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Issue 06

1 i keness

m a g a z i n e



*enlightenment and
realizations*

Low Entropy is headquartered in Kwikwetlem First Nation Territory of the Coast Salish people, and in the shared territory of the sə́lilwətaʔt̓ təməxʷ, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Stz'uminus, Qayqayt and S'ólh Téméxw nations.

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About Low Entropy: Founded in 2015, the Low Entropy Foundation is home to free programs and events that focus on personal and community growth through empowerment, authenticity and meaningful interpersonal connections.

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Foreword

The lightbulbs over our heads are not like the other ones, mundane and taken-for-granted, that bathe our spaces of modern comfort in banal glow. When the former snap to life, we acknowledge that illumination as miraculous: the end product of an invisible barrier finally giving way to some unspecified force of reason (or maybe emotion? Who knows).

In truth, they should both be appreciated, but one can learn, with some effort, about power grids and electrical engineering. It would seem to be a far more cryptic process, this . . . something . . . of having an idea. Of course, there is neuroscience, but can it be harnessed to create epiphanies at the flick of a switch or the pull of a little chain? One can dream. Or, perhaps, one can only dream.

It is a sobering notion, the horrible thought of just how many realizations we haven't had, or came too late. How many lives could have been saved, how much suffering never had to be.

This issue — every issue, actually, but this one in particular — of *Likeness* seeks to celebrate those lightbulb moments that have happened, in gratitude that we would likely have experienced even more difficulty without them. It doesn't really matter when they happened, just that they have, and always will.

Thank you for being here.



Editor, Low Entropy

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Frequên- cia/Fre- quency

Caroline Araujo Pin-
heiro da Costa

A poesia é entidade,
é espírito.

Ela habita o horizonte, as ondas, as sementes e os grafites.
Ela chega com força pelos cabelos,
Atravessa minha coluna
e se espalha entre as palavras que escrevem os meus dedos

Ela tem uma poder engraçado
que me desperta quando estou quase dormindo
tomando banho, ou dirigindo,
só para ter que ficar repetindo
as mesmas frases para mim mesma
e acabar esquecendo antes de transcrevê-las no caderno.

Eu acredito que ela gosta de mim.
Eu sinto ela por perto quando eu fecho os olhos,
e no calor que exala do corpo do meu parceiro à noite.
Eu vejo ela na chama da vela que eu rezo,
E no jeito que os patos sobrevoaram o lago de domingo.

Talvez ela seja meu Orixá de cabeça
ou meu guia de jornada.
Talvez ela esteja comigo desde antes dessa encarnação
e botou no meu peito sua marca de nascença.

CAROLINE ARAUJO
PINHEIRO DA COSTA

My name is Caroline Araujo Pinheiro da Costa.
I'm from Abya Yala, the Indigenous name for
what is currently known as Brazil. I'm a journal-
ist, doula, yogi and plant spirit facilitator.

Poetry is entity,
it's spirit.

It inhabits the horizon, waves, seeds and graffiti.
She comes hard through hair,
cross my spine
and spreads among the words that my fingers write.

She has a funny power
that wakes me up when I'm almost asleep,
bathing, or driving,
just to have to keep repeating
the same phrases to myself
and end up forgetting before transcribing them in the notebook.

I believe she likes me.
I feel her close when I close my eyes,
And in the heat that exudes from my partner's body at night.
I see her in the candle flame I pray
and in the way the ducks flew over the sunday lake.

Maybe she is the Orisha of my head
or my journey guide.
Maybe she's been with me since before this incarnation
and put on my chest its birthmark.

NEEMA EJERCITO
Neema Ejercito is a professional writer, director and creative writing mentor. Her 3D edutainment series for beginning readers, *Alpha-Besties*, is showing in YouTube Japan and Prairie Kids. When she's not writing or mentoring, she manages her household with her very supportive husband and three children.

Why I Haven’t Written

Neema Ejercito

I’ve swept the floor and there’s still dust folded the laundry and there are still missing socks bathed the pitbull and he still stinks driven the kids to school and the coffee’s gone cold scrubbed the toilet and the stain won’t come off read the 83rd page of Proust and the Squid for the 17th time and still don’t get it watered the plants and they’re still wilted done the grocery and forgot the kangkong again checked my emails and 2,337 are still marked unread updated my resume but still have no objective

the page is still blank

I’ve
orbited the moon
performed with the Queen B
visited Syria with Angelina
co-directed with Wes
written for Miyazaki
And the draft hasn’t moved.
But inside my head are all the ideas,
the justifications,
my doubts, my fears, my noises.
People thinking I’m busy
when I’m just being lazy.
Then it’s time to type my first word:
Why

UGOCHI GUCHY KALU
My name is Ugochi Guchy Kalu, I have lived in a bubble and also experienced real life hurt. I pulled through the toughest times through acceptance and a positive outlook. Stay positive, pals!

TIME

Ugochi Guchy Kalu

“Hey! Gugu — wait up!” a strangely familiar voice yelled from the parking yard.

Only one person ever called me “Gugu.” I hadn’t heard that name in 16 years, and yet I recognized that voice. I made a sharp turn and there was Kenny in the flesh, smiling, running and staggering towards me. It was almost the perfect teary moment as he embraced me, wrapping me up in his broad chest. If I wasn’t at risk of suffocating to death, I would have rested my head on that firm chest for a little longer. Kenny, my childhood love, was standing right in front of me, and I could not find the right reaction.

I would not have recognized him if he had not called me by the special name he had coined for me. Kenny, playing in the rain, and my dad’s special honey-grilled chicken were my favorite childhood memories. Yes! In that exact order. I was 12 years old when I saw him the last time, and now all those memories came rushing back like a fresh wind.

He was the boy in my secret diary. I remembered every word I wrote, and how I felt writing them.

I remember my first time alone with my grandmother in the village. It was the beginning of the rainy season and my parents had sent me off to spend time with her. I was excited for many reasons. My grandmother’s fish pepper soup is the best in the entire world, and Kenny . . . oh Kenny . . .

the boy who lived next door!

I was only nine when Kenny and his mum walked into the hall on Christmas Day to say hi to my grandmother. Our eyes locked. He had the brightest smile, and his eyes were bold and kind. I could look at him all day. Then his mother told me Kenny would be my husband when we grew up, and I couldn’t help but agree. Kenny and I were inseparable throughout the entire Christmas holiday.

When the holiday ended, we bid each other goodbye and promised to keep in touch as my parents picked me up and we headed back to the city. We exchanged photos and wrote each other letters. Time passed, and I was excited to spend my 12th birthday in the village again after being away for three years.

Photo
by Xavi
Cabrera

Stepping down from the car on arrival, my eyes went straight towards the window of Kenny's house. I stood a while, searching for that smile. Grammy noticed my hesitation and asked if I was looking for my friend Kenny. Shoot! I had been caught red-handed. Grammy assured me Kenny would come say hi when he accompanied his mother to the farm. The day went by and soon it was nightfall, we ate by the fireplace and retired to bed.



I was awoken by the drops of rainfall, the sudden chills of the breeze and the moving sounds of trees clattering. The sky became dark, thunder followed lightning and slammed against the wooden windows, and it was certain that the rain would take over the entire day. I rushed out to watch the raindrops from the door. At first I hesitated, as my parents never let me out when it rained, for fear that I might catch a cold and get sick. Grammy tapped my shoulder and asked if I wished to go play in the rain for a while. My eyes shone bright, my face beamed with joy as I hurried off before she changed her mind.

My childhood dream was stirring as the rain trickled my face.

I could finally feel this amazing drizzle and roll around and enjoy the gift nature splashes every now and then. I had run off before my grammy even finished her last sentence.

"Be careful!" she yelled, "The floors are slippery, and come back in 10 minutes!"

"Yes grammy, you got it!"

Off I ran, sliding down the veranda and into the open yard. I lost balance and crashed onto the slippery, muddy floor. I looked up. There was Kenny, holding out his hands to help me up, his bright smile and charming eyes piercing through my soul. Oh dear, am I dying today?

Two of my dreams were happening at the same time as I gave him a broad smile. He smiled back, completely warming my heart as we hurried off to the yard. The running water had pooled at the slope down the culvert and we splashed each other across our faces, our laughter reverberating through the neighborhood. We rolled around and sang happily till my grammy called out for me. It was the perfect evening and my happiest day.

"See you around, Kenny," I said.

He held out my slippers for me, and then planted the warmest kiss on my cheek before he ran off towards his house. My heart was beating so fast I thought it would fall out of my chest. Dear God, I have fallen in love!

The rest of the days were quite eventful. We played together, sang in the rain and I caught cold a few times, but I was better the next morning after drinking the herbs grammy brewed. I didn't mind getting sick if it meant spending all my time outdoors, playing in the rain with Kenny by my side. Time goes fast when you are having fun. Yes, the damn time. Two weeks later, my parents arrived to take me back to the city, and my vacation was over.

I wrote a very sweet and sad farewell letter to Kenny. He wrote back and stuffed it into a tiny pink teddy bear he had bought me as a goodbye gift. My departure was teary as our car disappeared into the dusty lane. Before we drove off, I heard Kenny's mother telling my grandmother that we were soulmates and would end up with each other. My grandmother laughed.

"Oh they are just kids, they will get over it. Give them some time."

No, I do not agree with you grammy, I don't think I will get over him. Most importantly, this is my favorite person, I had the most magical time and I will hold on to this memory all my life till I marry Kenny in a few years, I retorted in my mind.

Years later, in the parking yard, Kenny and I talked and smiled for quite awhile after he had released me from his embrace. Funny how I had just asked my mum about him while clearing out the old storage room in the basement of my grandmother's house.

"Where is Kenny, mum?" I asked.

"Oh, he is the local government ward councilor, he joined politics and has a promising future in the government," she responded.
"Hmmm," I sighed while picking up the old teddy bear, which was no longer pink.

I realized this was the first time I had thought about him in 16 years. How astonishing that we were standing face to face just a few days later. Perhaps his mother was right, we must have truly been soulmates.

A few minutes into our reunion, the sky frowned, the light dimmed and rain showers poured freely. For a moment,

I thought this was the final confirmation of our love,

just before I made a quick run to a shade while Kenny stood in the rain, laughing and mocking my quick reaction. I made it to the shade and turned around to look at him, and couldn't believe how much he had changed. He was almost unrecognizable. His eyes were now bloodshot and serious, a little crinkle line ran across his face and his smile was no more than ordinary. He was a fine gentleman no doubt, but the spark I wrote about in my journal had disappeared. Although he complimented my beauty and insisted my face was the same, I could only see a stranger as I gazed intently at his.

Kenny ran up to me laughing. He reminded me how much I loved playing in the rain and wondered what changed. I simply had no remaining affection for it whatsoever, I hated the rain, I hated getting drenched and I hated the slipperiness that came with it. I felt like I had always hated rainfall, it was hard to recall when

this displeasure began. As we sat down talking and waiting out the rain, I could not believe I once thought he was my prince in a shiny amour. Phew! Our ideologies were different, there was no intersection of our parallel plans and goals, and he was just like the next guy on the street corner. How was it possible that I no longer liked my favorite person, and that my favorite memory had become a nightmare?

Perhaps leaving the country to go study abroad did change me after all. I was lost in thoughts for a minute, trying to make sense of it all. No matter how much I tried, it still didn't add up. Kenny was in no way the man of my dreams, He was not even a close second. Ouch!

The realization that I was once happy about the things I now despised hit me very hard. Was I just blind or had poor taste in things and people? As much as I enjoyed reliving those memories, I am most certain I would not vote for a repeat. While we bid each other goodbye,

I concluded that the lesson from our little reunion was proof that time is more powerful than love.

“Walking a lonely road, dreams in her eyes”



Photo by Jack Blucker

DHVANI PAREKH Dhvani is pursuing a dual career path in data and education. She loves to get things organized, gets excited about the little things and believes in the power of a good education. In her free time, Dhvani enjoys reading, sipping hot chai and holding deep conversations about life and its meaning.

Uprooted

Dhvani Parekh

Walking a lonely road, dreams in her eyes
Unable to comprehend the complexities of life
What she searched for was impossible to find
Anywhere else but within her own mind

Freedom! That is what I want
The decision to be independent she would flaunt
But she soon forgot who she was all this while
In the obsession to get away from the present so riled

It is time to move on, she would think
And decided to cut off her ties, without a blink
Uprooting is something we all go through
Carving our own place, digging our roots anew

“This is a big deal,” friends would say
“So what! Many people would do it anyway”
Why should I be any different, she thought defiantly
Ignoring the pleas of her loved ones silently

In all the ignorance she completely forgot
Of the abundance of love she had got
And how much she loved having her people around
Now she missed them terribly but cried without a sound

But life had some lessons for her in store
Changing her in so many ways at her core
She was only a little girl, and little did she know
Now was the time, for her to create her own show

She had to step into a journey of unlearning
To let go of comfort and welcome the unnerving
To be willing to dare the fires of the unknown
To defy the paths of childhood that she was shown

She also realized that she was not limited
Magic lay within her, unexplored and muted
She could not be defined, put in a box or labeled
She was an uncontained ball of energy, destined to be fabled

Wish her luck on this journey if you see her
Being brave does not come naturally to her
An epiphany she would like to leave you with, in the end
Is that “Only leaves that are uprooted get to fly with the wind.”

LYNLEE TABIA My family and I migrated to Canada in 2009. I studied nursing and have been enjoying my career since then. I have an inclination to write and would like to write short stories and health articles that may inspire and motivate others.

my friend.

Lynlee Tabia

Illustration
by Lynlee
Tabia

It was in the midst of winter 2010 when I heard my phone beep, someone was sending me a friend request. The name was familiar, I knew this person a long time ago and, in fact, she was one of my best friends. My mind started to recall the events that took place 20 years ago or maybe more . . . oh yeah . . . she was my neighbour, a schoolmate in high school and college days that I hadn't seen in two decades. Before I accepted the request, her face was very clear and rushed into my mind, a pretty face with beautiful dimples set deep in each cheek, teeth so clean and well-taken-care-of.

We knew common people in our time from high school to college. She was unique, a fashion icon, a friend anyone would wish to be. She was popular on our campus. One day, when we walked together after class, she had fans waving at her or greeting her from a distance. I was just so proud of my friend.

After graduation, we parted ways. I followed my path, I went overseas practising my field. I did not know where she landed. We both were looking for a place that would bring us to what they called "life after college." Sadly, there was no communication between us. There was much less internet communication and no Facebook in the early 90s. Sometime during those long years, my family mentioned to me that my friend had married a guy, but not her longest boyfriend in college. Before I forget, my friend had a serious relationship way back. Those two love birds could be seen on campus holding their hands, embracing each other, showing their emotions in public. I was astounded when I found out they did not get married.



My heart was pounding so fast as I got closer to our meeting place. Then . . . there she was . . . beautiful as ever. I saw the smile with the dimples once again. My heart leapt with excitement. We hugged, we laughed, we cried. I just couldn't believe I was seeing my friend again after two decades. My heart bounced with enthusiasm as we started talking like two old friends whose memories started to pour and unfasten, gig-



Photo by
Franky van
Bever

gling and chuckling while our stories unfolded on that sunny afternoon.

That was the beginning of the second chapter of my experience with my friend. We went for coffee together, attended parties, and barbecued by the lake. I introduced her to my colleagues, which made me more proud. She had a character that could easily fit into all situations.

One day, when we were having coffee together, I could feel she had something to tell me.

I was confident it was something exciting because I could see it in her sparkling eyes.

There were two pieces of good news. The first one was that her daughter from her first marriage would be coming to Canada soon. Second, she was in love. I was just so happy for her. Life was good.

COVID hit in March 2020. The world was shaken and sad and devastated. Gatherings and parties were forbidden. I seldom saw my friend. We messaged each other on social media. I knew her life was perfect, in view of the fact that she had her daughter and had met the love of her life.

In the summer of 2020, I received a call from her daughter, telling me that her mom had passed away. Wh . . . what??? Who passed away? I could not fathom the news. Is this true? My friend had passed away from end-stage ovarian cancer.

I was upset, angry, devastated from not being told that she was in and out of the hospital. My friend did not want to be bothersome to anyone . . . including me?

I attended the funeral. I saw her in the coffin. My heart was broken and heavy and hurt. I just couldn't believe that she would be cremated the day after the viewing.

Looking back on one afternoon coffee session, we had talked about how we would want to be buried when we died. She told me, "I want to be cremated. I don't want to bother any of my loved ones."

Her wish was granted.

It's been two years since my best friend passed away. But her memories will linger forever.

l i k e n e s s



Photo by Robert Serban

MARTIN EDWINI-BONSU I'm Martin, a 2nd-year chemical and biological engineering student studying in British Columbia. Although I'm a STEM major, I enjoy the artistic side of life. I enjoy creative writing, reading dystopian books and cross-country running. The Low Entropy Foundation is a great outlet for me to express my thoughts in fluid and creative forms.

An Intricate Mind Map of Realizations

Martin Edwini-Bonsu

I realized that I am no longer fascinated by the lives of the rich and powerful but believe that respect is more deserving of the undervalued, overworked, and underprivileged.

I realized that my idols are not the ultra-rich and the power-hungry people of the world but the artists, activists, scientists, and pacifists who believed in humanity.

I realized that prestige is just an image. Your Ivy League degree, Audi car, or luxury mansion is not a signifier of your self-worth and does not put you above others, it's a facade meant to mask the pressure behind greedy desires.

I realized that human beings have a long path of learning along with unlearning preconceptions that are rooted in hypocrisy, insecurity, and superiority.

I realized that you don't have to catch up to the rest of them. They might have an advantage you were never granted in life.

I realized that you shouldn't obsess over and envy people's success. My mind was fogged with clouds engraved with phrases on them. Phrases of insecurities, doubts, and self-hatred.

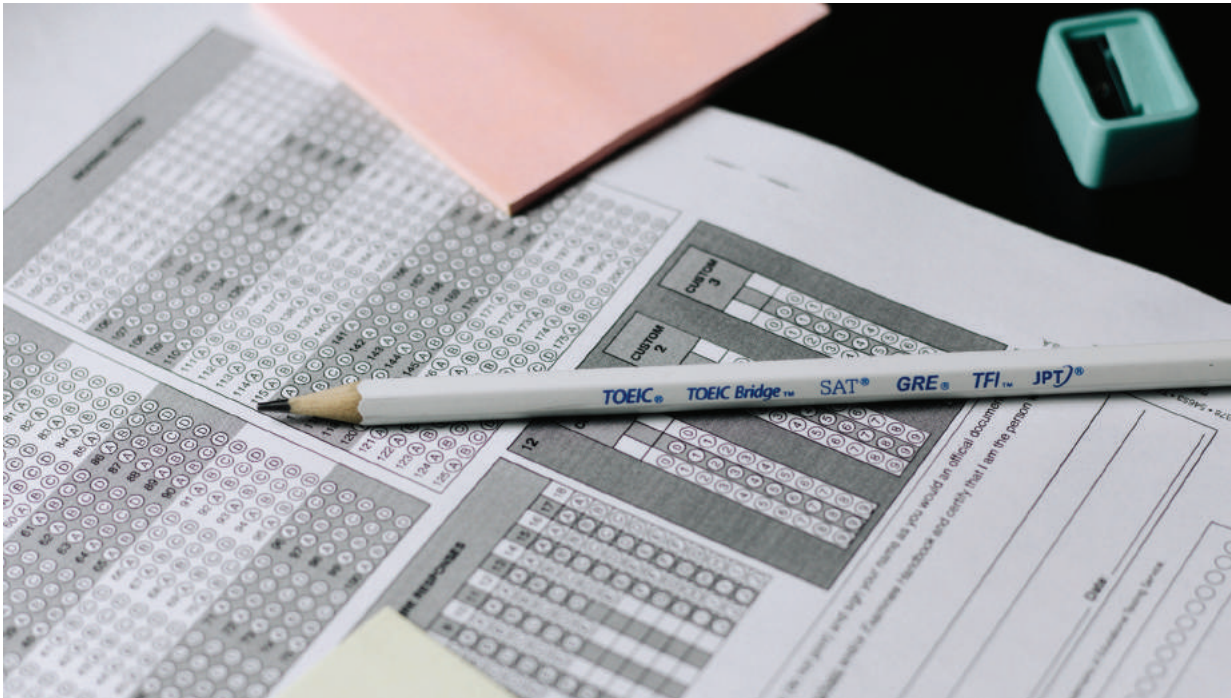
I realized that you don't have to make a serious life decision based on the impressions of others. They will never know, understand, or see the tears, hardships, aggravation, and burden behind your regrets.

I realized that I don't have to surround myself with people who pride themselves on their achievements but then ostracize those who don't have the same achievements or the same opportunities.

I realized that being surrounded by successful people can have its benefits but can feel like a toxic competition where you're constantly being compared to.

I realized that comparing yourself is a waste of energy. Why would you possibly want to drain your mental health by emulating someone else?

Photo by
Nguyen
Dang Ho-
ang Nhu



I realized that if someone is leading you on about something too good to be true, it probably is.

I realized that I've cried enough about my failures that I get this numbing and contractive feeling that makes me feel small. Small as in an ant crawling into a hole.

I realized that some days, I truly love myself but get wrapped up in the toxicity of workaholism and get misted with a cloud of self-hatred and guilt about not being productive enough.

I realized that nobody is any less ambitious because they don't want to take a risk on financing a business, invest in a risky venture, or do anything solely for the impression of others or material gain.

Success is a relative measure that humans can be attached to socially, economically, and environmentally.

I realized that planning is one of the best things that you can do for yourself. A mindset that becomes more thoughtful, contemplative, and reflective of the future can do wonders for your growth and motivation.

I realized that intelligence is relative and not fixed. No IQ test, no grade, or any human-created assessment will ever accurately capture the essence of human intellectualism, regardless of what lengths the human race will go to with their obsession with human intelligence. For the sake of my mental health, I completely dissociate any scores and meaningless exam grades from my intelligence, forever and always.

I realized that you don't have to fall into the trap of two extremes. There are always more alternatives than people think there are.

I realized that you don't have to dominate or feel like a boss when you are more comfortable being behind the scenes.

I realized that you do not need to love someone because they provide you with material gifts and rewards. If their personality does not match their supposed generosity, I cannot feel any affinity towards them.

What else can I realize?

“We need bad karma
to balance out the
good.”

The Pursuit of Spiritual Bliss

Tajpreet Grewal

How does one achieve enlightenment? Let's begin with defining enlightenment, which is a tricky subject because everyone will have their own definition. As defined in the dictionary, enlightenment is simply “the state of understanding something,” whether that be yourself or some higher power. In religion, enlightenment is a form of spiritual bliss that is the highest spiritual state one can achieve. I agree with both definitions, but for myself, I lean towards the latter more because it speaks more to a state beyond consciousness, which I understand is quite a meta idea to comprehend.

This process of achieving a state beyond consciousness, or simply understanding yourself, starts with **becoming truthful with yourself.**

I myself began becoming truthful with myself by having had many realizations and epiphanies while traveling and practicing yoga, but only once did I feel I had achieved “enlightenment.”



Photo by Hans Vivek

This experience, which I perceived as spiritual bliss, came to me during a mediation session where I sat upright, in the dark, on the ground, and with my legs entwined with each other, in complete stillness. Now throw in some breath work and you've got meditation. I eventually became consumed by the rhythmic breathing of the twenty other people

around me. It almost felt like chanting that could up-lift you with each inhalation.

After half an hour of this, I had overcome the excruciating pain in my legs as I began to feel quite lightheaded and my vision was tunneling in on itself. As you can tell, what I am describing was not enlightenment, but rather

me on the brink of fainting

With an overall feeling of relief, coupled with disappointment in myself, I slowly unwrapped my legs from my meditative pose. The thing about meditating for long periods of time that is not explained beforehand is that waking your dead asleep legs is far more painful than just staying in the pose, but the alternative was me collapsing and going down in the history books as a cautionary tale.

Oddly enough, this experience did not discourage me from meditation. Rather, it motivated me to keep chasing that feeling with the practice of meditation and breathwork. It's actually becoming a healthy obsession, to the point where my friends and family now think I am verging on becoming a devout Buddhist monk or something. I don't really blame them either, because I had always thought doing yoga meant you would have to eventually give up all your worldly possessions and live in a cave for many years. In fact, when you delve deeper into the tantric method of yoga, they actually recommend you to continue your normal life, but encourage you to incorporate their teachings as a way of overcoming its hardships.

So how does all this relate to enlightenment? Simply put, it's not really possible to achieve enlightenment. The best way I can explain this is with the term "karma" (its translated meaning is "action"). We all

know we can have good or bad karma, so you would think the more good karma the better, right?

Not necessarily, because if you think back on your life and remember all the most important lessons you learned, they probably mostly stemmed from bad experiences that you had to overcome. Those lessons are due to "bad karma." So essentially, we need bad karma to balance out the good. You could even say you need the bad to not only obtain the good, but to appreciate the good as well when it comes.

In Hindu philosophy, it is stated that to achieve "moksha" (roughly translated as "enlightenment") we need to have an equal amount of good and bad karma, which if you think about it, is not possible if you lived your entire life being cruel and then decide to be a saint just for the last few years. This is why Hindus and many other religions believe in reincarnation. With reincarnation, you are able to have a second chance at balancing out your karma.

This is why it is said that moksha is impossible to achieve, at least in this lifetime.

TAJPREET GREWAL Taj is an aspiring writer who has recently become obsessed with travel and the practice of yoga. He has worked in the medical field for the past several years, but is now hoping to bring those experiences and lessons into a new industry related to mindfulness and psychology.

CASSANDRA DI LALLA Cassandra Di Lalla lives life purposefully. She enjoys reading, writing and mental health initiatives. She's an animal lover for life and an innovative individual always finding new ways to create.

Life's like a roller coaster ride

Cassandra Di Lalla

Living takes an astounding amount of courage
Life sometimes feels like a psychedelic trip
Or maybe a roller coaster ride
You can't control your body's warning signals
Life throws all these emotions and feelings into thin air
And your goal is to reach out and catch all the positive possible
Allowing all the negative to flee
But what life doesn't realize is that those negatives are still out and about
Existing, creating chaos, and causing a catastrophe
So, life is feeding everyone that negative energy
And while some individuals accept it
Others opt for the positive energy they caught while playing life's game
Those who choose to live life with a bad attitude, have accepted life, as it was handed to them
Instead of fighting back and choosing a harmony filled life that is endlessly blooming
Because being a follower is much easier than being a leader
But being a leader is much more fulfilling and enriching
Each and every single individual is capable of making a choice
For some, it is accepting 'what is'
And for others, it is being curious about 'what could be'
It does not take courage or strength to live a cookie-cutter life
And follow life's commands
But what does take heaps of courage is saying 'yes' to life
After having to choose to progress or to remain a static individual with no fight in them
Life is always testing us
And life doesn't want you to fail
But it can sometimes make you feel defeated
Because that's life signalling to us that changes need to take place
Will you accept life as it comes and allow for the bombs of negativity to be dropped on you?
Or, will you challenge life and accommodate for yourself, your well-being and your worth?
Because life is an everlasting roller coaster ride

“She wakes every morning to the same sky—the black jeweled sky.”



Photo by Nick Brunner

Mooncakes

Sue Turi

“Mooncakes” tells the story of Tila Flynn, chief botanist and head of an experimental program on the moon to grow the first crop of dwarf wheat. The Centre for Lunar Research (C.L.R.) has been operational since 2045 but has had little success with growing plants for food. The story takes place in 2065, during a period of intense solar flare activity affecting the Earth’s weather, causing widespread drought. Tila is suffering from emotional fatigue after four years on the moon. She is eager to return home to Earth and to her daughter Sam. In the meantime, she maintains morale with the hope for the program’s success and her shared love of baking with her daughter.

The sky is a black velvet carpet encrusted with diamonds. But Tila doesn’t notice.

She opens the throttle and skims across the surface of the ancient molten sea, like a pebble on a pond towards a sheer cliff, noting the telltale signs of a spiral formation as she approaches. If the trench is deep enough, it might just work.

She stops her engine at the edge of the cliff and looks down. The crater is small, but seemingly bottomless. An abyss more than a trench. She turns slowly to look at the two devices on the back seat: a large plant incubator filled with soil and an old-generation magnetometer.

I’ll need a free hand, she thinks.

She descends from the buggy, her boots disappearing in a cloud of pewter, and reaches for the incubator, every movement a test of patience in her heavy suit.

She recalls the last time she had been here at Mare Frigoris, but a bit further north. She had watched her sapling grow, then die after one hour, its buds rapidly mummifying from the radiation, its crisp green leaves curling up like a potato chip. When she told Sam

about it, she just stared back at Tila across the cold expanse of space that separated them, the enthusiasm of an 11-year-old fading from Tila’s face. Sam said nothing for a few minutes, then turned to look out the window.

“They say the next few weeks will be cooler, Mom,” Sam said, “maybe we’ll get some rain.”

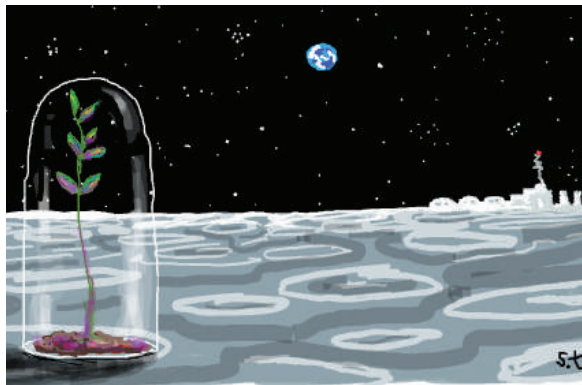
She had become an expert at changing the subject.

“Ah rain,” Tila muttered —
the word weighed heavily on her soul.

She could see the tall sunflower outside Sam’s window. It had lost its aura of petals, its head drooped like a scruffy old man’s. She heard a humming sound, then their connection broke. She had wanted to talk about purple pizza dough with her, but another time perhaps . . .

Maybe twenty meters to the bottom.

Illustration by
Sue Turi



Tila is acutely aware of distorted distances in one-sixth gravity. She bounces gently down the steep banks into the blackness below, gripping the incubator firmly in her gloved hand —

she can't afford to tumble with distracting thoughts.

Groping in the dark, she's grateful for her earlier decision — the incubator alone is heavy. The weight of her suit lightens as she glimpses the familiar pale mauve of a crystalline formation below: regolith and hydrogen bound to rock. It glints, refracting the growing light of approaching lunar dawn like a prism. She reaches the abyss floor and places the incubator between two boulders. It's just out of range of the first rays of light, but she's not sure. She left the magnetometer back in the buggy. She pauses for a moment, thinking about the "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," then glides back up the ravine.

I wonder what Niell Armstrong's favorite bedtime snack was . . . she muses. Brownies and milk, I bet.

Night has fallen when Tila arrives at base camp. The dunes are bathed in faint earth shine. Four years here have drained all pigment from her. She's as pale as the lunar surface. Her limbs are dry twigs, her knees and elbows gnarly growths from years of living in a hermetic bubble. But she still takes the time to braid her hair into two perfect Princess Leia hoops on either side of her head. She irons her off-duty clothes every day and remembers to say "I love you" to her greenhouse plants.

Her mother would often say,

"Self-care is survival,"

as she stood with a mound of steaming cupcakes on a plate. Mothers secretly bake for themselves as much as for others.

Tila thinks of the new zero-gravity convection oven just delivered to the C.L.R.'s kitchen, and hopes it'll work. She then checks the connection home and punches in her code, eager to talk to Sam about her day, but the screen is blank, reflecting back her own faint smile. She makes herself a pancake and drizzles butterscotch over it, then leaves it to plump itself up on its syrup, like a thirsty sponge.

Tila watches shadows when she's not in the lab or the mess hall. There is nothing else to watch on the moon outside her base window. The pink-orange of Earth's sunrise; the surprise visit of an early morning mist are but faded memories. She wakes every morning to the same sky — the black jeweled sky. She misses the colorful palette of her terrestrial life. But Earth occasionally rises, a swirl of azure, to tease her about that. So-close-but-yet-so-far.

The shadows of craters have stretched to their late-afternoon lengths now. Tila has measured every day of the thirteen days on the rocks outside her window. Soon it will be thirteen days of night. If Sam were here now, she would say

"Mom, be careful — the maria look different at this time of day . . . you can get lost." But Tila has to return to where the incubator lies

with its potential treasure.

She cannot wait for solar minimum.

Time sublimates when so much is at stake. Tila cuts off her buggy's engine idling at the rim of the crater. It's been four hours since she left base. She glides like a ghost down the slopes over her boot prints from thirteen days before. Dust hovers, then settles behind her as she descends. Despite her empty hands, her suit feels like lead, pulling her further down.

An orange light blinks on her sleeve as a slither of lunar afternoon fades, then leaves the rim of the abyss entirely, plunging her into darkness. She can just about make out the faint glimmer of the incubator pilot light below.

She follows the pale blue pinpoint as it grows larger, then she leans in, peering through its glass as if into a crystal ball, her breath held back behind chalked lips. She then collapses back against the boulder, looks up at the eternal evening sky, and lets out a long sigh. She listens to the sound of the recycler as it gurgles, siphoning her condensation from the visor.

The light on her sleeve has turned to a flashing red. Tila watches as a diamond drops out of the sky and another streaks across like a magic wand. She's got a recipe in mind already. Earth has risen and peers down on her as an indifferent guest. On the plains of Mare Frigoris, cliffs and dunes blend into silhouettes, as if bidding farewell to Tila. She sends a final message to base:

"Success, guys! Just to recap my location: lat. 56.0°N, long. 0.0°E. Time to dust off the cookbooks and get that convection oven powered up pronto!"

The sealed package has been sitting for a while on the table. It arrived at 10:03 a.m Earth time. Sam waits as long as she can to open it because of the address in the upper left-hand corner: Center for Lunar Research. Mom sent her something. It's not too heavy, but bulky. A letter inside written on C.L.R. stationary slips out. Sam recognizes her mother's hand-writing:

Dear Sam,

Am writing this to you before I go back out to the crater. The satellites are down again. If the experiment works, you'll be the first person to taste cakes made from moon wheat after we've grown a crop or two. Todd has been testing out recipes in the new oven, getting the ingredients right. Pete is working on a milling device (?!)

I thought if I could send you a special memento from the moon, why would it be an unappetizing moon rock when it can be a mauve cake made from moon wheat!?

Missing you always, stay safe

Mom xxx

21/01/2065

Sam opens the bubble-pack envelope and removes the wax-wrapped bundle from inside a ziplock bag. Her heart is weighing in her chest; a lump swells in

her throat. Peeling the corners back of the bundle reveals 10 little mauve-colored sponge cakes, capped with rock sugar that glints in the morning light like alien gems. Hesitant, Sam bites into one, trying to get



Illustration by Sue Turi

beyond the novelty of mauve-coloured cake. The soft sponge melts in her mouth — a hint of almond invading her senses before settling into a flavour of toasted bean. Sam looks at the next one inviting sampling.

"Delicious!"

She's beyond surprised. She then remembers what her mother used to say on cold, rainy days: "Hope is dreaming about cake. Happiness is knowing there's a cake on the way, baking in the oven."

FIN

SUE TURI I'm a writer and illustrator based in Montreal, Canada. I've been writing for the Low Entropy Foundation for almost a year now, though my background is mostly in visual arts. I am a great lover of dystopian fiction and surrealist art, but equally enjoy writing non-fiction: articles, op-eds and occasional marketing content for publications.

Sussur- ro de nuvem/ Cloud- whisper

Caroline Araujo Pin-
heiro da Costa

Eu vi uma nuvem sussurrando para a montanha:
- não se preocupe, eu vou pegar água para você.
Eu vi outra nuvem,
compartilhando ao coração do céu o que
a montanha estava dizendo:
- Estou pronta, posso começar a florescer?

Eu vi algumas montanhas, sozinhas,
falta de interação com as nuvens,
queimando de baixo para cima.
Sem água.
Sem animais.
Sem plantas.
Sem amigos.
Eu vi algumas nuvens,
espalhando cada uma em uma direção
e outras se reunindo para outra
festa de tempestade.
Toda vez que elas se cumprimentavam,
um raio era desenhado
na tela do céu.

Eu fui lá,
no ponto mais alto da montanha,
toquei minhas mãos nas nuvens,
molhei meu cabelo com suas gotas,
enquanto recebia alguns raios de sol.

A terra, o ar, o fogo, a água,
eles estavam falando comigo.
Eu traduzi o que eu entendi para
frequências-cores-códigos.
Agora eles me chamam de arco-íris,
Parece que o que eu carrego é ouro.

I saw a cloud whispering to the mountain:
don't worry, I'll get you some water.
I saw another cloud,
sharing to the heart of sky that the
mountain was saying:
I'm ready, can I start blossoming?

I saw some mountains, alone,
missing interaction with the clouds
burning from bottom to top.
No water.
No animals.
No plants.
No friends.
I saw some clouds,
spreading each in one direction
and other gathering for another
storm party.
Every time that they Hi five,
a ray would be drawn
into the sky canvas.

I went there,
to the highest point of the mountain,
touched my hands into the clouds,
wet my hair with its drops,
while receiving some rays of sun.

The earth, the air, the fire, the water,
they were talking to me.
I've translated what I understood into
frequency-colour-codes.
Now they call me rainbow,
It seems that what I carry is gold.



Illustration by Sifat Tanzila Aziz

