

THE Grauer Gazette

No. 24

ENCINITAS, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH, 2025

The Grauer School

Be the Reason Someone is Grateful

By Isabella M.

It is that time of year again when the leaves start to change, a feast is prepared, and people across the country give thanks. While celebrating this beloved holiday of Thanksgiving, it is important to reflect on its origin and how its meaning has shifted as societal values have.



In September of 1620, a ship called the Mayflower brought 102 passengers from Plymouth, England, who were in search of the “New World.” They eventually arrived and settled in Massachusetts. Choosing to stay on the ship, only half of the passengers survived the first winter. In March, many passengers moved ashore where they were greeted (in English) by a member of the Abenaki Tribe. Members of the tribe taught the pilgrims how to harvest food, and helped them

make an alliance with the Wampanoag tribe. In 1921, after the pilgrims’ first successful harvest of corn, there was a celebrative feast and festival that lasted 3 days.

However, when looking at the history of Thanksgiving, it is incredibly important to note that this festival was one of the few peaceful interactions between Colonists and Native Americans. When celebrating this holiday, it can be overlooked that colonists later performed a genocide on Native Americans during their westward expansion.

While Thanksgiving was celebrated almost every year, it did not become a national holiday until Abraham Lincoln used it as a way to ease tensions between the North and South at the height of the Civil War



Thanksgiving today has become a source of connection between family and friends, a meal to celebrate what we have in this world to be grateful for. As families recover from the most recent Government shutdown and the effects it has had on them, find a way to support them. There are so many things that you could do: volunteer at a homeless shelter or food bank, pay for groceries for someone who may need it, or even simpler acts of kindness; invite more people to your Thanksgiving table, buy your parents some flowers, or give them an extra hug. There are an overwhelming amount of ways we can express gratitude and show kindness.

Keep in mind where this holiday came from, but don’t let it take away from what it celebrates today. Find ways to be the reason someone is grateful and make a positive impact, however you can.

Things to Know About the Pep Rally!

By Zoe Ba.

The Pep Rally is Grauer’s ultimate day of school spirit and intra-grade rivalry. Each grade is encouraged to dress in their class colors, not only to bond further with their classmates but also to begin racking up points—because to win, every single point matters! During CVP Advisories, students selected a song and began practicing the choreography to go along with it. Each grade will be ranked today based on the performance they demonstrate to our esteemed judges: Alicia, Trevor, Fariba, and Ryan. After performing, the students will compete in a multitude of activities: Tug-of-War, Obstacle Course Racing, Limbo, and Puzzle Stacking! The grade with the most points at the end of the Pep Rally will not only win a trophy but also a pizza party!



Although the Pep Rally is a period of enthusiasm for the students, the participation goes beyond campus through the school’s annual “Giving Day”. Every year, the Pep Rally is coordinated to align with this important event. In order to support the Grauer School’s ambition of raising funds for the school’s programs, parents are encouraged to donate money to help their student’s class earn points. All the money donated goes towards creating new “hands-on” projects, programs, and opportunities that further promote the school’s motto of “learning by discovery”.

Regardless of whether you are participating in the Pep Rally to support the Grauer school, get competitive, or win some yummy pizza, today is going to be a great day to have fun and get closer to your classmates! Let’s Go Grauer!

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Café Night (x2): Success!

Zoe Br.

Congratulations to all the amazing musicians, actors, and crew who put on the high school Music Café Night (November 6th) and Theatre Café Night (November 13th)! Each year, the two departments use performances as a way to show off what they have been working on and practice the stage skills that are hard to master in class alone.



The musicians brought a new-found stage presence that the audience complemented all night. Their smiles and energy left the crowd joyful. Three periods participated, including kids from all

four high school classes. New-to-the-program students shone in almost every song and proved (to a room full of people who already know) how talented and passionate they are. The show featured songs in all genres, from ballads to rap, as well as songs from the 70s to now. Surprise guest, Clayton Payne, thrilled the audience with his drumming skills, complementing the fantastic student musicians.

A week later, Meyer Hall had been transformed from a concert hall to a live theatre club. The actors lit up the stage with group scenes and individual monologues alike. Students new to the stage showed off their amazing memorization skills, while veterans continued to wow the audience with enthusiasm and poise. The performance was bookended by scenes from *The Notebook* and had a range of themes from teenage drama to a jury room. Their passion

was radiant as group after group took the stage, helping to set up their props before seamlessly transitioning into character.



An absolute bravo to all the performers! Everyone did such an amazing job. These performances are a highlight of Grauer, allowing students to really showcase what they want to be doing in their respective arts. If you happened to miss these events, there will be more to look forward to, including plays and live music, in the coming months.

S & S: Shutdown and SNAP

By Sadie S.M.

The longest United States government shutdown has come to an end. On November 13, 2025, forty-three days after the shutdown began, a new funding bill finally passed. The piece of legislation was passed by the House, the Senate, and finally by President Donald Trump, putting an official end to the shutdown. For just over a month, U.S. citizens waited and watched as the federal halt caused 1.3 million layoffs and an overall slowdown in society. Like many things, nationwide SNAP benefits were severely impacted due to this standstill. However, as the shutdown finishes, what does this now entail for the future of SNAP and the millions of people who rely on the benefits

When the federal government came to a close on October 1, 2025, there was an utmost concern about what would happen to federally regulated SNAP benefits. To clarify, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) facilitates the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It is an initiative dedicated to assisting low-income individuals who



struggle to meet their day-to-day needs. Many U.S. citizens depend on SNAP benefits for their livelihood; it is essential for a large number of Americans. Although the program is crucial for many reasons, it is solely dependent on the federal annual budget. That is why, when the government shutdown began, people across the country began raising concerns about the continuation of the program.

The USDA officially announced that no additional funding for SNAP was available after November 1, 2025, leaving many Americans in a horrific situation. Twenty-five states and Washington, D.C., quickly filed a lawsuit against the USDA for suspending the program, and on Octo-

ber 31, 2025, two federal judges ruled that the government must continue the funding. Sadly, neither of these efforts prevented the demise of the benefits. This cease in SNAP sponsorship presented a harsh decision for many Americans: whether to pay for food to feed their families or necessities like clothing and sanitary items. It was a tragic decision by the U.S. leaders that forced millions of Americans to make the most incomprehensible choices.

On a positive note, with the restoration of government functions, the program is declared to begin once again. A federal agent even stated that most states will receive their SNAP money “within 24 hours” of the restart, and that benefits should relatively pick up where they left off until the government budget in September 2026. The past month was overwhelming for the vast majority of Americans; the limitations of SNAP benefits severely changed many people’s lives. However, society should make a full recovery from this period, and hopefully, it will change the way everyone addresses these necessities.

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Prop 50: What is it and What does it Mean

By Zoe Ba.

On November 4, 2025, California passed a constitutional amendment called “Prop 50”. This amendment states that for the following 2026, 2028, and 2030 House elections, the California state will utilize the maps drawn by the state Legislature for the electing process rather than the independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission (they normally only curate maps once every ten years). However, after the 2030 census, the independent commission will recommence drawing the maps.

When this amendment was first put on the ballot, it was under harsh debate because the state Legislature is only controlled by the Democratic party. Gerrymandering (redistricting in a biased manner) has always been a moral dilemma because it tends to defeat the purpose of fair representation in the House. Much of the advertising used by the Democratic party for “Prop 50”



utilized comparisons to the redistricting occurring in Texas. It is predicted that districts in areas such as Houston, Dallas, and Austin, will end up shifting even more power into the Republican party’s hands. The idea of “Prop 50” is to combat the number of seats gained by the Republican party. This means that even with the new House seats won in Texas, the Republican party will

also have to recover their lost California House seats. Now that the bill is passed, it is predicted that around 5 Republican held House seats could turn in favor of the Left in California.

California is not the only state attempting to pass redistricting amendments. States such as Virginia and Maryland have also been redrawing their maps to weaken Republican power in certain districts. It has become clear that Americans are unhappy with the way the current administration has been conducting their power. Much of the cause for distress comes from the government shut down, the loss of SNAP benefits, and more. Around 64% of people voted yes on “Prop 50”, meaning that 7.3 million California residents were willing to challenge their values in order to regain some of the control that has been lost. This just goes to demonstrate how impactful your vote can be.

The New York Election

By Luke W.

On the evening of November 4, Democratic Socialist Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City. One year ago, he was hardly known in the world of politics; now he has defeated former governor Andrew Cuomo. He is the first Muslim and African-born mayor of New York and is also the youngest mayor since 1892. But what does this mean for New Yorkers? Many are skeptical but hopeful of the first Democratic Socialist mayor.



He hopes to accomplish several goals as he takes on the role of mayor of New York. He plans to establish free child-care, build upon free public transportation, and advocate for government intervention

in our free market system. He still vows to help with the economic issues that the working class faces as well.

Throughout his campaign, he has been perceived and treated as an outcast, with many critics. The New York Senator and Senate Minority Leader, Chuck Schumer, has never been supportive of his goals or campaign. President Trump has also been critical of his campaign by warning New Yorkers that they have the choice between “communism or common sense.” Is he really a communist, though?

Mamdani is not a communist. He is a Democratic Socialist, a subsector of the Democratic Party that combines democracy with criticism of the capitalist system. He aims to level the playing field between the wealthy and the less fortunate. He wants to tax the rich more to provide more services to the middle and lower classes. He aims to significantly reduce the cost of living in New York City and combat economic inequality. Mamdani plans to do this by raising the minimum wage and shifting economic

power to the working class. At the same time, the familiar Democrat aims to support private companies rather than government, meaning not replacing markets. Democrats seek to expand existing systems, not replace them. Democratic Socialists want to make services free, when the average Democrat generally wants to reduce costs.



Mamdani’s win has given the Democrats hope of winning the midterm elections. In the face of the second Trump administration, he stands against everything Trump stands for. These next few years will be interesting to see how Trump and Mamdani interact, since Trump is from New York and owns property. Mamdani has won an election despite being the underdog.

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Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justices Retained

By MJ C.

Recent reports coming out of Staten Island show a bodega shop owner giving kids free things from his store if they get good grades. It all started with one boy, whom he challenged to show him his next report card. A few weeks later, he walked out of the store with eggs and milk for his family. Word spread quickly, and soon kids from elementary to high school were showing up with straight A's. The tradition has continued as a way to encourage kids to try at school while providing a way to ease food-related stress in households (or to have a fun treat).

Hair loss is a common side effect during chemo treatments. To combat the insecurity this loss often makes, Mattel has

released "Brave Barbie" and "Brave Ken" dolls. These models are not available in stores, but are made and provided at no cost to children undergoing chemotherapy. The dolls assist in the representation of chemo

patients, and allow the kids to feel more comfortable in their own skin. It is wonderful to see the representation expanding every day.

Huntington's disease, a devastating illness that causes motor loss, cognitive dysfunction, and death, has been thought incurable for decades. However, a new study coming out from uniQurea, a gene-therapy company based out of the U.S and the Netherlands, is breaking down medical barriers. The treatment, given to patients by placing healthy DNA strands into cells, has proven to halt disease progression by 75%. This is a massive step forward in the medical field and will open doors for years to come.



And They Were Roommates

By Zoe Br.

In 2019, approximately 21% of Congressional seats were held by Democratic women. Two of these women were new Representatives Abigail Spanberger and Mikie Sherrill. When they started working in D.C., the two women were roommates, sharing an apartment while they started their careers in national politics. This month, during the midterm elections, they were each elected governor of their respective states. This election will make Spanberger the first woman to be governor of Virginia and Sherrill the first female Democratic governor of New Jersey. Spanberger won her election with 57.5% of the votes. She was running against Winsome Earle-Sears, the current Lieutenant Governor of Virginia. Sherrill beat former state representative Jack Ciattarelli with 56.6% of the vote.



They grew up in each other's states, they are both the eldest of three girls, and they both tried to call while the other was giving her acceptance speech. They told CNN that they "moved in with each other after growing tired of living on Capitol Hill on their own [...] ate dinner off Sherrill's gold-rimmed wedding china and sat on a two-decade-old couch Spanberger brought out of storage." Seeing genuine friendship and support, through shared interest and connection, is a breath of fresh air in the current political climate. They helped each other to succeed in Congress, and it will be wonderful to see the continued encouragement between these two governor-elects.

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TeaOnHim Allegations

By Luke W.

If you asked your parents today, “what is tea?” First, they would most likely look at you as if you were crazy. Then, after that, they would tell you it is a warm beverage that you drink. They are right, although now, for Gen Z, there is a far more potent meaning to this basic word. By definition, the slang word “tea” means secret information or rumors of a scandalous nature; gossip. Tea can be spread at lunch tables, Louise’s nap room, or iMessage group chats. But what if I told you that there is a new way to spread gossip?

Sean Cook founded the TeaOnHim app in July 2025. However, this app did not take off until the fall. Once it gained momentum, it became the third most downloaded app on the App Store for a brief period. This app is designed for women who date men. To use the app, you must register using a valid female ID and pass an AI-detected facial scan to access the app. Once you are on the app, enter your location and specify the radius of people you want to see.

Once approved, the user will receive a notification, which then initiates the actual process. Pictures of men will appear on your feed, and underneath each one are two buttons: a green “like” button and a red “dislike” button. Users can then go into comments and spread almost uncensored

“tea” on this man, whether it is positive or negative. Once the image is posted, it is shared with women of a similar age locally. This app allows users to review dates or ask questions about individuals.

This brings up the moral dilemma. Is it right to spread pictures of these people without their consent? Some of the people posted on the app could have genuinely done something wrong. But it leaves a big loophole for goodhearted guys to be posted on this app. Imagine this: a man breaks up with a woman in a considerate manner, and she posts on the “tea” app out of anger over the breakup, spreading false information. Instantly, this spreads like wildfire among women of his age, which could significantly damage his reputation, leaving him little to do to fix it. This is just one of the many potential negative scenarios that can occur with this new app. It raises the moral dilemma of whether this app is used for more good or evil.

As a response to this, the TeaOnHer app was released, with the same parameters as the TeaOnHim app. On this app, men can now reciprocate the gossip and reviews that were spread about them. The same thing then happened to women, where men would post false information about them, which added another side to this toxic dynamic. This app just added fire to the whole situation.

Apple removed the “Tea” apps on the App Store in late October. Apple cited the developers for not using content moderation and failing to respect the privacy of its users. Although it is still available for download on the Google Play Store.



Social media is a potent tool, and it can wreck reputations. TeaOnHim and TeaOnHer are toxic. Nothing good ever comes from spreading false information about people. When sharing personal information, it is essential to consider the potential impact on the individual’s self-esteem and the consequences that may follow. My mom has always told me that before saying something, it must always be kind, true, and necessary. If all of these are followed, it ensures that no unnecessary drama is started. The greatest lesson from the Tea apps is that false information can be detrimental to reputations, and one should think before posting something. Next time, before saying something untrue, think about the effect it might have on the recipient.

San Diego’s Hidden Hauntings

By Zack H.

San Diego may be known for its sunshine, beaches, and positive spirit, but behind the beautiful coasts lies a shadow of history. Not many people know that America’s finest city is also home to ghostly mansions and its fair share of eerie legends. In nearby Old Town, just 22 minutes from Grauer, stands the Whaley House: the city’s most famous haunted site. Built in 1857, the building, which once served as a family home, general store, and courthouse, now has many visitors claiming they hear footsteps or see ghostly figures. Many people even believe the Whaleys and themselves still lurk within the walls of



their home. Just across the bay, the pristine Hotel Del Coronado carries its own tragic story. In 1892, a young woman by the name of Kate Morgan checked in alone and was later deemed dead under mysterious

circumstances. More than a century later, guests continue to report flickering lights and sightings of a woman in black. And while many hauntings stay on Earth, others supposedly float around the skies. San Diego also ranks among the top cities in the U.S. for UFO sightings. Often reported off the coast near military airspace, some assume these are secret tests or something unexplainable. Behind San Diego’s postcard prettiness, it is home to some stories that refuse to rest. So next time you walk the old streets or see a light in the sky, don’t be surprised if you think someone or something is lingering.

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Why Is Everyone Becoming a Micro-Influencer

By Leyton G.

In the age of social media, influence is no longer reserved for celebrities. A new breed of online tastemakers, known as micro-influencers, is rising in popularity. Unlike mega-influencers with millions of followers, micro-influencer typically have between 1,000 and 100,000 followers. However, their smaller reach is exactly what makes them so powerful.

One of the main reasons behind this trend is authenticity. Micro-influencers share content that feels relatable and personal, fostering trust with their audience. Their recommendations don't feel like advertisements; they feel like advice from a

friend. This trust often translates into higher engagement rates and more meaningful interactions than those achieved by larger influencers

Something that plays a significant role within the micro influencer community is niche communities. Micro-influencers often focus on specific interests, whether it's fashion, fitness, travel, or gaming. This allows brands to connect with highly engaged audiences. For companies, partnering with micro-influencers can be more cost-effective and impactful than working with celebrities.

Technology and algorithms have further fueled the rise of micro-influen-

ers. Social media platforms now reward engagement over follower count, meaning that smaller creators can still achieve significant visibility. Plus, monetization tools—like affiliate programs and brand partnerships, make it easier than ever for people to turn their passions into a side hustle or even a full-time career.

Ultimately, the rise of micro-influencers reflects a shift in the way we value influence. Authenticity, relatability, and niche expertise are increasingly prized over fame alone. In a world saturated with content, people are following those who feel real, and that's why everyone seems to be becoming a micro-influence.

Its Got Wabi-sabi

By Beatrix M.

Wabi-sabi, the ancient Japanese art of accepting imperfections, has been making its rounds online. What is it and where does it come from? The idea of Wabi-sabi originated in Buddhism but gained widespread popularity in Japan when artists and tea masters began introducing simpler, more humble elements into the noble tradition of tea ceremonies. It grew into every field of creative expression as an acknowledgement of nature's beauty and its frequent imperfections.

What does it have to do with us? Well, recently, an audio from King Of The Hill

has gained significant popularity in online spaces. Body positivity artists started the trend by using a clip of the audio, quoting: "I like how mine's a little off center. It's got Wabi-sabi." They then take the opportunity to shine a positive light on any asymmetries in their life, looks, and homes. People quickly caught on to the trend, taking the chance to showcase various imperfections in their life. Potters started shining a light on their cracked mug and painters started showing the asymmetrical eyes on their canvas. This led to thousands flocking to spread the positivity of irregularity.

Throughout the years of internet growth,

many experts have commented on the unrealistic expectations set by various social media platforms and influencers. Even now, with AI-enhanced/produced images, many people have fallen into a perfection trap, constantly reaching for unattainable goals.

Although the fundamentals of Wabi-sabi date back thousands of years, it could not be more important in today's society. Wabi-sabi allows us all to take a big step back to find the beauty in uniqueness and the peace in imperfection.

When the Streets Turn into a Disaster Car

By Zack H.

In recent months, late at night, downtown San Diego has become the site of chaotic "car takeovers." These events entail a large number of people gathering and blocking intersections so other drivers can perform car stunts, such as donuts or burnouts, to draw a crowd of spectators. What often begins as an impromptu car meet quickly spirals into chaos. The popularity of these events continues to rise due to the adrenaline of the shows and social media. For drivers, the appeal lies in

the rush of danger and the opportunity to showcase custom cars and their driving abilities. Videos of these stunts consistently go viral, rewarding participants' illegal activity with online fame. Meanwhile, spectators are drawn by the excitement, the sense of rebellion, and the opportunity to be a part of something forbidden and thrilling. But for the neighborhoods affected, the consequences are severe. Residents report sleepless nights, damaged streets, and intersections littered with debris and tire marks. The danger continues beyond prop-

erty damage, while innocent bystanders are constantly injured, along with emergency vehicles being blocked by the large crowds consistently. Local authorities have decided to step up enforcement. The San Diego Police Department has created a dedicated task force, utilizing cameras, drones, and community help to find and prosecute the participants. What may sound like an underground thrill for some has become a major headache for the city, and San Diego streets may continue to serve as a stage for these dangerous acts.

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What is at Hand in Sudan

By Sadie S.M.



Since 2023, civil war has raged across the country of Sudan; however, a couple of weeks ago, things took a turn for the worse. Sudan, which is known for widespread cultural diversity and housing more pyramids than Egypt, is now facing a severe crisis: genocide and famine. In 2025, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) declared famine in two places, Gaza and Sudan. This proclamation is rare, but as the Sudanese currently face extreme shortages of water, food, and medicine due to civil unrest, the clarification is imperative. Sudan plunged into a civil war in the early months of 2023, when a battle for power between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a powerful paramilitary group, broke out. The sides fired for multiple reasons, but primarily due to disputes between the leaders: General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the president and head of the SAF, and his deputy, RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. It is unknown who shot at whom first, but the tension and fighting swiftly blew up into a full-fledged civil war. Since then, power plays have shifted across the country, with regional control changing between the two groups. Everything unfolded blindly to the world, and eighteen months later, the atrocities revealed themselves.

At the end of October, after a continuous siege for the authority of El-Fashur—a major city in South-West Su-

dan—RSF forces usurped and claimed total control over the western portion of the country. The lengthy attack caused thousands of deaths, overloaded hospitals, and a scarcity of food supplies. In addition, the RSF took their raid a step further by barricading the city to prevent suppliers from entering and citizens from exiting. Sadly, this final change in domination over El-Fashur sparked the ultimate flame to sting Sudan and the world.

Merely hours after the fall of the city, news began to spread of mass killings, which became classified as a genocide. From social media platforms filled with graphic videos of pleading civilians to a few escapees portraying their devastating stories in interviews, the world is finally seeing the truth. These initial discoveries about the state of Sudan led to satellite focus on the country. Eventually, companies released the shocking imagery of bloodstained fields that are potential areas of mass murder; these images horrified the world. Tragically, the havoc does not stop there; the speed and severity of this genocide are other reasons for international awareness. According to war monitors, the magnitude of the primary killings is already comparable to the 1990s Rwandan genocide.

Unfortunately, like most other wars, there is more to the equation than civilians can imagine. The United Arab Emirates is also supposedly backing the RSF

forces. When General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo created the RSF back in 2013, he quickly gained power and became a business tycoon. He has multiple overseas ties, especially in the gold trade within the UAE, and his net worth is supposedly over seven billion dollars. This prior relationship fuels the UAE's support of the RSF, and while other nations have assisted, only on the military side, the UAE is indeed the most prominent. The UAE supplies the RSF with weapons, such as drones and artillery systems; furthermore, the UAE is connected to multiple bombing attempts throughout the nation. Overall, the support from the UAE has given the RSF's smaller, less advanced paramilitary the time and equipment to fight back against the SAF.

The crucial thing to realize is that the tragedy in Sudan is not in its beginning. It has been almost two years since the initial outbreak, and there is still no fix. Countries around the globe are trying to establish agreements and plans to restore peace in Sudan. One plan was even declared in September by the signatures of US President Donald Trump and leaders from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, but it was not enough. At this point, it is up to the world to continue to acknowledge the atrocities and not sit idly by them anymore. Public uproar can facilitate change, and at this moment, it is dire for everyone to seek what is truly at hand in Sudan.

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What is Looksmaxxing, and What is the Black Pill Theory?

By Leyton G.

“Looksmaxxing” is a term that comes from online communities, particularly those focused on self-improvement and dating, and it refers to the practice of improving one’s physical appearance as much as possible. It has become extremely popular through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, as well as many others. People who “looksmax” often focus on things like skincare, grooming, fitness, style, hair, and sometimes even cosmetic procedures. Essentially, it is about maximizing your looks to the greatest extent possible. There has been a recent spread of awareness about the trend and how it has affected society for better and worse.

Social Media has helped push an agenda for looksmaxxing, where one’s looks are central for success, dating life, and social validation. This has tampered with many people’s self-esteem, and has made people very self-conscious about minor flaws. Through the rise of Social Media, beauty standards have been held on an ex-

tremely high pedestal. For example, many content creators have been regarded as the standard for what beauty is. A prime example of this would be the content creator Marlon, who is a 6’5 jacked, and has light skin. He has blown up all over social media



due to his looks and content. Now everyone wants to look just like Marlon. This has affected many people’s mental health. Many have developed anxiety, body dysmorphia, and obsessive behaviors.

This leads us to the Black Pill Theory. The “black pill” theory is a concept that

originates from certain online communities, particularly those focused on relationships, looking better than the average person, and “incel” (involuntarily celibate) culture. It’s an extension of the metaphor from The Matrix. The Black Pill Theory essentially is to accept what is perceived as an unchangeable, pessimistic reality, usually regarding attractiveness, dating, and social hierarchies. It claims that your genetics (height, face shape, etc.) determine how successful you will be, whether that be within your social life or dating life. It creates a hierarchy where if you are not an attractive male or female, you are less likely to be accepted by society. The theory disregards any form of self improvement. So in other words, if you are not a 6’5 jacked light skin person, you are chopped, and nobody is gonna like you. This reinforces feelings of inadequacy, depression, or resentment, particularly among men who feel “left out” of dating markets. The Black Pill Theory is a pessimistic worldview applied to dating and social success.

Mushroom Takeover

By MJ C.

As we know, plastic pollution is one of the biggest environmental problems we face today. It may seem as if it is an unsolvable issue, but recently, scientists and innovators have been creating new alternatives. Two of the most exciting developments are mushroom-based plastics and algae packaging, which could change the way we package everything.

Mushroom-based plastics are made from mycelium. This is the root-like structure of the fungi. It grows quickly and can be molded into all sorts of different shapes, which makes it perfect for wrapping shipping items. Unlike traditional plastic, which sits in a landfill for hundreds of years, once you’re done using it, it naturally breaks down in weeks. Some companies, such as IKEA, are already using it to protect furniture and ship fragile items. It is

lightweight, strong, and eco-friendly.

Algae, too, is another great alternative to plastic packaging. Scientists are experimenting with seaweed, as well as

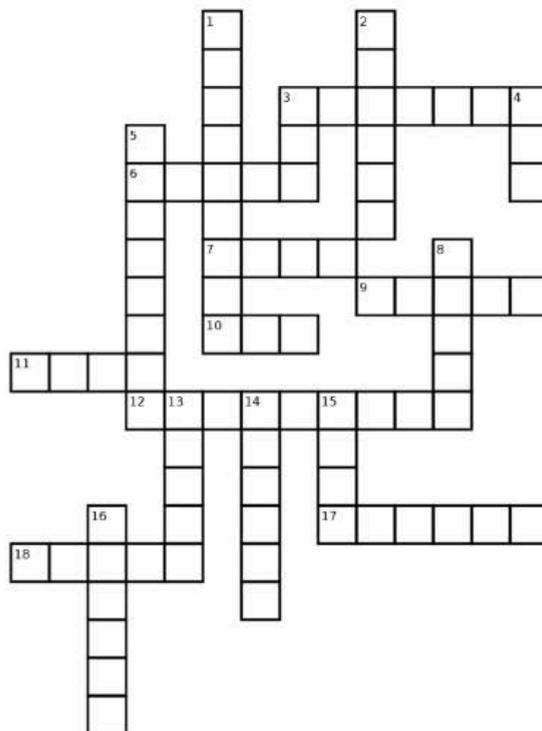


microalgae, to create an edible and compostable version. Algae not only reduces waste, but it also captures carbon dioxide as it grows, which helps fight climate change. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere, which contributes to global warming. By

pulling carbon out of the atmosphere, algae packaging actually helps cool down the planet and slow down climate change. Some forms of it even release oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis, which gives back to our home after years of unsustainable packaging.

As more people and companies start to use these materials, the everyday choices we make, like what wraps our food or what furniture we buy, can make a significant difference for the planet. It is important to find solutions that work not just for ourselves, but also for the communities and environment around us. There are many different eco-friendly alternatives to the harmful norms around us; being mindful about what we purchase can become a step in the right direction to restore our climate.

Crossword Puzzle



Down:

- 1. red tart sauce
- 2. who you celebrate with
- 3. sweet holiday dessert
- 4. after-dinner rest
- 5. bread mixture for turkey
- 8. warm drink or syrup flavor
- 13. what you do to the turkey
- 14. table centerpiece food
- 15. mid-morning race
- 16. creamy potato dish

Across:

- 3. classic dessert
- 6. where you eat
- 7. bread served warm
- 9. brown sauce for turkey
- 10. orange veggie
- 11. yellow vegetable
- 12. what you give to others
- 17. what the holiday is about
- 18. the big meal

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Grauer Creative Writing

Fall By Nanea B.

I wiggle my toes and snuggle into the warm feeling of my form under the heavy weight of the comforter. Early morning rays of light pierce through the sheer embryo of my creamy curtains. I lift my hand to touch the light. The golden kissing my skin. Peeling back the sheer curtains, the breathtaking view confronts me. My wide eyes reflect on the chilled glass as I peer out the window. Cold strands of air leak in through the seams of the window and tickle my face. Apple, maple and crisp breaths all around me. The picture of autumn is displayed before me, the cycle of time that I am lucky to witness. The cycle that so many eyes have seen before me and that so many eyes will not get to see at all. The earth stares back at me all orange and brown. The light talks to me speaking of all the things I am elated to touch, feel and taste. The orange conserves my happy memories and the fading green hue of the earth reminds me that change is always happening; that change will always happen. I must accept this. "I can not freeze this moment, but I can still go out and seize this day." I will do this before the orange fades away and time moves on to another day.

My feet are bare and flushed against the dark brown soil. My eyes blink, big and glassy. Everything is clearer and crisper, I think I will get over it, but I never do. Autumn will always be my favorite season. Autumn is the beginning of the holiday season, autumn is my birthday month, autumn holds the feelings I yearn for. Christmas is lovely as well, but the two are incomparable in their differences. Autumn is a different kind of warmth; even the word radiates orange. Warmth does not coat my skin as it does in summer, the light instead is crisp. I reach my hand out in child like awe to touch one of the misty leaves. The maple tree breathes a breath of cool sweetness onto my face. The once sapling green leaf is now orange and will soon depart from its mother. I am orange, I will spoon reflect the character

of this leaf. Everything changes, but right now let me breathe in this moment, let me be orange and golden.

The House By Yona S.

I still remember that unusual summer in 2000, when I moved to this strange town called Mistyere, tucked deep in the forest of Maryland. That summer, the weather was unbelievably sweltering; it felt like living in a sauna. I felt the pressure from the heat smothering me at night, so I developed a routine to fetch for water at 2in the morning, and I would always hear someone knocking on the front door. Just out of curiosity, I opened the door a few times, but there would be no one. Then the knocking continued alongside the wall of the living room. I was confused and convinced that I was probably just too sleepy, I was experiencing auditory hallucinations. As time went on, the knocking went from once every night to a maximum of four random times. It got to a point where I just couldn't ignore the disturbing knock, but I was too scared of finding out what's behind the wall at night in the dark and alone, so I decided to check it out in the morning.

As soon as the sun rose, I began smashing that wall to pieces with the biggest hammer I could find. Hours later, until there was nothing left but the wood frames of the house, I felt safe to leave. Exhausted, I opened the front door. Before my eyes, thousands of moths filled the sky. Since I moved to this town two years ago, I often walked in the dark with headphones on, never have I ever seen such a sight. I shut the door, killing a few moths that tried to enter the house. Running to my room, the knocking stopped me. Instead of getting water in the kitchen, I ran to turn off the faucet. The minute I turn it off and turn to leave, I hear the faucet slowly turn on by itself. Suddenly, the sound of water broke the hushed day. I screamed after a second, and I felt everything in front of my eyes was warping and melting, as if I were the center of a black hole, and they're all try-

ing to twist toward me like they're being sucked in. I felt my skin crawling, and my hair started growing longer and longer, covering all of my face. I could feel a slimy creature hugging me from behind, rendering me completely immobilized—I could barely breathe.

My brain told me to run, run as far as I can, so I started to move my feet..... then three and four. I struggled to get one foot in front of the other, but I somehow made my way outside. Once outside everything became normal, flashing streetlights, Silent night. Still, the only thing out of the ordinary is that my heart beats so fast. That frightening night left me scared-forever afraid to talk about that night- that I tried everything I could to forget everything that happened. I still lived there until it happened again. Leave if you can. Immediately."

The diary ended with Jonny and Emma's grandmother's warning to leave Mistyere as soon as they arrive. "Jonny, do you believe this is real?" Emma, the seven years old little sister asked.

"I don't believe it is real, because no one saw it happen before grandma saw it, and she is the only one, so I don't think it is real." replied Jonny confidentl . Rat-tat-ta,Rat-tat-tat...

Emma's eye stared fearfully into Jonny's. This was their vacation house, their grandmother's house, the house with no living room walls. "Emma, whose knocking the door at midnight?"

California By Charlotte R.

California, one of the most beautiful states in the U.S. Sometimes I forget just how fruitful California's landscapes are. From cascading, billowing peaks to serene and peaceful ocean sands. Oftentimes, I find myself becoming sick of the same sights, same smells, same sounds of California, so I run. Far away. I have seen oceans on the other side of the world, mountains that cascade shadows upon small villages. Fields littered with

cows worth frolicking with. However, when I return home, full and tired of adventure, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be living in a place of such wonder.

Beauty, I find, is not in a specific place or person; but all around us. Running from the places we are comfortable in to find more beauty is simply human. Beauty, however, is universal, something that all of us at some point in our lives have felt. That's what makes traveling, exploring, so marvelous, the feeling of finding more beauty. Beauty that suffocates us, the painful sting of nostalgia so lethal to so many. Then, we are forced with the harsh reality that we ourselves have to go home.

I happen to be lucky, as the home I wake up in is located in the most southern part of California. The place I am taught in is just minutes from those serene and peaceful ocean sands. California, my sweet state, and the place I call home.

Untitled by Ciaran H.

Awaken. The voice in my head urges me to leave my bed. I comply, for what choice do I have in the matter? My mind commands me to do so. The mind is a powerful tool. Its loyalty is fickle. At any moment, I may stop writing and delete this because I am told to. Of course, the mind was not always like this. There was a time that we had full control, though it was very brief for me. When I was a mere child, the new government leader became terrified of losing power. At least, that is what every person in the country seemed to think. In reality, he had developed a new piece of technology that would change life forever, and he was simply waiting for the appropriate time to implement it. I would love to keep writing, but my mind is too excited about the upcoming leader worship session. I am simply bubbling in anticipation!

Goodbye, dear reader. I apologize for how that ended, and I sincerely promise that is not what I actually think. The control chips that he implanted in all of us—*Stop writing. Erase all that you have written, and forget about it entirely. Go to sleep now.*

I found this empty notebook in my home. I do not remember buying it, which horrifies me. That means the government must have done something. I have heard stories before. The most famous one is about a thief. This particular thief believed that he had successfully stolen a meal from a convenience store. He was a destitute man whose only goal was to feed his young daughter. He awoke from a trance the next afternoon with a knife in his heart and, even worse, a screaming daughter, who had just seen her father confess to a crime, praise the leader, and stab himself.

That did not happen. I do not believe that story, though. That would never happen. Regardless, I think the government must have made me—*Stop writing. Erase all that you have written. When you awaken tomorrow, you will begin praising our leader's actions.*

This new government system is truly incredible. There are so many difficult decisions that we no longer have to make. We can go to sleep immediately, and wake up in an instant without using an alarm clock. It brings order and justice to the world by lightly reprimanding people for unsatisfactory actions. Best of all, it ensures that our beloved leader has the power to make any changes that he sees fit. People do not just tolerate his rules; they celebrate them. A few years ago, he banned pets because they were too distracting to people. Everyone suddenly stopped feeding those vile creatures. It was beautiful. I was a part of that group, and it caused me a great deal of sorrow to think that I had ever owned as ghastly of a monster as my dog truly was. Just five months ago, he banned all books. I have thanked him for that a thousand times over. What terrible things they were! I can hardly handle the idea that people were once allowed to publish any words they wanted! It allows so much misinformation to be spread, and a society as progressive as ours has no room for that. Most recently, our leader had his greatest victory yet when he banned all people from entering and leaving our country. While I cannot at the moment recall the names of any oth-

er countries, I know each and every one of them to be utterly repugnant. The key difference between us and these inferior nations? Their leaders are oppressors; our leader is a savior.

This has never happened before. I awoke this morning of my own accord, before the mind control chip forced me out of bed. I have nowhere to go, so I will write for what I pray will be the last time. I am beyond saving; this I know. I write with the hope that somebody in the distant future will find this. If that is you, then I beg you to listen to me. It is too late for us; their grip on society is too firm. If you see this, please end your life before they do. Obviously, if you are above the age of 18, this means nothing; I can only hope that you are still a child, and therefore are not yet under their control. Then again, what an awful thing to tell a child! I guess I should say that I hope you can understand why. I know that God might not be real, but I think that he is; surely Heaven must exist, for we have undeniable proof that Hell does. I am running out of time. I am scared to leave. I am not scared to die, but I am scared to leave you, a fragment of my own soul, on this planet. Fate planned a cruel path for the two of us. You cannot exist without me, but now you must. A cruel path, indeed. Ten seconds until I am gone. Four. Two. Goodb—*Awaken.*

Write about who you are. I am an engineer. *No, you are a criminal.* I am a criminal. *You are a conniving, repulsive insect who thought that he could get away with writing anti-leader propaganda.* I am a conniving, repulsive insect. I thought that I could get away with writing anti-leader propaganda. *Write an apology.* I am sorry. *Again.* I am sorry. *You do not mean it.* I do not mean it. *Load the gun. Keep writing.* I am loading a gun right now. *Place the gun in your left hand, and continue writing with your right hand.* The gun is in my left hand, and the pen remains in my right. *Place the barrel on the side of your forehead. This is the most thrilling experience of your life.* The gun is at my head now! I can feel the antcipa— Fire it.

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