

# AMP

may 2023 | volume 21 | issue 8 | [ampatutd.com](http://ampatutd.com)

## ***Farewell to Finals:*** *AMP Summer Edition!*



UTD's **FAVORITE** Housing Game  
Show!

Are Stuffed Animals  
**CRINGE?**

Spring **DOESN'T** Have to be  
Feminine.

# AMP

## Editors' Desk

### Seniors give their Goodbyes



**Bethel:** Hey Comets! It's officially the last *AMP* issue of the school year and my last issue altogether! It's a bittersweet moment and a heartfelt goodbye to a wonderful chapter as Editor-in-Chief of *AMP*. I've loved being able to be a part of covering such a wide range of topics and I can easily say Student Media and *AMP* have been one of the best parts of my college experience. I know it's cool and trendy to trash your university but I've always been so happy and grateful to attend UTD. I feel blessed to be at such a diverse school where practically everyone can find a community, get a high-quality education, and relax on a comfortable, safe, and actually beautiful campus. To any underclassmen reading, do that thing that you've always wanted to do but you're slightly scared of doing. I promise you that joining that team, competing in that activity, or starting that club is never going to be something you regret. Worst-case scenario it will be a necessary lesson to learn and best case scenario it can make your college experience one you never forget. Thank you to the entire staff at *AMP* for a wonderful last year, and thank you to all our contributors and readers!

**Sebyul:** I'm sure everyone who knows me is sick of hearing this story, but I'm going to tell it anyway! When Bethel and I took over *AMP* management in Fall 2021, we had no training, no designers, and no writers. Neither of us knew anything about running a magazine. The first issue we ran had only four articles — Bethel and I each wrote two, and our previous art director illustrated the entire issue (shout-out to Gigi!). Looking back, it's hard to believe how far this publication has come in just two short years. I still feel giddy

every time I see someone reading *AMP* in public (bringing back horoscopes was the best decision I've ever made). I can't even begin to describe what an impact working here has had on me personally. Everyone likes to joke about how lame UTD is, but I think if you look a little closer, you'll find that this school is full of wonderful, vibrant communities doing exciting things! I'm just grateful that I got to be a part of one of them. Farewell, *AMP*! I can't wait to see what comes next.

**Ally:** So... this is it. No more working and hanging out in the Student Media office. No more late nights editing articles for the website and random discussions about Tobor. I'm grateful for everyone who I've met and thankful that I somehow decided to do journalism again after swearing I would never do so. It's all because of the readers and the lovely people in Student Media (particularly *AMP* <3). It's changed the course of my life for the better. Don't wait to get involved in anything you're curious about. College is the time to try things, make mistakes, and somehow figure things out along the way. (This is why we need more college stories in fiction, but I digress.) It was wonderful to be your Web Editor and then making up the Copy Editor role because we needed one. Even though I won't physically be there anymore, I'm glad of all the things I leave behind like the articles I wrote and the darling Ratford. You guys can keep them and I'll hold on to the memories I made with everyone! I hope you all enjoyed my writing and my edits. Take care of Ratford for me. I know I'll be leaving him and *AMP* in good hands.

Bethel Bekele - Editor-in-Chief

Sebyul Paik - Managing Editor

Victoria Bruno - Asst. Art Director

Ally Duong - Web and Copy Editor

Gavin Arriaga - Marketing Director

Danny Torres - Art Director

Ethan Wuu - Asst. Marketing Director

Sneha Raghavan - Asst. Copy Editor

# THIS ISSUE:

---

- 4 May Horoscopes
- 5 Life After GRATuation with Ratford
- 6 DJ of the Month: Caleb Jenkins
- 8 Stick Up for Stuffies
- 10 Don't Abolish UTD Diversity
- 12 The Blooming Effect: Springtime and Femininity
- 14 What We Can Learn From the Mario Movie
- 16 Finding Trans Representation in Trigun Stampeded
- 18 So You Don't Want To Live On The Street

## Contributors

Ellie Maguire, Luka McNamara-Ray, Akie Kasai, Cherissa Mae Banag, Malu Yitages, Ally Duong, Sebyul Paik, Victoria Steiner, Ethan Wu, Shreya Parimal

## Designers

Izkra Chavez, Susan Zhang, Brianne Bitar, Lenox Smiley, Victoria Bruno, Danny Torres

## Media Advisor

Jonathan Stewart

## Editor-in-Chief

Bethel Bekele

## Managing Editor

Sebyul Paik

## Art Director

Danny Torres

## Assistant Art Director

Victoria Bruno

## Web/Copy Editor

Ally Duong

## Assistant Copy Editor

Sneha Raghavan

## Marketing Director

Gavin Arriaga

## Assistant Marketing Director

Ethan Wu

## Disclaimer

Opinions expressed in AMP are those of the editor or of the writer of the article and are not necessarily those of the university administration, the board of Regents of the University of Texas System, or of the operating board of the magazine.

## Have an opinion?

## Think you're funny?

Write for AMP! Contact us at [ampatutd@gmail.com](mailto:ampatutd@gmail.com) and follow us on social media @AMPatUTD for more information.



# AMP HOROSCOPE

*Aries:* Exact cold, brutal revenge on your worst enemies this month. As a treat!

*Taurus:* Sometimes it's okay to ritualistically sacrifice a Virgo.

*Gemini:* You're going to spend too much time thinking about the many instances in which Bugs Bunny wears drag.

*Cancer:* Stop waiting around for life to send something your way! I mean, if you want. I'm not your mom.

*Leo:* Your ambitions will lead you to greatness, then become your downfall, before you ultimately end up finding enlightenment by making submarine sandwiches in a cave by yourself. They're not the best, but they're made with heart.

*Virgo:* Sometimes it's okay to let yourself be ritualistically sacrificed by a Taurus.

*Libra:* There's this super secret thing you've

obviously never heard of where you lie down and stop being conscious for about eight to ten hours. Do that probably.

*Scorpio:* You've been charged with an epic quest of fantastical origins to save the world! No presh.

*Sagittarius:* The stars say to keep doing what you're doing. I think they're stupid, but it's whatever.

*Capricorn:* Accompanying the end of the semester, the stars see a new start for you. As a gambler. You have a life-ruining gambling addiction now, and there's nothing you can do about it.

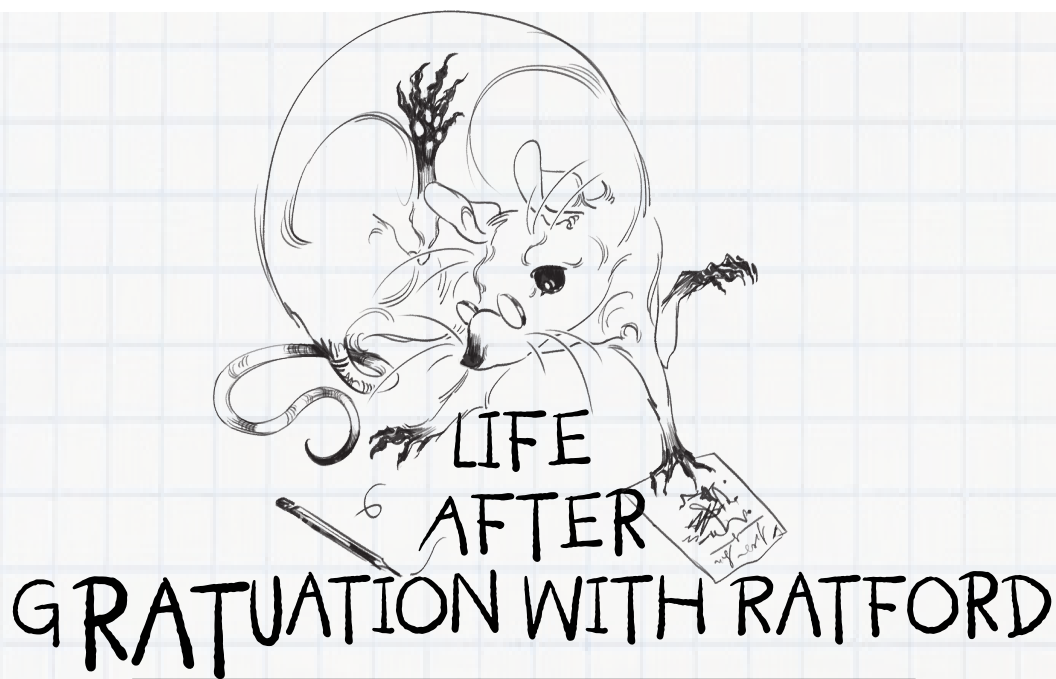
*Aquarius:* The universe hates you this month. Have backup plans for whatever you do.

*Pisces:* Be extra responsible this month and burn your next bridge before you get to it..

**ETHAN WUU**

freshman | ATEC

Libra sun, Aquarius moon, Virgo rising



# LIFE AFTER GRADUATION WITH RATFORD

**Q: Name something that's better than cheese.**

A: Nothing. (Me. Or really anything that's not my ex-wife.)

**Q: How do I deal with the next 3 years of UTD?**

A: Join the folks at AMP! They've been treating me pretty well and have gouda taste. And, most importantly, you get to meet me, so.

**Q: I think choosing my major was a mistake, so I'm dreading getting a job in it. How do I cope?**

A: Work isn't everything. Cheese is. Eat cheese.

**Q: I'm worried about where I'm going to live after university.**

A: That isn't a question, but I'm right there with you, buddy. Let's find a nice cardboard box outside Northside together.

**Q: How do I make friends after college?**

A: You don't. I have no friends, which is why I'm doing this. \*sadly eats cheese\* Wow, this is saltier than normal. ;-;

**Q: What is the purpose of life?**

A: Eating softened cheese in the sunshine as it melts in my mouth at just the perfect temperature. All while avoiding my ex-wife.



**ALLY DUONG**

senior | literature  
creator of Ratford.



If you were lucky enough to tune in to RadioUTD between 6–9 p.m. on Thursday nights, you may have caught this semester’s most recent addition to the late-night lineup: “The Bookshelf.” Designed by Caleb Jenkins as a reading playlist for those wanting a more relaxed vibe, “The Bookshelf” offers music ranging from indie to ambient tracks to jazz and classical. Caleb tends to play longer tracks on the show, which sometimes backfires.

As Caleb described it, “It’s a wide variety of music, but I try to make sure it all meshes and blends under the umbrella.” However, it’s not only music that’s discussed on-air. As a Literature major with a love of performing arts and film, Caleb sought to incorporate multimedia such as books and movies into “The Bookshelf.”

**“I TRY TO INTERCONNECT IT ALL BECAUSE THERE’S A LOT OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN ART THAT I LIKE TO EXPLORE. I LIKE THINGS THAT BLEND MEDIUMS SO I WANTED TO CAPTURE THAT SORT OF ETHOS WITH THIS SHOW.”**

Caleb attributed his humble beginnings in radio to his father, who started his own career at a college radio station. “It was partly [wanting] to continue that lineage,” he explained. (Caleb’s family does listen to the show — he fondly recalled a time he’d played a 22-minute long track and his grandma texted to ask if the record was stuck). Though his father definitely influenced Caleb’s love of classic rock and 90’s hip-hop when he was younger, Caleb cited his own exploration of internet

culture as another source of inspiration. “There’s a lot of terrible things [on the internet], but yeah, I’ve discovered so many things about the world, so I want to play a part of that.” From having an emo phase in middle school (complete with the usual repertoire of Panic! At The Disco, My Chemical Romance, and Twenty One Pilots), Caleb has now journeyed to enjoying more hype, danceable music that he loves to blast when driving.

In addition to hosting “The Bookshelf”, Caleb had also written concert and album reviews for Radio UTD. According to Caleb, music was only a small part of the entire concert-going experience. “It’s the venue, it’s before you get into the venue. You have to set the scene... it’s the performance, it’s the crowd.” While reminiscing on a punk rock show where he was kicked in the face, Caleb fondly explained how interesting it was trying to put that moment into words, and how he’d find himself thinking about specific moments over and over again. “It’s not that much of a step further to think about how I can put that into words,” he said, going on to describe the thought process behind writing his articles.

When asked about his favorite part about working at Radio, Caleb laughed. “This is a stock answer, but the people.” Radio UTD gave Caleb the opportunity to meet people he never would have otherwise met. Take Luna, for example. “He’s like a senior, or maybe a super senior. I think maybe, normally, I would have never gotten to meet him.” But as a result of RadioUTD, the two were able to bond over their shared love of film. Luna even featured in Caleb’s short film, “Weird Lamp.” “Weird Lamp,” which was recently entered into UTD’s Cosmic Film Festival, asks the viewer exactly what makes a lamp weird, and serves as Caleb’s first foray into filmmaking, which is one of his ultimate goals in life. “I want to write and direct, among other things. I kind of want to make art of all mediums, which goes back to what ‘The Bookshelf’ was about: The intersection of all these media.”

For listeners interested in Caleb’s future plans, a new show may be something to keep an ear out for. “I’m thinking of calling it ‘Heart and Seoul,’” he said. Inspired by Korean indie and R&B, “Heart and Seoul” began as an idea that struck Caleb when listening to Korean music for fluency practice. The show would focus and highlight more obscure and underground tracks that Caleb hopes will showcase the richness and variety of music coming from South Korea. In the future, Caleb looks forward to discovering and exploring different types of music and sharing them all with eager listeners at Radio UTD. “That’s another good thing about having a radio show. I discover a lot of new music in searching for music to put on the show.”

showcase by: shreya parimal & sebyul paik  
design by: danny torres

# DEETS

## Album on repeat:

“Most Ordinary Existence” by Sister’s Barbershop and “Cop and Speeder” by Heatmiser

## Vibe of your show:

It’s a reading playlist for those who constantly get distracted while reading.

## Favorite song recently played on your show:

“The Fox And The Rabbit” by Xiu Xiu

## What you’re reading right now:

“Crime and Punishment”... making slow progress, but I think that’s the best way to read it.

## Go-to coffeeshop order:

A red eye, which is a regular drip brew with an extra shot of espresso.

## Temoc v Enarc:

Enarc.

## The elite pizza topping:

Bell peppers!

## Zodiac sign:

I’m a Taurus.

## Favorite obscure animal:

It’s not really obscure, but I really like meerkats.

## Something trivial that you strongly hate or love:

I love flags. I’m a big fan of flags. I have a flag poster in my room and sometimes when I don’t want to get up in the morning, I just roll over and I name all the flags.



# Stick up for stuffies



Some nights are easier to deal with than others. However, on those restless nights when I cannot sleep at all, thinking about every problem in the world, I reach over to grab my stuffed animals. Yes, I am a twenty-one-year-old person and still sleep with stuffed animals. I have my childhood stuffed dog who is well-loved and wrinkly and still smiles fondly with her smile made out of pink thread. While collecting stuffed animals can be seen as strange or even childish, sleeping with and collecting these stuffed animals should be normalized. In this awful world of student debt and climate change and a million other terrible things, stuffed animals are a source of healing.

Being a college student juggling both work and school, I find it hard to find any rest or reprieve. However, no matter what happens, these stuffed animals are my friends. One year ago on a cold January night, I faced countless assignments and never-ending tasks and responsibilities that I needed to take care of. However, when I got home from work, my mom left me a present on the living room table. I got home and immediately ran towards this weird pink thing. I had no idea what this pink something was. He looked up at me with his asymmetrical black tapioca-ball eyes and giant pink nose and I fell in love. "OUGH," I shouted. "What is this?" Instantly, all of my troubles went away when I looked at this weird creature. Instead of thinking of past assignments and grades or worrying about future schoolwork or career paths, I focused on the present moment. "What is this creature?" This was when I named and met the love of my life and reinvigorated my love for stuffed animals. I loved stuffed animals as a kid but I never thought that I could still love my old interests. Stuffed animals are reassuring for someone who is often stressed out; it's like having a fidget toy in the form of a soft friend.

These seemingly innocent childhood toys are not as innocent as you might think; there are big companies behind all of these toys. There are also large groups of people who buy stuffed animals and other goods to resell or make a profit out of them. To avoid getting overpriced goods, you need to ask yourself if this item is a want or a need. While I do not need a new stuffed animal to survive, I need my reliable childhood stuffed animal to sleep with. I do not need new stuffed animals to live. Instead, I make sure the ones that I already have are taken care of. I know that our generation thinks it's cool to not care but caring is everything. You should take care of the things around you kindly and treat them nicely, including stuffed animals and other mementos. Everyone needs a soft friend and living through various life-changing events is hard. No matter what happens, my soft friend will be there.

Fidgeting with fidget toys is enjoyable and people should be allowed to have silly and goofy interests. This online concept of cringe culture is when people make fun of people with "cringe" interests that are often childish, juvenile, or otherwise out-of-the-norm concepts. When I was growing up, I had early access to the internet from a young age. I grew up watching adults and content creators insult and make fun of people with

"cringe" interests — often younger kids who are having fun with art and watching children's shows. Kids should have the outlet to enjoy things and have fun with art while they can and not focus on what other people think of them. While what I am saying applies to kids, everyone was a kid once. Now that we are older, we are all too focused on how we are presenting to the world. However, I've brought this pink stuffed animal named Ough to class and no one bats an eye. Most people ignore him because people are too busy focusing on themselves and what they do so I have learned that it is okay to be a little cringe. Life is too short to be worrying about what other people are doing. Who cares if people think you're weird? Bring your stuffed animals to class. As long as it is not distracting your learning or anyone else around you, bringing a soft friend to class can be comforting. I like my college-educated stuffed animal. I brought my stuffed animal to class and my professor said that she found Ough adorable and did not admonish or think less of me. I will admit that I thought it was childish to have stuffed animals when I was in high school, but now, as a college student, I embrace my weirdness and my love for stuffed animals.

Stuffed animals are transitional items that make people feel better and aid in self-soothing. A stuffed animal's purpose is to make people feel better and aid in self-soothing. The New York Times published an article titled "The Case for Sleeping With Stuffed Animals as an Adult" that featured all the psychology behind these rituals to sleep like having these stuffed animals or blankets. In a 2017 survey by Build-A-Bear, 40% of respondents who owned or once owned a stuffed animal said they still slept with one. Time also published a piece titled "Adults Are Spending Big on Toys and Stuffed Animals—for Themselves" reiterating that adults just want to spend money and play. There is plenty of science to back these claims but essentially it all boils down to one thing. Stuffed animals are soft and cuddly and friendly.

Sleeping with stuffed animals is not a crime. Owning stuffed animals and toys and games and other childish things is not wrong. As a member of society, I can buy things with money. What I buy with my own money should not bother other people. There may come a night when I no longer need to hold on to my stuffed animals to sleep. But for now, it is nice to have a friend by my side to doze off with.



**AKIE KASAI**

senior | literature

ough

# Don't Abolish UTD Diversity

**Dedication:** While writing this, the Director of the Multicultural Center, Bruce August Jr., passed away. He was a mentor for several students, no matter their background, allowing for a special connection that for many would last years. Bruce had given so much of himself to UTD and helped support various organizations; his positive influence will continue to inspire students and faculty on campus.

So, the Texas government wants to rid UTD of its best quality: its diversity. The State Legislature is working on State Bill 17 (SB 17), planning to strip away funds from university offices like the Multicultural Center and the Galerstein Gender Center. If it passes, by next semester we may not have these safe spaces. Apparently, marginalized groups have received enough benefits and we're all equal now! I don't understand how anyone could market an anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) bill as a positive, but Texas Republicans like Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Sen. Brandon Creighton have tried extremely hard to do so.

The argument against DEI offices on campus is severely flawed; it assumes that because these communities have begun to feel seen and heard on campus that they will stay seen and heard once these offices are gone. They will not and these politicians know that. Without these offices and groups, students will not have staff and faculty that understand their unique struggles. The Multicultural Center and the Gender Center were made to help students adjust to university culture that they may not be familiar with. Many of our international students have found peace knowing they can reach out to the Multicultural Center for any needs they may have. The transition into college is a difficult one and all students should have mentors that help them adjust to this new environment. These politicians' xenophobia is hidden behind fabricated concerns in order to push their own agenda. This bill actually says that institutions of higher education cannot endorse anti-racist ideologies. What are they supposed to endorse then? These offices do not promote segregated communities, they make sure that their identity is uplifted and appreciated by others. The issue is that many do not know how to acknowledge differences without judging them, therefore creating a "cliqey" environment. What I'm very fearful of is how student organizations could be affect-

ed in the future. Organizations like the Black Student Alliance and African Student Union work closely with the Multicultural Center and have been supported by the office immensely. There is so much history within the community that could be lost with this bill.

UTD is one of the most LGBTQ+ friendly campuses in the nation!

Without the Gender

Center, several students would

lose support on campus.

SB 17 would also prohibit universities from conducting training pro-

grams that teach employees how to make all students

feel safe. This bill also

has a chance of affecting students with disabilities

across all Texas public campuses.

For example, UTD's AccessAbility Resource Center is tied to the university's ODEI. The loss of DEI is not just about "politically" hot topics like race and gender but prevents the inclusion of all people.

What is ironic is that the proposal of this bill itself proves that what they are claiming is incorrect; we are not at a point as a society where we are all only judged based on skill. I know that

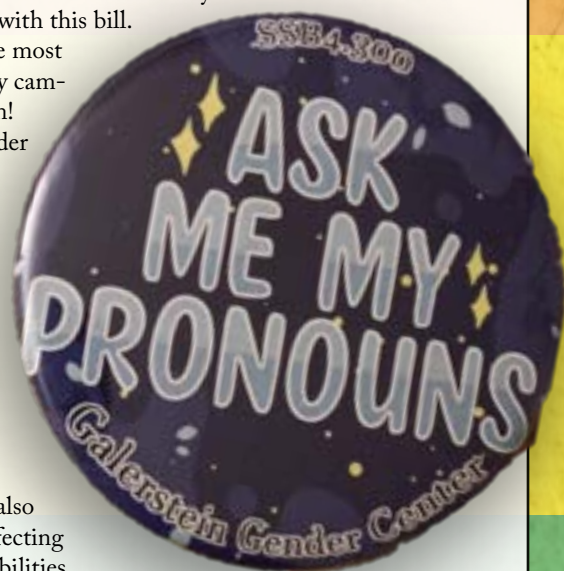


photo credit: izkra chavez



my skills are undermined by many because I am a black woman; that's just how the world still works. And because of this, I need to take time and effort out of my studies and put them into protesting against bills like SB 17. It is not fair that students like me have to jump these hurdles that others do not. These DEI offices that Sen. Creighton is trying to get rid of help students like me evade these hurdles. By eliminating funds, our representatives are not evening things out, they are purposefully setting us behind.

Yes, affirmative action is still necessary to provide extra help and guidance to those that need it. Problem is, affirmative action has a nasty stigma against it placed by those who do not fully understand it. UTD's ODEI is not focused solely on excluding those who are part of a majority, it is focused on uplifting those that would usually be ignored because of their identity. It does not inadvertently create divides; we get these divides because small-minded people cannot accept others that are not like them. The solution is **not** to avoid seeing color and pushing for the idea of "one race, the human race"; it is to allow people to express their individuality and support different cultures. That is what UTD has done so far and it should continue to do so. Universities do not favor minorities over any other group, these institutions have simply created opportunities for those who would not have them otherwise. Unfortunately, members of the Texas State Subcommittee on Higher Education believe this is detrimental to straight, white students.

But why is diversity such a threat to our government? It is not a political tactic used by leftists, it's an important part of being human. We should be allowed to celebrate differences and take the time to understand what may help each other most. Any push by the government to pass bills that restrict our right as students to embrace our individuality and heritage should be taken seriously. These bills are no longer just talk, the Subcommittee has the power and backing to control Texas public universities and will do so if they get the chance. Once they get the power over what offices receive public funding and who can be hired into these offices, they will push for more and more power.

It may feel like all hope is lost, but even if SB 17 and the other bills intertwined with it do pass there is still more we can do next semester. Now that we know that some politicians see evolved education as a danger to them, we must keep ourselves informed on not only the history of this country but also what changes are being made today. The government has already been trying to hide our nation's dirty history in order to keep students in check, and now they are trying to control the demographics of our colleges. Student leaders across Texas have been doing their best to spread this information to others on campus about the changes that may come this fall. I've enjoyed working with student organization board members here at UTD as we've not only been able to get the word out but we've supported each other through our efforts. It is difficult to get the government to listen to students, but that doesn't mean we should keep quiet. Change can only be made if our voices are accompanied by action. The best way to combat this bill is to keep students informed! Sign petitions, talk with students from other universities, speak with faculty, and just do all you can to keep diversity alive here at UTD. Whether SB 17 becomes set in stone or not, I hope that our university stays true to what I love most about it and fights for their beautifully diverse campus.



## MALU YITAGES

senior | atec

I worked at Disney once.



## The Blooming Effect: Springtime and Femininity

**W**hy does Springtime have such a feminized connotation to it? Does the season of the year with spring and flowers implicate a girly scene? Well yes, but its history with today's state of the world ties all those associations and emotions together, with a little twist.

As the temperature gradually rises, the birds start singing more, and pollen starts filling up your nose, you know that spring has arrived. And during this spring season, the flowers would start to bloom again. Flowers have those delicate qualities of them with their softness and sweet fragrance. The beauty each of them possesses coincides with a woman's individuality. They are beautiful as a group,

but until you take the time to see each one, you don't notice that they personally carry traits that are admirable beyond comparison. Additionally, they are also a reflection of traditional feminine ideals with flowers symbolizing the creation of life and growth.

Springtime has been representatively known for fertility and rebirth because it can be seen as the mark of a new growth cycle; this renewal of life. That is why it is not a surprise that spring has many visions of female imagery; similar to when we say mother nature, the personification of nature as a life-giving and nurturing mother. The bloom of trees and flowers can evoke feelings of wonder and beauty. The emergence of spring flowers many people view as a sign

of renewal and hope. Both flowers and the season of spring have those connections of reproduction. Interconnectedness with the role of women and the act of giving birth to human life.

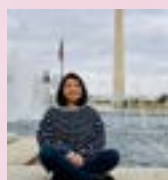
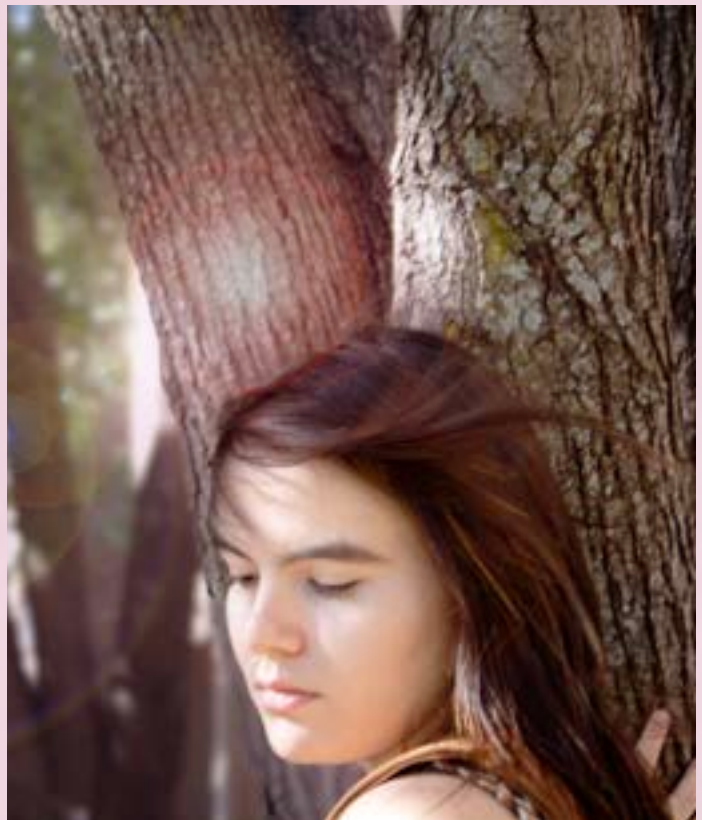
Yet, in America, a little bit less than half of the women today describe femininity as independent and loyal. And over half of the women without children of their own have no desire to bear a child, with the biggest consideration influencing their decision being to maintain their personal independence. Therefore, why is it so ingrained in society that the value of a woman comes from their position of reproduction? It is because, throughout women's history, the Court ruled that women's bodies are "an object of public interest," because of their primary role as reproducers. But in today's economy, the future of children seems uncertain. With the rise of climate change and inflation, there are factors out of our control as citizens that would hinder our quality of life. For that reason, the act of not having children comes from a place of love because they value the child's life. That is where the cultural expectation that is reinforced by society is being used, the roles of women as nurturing and caregiving. Hence, that part of womanhood would always seem to be a part of their lives; yet, there is always room to make womanhood worthy of one's own. Unlike with flowers, we see a singular flower in a vase and can see the beauty it attracts, whereas a singular rose given indicates your love for a special someone. And there is no cultural expectation from humans for flowers to act a certain way; the blooming beauty it brings initiating from spring would be enough for it to be cherished.

Spring is also known for new beginnings and transformations. So, instead of perceiving women as playing their role in reproduction, we should perceive them for their independence and freedom they value on their own. Women's value has always been because of the service they do for others, but being of value to oneself is one not too common. When women receive flowers they express feelings of happiness because of the gesture from the person they received it from, when women receive flowers they are being valued for being themselves. It could be as a gesture of love, commendation, friendship, etc. Nowadays, there has been growing recognition of the importance women bring to this world beyond the traditional caregiving roles, such as pursuing fields that are male-dominated and embracing their individuality and uniqueness. Each flower is distinct from others, and while many of them may appear similar, they each have their own unique genetic makeup. Similar to women as well, each of them has different values they can bring forth to the world, with different ambitions and goals. That is why gender roles are slowly breaking because you can no longer confine a woman to a specific role or perceive them all the same. Because in early American history, women were expected to be mothers, and the role of motherhood was deeply valued. However, the rise of women's rights and feminism gave women more freedom to make choices about their lives, which includes their choice of whether to have children or not.

The connection between flowers and spring is that this is the season when flowers start to bloom. This is because as the weather starts to get warmer, they would come out of dormancy to resume their growth cycle, which all leads to a field of beautiful flowers. Now as we are in a time where open-mindedness is welcome, differences are

celebrated, and the perceptions generations ahead of us constantly pushed down to women can no longer be as effective. We can enter a new field by being receptive to a broader world of expectations.

While motherhood is still viewed as an important role in American society, it is no longer seen as the sole measure of a woman's purpose or worth. However with flowers, their primary purpose is reproduction, yet they are appreciated more than their purpose but for the overall effect, it has on people. The way flowers light up a room and bring instant joy to those receiving them, it is filled with love and charm and has infinite values beyond their purpose. By this, we should switch the narrative that even though a woman's purpose is no longer affiliated with reproduction, it can be by their own self-worth. Individually, flowers can be appreciated for their unique shapes, colors, and scents. Many people enjoy picking and arranging individual flowers or use them individually as decorations. They could be seen and admired on their own. We can now view women not as baby machines that bring value to continuous life on earth, but the life of their own. To be acclaimed and picked out from a field of flowers to be admired for its own beauty and assets that is distinguishable from the rest of the garden.



**CHERISSA MAE BANAG**

junior | atec

# What We Can Learn From the Mario Movie



Films have always been subject to criticism — both good and bad. With how fast information is spread and shared through the internet today, leaks and previews of films are easily accessible, which is then subject to judgment on social media. Whether it be the rumors of an emoji or Tetris movie being in development, or details in movie posters such as the original version of Sonic's movie design being displayed as a silhouette, people are now quick to criticize media when production isn't even complete.

Despite the success "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" achieved following its release, it was subject to harsh criticism for years, even when it was limited to just word of mouth. When the voice actors for the film were revealed back in 2021, almost every YouTuber who reacted to the reveal burst into laughter, followed by denial, then dread at the possible failure of the film. Mario fans were especially harsh towards the casting of Mario as Chris Pratt and not by the original voice actor of Mario, Charles Martinet, who was left to a cameo.

Personally, I was skeptical about

the voice actor reveal. I first heard it through memes and people talking about it online, as I couldn't have imagined Chris Pratt being the voice of Mario. At the time, the only voice that I was happy with was Seth Rogen playing as Donkey Kong. Most of my skepticism was put to rest, however, when animators took action and used audio from the voice actors' previous work and animated them as the respective characters that they would play as. My favorite videos from YouTube were Tytofi's "Jack Bowser and Seth DK," which took clips from Kung Fu Panda and turned Po into Bowser, and Sangled's "How Luigi and Daisy Started Dating," which took clips from "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" and turned Charlie Kelly into Luigi. By doing this, it allowed fans to get a better idea of what to expect from the actors and the film itself.

However, other fans continued to doubt the casting decisions for the film. Chris Pratt was especially the hardest to impress with, as he was restricted from showcasing to his fans what he would sound like. Fans also couldn't help but acknowledge that the only other animated film Chris Pratt did

before "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" was "The Lego Movie."

And then the first trailer for the film was released in 2022. Finally being able to see the characters in action in an animated film was so surreal to me. I got to see my favorite Mario character, Bowser, stomp around and breathe fire. I



got to see Mario hop around and talk to a toad, even if it was only for a little bit. Even though fans were amazed at Jack Black's role as Bowser in the trailer, they were still skeptical of Chris Pratt despite the trailer only showcasing two of his lines. With the limited amount of lines shown, it wasn't fair to make a conclusion on what Chris Pratt's voice was going to be like. Some people thought he would do an Italian or a Brooklyn accent. Some others thought he would just use his normal voice. Although I had my own theories on what Chris Pratt's voice would be like, I didn't want to make any conclusions based on only two lines and a few gasps and screams.

Then finally, the film was released in April of this year. Audience ratings were high and "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" currently holds the record for most money made at the box office for an animated film at launch. The only criticisms most people had were more concerned with the plot than the voice acting or casting. Every group chat I was in was talking about "The Super Mario Bros. Movie." When a group of friends of mine were planning on going to the movies together to watch the film, I gave in and decided to go with them. And I do not regret a thing. The voice talents of each of the cast members were great. Jack Black got to sing and play the piano as Bowser and clearly had a blast with the role. Keegan-Michael Key got to go high and low in pitch as Toad. And, the most surprising and impressive thing of all — Chris Pratt got to showcase an impres-

sion of Charles Martinet's Mario at the start of the film. Although this wasn't something that would continue throughout, just hearing the voice made me and my friends' faces light up. Despite my few gripes with the film's plot and the portrayal of some of the characters, I enjoyed the film overall and the voice actors who brought the characters to life.

After we exited the theater and started talking about the film and the journey the film had in its production, we all came to a conclusion that made these last few years look silly — giving Mario a cartoony Italian accent, despite fans' constant requests for it, would have been such an annoying voice to listen to, especially for a film that lasts almost two hours. As the main character of the film, it wouldn't have made sense to give him the voice. It was great just being able to hear both Chris Pratt's impression and Charles Martinet's Mario voice as a cameo.

Even though "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" had a rough road of judgment and assumptions about its quality before its release, it has clearly shown to surprise most audiences around the world.

Despite this, people continue to give the same kind of treatment to other films that have only just been announced. Although there are a lot of reasons to criticize Disney's recent choices in their live-action remakes for example, it's not fair to criticize the live action design of *Stitch* and consider the live action "Lilo & Stitch" film a failure when the only

information we currently have on the film is some of the cast. Fans of the "Five Nights at Freddy's" franchise are already predicting the quality of the film adaptation even though the release date has only just been announced. The only information we have regarding films such as "Shrek 5" and the live action "Moana" are their titles, yet people are already theorizing how well or poorly these films will do even though there is still the likelihood of these films never even reaching completion. Instead of judging a film that doesn't even exist yet, I believe that we need to slow down and patiently wait until we finally see all the elements of a film — the visuals, the sound, the music, the voice acting — in action before criticizing it. We live in a world where Chris Pratt being the voice of Mario somehow works after all!



## VICTORIA STEINER



junior | psychology

I play games for THE LORE

# FINDING TRANS REPRESENTATION IN TRIGUN STAMPEDE



Trans representation can be pretty hard to find, even in the modern era. A lot of it has historically been either caricatured or outright bigoted, as seen in movies like “Dressed to Kill” or “Ace Ventura: Pet Detective” which treat trans people as both a threat and a punchline. Even when it is presented in a positive light, it can be bland, uninteresting, or easily skippable. To paint a picture, if you google “best trans characters in video games”, a not insignificant amount of ranked lists include “sex workers from ‘GTA: V’” as like, number eleven, so we’re working with a pretty small pool here. However, that isn’t to say that trans

representation is impossible to find, sometimes you just have to dig for it in the desert sands of a series like “Trigun”.

“Trigun Stampede” is a reboot/prologue to a Japanese space western manga named “Trigun”, which began serialization in 1995. The central conflict centers on two aliens of a species known as “plants”. These two characters, Vash the Stampede and Millions Knives, fundamentally disagree about the goodness of humans, with Vash believing humans are inherently good, if misguided, and Knives believing that humans exploit plants for their own gain and that they will never change. You might not hear ‘sci-fi space western about plant aliens and the inherent nature of humanity’ and connect it with the thought that ‘I bet that’s a wonderful vehicle for exploring the trans experience and gender expression’, but I’m here to tell you that it absolutely is.

I want to center the focus on Vash and Knives, the main two characters of “Trigun Stampede”. They’re twin brothers, which makes both their similarities and differences interesting to explore from a trans-analytical lens, but also how their place in the story — with Vash as protagonist and Knives as antagonist — changes how the subtext influences their narrative. These trans-subtextual elements are relevant to the plot and narrative of “Stampede” as a whole, rather than just being tacked on for aesthetic’s sake. A lot of the time, it seems like an easy fix for writers to just write in a trans or vaguely trans character, while ensuring they have as little to do with the plot as possible. A character like Krem from “Dragon Age: Inquisition” is a great example of being a mostly unimportant character outside of having one scene to explain what being transgender is. Krem is not an inherently bad character, however, he is not a central character to the plot until it comes time to explain his gender to the

design by: victoria bruno



audience. “Stampede” does not start with Vash saying “Sup guys, I’m here to be trans and shoot a cool gun,” but that doesn’t mean the trans narrative is absent altogether.

For reference on how obvious a lot of this evidence is, Vash and Knives are the only masculine-presenting individuals from a race that is made up entirely of female and feminine-presenting plants, which is so overt that I’m hesitant to even label it “subtext”.

Starting with Vash, “Trigun Stampede’s” director Kenji Muto has been surprisingly open to many different interpretations of Vash’s gender identity. He’s liked art on Twitter of Vash dressed in the nonbinary flag, and retweeted similar kinds of art that celebrate Vash’s gender. If you want a good way to spend an hour, scroll through Kenji Muto’s Twitter likes and let the good trans vibes wash over you. One of the show’s head writers has even stated that Vash represents both a stereotypically male and female place in the story, as he’s the hero, but he is also there to be “gazed upon and desired”, as compared to the women present in “Stampede” who are not framed in this way. Even beyond external validation from showrunners, Vash’s fluid gender is most explicitly shown in a scene from episode eleven, where he effectively gives birth to a bunch of other plants as a result of Knives’s plan. A series of thousands of inactive plants are awakened after Vash connects with them through a stem-like aperture, and within the scene, the moment is referred to as a birth. This places Vash into a more typically feminine role, but the show does not refer to him as a mother. He is still very much a man, yet he is giving birth to many other plants. Vash’s mix of feminine and masculine characteristics makes him one of the most obvious examples of transness and gender exploration within the story.

Moving onto Knives, he has had less stated externally by showrunners about his gender, but the subtext with Knives is incredibly apparent. On a physical level — if you’ll forgive my being crude — Knives is very noticeably “smooth like a Ken doll” whenever his body’s form is visible. Despite being a lot more stereotypically masculine than Vash, as Knives is extremely muscular and has a very deep voice, there are still physical indications that imply gender ambiguity. Vash and Knives are the only male-presenting people amongst an entire alien race of female plants, and Knives being more masculine does not diminish that fact. I argue that it bolsters it, as plenty of transmasculine people identify with this somewhat traditional vision of masculine identity.

One of the most classic ways that trans people are able to connect with characters in media is when characters go through some sort of physical transformation into something different. A classic example of this is Grell from “Black Butler”, who first appears in that show as a male butler, before going through a transformation that reveals that she is a woman. Her hair grows incredibly long, and her face becomes slightly more feminine with longer eyelashes and thinner eyebrows. The audience comes to understand that this transformation is the “true self”. Usually, the transformation is understood as some kind of “metamorphosis” of the body, which is something that both Vash and Knives go through in the final episode of Trigun, both of them sprouting a single wing out of their shoulder blade. Vash’s transformation goes one step further, with much of his appearance changing to align with the ideal self inside of him — the transformed design shares many similarities with Vash’s manga and 1998 anime adaptation designs. There’s a lot of other symbolism present within these changes, but I find that the act of transforming into what Trigun fans will recognize as the “true” Vash design works as a parallel to the trans experience of growing into your ideal self.

You might think the trans subtext within “Trigun Stampede” is a result of it having been released in 2023, however even as far back as 1995, “Trigun” has been playing with gender and trans representation as a way to tell its story. “Trigun” manga fans might have noticed that in the discussion of trans representation, I’ve very noticeably skipped over an obvious example named Elendira the Crimssonail. In the manga, she’s considered one of the strongest antagonists in the story — and she happens to be trans. As far as her actual representation, the manga is not perfect by many standards, but does a solid job at communicating Elendira’s gender to the audience. There is a humorous moment with Elendira and another main character named Nicholas D. Wolfwood, where Wolfwood says “Blind faith, huh? From a man like you...” When he says this, Elendira looks away and doesn’t respond to the comment. Wolfwood corrects himself after a brief pause, instead saying “Woman like you...” to which Elendira snaps to attention. It’s a little clumsy but still remains a well-intentioned and funny moment that connected with a lot of manga readers.

In “Stampede”, Elendira is represented very differently, as a young child and a clone of Vash and Knives. Many fans of the “Trigun” manga took issue with this, and it’s not without reason — taking the one explicitly

trans character from the manga and changing her drastically can be very off putting. A lot of the arguments against Elendira is that her trans identity has been erased by doing this, and that people who watched “Stampede” as their first piece of “Trigun” media would have no idea Elendira was trans, which is a valid argument if we’re talking about explicit text.

If you were to ask my opinion, and by reading this article, you have, I would argue that this change, while not what I would have done if I was writing “Stampede”, does not invalidate Elendira’s identity as a trans woman. Not only can young people be trans and act upon these feelings in their presentation — and it’s important to remember “Stampede” works as a prologue as well — it is worth mentioning that Yasuhiro Nightow, the original writer of “Trigun”, has gone on to say that while Elendira in “Stampede” uses she/her, she is “neither male nor female”. Everyone will have their own interpretation of what that means, but I’d argue that being neither male nor female but choosing to present as a woman regardless does still qualify her as a trans woman. It’s worth noting that the manga does not use the phrase “transgender woman” to refer to Elendira, but the information is still communicated without being explicitly stated.

It can be frustrating to have to dig for subtext in order to find yourself in the media, and it’s an annoyance queer people have had to deal with for decades. Trans stories will always need to be told, especially now more than ever. Even when it becomes difficult to celebrate trans identity and trans narratives, there will always be ways to add subtext to your text, ways for people to identify with characters and their gender without explicit statements. In the world of “Trigun Stampede”, trans people are a part of the world, they’re intrinsically a part of the story, and you can’t write them out without cheapening the story “Trigun Stampede” is trying to tell.



**LUKA MCNAMARA-RAY**

junior | atec

Professional gaslighter and funnyman

# So You Don't Want To Live on the Street

Welcome back to “So You Don't Want To Live On The Street: UT Dallas,” the only game show where you pay us! I'm your host, Utena T. Daniels. Tonight, the stakes are high and the rent is even higher. Will our contestants secure a place on the UTD campus, or will they hang their heads in shame as they prepare to commute from their parents' houses for the next year? Find out tonight on “So You Don't Want To Live On The Street?” But first, let's take a look at all of this year's fabulous prizes!

## Residence Halls

The first stop for any freshmen seeking to live on campus is the residence halls! Located in 5 buildings tucked away in the furthest corner of campus, a spot here may seem affordable, but watch out! Living in the residence halls requires our young contestants also to get a meal plan, giving them access to delicious food for no further cost. Well, edible food anyway. Most of the time. Depending on the week. It's covered by the meal plan, and that's what matters, right folks? Everyone knows college kids are too worried about keeping that GPA up to care about what they're eating anyway. For parents, rest easy knowing your child is under the careful eye of peer advisors who will work to foster a connection between your child and the rest of their floor to ensure no student is isolated. Sure, plenty of students have never shared a wall with anyone, and may need time to adjust their volume level, but that's why our peer advisors are around — to ensure everyone is a respectful neighbor. With no cold water in some showers, freshmen won't have to worry about too-cold showers when they just need to get going — flip between uncomfortably warm and scalding at your leisure. The freshmen dorms are the perfect place for you to start your college career!

## Canyon Creek

Canyon Creek is one of two on-campus options available to students as dorm-style furnished apartments. Here, those UTD-goers who want to get their degrees and get out can thrive in a pleasantly sterile environment. Furnished with a kitchen in each dorm but no washer/dryer unit, the joys of cooking are more than enough to make up for the awkwardness of dropping your lingerie in the packed elevator as you bring your laundry down to the first-floor washer/dryers. It may not be prime real estate, located at the far edge of the UTD campus past the rarely-used athletic fields, but the 30-minute walk to campus provides students with the ability to stop and enjoy nature as they head to their classes. And



design by: izkra chavez

sure, you may end up rooming with a freshman due to overflow in the residence halls, but their fresh perspectives on UTD can be refreshing, compared to those who have been overly exposed to the soul-sucking nature of university life. Canyon Creek is — more than every other living space on campus — concerned with your safety. And yeah, scan-ins at every point from entering the building to entering the elevator can be inconvenient for groceries or carrying anything up, but you'll be thankful eventually, right? And the fire alarm may be on a hairpin trigger and force you outside at 3 A.M. because someone burned their popcorn, but, um, the fresh air is good for you? Point is, Canyon Creek is one of UTD's finest offerings, and our contestants would be lucky to live here!

## University Village

Our other on-campus option is University Village, with garden-style apartments. Our contestants better act fast, because this semester, University Village sold out as soon as in a month — wait, no, I'm getting word from our producers. Better get while the getting's good, folks! Taking up a third of UTD's campus but housing less than 10%, this prize puts you in the elite of UTD — those that actually live here! For those leaving the residence halls and Canyon Creek, the convenience of these apartment-style dorms will be a refresher, even if it puts you at greater risk of a break-in. The expansive, maze-like structure of UV ensures fantastic people watching as you watch lost, drunk frat men stumble their way home at 2 A.M., provided you can deal with the smell in the morning. And despite the- okay, no. Get someone on the phone. I'm not- I'm not telling people that the roaches in UV make good pets. That's not happening. They're massive! They're everywhere! You can't- no, being bigger doesn't make them easier to put a leash on, it makes them more efficient death machines. Telling someone otherwise is inhumane. This whole thing is inhumane! I'm not doing this!

## Northside

Northside is for the poor, damned souls who came from somewhere outside DFW but also couldn't find on-campus housing. No one goes to Northside, they end up at Northside, because it may not be nice, clean, or affordable, but it definitely is somewhere to live! There's a roof over your head! Usually! It's right off-campus, so you too can pay rent like you're living in Manhattan complete with random price gouging for people who have basically nowhere else to go. And just like Manhattan, Northside's most prominent residents are the rats! Literal, and metaphorical, because not only is Northside infested to the point that half of the cords and wires of anyone who lives there will be chewed through before you can say "hellscape," everyone you've ever met has a terrible ex who lives at Northside, so prepare to make awkward eye contact with the guy you met once while they were together who you know for a fact has committed multiple felonies. With a trash service that only comes once a week if you're lucky, watch in horror as trash piles up outside your neighbor's door, then realize in horror when your own trash fills up with days to go until the trash guys get there that you too have to join the hordes of trashbags giving Northside its distinct aroma. Enjoy fun new philosophical experiences at 4 A.M. when you're still awake because your neighbor's "chill kickback" is blasting Pitbull through the walls, realizing that oh, wait, this is hell actually! Open up your laptop to try to find somewhere, anywhere else to live, and find:



## Future Housing

Thank God, I- you say. UTD has purchased massive swaths of land, which must be to build new and improved housing. You can see it now. Cute apartments, functioning card swipe systems, convenient, on-call pest control. Fun neighbors you can get coffee with. Finally. You scroll, looking for a date to start construction, only to realize. The new land bought — which destroyed some of the already in high-demand parking spaces — is for an art museum. An ART MUSEUM, you might say? After suffering months of hearing roommates argue with their boyfriends through thin walls, after years of University Village as a whole, after eating at the dining hall willingly? Not only does UTD not see a need to change their housing system, but they're also taking up nearby land that could be a non-university complex to build an art museum. Now, there are a lot of things one could do with this information. One could call their parents, and ask to commute next year. One could rip their hair out and scream. Or, one could, hypothetically, reach out to official UTD housing. They could offer to make a cute promotional video for UTD housing about the housing on campus in the format of a game show. They could spend months infiltrating the system, finding personal information, and gaining the trust of the top dogs until the day the video comes out. And then they could, hypothetically, use the personal information they've found to politely request to the housing committee that maybe, just maybe, it would be in their best interest to change the purpose of that new land if they want to see their pets again. Hypothetically.

You have 24 hours, Kevin. Make them count.



**ELLIE MAGUIRE**

freshman | neuroscience  
geek who went greek

by: victoria bruno



Fly high Comets.

# AMP

[ampatutd@gmail.com](mailto:ampatutd@gmail.com)

Follow us on Instagram @amputd

Follow us on Twitter @AMPatUTD

[ampatutd.com](http://ampatutd.com)