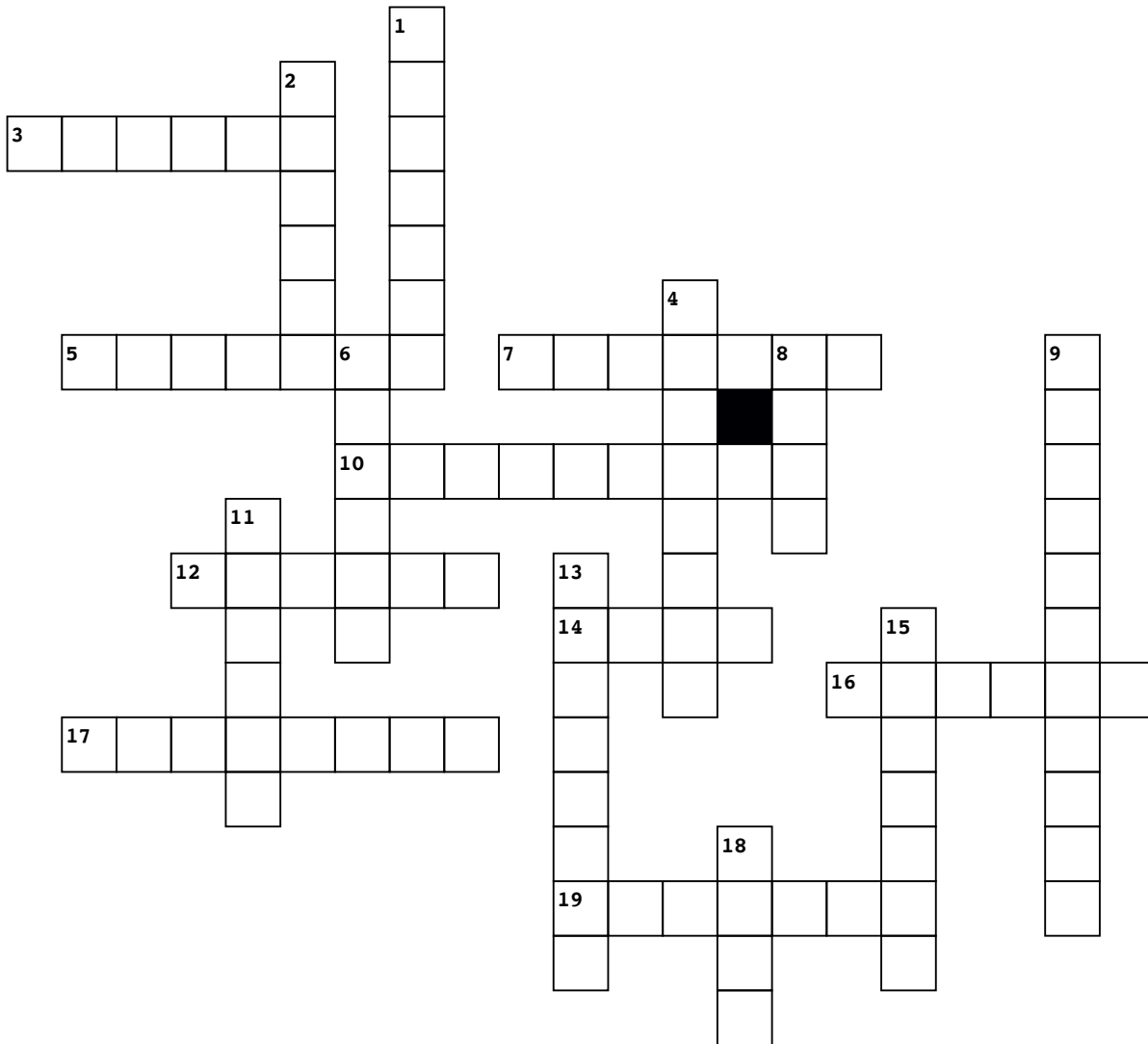
Best wishes

**The Staff of Brockwood Park School**





# CROSSWORD



## Down

1. Cover
2. Romeo and Juliet's city
4. Purple gemstone
6. Winner of Eurovision 2023
8. Common carbohydrate
9. Scottish First Minister
11. Illegally taken
13. Artist featured on Taylor Swift's 'Karma'
15. Streaming service
18. Classical composer

## Across

3. 2023 Greta Gerwig Film
5. Audible media form
7. Large battleship - German ruler
10. Act Gemini (anagram)
12. Ancient Greek goddess of wisdom
14. Money
16. Rarely
17. Spanish/French mountain range
19. Doctor - Grammy nominee

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