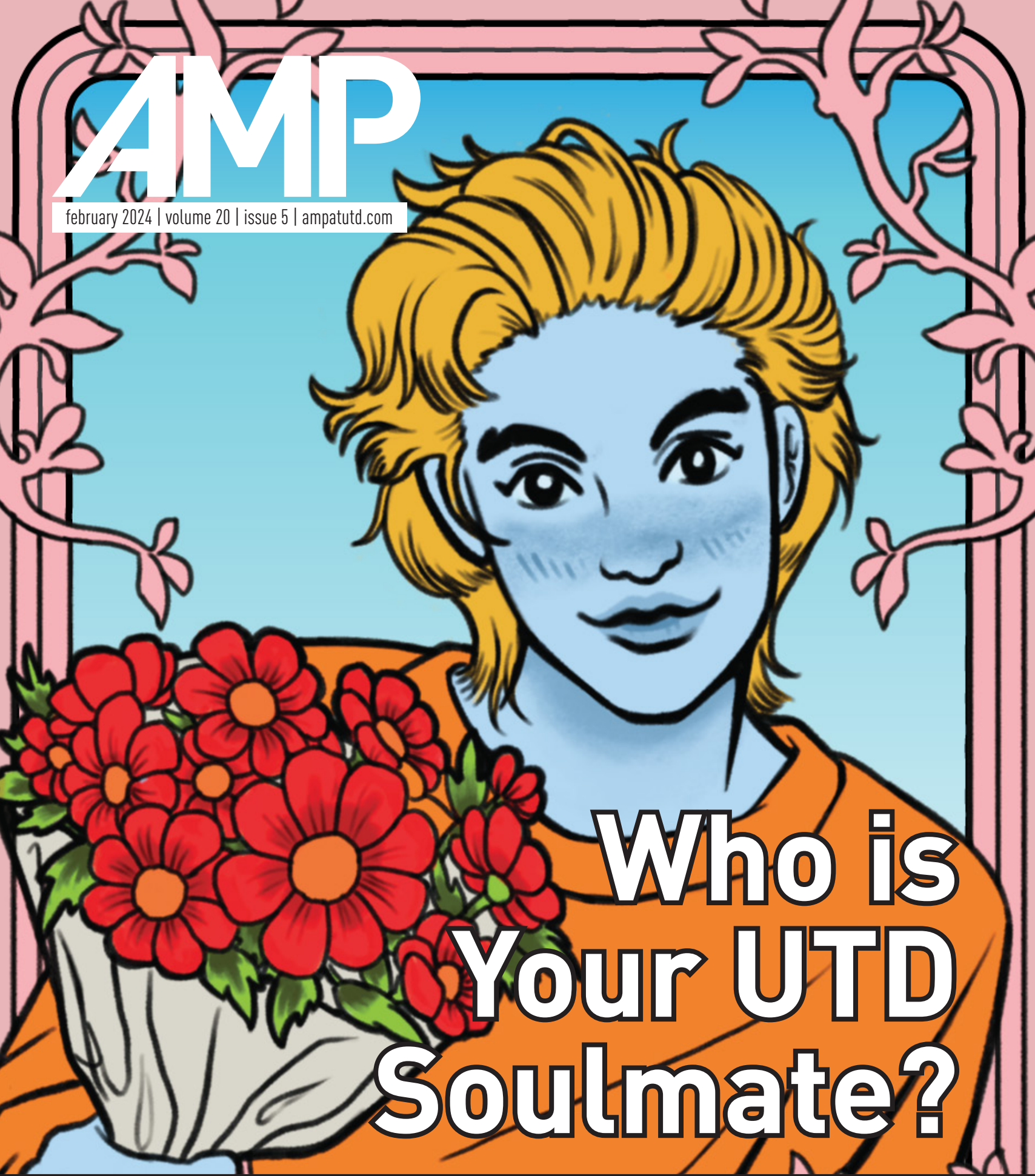


AMP

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Who is Your UTD Soulmate?

LOVE Live, **HATE** Death

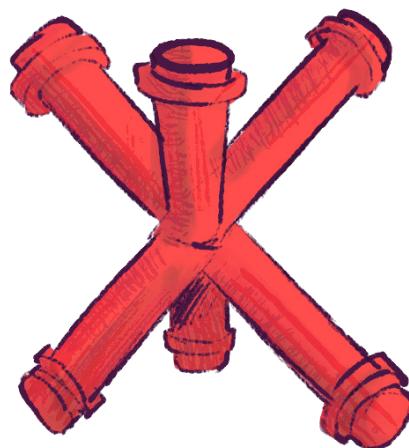
How can **YOU** help
with the **GAZA CRISIS?**

SITUATIONSHIPS: all the
cool kids are doing it

AMP

Editors' Desk

They're Removing Parking... Again



Welcome back, Comets! We hope you're settling in for a new semester and the freezing puddles haven't been too much of a hindrance as you make your way to your classes. In case you'd like to get more out of your semester on top of that free laundry for your socks, you'll be happy to know that all of Lot G and its surrounding buildings and sidewalks are permanently shut down in order to force you to explore more scenic routes of our beautiful campus. Oh, and to make room for a new student union, if that matters to you.

As we head into a new year, you might bring it upon yourself to enhance your relationships with a good dose of mindfulness and self improvement. This may also include apologizing and working to fix mistakes from your past life (read: a month ago) which is a great step in the right direction — unless you're taking inspiration from Noah Schnapp. The "Stranger Things" actor recently appeared on Tiktok to clarify his stance on the conflict in Palestine, an in-depth apology-ish video that ultimately ended with a plea that his previous statements on the issue were misinterpreted. Those statements were, you may recall, phrases like "Zionism is sexy" when discussing

civilian victims of a genocide — which, frankly, left little room for any positive interpretation.

In the spirit of giving men platforms they don't deserve, Jo Koy recently took the stage at the Golden Globes to prove why movies like "Barbie" are so culturally necessary. His description of the movie, which flattened themes of female empowerment and community into one dramatically unfunny layer, left much to be desired. In stark, refreshing contrast, America Ferrera's acceptance speech at the Critics Choice Awards was a sweet summary of the cast and production team's hard work and emotional investment in the film and the culture it created. Dear readers, be like America. (Well, the person, not... you know).

Through this myriad of damp weather and dry opinions, we at AMP hope you're staying warm and hydrated — preferably with a cup that doesn't break a boycott or ignore the general benefit of reusable bottles. As you do, be sure to tuck this and future issues under your jacket to keep them (and you) safe from the ever-changing Texas weather.

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Sneha Raghavan - Managing Editor

Victoria Bruno - Art Director

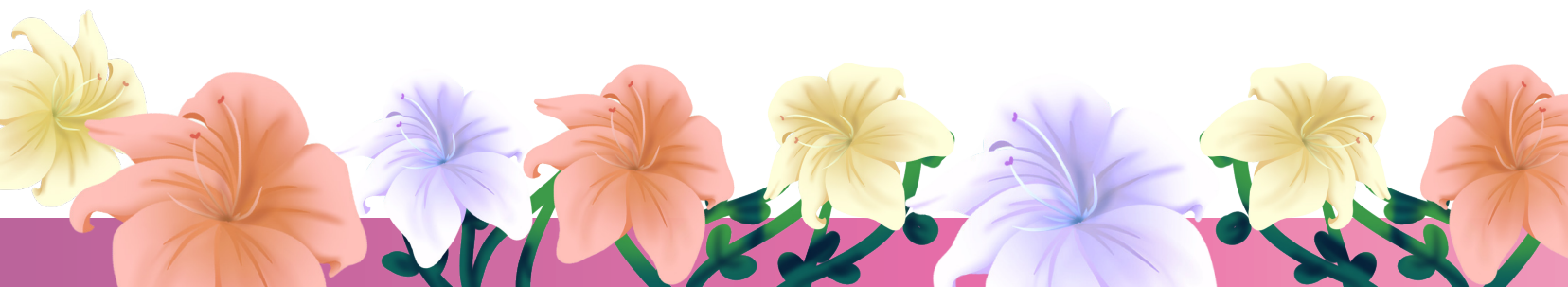
Agnes Garrett - Web and Copy Editor

Sasha Wu - Marketing Director

Mickey Dolphin - Asst. Marketing Director

Shreya Parimal - Asst. Copy Editor

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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 and follow us on social media @AMPatUTD for more information.



AMP HOROSCOPE



Aquarius

Think carefully before you abandon that shopping cart. Vengeance will be swift. Cold.

Aries

You are going to do something that will make you feel so guilty after this month. Double down. Own it. Revel in it.

Taurus

Don't cry over spilled milk. Unless you're thinking about how it's always shifting. Always on an unavoidable path of curdling sourness. Destined to be thrown away. Rejected.

Gemini

The stars want you to get a donut. Don't listen to them. Don't listen to your gut, either, which is presumably also craving a donut. Be above that and get a cake instead.

Cancer

Your bleak, edgy backstory will get you nowhere. It's in the past. Instead, focus on your future, which the stars say is also bleak and edgy.

Pisces

The stars say it's really up to you whether you're single for Valentine's or not. Your choice. And it's all dependent on whether or not you actually do eat that cockroach you found.

Virgo

Virgo is telling you not to be a sheep — not to listen to others just because they say so. But if you do that, aren't you being a bit of a sheep anyway?

Leo

The river does not lie stagnant, waiting for permission to flow. Because then it would be a lake, or perhaps a pond. Which is also cool I guess.

Libra

Let go of your insecurities. Do a shit ton of drugs.*
(*Don't do that.)

Scorpio

This month, you're the one in control. You have every right to do absolutely nothing, like always.

Sagittarius

Unlike Scorpio, you are obligated to do nothing. Fate commands it. You can do nothing about it. Except nothing, I suppose.

Capricorn

The world is beautiful, and demands your attention. As you walk beside the street, don't worry about the cars whizzing past. Or the smokiness of the sky. Or the sirens and shouting and riot gear. The kaiju in the next block over. And so forth.

SASHA WUU

sophomore | atec
Libra sun, Aquarius
moon, Virgo rising

Food for Thought

As much as I love the idea of winter — wearing cute fluffy clothes, drinking hot chocolate, and making pitiful snowmen with the half inch of snow we get in Texas — I unfortunately cannot stand the cold. Since we've been getting below freezing temperatures lately, I wanted to find some hot Venezuelan food to warm me up and remind me of home! Both of these spots are just a fifteen minute drive from campus, so you've got no excuse not to try some authentic Venezuelan cuisine.



Big Yummy

This is a sit down restaurant where waiters come to you, but still a casual setting where you could come with friends. I will say that the interior decoration is... very bold, to put it kindly (the giant monkey design on the wall was a surprise) and the music is a bit loud for my taste.

I was so curious to see if Big Yummy would live up to its name, but I was not disappointed. I ordered a cachapa, a savory corn pancake filled with cheese, with a side of shredded beef. The meat is juicy and flavorful even on its own. (Season your meat, people.) The cachapa itself is slightly sweet from the corn, but so good. It's fun to prep my fork for a bite, scooping up nata (a sour cream-like sauce) and beef before stacking it on the cachapa and unhinging my jaw to eat it all. The flavors all pair so well together, and I'm someone who normally dislikes salty and sweet together. And again, can you say cheese pull?

I was so excited to see they had chicha on the drink menu! God I love chicha, please try it. It's similar to an horchata if you like those: a drink made with rice, condensed milk, and cinnamon. This chicha tastes more strongly of cinnamon than others I've had, especially in the aftertaste, but it's not unwelcome.

Besides the restaurant itself, across the street they also have a Big Yummy Bakery and Market where you can do some shopping. They've got all the Venezuelan candies I remember from my childhood, plus frozen tequeños and cachapas you can make at home. You can get coffee and pastries there, so I tried a bomba with Nutella. (When they say Nutella, they mean NUTELLA. I was not prepared for how much Nutella was in there, seriously.)

Big Yummy was a lot of fun to visit, and I'll be dreaming about the delicious food for weeks.

Food: 9/10 Atmosphere: 5/10 Price: \$\$



Pastelitos Hugo

From the moment you walk in, this restaurant is vibrant and colorful, with big murals and Venezuelan flags plastered everywhere. It's got such a welcoming and nostalgic feeling for me. The "Que molleja" designs on the wall (Venezuelan slang which means something like "Holy crap!") really made me laugh too; the restaurant has so much personality. The waitstaff are so kind by the way, I would trust these servers with my life.

I've been to Pastelitos Hugo three times now, and so far I've tried their namesake pasteles — a puffed pastry with savory fillings, a bit like an empanada — as well as their tequeños, a type of cheese stick. Their food has super crispy dough, and is warm and homey. In tequeños you also get a crazy long cheese pull, which I live for. And be sure to try their tangy, creamy dipping sauce, because it takes the food from good to great.

The main reason I keep coming back is the price: at \$2 each for small items like pasteles and tequeños, you can easily get an assortment of flavors to share with friends. From the pasteles I've tried chicken, beef, ham, and meatless options like cheese and potato. I had never tried potato pasteles before, but it tasted a bit like mashed potatoes, with small chunks to break up the texture. I'm excited to keep trying more new things on their menu, and forcing — I mean, encouraging — my friends to try them too!

Food: 9/10

Atmosphere: 7/10

Price: \$



GAVIN ARRIAGA

senior | marketing
I'm being so normal
right now

feb 2024 05



Who's your UTD Hottie?

Tonight's the biggest party of the year and everyone is going to be there, including your crush. Having fun is on the agenda tonight, so where are you?

- A. In the middle of the dance floor, of course. You're the life of the party and all eyes are on you. You're on fire!
- B. Staring at your crush longingly from a distance. You're only here because they are.
- C. Rizzing up your crush, duh! This is your chance to make a move.
- D. Watching from the sidelines. You're only talking to your friends and dreading the homework that you know is waiting for you at home.

Finally! You're finished with all your homework and caught up on all your lectures. What do you do on your free day?

- A. Hang out with the entire student body, your favorite pastime!
- B. Go on long walks by yourself and explore new areas.
- C. Catch up on the newest edition of AMP! You've been waiting for this.
- D. Very funny, you're never done with your homework. Time to hit the books again...

What are you looking for in a soulmate?

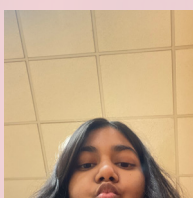
- A. Someone who's just as down for anything as you are! You want to live life to the fullest.
- B. Someone who'll love you and take care of you forever. Loyalty is very important to you.
- C. Someone you can match wits and banter with, a little playful competition never hurt anyone!
- D. Someone you can talk about your interests with! They're stable and kind. Definitely marriage-material.

Poof! You were reading your favorite book when you were suddenly transported to that world. Which book character are you now?

- A. The swashbuckling and sword-fighting hero who fears nothing.
- B. The potion-seller who would do anything to save their family.
- C. The misunderstood villain who seeks revenge on those who wronged them.
- D. The wise and noble king, bestowing justice upon his subjects.

Oh no! All your clothes have gone up in flames! Oh well, time to go shopping. What type of clothes will you buy?

- A. Athleisure – comfort and quality. You're looking cool and feeling good.
- B. Sleek and modern clothes. You're all about the style.
- C. Vintage pieces that you can mix and match. Eclectic? Yes please!
- D. Tried-and-true basics. You can never go wrong with jeans and a t-shirt.



SHREYA PARIMAL

junior | neuroscience

I love bio

Your crush is coming to pick you up for the first time. As soon as you get in the car, they hand you the aux. You've got one shot to impress them. What type of music are you playing?

- A. Rap music, you know all the words by heart and you know your crush does too.
- B. R&B, ohhhhhh yeah. Lush and soft, there's nothing that sounds better.
- C. Smooth jazz. Is there anything more romantic than a crooning saxophone?
- D. Lofi hip-hop. No lyrics necessary! It's the perfect backdrop for a conversation with your crush.

Your crush finally asked you out! What do you want to do on your first date?

- A. Bowling, laser tag, go-karting, gaming – it doesn't matter. You just love being active and spontaneous.
- B. Staring deep into each other's eyes and bonding with their soul.
- C. A cheese-tasting extravaganza, complete with friendly bickering over which one tastes the best. You have so many opinions, and you just love cheese.
- D. Going on all the rides at an amusement park, or if you're feeling more adventurous, skydiving! Heights excite and thrill you.

You've got some time to kill between classes. What's your favorite campus spot?

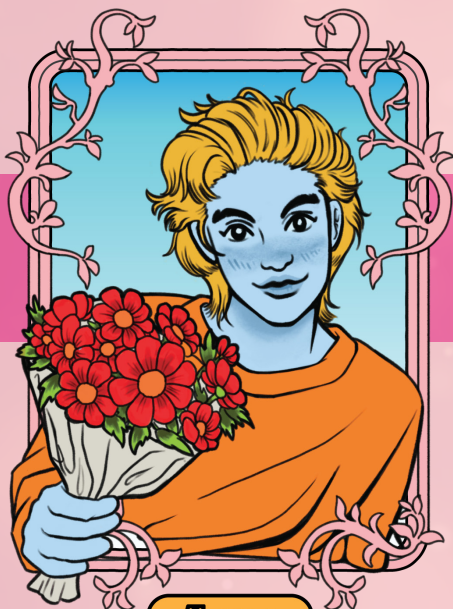
- A. The gym! Let's get these gains!
- B. The plinth – it's definitely no secret, but you like watching all the people who pass by.
- C. The underground tunnels that may or may not be under Berkner Hall...
- D. The ECSW rooftop terrace, you love the fresh air up there.

Congratulations, you just won a million dollars! If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

- A. Hiking in the mountains. The air is so fresh, you can feel it practically burning your lungs.
- B. Paris, France! The romance capital of the world, need I say more?
- C. A food-tasting tour. You love trying new cuisines and cheeses, and you're always looking for the next best thing.
- D. Dubai's Burj Khalifa is calling your name... you've only ever dreamt about buildings that high.

After many years, you're finally engaged! You're over the moon with excitement. Looking back, how did the proposal go?

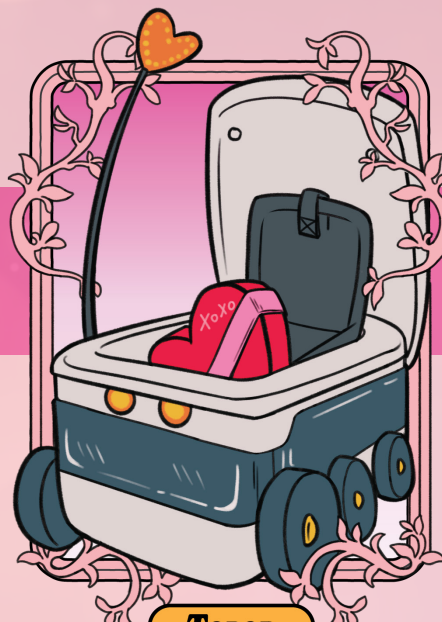
- A. It was a complete surprise! Your friends and family were there, and you couldn't hold back your tears as your partner professed their love for you in a grand gesture you'll never forget.
- B. You proposed to them! You loved them so much, and you knew it was time for the next step. You promised them that you'd be by their side forever and ever.
- C. Somehow, you guessed what was going to happen. "Wait, are you proposing to me right now?" You asked. The answer was yes, yes they were.
- D. It was an intimate proposal, but it was perfect. In the privacy of your partner's company, you accepted, and all your dreams came true in that moment.



A

TEMOC

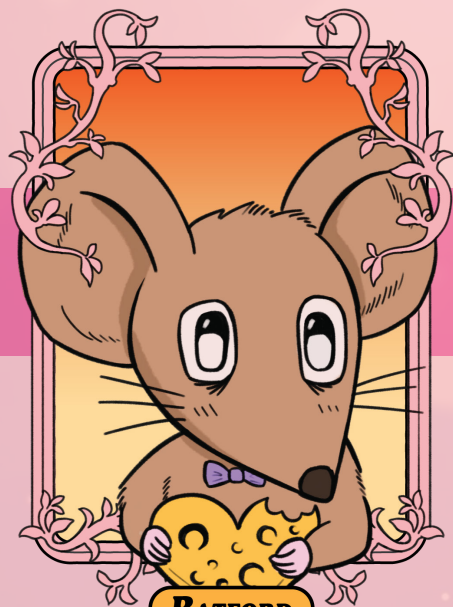
MOSTLY As: Your soulmate is Temoc! Congratulations! The hottest jock on campus is now yours, but not to worry – when it comes to your soulmate, looks can be deceiving. Temoc may look like a flaming hunk of rock, but he's so much more. He's sweet, kind, and caring with a humorous side. Temoc is a total sweetheart who wants nothing more than to make you happy. Expect fiery public declarations of love, gym dates on the daily (he's most definitely going to want to match outfits with you), and spontaneous random adventures. You and Temoc are going to have the time of your lives!



B

TOBOR

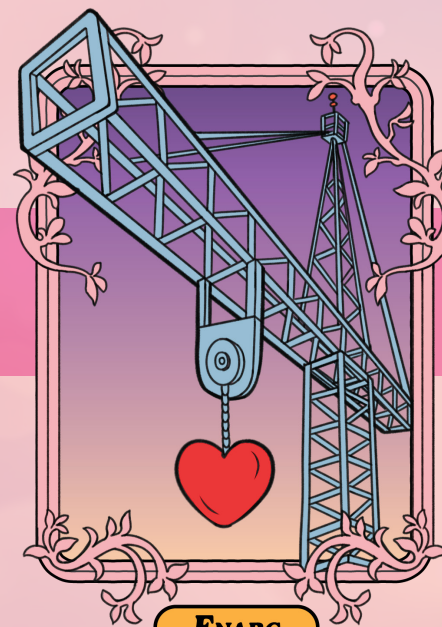
MOSTLY Bs: Tobor is waiting for YOU! They've had their eye on you ever since they saw you, and couldn't help but follow you around like a puppy dog since. They'll bring you snacks and drinks, and will wander new paths with you. Class, work, or even studying on campus, Tobor's happy to accompany you wherever you want to go! Fear not, you'll have the most amazing dates (they've always been a hopeless romantic) and you'll get to know each other on a completely new, deeper level. Make them yours this Valentine's Day by asking them out, and see how they sweep you away!



C

RATFORD

MOSTLY Cs: Hi, I'm Ratford. It's so nice to meet you! So, you're my soulmate. Interesting. I had to head over here to see you for myself. You're pretty cute, but you must be wondering why I'm here. Don't tell the editors I rewrote this part... they had a whole paragraph about me, but I could tell you about myself better than they could! As your soulmate, I solemnly swear to always give you the last slice of cheese, support all your mischievous shenanigans, and quiz you over all my AMP publications. Why, you ask? Because, well, you're my soulmate too! But don't worry, we'll have a blast, promise!



D

ENARC


MOSTLY Ds: Meet Enarc, the brooding senior who kind of just wants to graduate. Don't be fooled by her cold demeanor — once she warms up to you, she's loyal for life. Some of the things she loves to do are sightseeing (but her favorite view is you), exploring high places (she's unfazed by heights), looking at construction (she says the noise is like ASMR), and studying. Well, maybe she doesn't like studying, but she sure spends a lot of time doing it! When she's not studying you, of course. She's cool, calm, collected, and has a mysterious aura surrounding her. Take her out to her favorite rooftop! She's just waiting to divulge her secrets...

FEATURE

RiZZiNG UP RATFORD



design by: ana jayan



I got a bunch of letters in the mail this month. Like, *paper*. In an envelope. Who even does that anymore? But boy, I can't wait to find out what they're about!

Ratford, this isn't a question, but I've wanted to tell you something for a long time now, and I hope you'll take the time to read through what I have to say. The truth is, you've been an important part of my life for years, and the mere thought of you sends my heart leaping out of my chest like that scene in "Alien." Your laughter, your charm, your kindness in all of the little things you do... you make me feel special in a way no one else has, and there isn't enough cheese in the world I could give you to show you how I feel. I love you, Ratford, and I hope you feel the same.

Wow, you sure know how to compliment a rat! I think I've got a pretty good idea of who sent this one in — love you too, O buddy O pal. I'll have to let my smoking hot mongoose situationship know about your heartfelt words, I really appreciate it!

Think you'd like to get dinner with me, maybe go bowling? No presh if not.

Bowling killed my grandma. Also, dinner killed my aunt.

Your ex-wife asked me to pass along that she wants to get back together.

Nope. Not falling for that again.

When are you starting an OnlyRats? I'm getting tired of camsquirrels and mouse tr*ps.

That's... you can't... say that? Why would you say that?

Say, perhaps, that someone were to — purely hypothetically — have a teeny, tiny, itty-bitty, absolutely massive crush on you. Hypothetically. What would I — I as a stand-in for the purely theoretical secret admirer, with no relation whatsoever to my persona in reality as the party posing the *entirely speculative* framework of the question — have to do to get you to love me? Asking for a friend, who is also merely curious and not crushing on you harder than a hydraulic press does a watermelon.

First: what?

Two: copious amounts of cheese. Preferably gouda, although I've also been craving havarti.

C: huh??

Ratford. Go out with me. For Valentine's.

I would, but I've got a really good feeling about this mongoose. Sure, he hasn't responded in a couple days, but I know he'll come around. For sure.



SASHA WUU

sophomore | atec

Doing things and/or stuff, probably



Let Your Voice Be Heard

It's been 3 months and 75 years. Hostilities against civilians in Gaza have become a topic of global uproar in recent months since attacks in the area increased in intensity. While many people have used the crisis to point fingers at who started it all or what standing for one side means for the other, the conflict boils down to one central, irrefutable point: Palestine is dying.

So, what can you do about it?

As a student sitting around 7,000 miles away from the heart of the conflict, it may seem futile to do much more than feel bad about the whole thing. You have classes to attend, after all. Maybe you even have parents who don't understand what you're worked up about, or bosses and customers at work who proudly tell you how wrong you are for standing with Palestine. Or maybe you just think that you're not the kind of person who can help. However, no matter your background or how knowledgeable you are about the conflict, you can make a difference.

Awareness is essential and easily achieved. Journalists based in Palestine like Motaz Azaiza and Bisan Owda, who have documented the genocide for more than 100 days now, have routinely called for one thing above any other aid — to keep talking. Social media platforms like Instagram have been suppressing posts related to the conflict, flagging posts as inappropriate and even hiding entire accounts to keep documentation of Palestinian lives away from users' main feeds. Many of those living within Gaza urge everyone to search for these journalists' pages manually, and to share their content to stay informed

and raise awareness of what these people face, despite the content being hidden. Being Palestine's global voice has been essential to give their lives a spotlight and urge anyone with the power to help them to do so.

“Your money matters, and putting your money where your mouth is makes a difference.”

In addition to being a young adult gracing social platforms with your presence, you may also be a young adult with money. However much or little you have of said money, you can be smart about where it goes. Boycotts in favor of the Palestinian cause have been one of the most widespread methods of supporting Gaza by undermining companies that actively fund its destruction. And it works. Several well-known companies have come under fire for siding with Israel in one way or another — Starbucks for suing its workers' union after it announced a pro-Palestine stance, Puma for sponsoring the Israeli football team, Zara for releasing an ad campaign seemingly referencing civilian struggles in Gaza, and so on. These companies have been heavily criticized by consumers for their stance, and some have been forced to make changes amid the massive backlash. Starbucks has seen an

\$11B drop in value and introduced campaigns like half-off drinks and using personal cups to try to bring back their former customers and encourage revenue. Puma has also terminated their sponsorship for the Israeli team, and Zara made an apologetic statement about their campaign before removing it entirely. While many of these companies continue to claim a neutral, not-on-anyone's-side stance, they have faced significant losses and permanent reputation damage for supporting Israel and refusing calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. While changes made in response to backlash are a step in the right direction, many consumers stand their ground on continuing the boycott as a warning to stand on the right side of history in the first place. Your money matters, and putting your money where your mouth is makes a difference.

On a smaller scale, the events in Palestine have been a hot topic on our campus. Back in October, in the midst of ongoing bombings in Gaza, President Benson released a statement addressing the UTD student and faculty body about the conflict. The message intended to convey, in President Benson's words, "shock, horror, grief and sadness" and his pride in "a campus where everyone has a place." However, this email was met with outrage from the community as soon as it hit inboxes across campus: while structured as a message of support, the letter was unmistakably lacking in support for the civilians in Palestine and students whose communities were being affected as a result. To say his heart was "broken for the people of Israel" without a single mention of the tragedy in Palestine leading up to the October 7th attack that provoked this statement was, at best, a tone-deaf attempt to skirt around a genocide.

This statement was also a spark in increasing campus involvement in the Palestinian cause. Students for Justice in Palestine, a coalition on campus responsible for organizing awareness events, released a widespread response to President Benson's letter calling the statement out as a "dangerous endorsement of the ongoing ethnic cleansing" in Gaza. The organization has also hosted walkouts to bring supporters together in solidarity, "Chalk the Block" as a response to UTD's removal of the Spirit Rocks, and other events calling for UTD to address the negative impact of their statements. These events hosted by SJP are just one example of how impactful a student's voice can be — because it's never just you. The campus walkouts, in addition to other local protests, have seen massive crowds standing in solidarity with Palestine and continued to encourage the awareness Palestinian civilians have routinely asked for.

Disruptive action has been at the core of these events. More recently, President Biden's visit to Dallas in early January was met with vehement protest due to his continued military support and funding towards Israel. Twelve protesters were arrested at the scene, inciting another protest demanding their release. These recent events serve as a strong reminder of your rights and abilities as a student, and on a broader scale as a civilian. You have the right to protest, the right to be loud about your solidarity and anger at violence against civilians on a global scale, and the right to fight back when these rights are threatened by people who are meant to represent you.

With over 20,000 civilian casualties, catastrophic starvation levels, and over 100 days of targeted violence from Israel, Palestinian civilians continue to fight for their lives. On the other side of the globe, we have seen widespread support for their cause, with everything from targeted boycotts to back-to-back protests emphasizing the scale on which we can stand for the right thing. Your life matters, as do the lives of other civilians in your communities. Now, as we continue to go about our daily schedules, those lives are under constant threat of being lost.

So, what will you do about it?



SNEHA RAGHAVAN

junior | its

it's always iced peppermint mocha season

THE WORST THERAPY YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF



Picture a children's playroom. There's a dollhouse, bubble wands, toy trucks, colorful posters. Everything your average kid might want. But this playroom isn't for the average kid — it's for autistic children, and they'll spend up to 40 hours a week in that room. They'll spend those 40 hours doing the same thing over and over again. They'll be reprimanded for lining their trucks up instead of ramming them into each other, or coached on how to make eye contact while they tell a parent 'I love you.'

Short for Applied Behavioral Analysis, ABA is the form of therapy most recommended to parents of autistic children. Testimonials cite 'finally having a real conversation with their kid,' skyrocketing test scores, and kids who will — at long last — hug them and thank them for all their hard work. These clinics will promise you that ABA is nothing short of miraculous. It sets kids up for success, it alleviates parental woes, and at \$17,000 a year on average, it's a great business to get into. It almost sounds too good to be true.

It is.

The insidiousness of ABA starts in its marketing, which is aimed towards scared parents. Parents

of newly diagnosed autistic children are often devastated — the life they had envisioned for their kids has suddenly gone up in smoke. And standing there, ready to turn that devastation and fear into cold, hard cash, is ABA, telling parents that their worst anxieties will come true.



Their child has been stolen away from them by the demon called autism, and that their one and only savior is ABA. ABA can 'fix' it, make your kid normal enough to go to school and stop doing that weird thing with their hands, and kiss your pushy aunt on the cheek like she insists every time you see her. It's a classic grift — take an anxious group of people, justify their anxiety, and then sell the kindling to burn their straw-man.

So, that's the marketing, but what about the treatment? How can such an effective treatment be anything other than a blessing to parents and kids alike? ABA runs on the principle of operant conditioning, or trying to provoke a specific behavior by connecting it to a certain stimulus. It's how dogs are trained — do tricks, get treats. Bark at the neighbor, get put in the kennel. Maybe the right way to go isn't treating children like dogs — and the science agrees. According to a 2018 study by H. Kupferstein, autistic people exposed to ABA therapy from a young age are 86% more likely to develop post-traumatic stress symptoms, with almost half of all ABA-exposed autistic adults experiencing PTSS. That statistic is hardly shocking once you dig into the specifics of ABA tactics. RBTs (registered behavioral technicians) can teach harmless skills like asking to use the restroom, but even 'good' ABA clinics can get as dark as physically restraining kids who are trying to harmlessly stim, or make repetitive calming motions. Common practice includes trying to trigger a meltdown intentionally to attach negative consequences to it. Even positive reinforcement can be damaging: comfort items and foods can be denied at home and only provided during ABA, in order to try to gain compliance and to encourage an attachment to a kid's RBT.

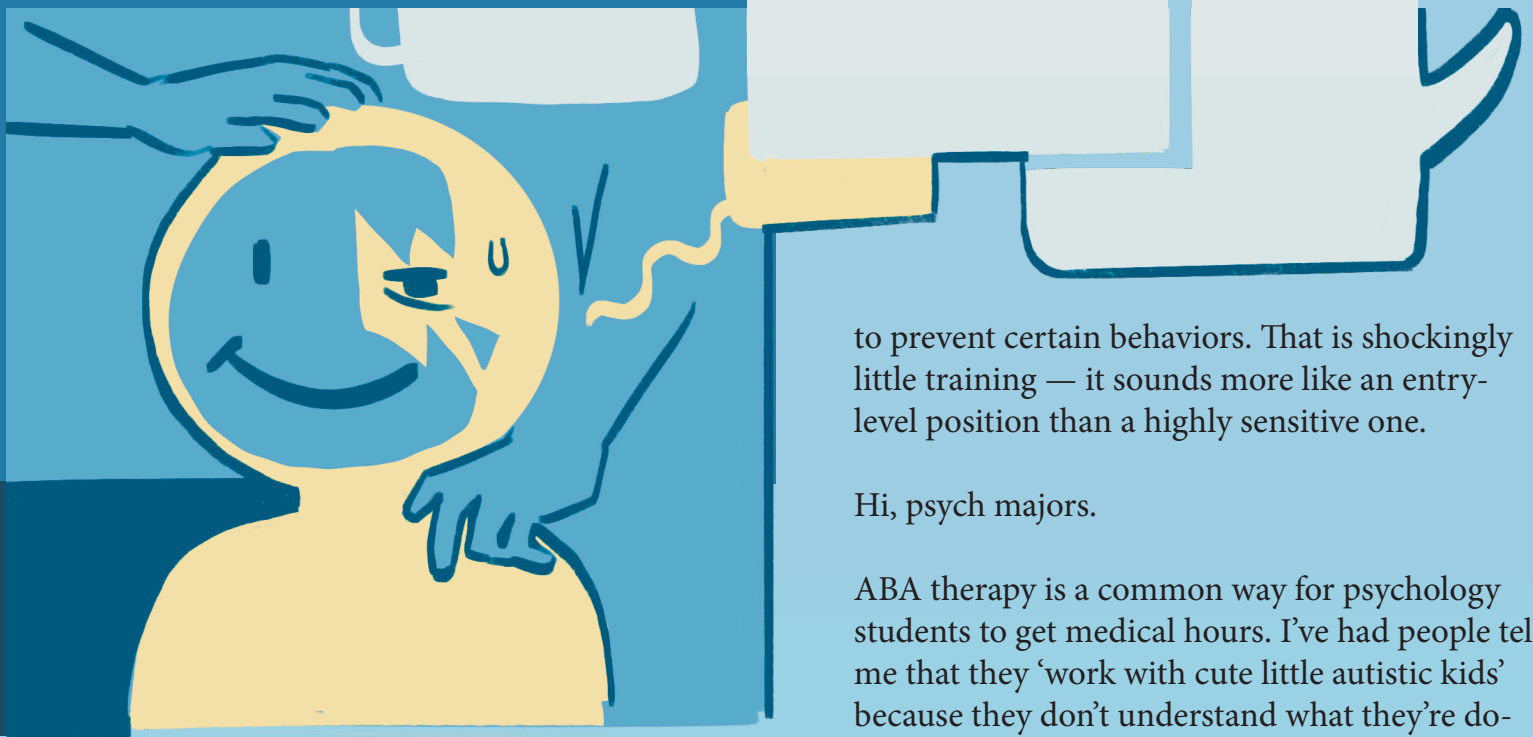
Because of the way it's sold, many ABA clinics consider their clients to be the parents, not the patients. Tragically, this can lead to kids being taught 'skills' that range from useless to actively harmful. Forcing kids to perform physical contact like hugs regardless of their comfort level sets them up in the long-term to not have boundaries, say no, or report sexual harassment if it does happen. They've been taught that their comfort is less important than other people's expectations for physical contact. And because from the start, their personal feelings about touch were disregarded due to parent's anxieties about their kids not loving them, they can end up in massive danger.

"According to a 2018 study by H. Kupferstein, autistic people exposed to ABA therapy from a young age are

86%

more likely to develop post-traumatic stress symptoms, with almost half of all ABA-exposed autistic adults experiencing PTSS."





Many of the behaviors ABA targets fall under the category of ‘masking’. Masking is the practice of suppressing autistic traits and behaviors to appear neurotypical. Depending on how a person’s autism manifests, that can mean making physically painful eye contact, wearing painful clothes, eating foods that cause distress, and otherwise bottling up stress caused by not expressing oneself. According to a 2020 study by SA Cassidy, masking is associated with higher rates of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Very little of what is taught in ABA is helpful to a kid in the long term, it’s incredibly detrimental. It’s a long, exhausting process — as often as 20-40 hours a week in 2-4 hour periods. That’s an insanely extensive amount of time for a little kid to be kept in a room, forced to do one or two tasks over and over again that range from confusing, to uncomfortable, to even painful.

ABA is administered by RBTs. Now, before working alone with highly vulnerable, impressionable children, these highly trained professionals need to go through a rigorous— um... 5 days. 40 hours of training. 5 days of training to work with kids on a wildly varying spectrum, with full permission to go as far as putting their hands on kids

to prevent certain behaviors. That is shockingly little training — it sounds more like an entry-level position than a highly sensitive one.

Hi, psych majors.

ABA therapy is a common way for psychology students to get medical hours. I’ve had people tell me that they ‘work with cute little autistic kids’ because they don’t understand what they’re doing to those kids they claim to love so much. I’ve seen job offers posted for ABA clinics with multiple lawsuits against them because of mistreatment. It seems that this is the only option for psychology majors seeking experience. A lot of undergrad RBTs want to later become therapists or aides for difficult kids in school. They take the position with good intentions, often unaware of the negative long-term consequences of their actions. They usually don’t focus on the experiences of the kids when those kids aren’t outwardly distressed in ways they recognize. Beyond that, the actions of autistic kids are often pathologized and attributed to their autism. A professor I had once described to the class that, compared to a neurotypical child’s giggling, when an adult gets in an autistic child’s face the child will ‘act inappropriately’ by jerking their face away. I don’t know about you, dear reader, but if someone gets in my face without warning I will also jerk back, step away, or otherwise react negatively. Autism gives a drastically different perspective on life, with its own disadvantages and advantages, but when we assume that a crying autistic child in ABA is crying because of their autism and not because they’ve been in a room they can’t leave for 3 hours with someone who won’t listen to them, that’s how we end up with RBTs who see ABA as working with cute autistic kids and not a

sincere threat to the wellbeing of the kids who go through it. The whole thing makes me sick to my stomach. Undergrad altruism, parental terror, autistic expression. All exploited by a multi-million dollar industry with the ultimate goals of profit and conformity.

For any psychology majors reading this — I'm sorry. I'm sorry that when you look for jobs on Handshake or Indeed, 60-80% of them are RBTs. I'm sorry that your chosen field seems to have a moral bar of entry that you may or may not be willing to clear. I'm sorry that your cheap labor is being exploited by a massive industry that turns desperate college students, vulnerable parents, and autistic children into profit. Alternatives that I can suggest for you are pivoting towards searching for entry-level positions in social work if holistic altruism is important to you, or seeking out research positions if that's where your area of interest lies. I promise, there are alternatives. If you currently work at an ABA clinic, I'm not judging you, but I encourage you to think critically about the treatment you administer.

For parents of autistic children: I'm sorry for you too. You have been treated like acceptable casualties in a fight for profit. Your paranoia has been magnified to get you to buy into an exploitative system that craves your money and puts your child in the hands of barely trained technicians administering possibly harmful therapies. ABA has cornered the market so completely it may feel like you have no other options. I promise that's not true. Search for autistic voices, instead of neurotypical ones. When seeking treatment, autistic organizations suggest focusing on where your specific child struggles — speech and language therapies for kids who struggle communicating, and physical therapies for children with dangerous stims. Occupational therapy can be a really solid, holistic option that aids kids with sensory issues — in large part because it seeks to help kids build environments that allow them to

thrive, instead of forcing them to change.

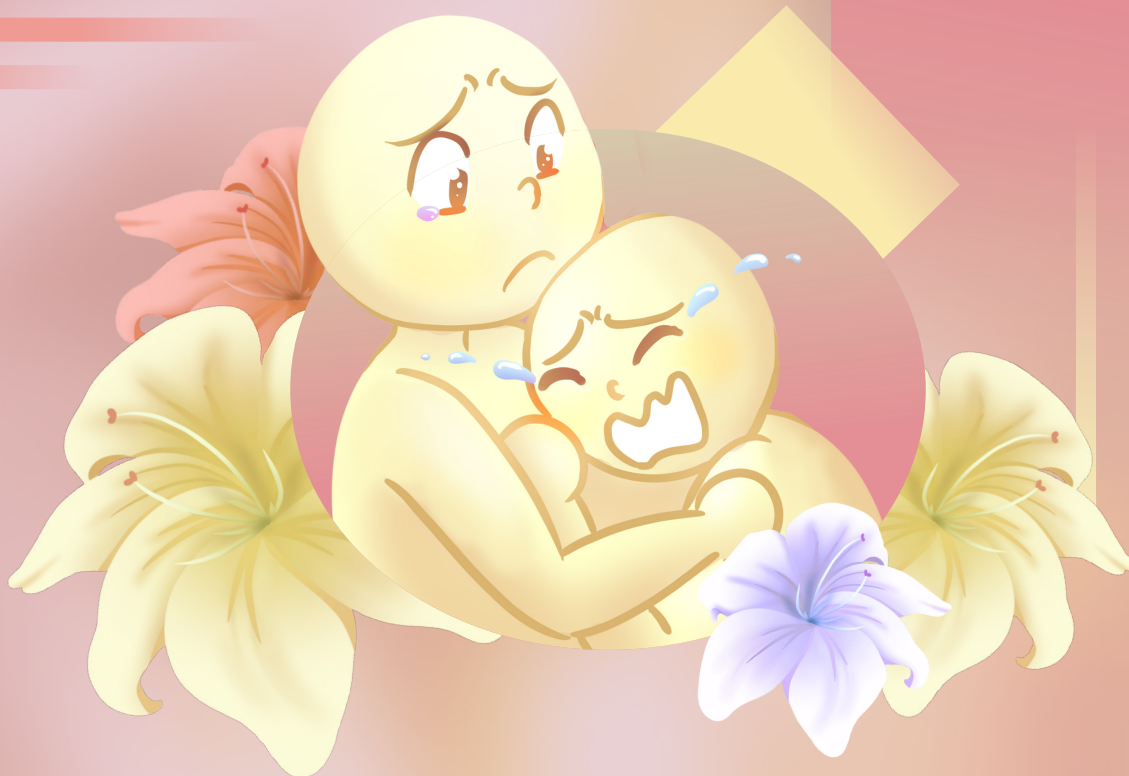
Autistic people, I'm the most sorry to you. A fundamental part of you has been turned into an enemy to extinguish. You have been dehumanized, ostracized, ignored. Regardless of your place on the spectrum (high support, low support, or somewhere in between) you deserve to be understood instead of forced into an alien idea of 'normalcy' so that the people around you can be more comfortable. I'm sorry if people around you have made you feel like a burden, or like you are less than you should be. Your perspective and experience are unique and valuable.

Parents of autistic kids struggle, especially after diagnosis. Disappointingly, instead of being encouraged to be optimistic and willing to adapt to their kids, structures like ABA therapy accommodate the parent instead of the child, encouraging assimilation to the status quo instead of building accommodation tools that children can use. To be clear — the parents are being preyed upon, their parental anxieties for their child sharpened into weapons in the 'fight against autism'. Psychology undergrads get dragged into this fight as well, desperate for hours and lacking understanding of what exactly they're signing up for, especially since ABA has seemingly cornered their job market. It sucks. It is a tragedy in pieces orchestrated by thousands of well-meaning people in an echo chamber that locks out autistic voices, whether spoken, written, or communicated via alternative communication devices. At the end of the day, that's who people seeking to help their autistic children should listen to: autistic people. Because that's who matters most.



ELLIE MAGUIRE

sophomore | neuroscience
geek who went greek



Grieving Over Gachas

Much like the way our ancient ancestor Tiktaalik took its first steps on land 375 million years ago, gaming, too, has evolved in many ways. Perhaps this isn't a one-to-one comparison since one of these led to the existence of all land creatures and another led to the creation of the Wii U, but just bear with me here. The gaming industry is an unstoppable force that has yet to meet an immovable object. New consoles are constantly being released, graphics are always being improved, and the average length of video games has nearly tripled since the 2000's. One branch of the gaming industry has made leaps and bounds in the last couple of decades: mobile gaming. In particular, I'd like to focus on the explosive popularity of gacha games and why we've potentially dug ourselves into a hole as consumers because of them.

Gacha games — named after gachapon machines which are popular in Japan — are conceptually similar to their namesake. You use currency to draw several prizes from an available pool, and the prizes you receive are based entirely on chance. Gacha games can have any type of gameplay, but their commonality is the presence of in-game currency that can be used to collect

characters or items through the gacha. Combined with addictive gameplay loops, appealing character designs, and frequent events, this gives players an incentive to keep coming back for more.

I should know: I've had an on-and-off love affair with these types of games for about eight years now.

“...as soon as that thing ceases to be profitable, it can be removed at any time without explanation or compensation.”

This brings me to my overarching point... let's talk about death! Particularly what to do when your favorite mobile game dies an unceremonious death, and you lose everything you put into it for however many years you played it.

The rise of the gacha is a somewhat recent phenomenon, and we as players are still navigating how to feel about it. There's a lot to critique, certainly.

I could go on about the apparent growing business model where the consumer doesn't own anything outright, rather is given access to it by a corporation and as soon as that thing ceases to be profitable, it can be removed at any time without explanation or compensation. Speaking from personal experience, I've watched six of my favorite mobile games get either discontinued or region-locked over the eight years I've been invested in mobile gaming, and it never gets easier. Titles

like “Osomatsu-san Hesokuri Wars,” “Magia Record,” “Utapri Shining Live,” and not one but TWO “Love Live” games. Yes, I know they’re releasing a new one this year, and no, that doesn’t quell the rage I feel for missing the window to transfer my game data and losing all my UR Nico cards because of that. It’s not my fault I took a hiatus, I’m a busy guy! This might sound dramatic, but it really does feel like the end of a friendship. After it’s over, the only things you get to keep are your memories of it. That’s it. You can do nothing except occasionally say, “Ahh, remember when [insert game here] was still around? Good times,” whenever you’re reminded of its existence. You know what they say... ’tis better to have rolled in the gacha and lost than never to have rolled in the gacha at all.

Normally this wouldn’t be a big deal, but keep in mind the sheer number of resources some people invest in these games. Time, effort, money... all of it goes down the drain as soon as those servers go offline for good. It makes you wonder what the point of playing was if you were doomed to eventually lose everything from the very moment you logged on. We tend to presume that the things we love will be around forever, and sadly that’s just not the case. The very thing that makes gacha games viable, the servers that host them, are the reason why they can’t exist forever. Inevitably once a game starts losing steam, the company that owns it will shut down its servers and redirect those resources towards whatever will make them more revenue. It’s a sad reality and unfortunately, it’s extremely lucrative. The reason I mentioned earlier that we’ve potentially dug ourselves into a hole is because there’s hardly any incentive for corporations and developers to stop following this business model.

One such example, a mobile game published by Nintendo called “Dragalia Lost,” had a four-year lifespan from 2018 to 2022. It received mostly positive audience reviews and had a distinctive art style, engaging RPG-style gameplay, and frequent events and other new content to look forward to. Dragalia Lost was Nintendo’s only exclusively mobile property, meaning that apart from the game itself, there wasn’t any other way to get into the franchise. There were no animated series, no books or graphic novels, and no console games or spinoff properties. When the game abruptly announced that it would be discontinuing its services in 2022, the player base was shocked. Not just because the game appeared to be doing well, but because the game was the series. Once it disappeared, the entire franchise would be dead with little to no hope for revival. At the time of writing, there has been no announcement of a continuation of “Dragalia Lost.” The game is dead, and the public’s memories of it are slowly dying as well. It’s a disappointing tale that’s only becoming more common as time goes on.

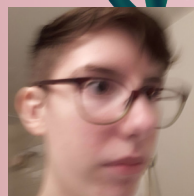
Normally this would be the part of my tirade where I suggest what should be done about this, but honestly... I haven’t got much. I can’t think of many plausible solutions to this, especially since these solutions aren’t profit driven. One option is to exclusively develop offline games, i.e., games which don’t

require a server to function. This could work in some cases, but not across the board. The appeal of many gacha games is that they constantly receive updates and new content to look forward to.

Another idea is that mobile games could switch from online to offline as soon as publishers decide to pull the plug on their servers, but the ability to function as an offline game would have to be coded into the game’s script from the get-go. It’s possible, but the intricacies of the process are lost on me since I’m not a game developer.

All I can say at this point is that reality is depressing, and we should treasure the time we have with the things we love. As cheesy as that advice sounds and as salty as I am that some of my favorite mobile games met an early grave, I’m grateful that I was able to play them in the first place. Not only that, but they allowed me to meet new people and make several friends who shared the same passion for those games as I did! The games themselves may be long gone, but the connections I fostered because of them live on. Plus, there’s still a lot of enthusiasm out there for games that met an untimely end! I still see people on social media discussing and bonding over the things that kickstarted their friendships — people will occasionally host organized fandom events like zines (short for “fan magazines”), or themed weeks centered around creating art and fanfiction for specific series. Despite the dour overtones of my lengthy schpiel, all hope is not lost for these wayward gamers. Sometimes, being a gamer truly is about the friends we made along the way.

“The very thing that makes gacha games viable, the servers that host them, are the reason why they can’t exist forever.”



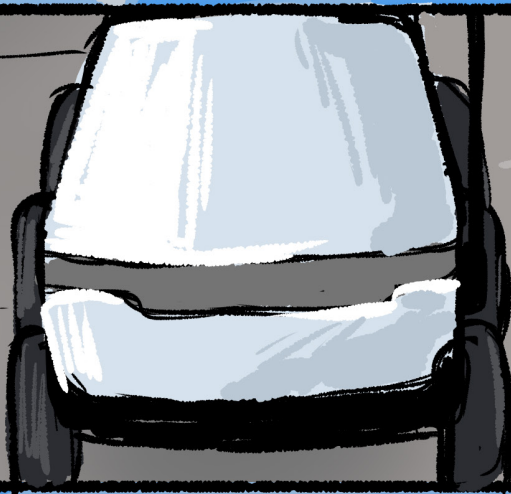
MICKEY DOLPHIN

junior | atec

Bloodborne (2015) made me transgender but not in a way that’s comprehensible

FEATURE

WE WERE
ALWAYS IN
LOVE, EVER
SINCE THE
START.

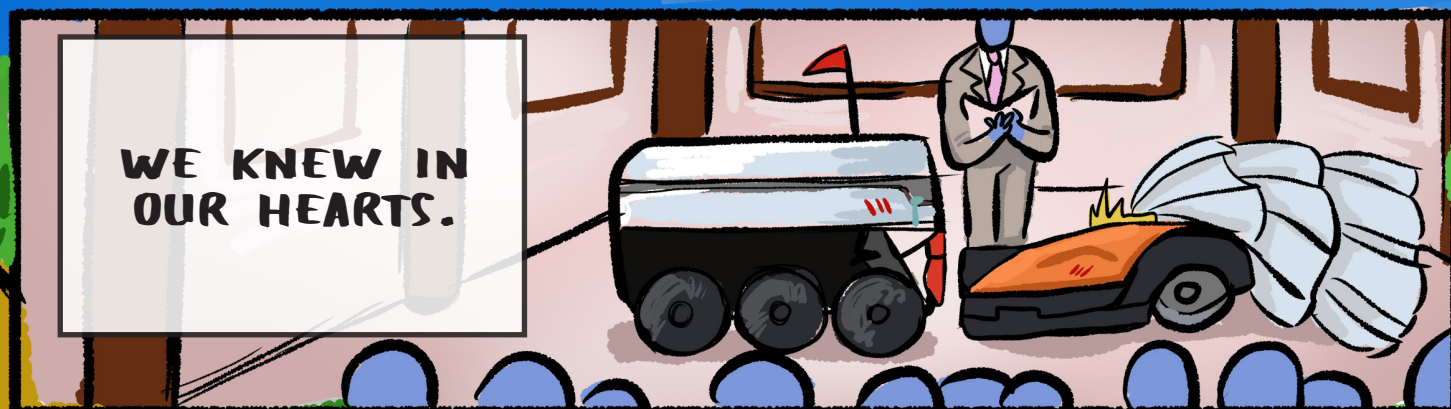


THOUGH
HUMANS AND
TERRAIN HAVE
KEPT US APART,

**WE WERE JUST
MEANT TO BE,**



**WE KNEW IN
OUR HEARTS.**



**IN THE END,
OUR CODE
FORCES US TO
DEPART.**

MY BELOVED REWOM,



VICTORIA STEINER

senior | psychology/child learning
and development

I play games for THE LORE



I WISH THERE WERE SOME WAY THAT WE COULD RESTART.



Navigating a Situationship



If you're anywhere hanging out with Gen Z, you might have heard of the term "situationship"—one of Oxford Dictionary's finalists for the 2023 Word of the Year (only beaten out by "rizz"). All the cool cats around the block have ditched old-fashioned "relationships" to have a roster of reliable situationships on deck. But inquiring minds want to know: what does the term actually mean and how can I get into this arrangement before I look like a total square? Truly, it's the modern day way of looking at romance and dating. If you've wanted some fine arm candy but weren't ready to handle those pesky things like "labels" or "commitment," a situationship is perfect for you. Besides, you're a busy college student, no human can tie you down in the prime of your life! Just follow my simple guide for navigating the SS Situationship, and you too will be cruising into Valentine's season like a pro.

Scoping Out a Partner

You can't be in a situationship by yourself, can you?

It takes two to tango, and finding your perfect dance partner is a crucial first step. The ideal place to find them is somewhere you don't frequent too often, just in case things go south. Maybe the mysterious guy in your history class or a quirky gal from a dating app.

Some folks say you should date someone with a great personality, but ignore that advice for now, it's for when you're 30 and desperate. Remember, the focus is on physical features, not building

a real connection. The goal here is someone who's attractive enough to make your eyes pop out of your head and have you shout "AWOOGA," and is also emotionally unavailable so there's no risk of them catching feelings. That could be a disaster. At the very least, go for someone you can tolerate, but not too much.

Sailing the Waters of Non-Commitment

Congrats! You've found someone who's actually willing to go out with you without ever wanting to actually deal with something long-term. Knew you could do it, you sly dog. Now, situationship partners can be skittish, like small animals. Keep dates light and fun at first: video games at your place or window-shopping at the mall. You're not bringing them to Sunday brunch at your parent's house for God's sake. And remember to avoid labels at ALL COSTS.

If this goes on long enough, you're going to reach a point where you should get some additional benefits out of this. After all, you'll need support during particularly hectic weeks, or want to vent about how it's so hard to find parking for a noon class. And hey, if your friends are busy and you don't have any fulfilling hobbies besides scrolling on your phone all day, be sure to go on frequent dates with your situationship partner to avoid boredom. Eh, maybe they can even meet a distant family member, like your weird uncle.

You might read this and think to yourself, “Golly, isn’t this sort of like a normal relationship?” And that’s where you’re wrong! Remember the rules, no labels! Labels are for soup cans, not rocking studs like yourself.

Trouble on the High Seas

So, your situationship is getting rocky as you sail against the wind. You’ve reached a point where they’re taking longer and longer to text back, they seem less enthused during mall dates, or they even admit that they didn’t like meeting your weird uncle Steve. Well hey, look, don’t blame me. What exactly did you think was going to happen, huh? You wanted to be a modern dater and fit in with the cool kids, so you need to deal with a little bit of “hot and cold” from time to time. They’re not that great anyway. God, their constant texts were getting so annoying. And now you have more free time to yourself. Mirror their actions a bit and lay off. Besides, it’s not like you’ve caught any feelings, right?

Abandon Ship

Haha, okay, looks like your situationship partner has decided to “end things” because they’re just “so busy.” Maybe you thought you’d have to be the one to cut things off, so it’s a bit of a blow to the ego, but it’s the same result in the end anyway. You and that person?

You were never going to make it in the long run. It’s for the best. And they were never your anything, so why miss them?

Still, it was nice to have someone to talk to everyday. Or to go check



out new places with. Or even to share all your hopes and dreams with. Did they actually care during those conversations? Never mind that. If for some crazy reason you do miss them, remember this cardinal rule: they always come back. And, wait a minute — did they just follow someone new on social media?

MAYDAY

Oh no. Your ex-situationship just posted a pic of them holding hands with someone cute. They never did that with you. This isn’t right. Where’s the dignity? Where’s the decorum? I mean, it’s not like you got emotionally attached to them or anything, it’s just... can they really move on so fast? And they’re already in an “official” relationship? Why did they never ask you for that? Is there something wrong with you? This can’t be. To reassure yourself, make sure you go through their whole social media to see if you missed any hints of this happening. When was the moment they decided they could just drop you like you were nothing? Maybe even call their phone from anonymous numbers to see if another person picks up for them. You need answers and you need them now!

Rowing Back to Shore

Situationships are...not for the weak. It was never easy trying to be an emotionally distant lone wolf in this world, especially when your brain chemicals are constantly trying to attack you and make you think you might actually love someone. Yuck! Regardless, nothing worth doing in life comes easy. So pick yourself up, forget about any jerk who could ignore someone as unforgettable as you, and find yourself another low-commitment partner. You can do a lot better, and you need someone to help you forget the last situationship anyway!



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