

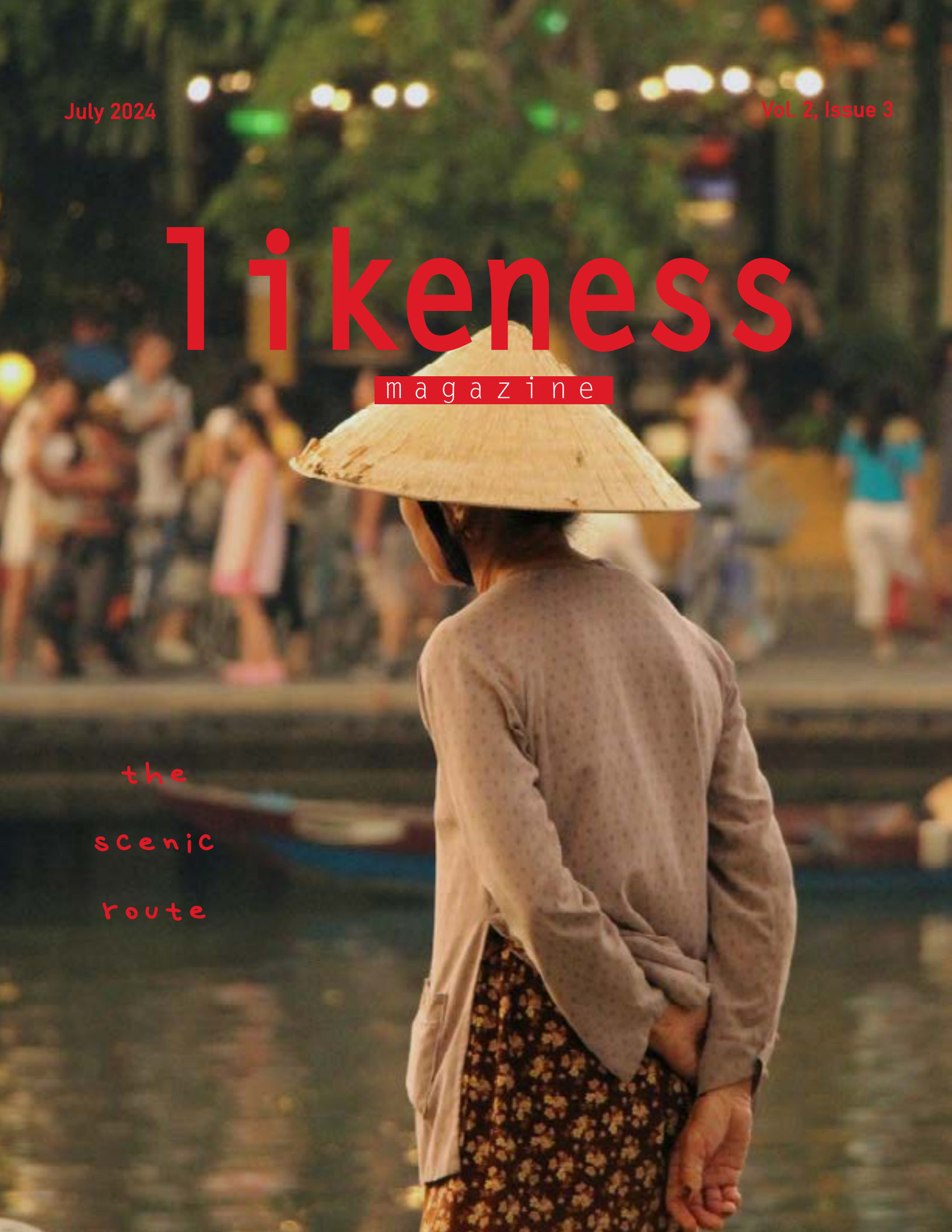
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1 ikeness

m a g a z i n e

the
scenic
route



Low Entropy is headquartered in Kwikwetlem First Nation Territory of the Coast Salish people, and in the shared territory of the sə́lilwətaʔt̓ təməx̣, x̣ṃməθḳʷəỵəm, 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

I remember leaning on the railing of a ship, admiring the glowing city skyline set against the night sky, allowing my gaze to hop from one of the scattered, still-lit office windows to the next, wondering what fragment of what story might be taking place there. They hid secrets, these windows, and the intrigue made me forget my own story for a while—which was nice—though I came away with very little of any certainty.

It occurs to me that gazing can be yearning and consuming at the same time—as you watch the trees whizz past the car window, the light is streaming into your eyes, flooding your brain with more information, more glorious detail than you could possibly appreciate in the moment. They are beautiful but you are not among them, really; they are imprinting themselves in your history and who knows what you might become because of it.

The scenic route is everything, no matter how seemingly mundane, because this exchange is a constant. Whether they are on the verge of a new, brilliant era or lost in the baffling mist of confusion, our writers watch, feel, anticipate the next movement with bated breath because this is it, as far as we know, this could be it.

This could be what matters most. For now, anyway.

This could be what the world wanted us to understand.

Simon Cheung

Editor, Low Entropy

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“[I] stood in stunned silence, surrendering to the majestic creature.”



Photo by Hendrik Schlott

ANNA MALLIKARJUNAN Anna writes from her love for the natural world, lessons from her journey through illness and trauma, and gratitude for the wisdom of the ancients. Her essays have appeared in literary magazines and eco-conscious journals. Originally from South India, she presently lives in Montreal (Tiohtià:ke), on the unceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka.

Encountering the Wild

Anna Mallikarjunan

As an urban dweller in a modern society, my natural world today consists of perfectly manicured gardens, organized mountain trails and pristine waters. I have had amicable encounters with groundhogs and heartwarming friendships with mallards. I listen to the songs of spring birds as they flit along the branches of flowering trees, and I find peace in the tranquility of winter.

But my liaison with nature did not have such romantic beginnings. Much of my childhood was spent on the Deccan Plateau of India. Our home was a modest dwelling within a walled-off campus on the outskirts of a busy city, where I lived with an extended family that included grandparents and aunts. I remember the brilliant night skies and the scorching heat of summer afternoons. And all across the campus, there were stretches of thick, dry forest teeming with wildlife—monkeys, crows, snakes, chameleons, and an incredible variety of insects and worms. These creatures naturally brought danger and disease in some measure, but mostly

reflected the vitality of life.

Nature was not something you had to go outside for—it was the very ground of our existence.

During the months of March and April, rhesus monkeys arrived at the campus in large numbers. These grey-brown, pink-faced macaques feasted on mango and other fruit-bearing trees, creating a racket wherever they went. The males were wild and unfriendly, while the little ones were shy and clung to their fiercely protective mothers. To satisfy their insatiable appetites, they invaded homes with an

utter disdain for propriety.

And on one hot summer's day, when I was around eight years old or so, I had a contretemps with one of them.

The monkey in question had found its way to a bowl of bananas on the top of a closet. I found him anxiously looking around as he gathered the loot into his arms. On seeing me enter the room, he straightened up and assumed an aggressive posture, as if ready to attack if necessary. In those days, like the monkeys, I too had an enormous appetite for fruits. I was enraged to find this thief of the wild helping himself to my beloved bananas. I completely ignored the potential threat of his aggression and demanded that he leave the fruits and premises at once. He stared at my gesticulations, unsure whether to be alarmed, amused or combative. Expressions flickered across his visage as he fought these conflicting emotions.

Finally, he took one banana, looked at me sheepishly, jumped down from the closet and ran out the door. Such comic encounters with the Old World monkeys were rare, and in general, the best strategy to employ was to keep a distance from them and leave them alone. For when provoked, they could chase, scratch or even bite a person.

House lizards crawled across the walls and ceilings of our home, and while they were mostly agile creatures, once in a while, one of them would drop from the ceiling onto my shoulder. I would inevitably let out a scream that resounded through the neighbourhood. Snakes slithered across paths in the woods, but their explorations extended to the roads and into homes. I once found a specimen draped on our balcony's railing, sunning himself happily. My attitude towards most of the creatures of the wild was one of

passive alertness tinged with respectful fear.

But there were a few exceptions to this rule. Dragonflies fascinated me, with their wings glistening in the light of a tropical evening. I had a special affection for non-invasive bugs that were content to live in the vast outdoors, and with these dignified creatures, I could foster an association of admiration and respect.

I delighted in the access I had to nature—a rare privilege in an Indian city. My favourite pastimes included climbing trees and taking long bike rides, during which I explored every inch of the campus. I brought stray pups home and hid them in a shed next to the house. I was too naïve to realize that the shed had no door, so the pups would stray into the house, and soon I would have to face the admonishment of Authority, i.e. grown-ups.

I yearned for adventures I read about in Enid Blyton novels, but curiously, many that came my way were far more real. Over the summer holidays, I often went to a friend's house to play. My friend was a boy of the same age, around eight or nine years old at the time. We sometimes played in a spare room at the far end of their house. The small, square-shaped

room had one window that looked into their backyard, and right next to the window was a large box of toys and games—

our treasure trove.

One day, we set out to get some toys, and I put my hand into the box to fetch them. As I drew them from the box, something leapt out and slithered onto the floor, then made its winding way towards the door. The snake, a greyish-brown venomous cobra, stopped at the door, turned around, coiled its lower body, and raised its hood at us. It blocked our access to the door, and the window behind us was barred. There was no escape; we were trapped. I quickly took charge of the situation, and in retrospect, I think this meant that either I was a bossy sort in those days or downright foolhardy.

"Pray," I said to my friend, and I brought my palms together. He did the same, and the two of us stood in stunned silence, surrendering to the majestic creature.

The cobra swayed a little, then gradually lowered its hood and slithered out the door.

Back in the present, I often forget that connecting with nature isn't just about enjoying, studying or preserving it, though there is indeed a place for all three. A deep, abiding love for the natural world—with its sublimity, grandeur, coarseness and unpredictability—is the most primordial sense we have. By separating ourselves from nature or by choosing only what is pleasant and agreeable, we cause great harm to ourselves and others because we choose to harbour an illusion. And illusion, by its very departure from fact and reality, is bound to damage one's body, mind and spirit. In the words of Chief Luther Standing Bear, the Sicangu and Oglala Lakota author and philosopher:

“**The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard; he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans, too.**”

AMY TOBIN

Wanderer. I'm an Australian from Wurundjeri country, currently travelling solo, walking on unceded lands of the First Nations people, in Turtle Island, Canada with a background in communications, writing and marketing for nonprofits, including animal welfare, conservation, Indigenous brands and environmental management. I share my travels as I aim to walk lightly, reduce my carbon footprint and connect to sacred land. I'm passionate about mindfulness, vegetarianism, Land Back, social justice, volunteering, conservation and giving back to community and the land on my travels.

A love letter to mother earth

Amy Tobin

Thank you ocean for keeping me awake and alive
 Thank you waves for teaching me to breathe
 Thank you trees for embracing my changes
 Thank you birds for encouraging me to sing
 Thank you wind for allowing me to dance
 Thank you stone for keeping me grounded and present
 Thank you moss for showing me how to connect
 Thank you rain for preparing me to sit in the shadows
 Thank you sand for connecting me to my roots
 Thank you moon for guiding me to move with my cycles
 Thank you mother for it all.

LESSONS ON TAKING A CHANCE

Jayne Seagrave

We all know people who always err on the side of caution. When you tell them you are travelling alone, they inevitably describe the most horrendous event that happened to a friend, of a friend, of a friend of theirs over 25 years ago somewhere in the world, which they feel sure could happen to you . . . and that because of this catastrophic event, you should either not embark on your adventure, or, if you insist, only go with an army of security guards and insurance to cover every possible eventuality. When this encounter happens to me (as I get older, it does with alarming regularity), I usually politely nod and seek a quick escape from their paranoia. I act with a desire for adventure and new experiences in mind, reflecting only on the positive and how it will make me grow as a person, without weighing up what could go wrong. While I assess the risks, I inevitably

take a chance.

This was my unshakable philosophy during a recent visit to Vietnam, a wonderful country still recovering from the United States' invasion, but trying so hard to start afresh in welcoming strangers with open arms and smiling faces, knowing tourist dollars are helping to relaunch their country.

One day during my tour, I found myself tired of walking the hot streets of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), exhausted from attempting to cross the scooter-clogged roads and

desperate for a calmer time

to recover before I could tackle the city again. But I did not want a bar or restaurant, as these were adjacent to the busy, noisy streets, with their gas fumed environments and constant dust. There was, however, the majestic Saigon River that flowed through the centre of the metropolis. The previous day I had noticed large, brightly painted dragon boats, which were wonderfully appealing. These were patronised by neatly attired, white-faced tourists, cans of coke in sweaty hand, sporting bright orange life jackets, cell phone cameras at the ready, about to embark on a river cruise. I headed in their direction, content with my decision to watch the city's noise and pollution float by from the relative tranquility of the water, while resting my hot, aching body and drinking the locally popular Tiger Beer.

As I approached the quay where the dragon boats were moored, an animated, smiling, young woman who (I think) wanted 400,000 Vietnamese đồng (about \$20.00 Canadian) for a one-hour dragon boat ride greeted me. She followed me as I walked



Photo
by Nam
Hoang

in the direction of the boats, understanding my intentions and realising I was not attached to a tour group, having no doubt honed her ability to read blue eyed, tall strangers in the past. I too had experience of this tourist/vender dynamic and knew not to accept her initial offer. I walked confidently by, but my pace slowed, a subtle way for her to discern I did have an interest, but that I was also a savvy customer, not prepared to be parted easily with the strange currency in my purse.

“How about 300,000?” she yelled.

“How about 100,000?” I cried back, not turning my head.

She ran up to me, waving a piece of paper torn from a receipt book. We settled on 200,000 (\$10.00 CAD), my much-needed rest gratefully in sight.

I confirmed, by pointing to a heavily used paper map she had quickly produced, that I would be away for an hour, and very importantly return to this embarkation point. She shook her head vigorously, smiled, and repeated, “Yes, yes, yes,” now only half concentrating for, as our agreement had been made, she was keeping a keen eye out for other potential clients.

Communication between the two of us was rudimentary, there was a lot of smiling and nodding. She wrote 250,000 on a piece of paper from the scruffy book that was to serve as a receipt, and I shook my head, stating it was 200,000. I did not blame her for trying to inflate the agreed price, and in retrospect, maybe I should have paid an extra 50 cents, but there was a principle involved. I handed her the crisp, unfamiliar notes. The deal was done.

Instead of leading me to the gaggle of brightly coloured vessels, where the tourists and their guides were milling around, and the hawkers were selling fridge magnets, scarves and small carved Buddhas, I was taken to an area where the concrete quay was cracked, the litter unremoved, and my western travelling contemporaries absent, to a somewhat weather-beaten, much older vessel. There was a dragon at the front of this boat, but its paint was chipped and faded, having clearly seen better days many decades ago. A man appeared from the bowels of the boat. Animated rapid conversation was exchanged with my vendor, who then quickly moved away, and the man presented a hand to help me climb on board. It was only once on the boat I found there was only to be me, together with this casually dressed man, who I quickly realised was

the captain. There were no life jackets, and the smell of fumes was prominent. The engine made a loud, irregular rattling noise, which did not inspire confidence. The smiling captain placed a green plastic garden chair in the middle of the deserted cabin for me to sit on and headed to the front of the vessel, out of my view, and we set off.

It was at this point I realised this was to be my own, private cruise on the Saigon River. I could not believe my luck. Let the adventure begin! I was in seventh heaven. How many get to charter their own boat in Vietnam? Immense satisfaction took hold for the first 15 minutes of the voyage, as I basked in the intense enjoyment of knowing I was to be totally alone in this unique, never-to-be-forgotten venture. Gradually, the expensive, water-front apartment blocks gave way to wooden hut accommodation, and the muddy banks of the brown river became scattered with plastic bags and other garbage. Washing lines hung by these shacks and chickens pecked at the ground. The river widened and the water traffic decreased. There were no other dragon boats. The river was mine. A real adventure never to be forgotten, all for less than 10 dollars.

Could life get any better?

After 30 minutes, the boat showed no intention of turning around as we continued to keep a steady pace and head further away from the city. At this point a mild panic set in. I had a real fear that the captain, who I could still not physically see, didn't understand the young woman's instructions, and I was going to be dropped far away from Ho Chi Minh City and tasked with trying to make my own way back. This thought remained for a while, then as the vessel continued its course, showing no signs of turning, my imagination took hold and negative thoughts dominated. I decided I was to be trafficked into Laos or Cambodia or China, and then be made to eat insects for a week, sleep in a jungle and eventually be murdered. Echoes of my mother and girlfriend's advice rang in my head, stressing that I

should not take chances and always follow the conventional route. After 35 minutes this Dragon Boat was not turning around, charting a steady onward course, with the noisy engines still turning. The buildings on the riverbank were now increasingly rare. The captain was still not in evidence.

At this point my anxiety was considerable, and I debated what my options were.

The journey was no longer enjoyable.

Instead of congratulating myself for chartering my own private excursion, I castigated myself for being so foolish, as my mind provided a litany of scenarios, ranging from who would find my body, would my health insurance cover the repatriation costs of my corpse to Canada, and who would be chosen to clear out my hotel room and remove the underwear, washed that morning and drying in the bathroom.

Then, as if sympathizing with my overactive imagination, the engines changed their banging, erratic tone and the boat made a wide circle and headed in the direction from which we had come. Suddenly all was well. I was going to survive. We were returning. I had made the right decision. I would never forget the day, for all the right reasons.

I was right to take a chance.

"I basked in the intense enjoyment of knowing I was to be totally alone in this unique, never-to-be-forgotten adventure."

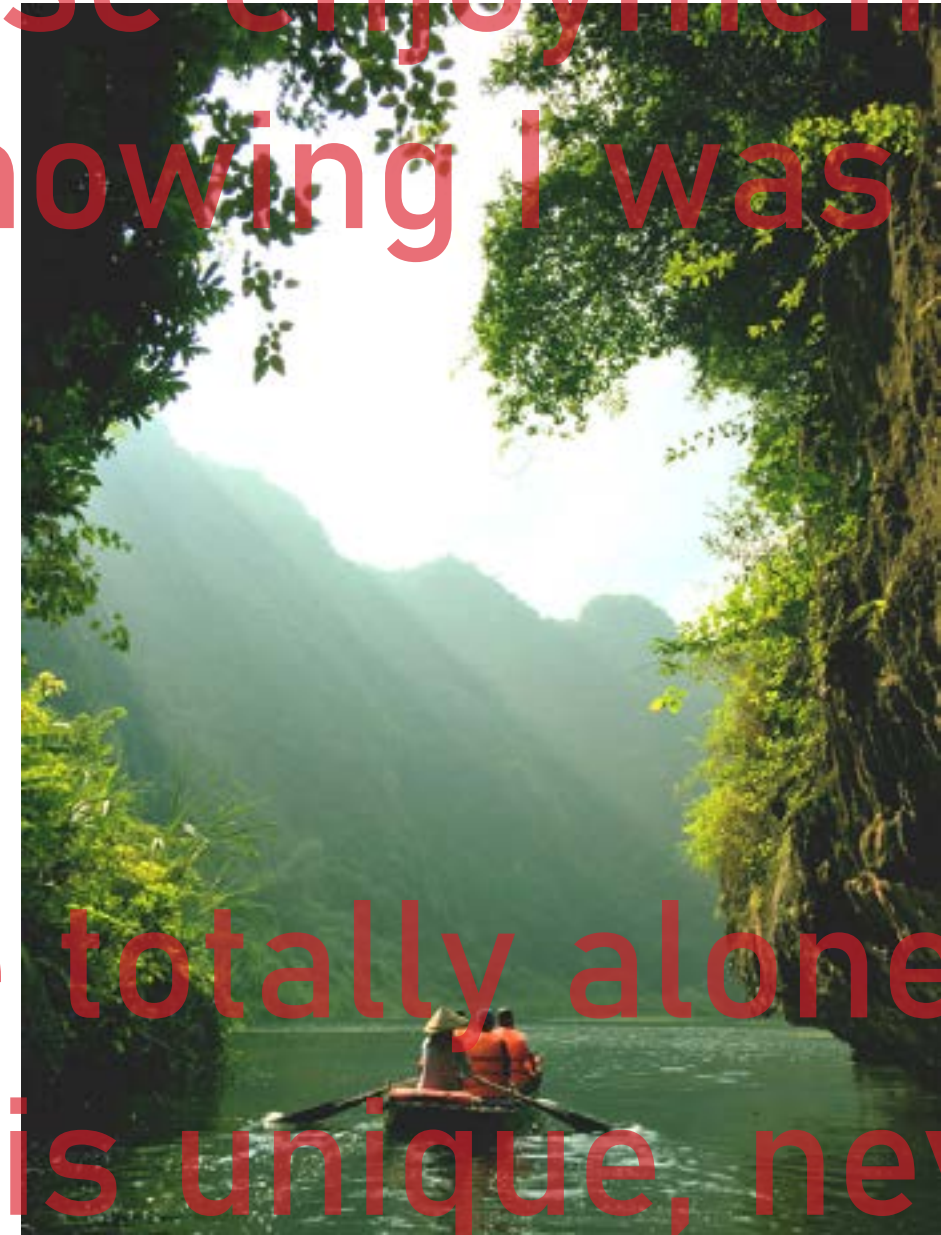


Photo by Unsplash

Theatrical Tourism

Alex Andy Phuong

A world that is much like
An ultimate stage,
And living in a way
That is much like
Turning page after page,
And a scenic route
Is like traveling through
Scenes in a play
Day by day,
And before the final curtain call,
Look back at the road taken
Rather than feel mistaken,
And understand how a tour
Can remind a person
That life does have value for sure
All while doing the best
To remain pure

Senioritis

Tomas McGrath

Hello, dear reader, Today I'll be talking to you about what some call "senioritis." Or rather, I'll be talking to you about what it might truly be. Senioritis is defined by the Oxford Languages English dictionary as a colloquial term for the loss of motivation that high school and college/university students feel close to the end of their school term. This may at first seem like just laziness, but it may actually be a form of burnout brought on by anxious anticipation of being released from the trial stages of life in which we go to school. The real world is scary, and high school is simply dipping your toes in the pool. High school is difficult, and if adult life is any worse than it, you may not even want to graduate. Perhaps there's a reason why students in their graduating year face such burnout, while adults don't always face the same effects. Might it be the need to impress and outdo your peers? Or perhaps the expectations of your superiors to get everything done on time? Not likely, as adults face those too. So what is it?

The answer is the domino effect.

When you mess up at work as an adult, perhaps you might lose some pay or get a warning at first, perhaps a suspension or losing your job. Not too big of an effect in the long run, but maybe a bad time for a few years at most. But when you mess up at school,

it could be the tipping point between a white-collar and blue-collar job and an easy or difficult life from then on. With so much emphasis on how important school is, we're going to have a big emotional toll taken on us. Maybe a necessary toll, but certainly not a pleasant one.

Loss of motivation is something that people faced with burnout or depression experience as well, so perhaps it's a **warning for us to prepare ourselves,**

or maybe it's just the end of one era and the beginning of another. No matter what it is, it'll pass when we graduate, and come back when we get close to the end of college, and wouldn't you know it, it'll pass once again. But who knows, is the end of something ever the end, or simply a "to be continued"?

So, while you might lose your motivation now, you'll find it again soon, reader. It—or they—might even find you.

To conclude, I believe that what people call "Senioritis" is just another case of burnout that is brought on by a desire to be finished with one stage of life and move on to the next one.

RYAN SELVIG

I am a recent postgraduate at University of Saskatchewan in Business Management. I simply enjoy writing and learning about personal development and human nature. My main interests are physical fitness—specifically weightlifting and jiu-jitsu—and psychology, specifically behavioural and evolutionary. Overall, I am just looking to improve my writing ability, connect with like-minded people and push myself outside what is comfortable.

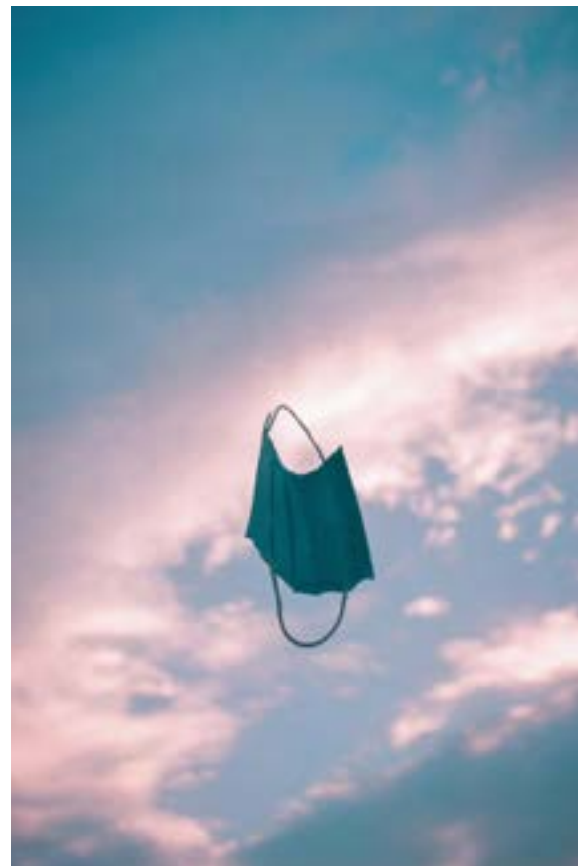
The Paradox of Progress

Ryan Selvig

Photo by
Aakanksha
Panw

In an era where our living standards have seen unprecedented growth, a perplexing question arises: Why hasn't our collective happiness kept pace? This conundrum takes us to the heart of what is called the "expectations" theory of happiness, a concept eloquently summed up by Yuval Noah Harari in his book *Sapiens*. Harari posits that happiness hinges on the gap between our expectations and reality. This theory not only offers a profound insight into our personal quests for happiness, but also helps explain some of the most paradoxical phenomena of our times, including our reaction to global events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

At its core, the expectations theory of happiness suggests that our sense of well-being is determined not by our objective conditions, but by the gap between what we expect and what we have. In simpler terms, happiness is the difference between our expectations and our reality. If expectations are met or exceeded, we experience happiness; if they fall short, we encounter dissatisfaction. Harari writes in his book "if you expect to get an ox cart from your father when you come of age and you get an ox cart, you're happy. But if you expect to get a new Ferrari on your 16th birthday and you get a used Toyota, you're unhappy." This theory sheds light on



a striking paradox of modern life: despite significant improvements in overall living standards, there's no corresponding increase in personal well-being. The reason? Our expectations are rising even faster than our living standards. The more we have, the more we want. It's a never-ending cycle where the finish line of "enough" keeps moving further away.

The relativity of happiness becomes starkly evident when we consider how societal reactions to events have changed over time, despite improvements in our ability to manage them. Take, for instance, the contrasting societal impacts of the Great Influenza epidemic of 1918 and COVID-19. The flu of 1918 was far more deadly than COVID-19 (it killed 20-40 million people, compared to the estimated 6-7 million of COVID), yet its impact on society's psyche was arguably less profound. This difference can be partly attributed to the expectations prevalent in each era.

In the early 20th century, diseases were often seen as an inevitable part of life. Medical science was in its infancy, and the expectation for health security was relatively low. Fast forward to the 21st century, where advances in medicine have led to an expectation that most diseases can be controlled or eradicated. When COVID-19 struck, it wasn't just the virus itself that caused distress, but also the shattering of the expectation that we had tamed the threat of pandemics.

What does this mean for our personal journeys towards happiness and fulfillment? First and foremost, it suggests that managing our expectations is crucial. This doesn't mean lowering our ambitions or settling for less. Rather, it's about

cultivating a mindset that finds contentment and value in what we have,

even as we strive for more.

It also means recognizing the relativity of our desires. The joy derived from material gains or societal status is often fleeting, because it's based on a constantly shifting baseline. True happiness often lies in experiences, relationships, and personal growth—areas where the comparison with others is less direct and where fulfillment has a more enduring quality.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life, the expectations theory of happiness invites us to rethink our approach to personal well-being. It encourages us to find balance—to aspire and strive, but also to appreciate and savor. In a world where the benchmarks of success and happiness are often externally dictated, it's a call to turn inwards and

define these concepts on our own terms.

This idea was perfectly encapsulated by Stephen Hawking in a New York Times interview in 2004. The world-famous theoretical physicist was asked about his rare form of motor neurone disease that left him unable to move his body at age 21. He replied, "My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus."

Hawking's perspective on life and achievements was radically altered by his circumstances. So perhaps the most profound shift we can make is in how we set and perceive our own expectations. It's about understanding that, while aspirations are important, constantly moving the goalposts as circumstances improve can lead to an endless chase for satisfaction.

In the end, perhaps the secret to happiness isn't endlessly raising the bar, but learning to enjoy the journey towards it, embracing both the triumphs and the setbacks, and finding joy in the simple, often overlooked aspects of our daily lives.

**BALREET
SIDHU** I followed my heart and found the one. In the darkness, I found my sun.

likeness/my love letter to

You

Balreet Sidhu

I realized I had left my old self behind. And still lingering are some old ways of thinking and the skeletons.

It's been a year. This move made me meet myself at a deeper level, who I really am. I do not have to fight to be or for a place where I belong. And yet most of all, it was an internal fight.

This is even more special having met you. This is my love letter To You. As I watch you, I realize you are a dream come true. I have been denying my feelings for a long time. I have been in love since I first met you.

What have you done to me? I am thinking and dreaming of you. My eyes well up knowing you are in my life to remain. It is going to be an adventure. I'm smitten. And I admit to being yours, as written.

Balreet Sidhu

A COUNTRY THE TOURIST FORGOT . . .

Jayne Seagrave

I had chosen to visit Fiji on a whim, after seeing an advertisement at a bus stop in Vancouver by Fiji Airways offering direct flights (12 hours). Following the breakdown of a 30-year marriage, 2023 was to be my first Christmas and New Year alone, and I was keen to escape the invites from well-meaning friends to share their family interactions (and tensions) during this festive time. I knew nothing of Fiji other than it consisted of over 300 islands, had an excellent rugby team and had a reputation of very friendly people. What I was not aware of was that it was essentially undiscovered by non-Fijians. On December 25, 2023 I boarded the flight, returning 10 days later.



Photo by Nico Smit

Fiji is special. It is a distant little place, neglected by tourists—how I imagine Hawaii or Mexico or Majorca were 40 years ago—but it may not be this way for long. There were very few tourists while I was there, and those I met were all from New Zealand or Australia. During my entire vacation I never spoke to another North American or European.

beach—which, in a clichéd way, offered everything one would expect from a Pacific Ocean island: clean, sandy beaches; safe, blue waters; palm trees and endless sunshine—I drove on the well-maintained, quiet island highway to this city. During my day in Suva I saw only five tourists, all in the Grand Pacific Hotel, a building dating from the early part of the 20th century, where I decided to have coffee and where my guide books told me to visit.

The guidebooks and internet sites I had read in preparation for my holiday advocated visiting the capital city, Suva, so after a couple of days on the

It took me all of 20 minutes to look around the Fiji Museum, which the experts described as being the

likeness/there we go

premier tourist attraction in the city. While there I even tried to gain access into a storage cupboard in search of more artifacts, as I could not believe this museum consisted of only one room. There was a single employee running the establishment, and when I exited through the gift shop I could have taken everything with me as no employee was present. Visitors that day consisted of me and two fathers with two three-year-old boys. The museum was in Thurston Gardens, a park where hundreds of bats hung from the trees and made loud, bird-like screeches. I shared the location with the

bats and two smiling, patrolling police officers, but no one else.

From the museum I headed to the Government Buildings, which was supposed to have an interactive display. Upon arrival I was greeted by Charlie, a taxi driver standing in the “Reserved for the Prime Minister” parking spot, who told me the display was closed and the Prime Minister not available—as if I was planning to see him. Charlie asked if I’d like to visit the post office, so, as he seemed very keen to show me, I agreed. We entered the parliament building—interestingly, Charlie could access the aged security panels—and walked through miles of tunnels, past wood-panelled closed doors to the underground post office, located in a deep bunker. This post office sold not only stamps, but packets of chips, canned drinks, condoms, soap and a collection of used books. All items looked like they had been in place for decades, as did the two employees. Purchasing stamps for Canada was no easy task, as different stamps were needed for Ontario than for British Columbia, and adding up the various costs was complicated by the fact that clearly the workers had not been given this objective before. I left the bunker post office via the police vehicle car park, watched by grinning officers eating their snacks, who obligingly pointed the way out. I then strolled the short distance to the Presidential Palace, again closed to visitors and guarded by a tall, uncommunicative gentleman carrying a rifle.

From the parliament building I walked into the town of Suva. There was an excellent huge fruit and vegetable market, and a bustling downtown, but again, remarkably, no tourists. Unlike so many other countries known for visitors with money to burn, I was never approached for cash. As a woman travelling alone, I never felt threatened or unsafe. I was, for the most part, ignored: just another individual going about her business.

Even the flight from Vancouver to Fiji seemed to be from another century. Fiji Airways used an older plane, so there was considerably more leg room, even in economy class. Only one bottle of red and white wine could be found on the drinks trolley (when you try to buy alcohol in Fiji, it’s distributed from locked cages in difficult-to-find supermarkets, and customers might feel deviant asking for the cage to be opened). The meals on the Fiji Airways plane were not dispensed from the trolley, instead the attendants delivered four trays to four passengers, then returned to the rear of the plane to retrieve more. Quaint.

Only four planes were on the tarmac in Fiji’s international airport when we landed. A band was playing local music as the passengers entered the terminal, and grinning passport control officers welcomed us to their country. Clearly no one was expecting the importation of drugs or wild, non-native animals, or kidnapped Eastern European women for the sex trade.

Everyone was welcome.

In days when it is becoming increasingly difficult to travel to other countries and feel like you are not just the same as thousands of others embarking on the same path, Fiji is uniquely special. The question is how long it will remain so.

“I was, for the most part, ignored:



Photo by Auskteez Tran

just another individual going about her business.”

NAVEED SIDDIQUI Before immigrating to Canada, Naveed Siddiqui ran his own family law firm back home in Karachi, Pakistan. A former third-generation lawyer, he has a passion for writing and presently runs his own business management firm, SNCO Business Consulting, in Mississauga, Ontario, and is also a director of a fast food franchise, Paradise Chicken, in Ontario.

**A SPLITTED
THOUGHT**

Naveed Siddiqui

I know it's hard for you to believe,
When I told you . . .
About remnant voices that call from long distance
With blow of hair, rising fog and steam that whistle
Making its way from far forgotten island
Carrying my splitted body, each one signal
Pieces of dwelling shadow. And time that fizzles
Shows no mercy to the last breath of twilight
Losing itself to darkness, to void cosmos riddles . . .

I know it's hard for you to embrace,
When I wrote to you . . .
About imprinted images revealing my ancient veins,
Of assumed mortal, its survival and pieces of glory
Which'r now dried among cracked palm lanes, and
Daylight full of dust make a sight useless and foamy,
Every page await for the unfinished story, and
Each effort to break into thousand pieces revert,
And more it does, the more blaze infuses with higher density . . .

T i k e n e s s



