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A Mother's
Love





// REITA LIU

“Mama!” My first words, and her first time hearing them. I wouldn’t remember. I was too little, too new to the world—still swaddled in a flurry of blankets, eyes squinted, hands curled tightly into firm fists. My everything was the nursery walls, the shaking crib, the dim warm lights, the mushy food and nap time, the moment I could close my eyes again and feel the darkness of sleep overtaking me. But I am her everything. I lived inside her for nine months. Her body was my home. She will remember forever.

“Mama, look!” I walked for the first time. My little chubby legs waddled on with encouragement from my mom. The floor was hard and uncomfortable under my baby feet, and they sensed the cold wood, the roughness on my skin. I wanted to lie back down and sink into oblivion, but I took my first steps with her watching. To her, movement was the greatest gift, but I couldn’t sense that. But she was happy I could walk, because I am her everything. She will remember forever.

“Mama, I don’t want to.” My first day of school. The first of more than a decade of such days. But she will always be there. Hours and hours of chalk, blackboards and whiteboards, carpets and storytime. Desks and tests, libraries and recess. Hours of my youthful years spent on arts and sports. Away from home, but always coming back. The months zoomed past, the years flew by. I came home tired, but was always greeted by a warm meal on the table, balmy yellow lights, and deep nights. I learned away until the pages stole my perfect sight and replaced it with knowledge. That knowledge was a gift nonetheless, one she was happy with. She and I will remember forever.

“Mom, leave me alone.” Now it’s graduation, job applications, and the steady stream and flow of a new adult life. I will soon no longer be a teenager. I am growing up so fast, but I have not grown on the inside yet. She sets curfews, stops me from going out, and keeps me home. Does she even understand? It is a world where she is an outsider, a world where exams, friends, work, and romance keep taking her place. Not removing her. Just pushing her. Blocking out her suggestions and thoughts, because I think I know better. But she is always there. My mind is clouded with swirling thoughts too profound and gray. I do not think about anything but propelling myself forward. It takes away from us, but in years we will catch up. And she will, of course, remember forever.

“Mama, I missed you. You were right.” Life will slow down. I will grow up, inside and out. I will leave university and settle down. Success will roll in and make everyone proud. My old home will become an empty shell with bleached walls and new doors. The comfort will fade while consistency replaces the beautiful turmoil of childhood. A job, maybe a few. A good marriage, maybe a child or two. But I will always still be her kid. I will blossom but I’m still her baby, forever and always. We will both miss the time we spent together, we will miss the time we have, unfortunately, overlooked. I will know better when we are bonded back together. In the end, she and I will always remember.

“Mama, I need you here forever.” When life’s inevitable, churning, wheeling cycle comes to an end, I will be old and her even older. I’ll wish for the time to return. But it cannot be turned back. The world will go on, and now again she will be my home. But she always was, even after I left her stomach. I will understand the life of my children, for I will grow up too. My mother will grow up. She has grown up. Maybe she really did understand. Now we will remember forever, because even time itself cannot stop a mother’s love.

PHOTOGRAPHY // ELENA SHAN
DESIGN // ANGIE XU

Hello? Hello?

Oh, wow, you actually picked up!

That sounded bad. Please don't be offended! I just kind of wasn't expecting you to get back so soon. Or at all.

Questions? Oh, yeah, sorry—I wrote down a list on the back of a No Frills receipt. I know you're a very busy person and all, so I wanted to make this worth your time. It's on the counter here somewhere. Shoot, what if the hamster ate it? Stupid Gabe. He's not even mine—he's really my roommate's, and I told them they could have it around if it didn't escape and start eating crap or whatever hamsters do. Shoot, are receipts digestible? They're going to take him to the vet for surgery and then they'll find a receipt for three pints of Ben and Jerry's in his stomach and—

Oh, there it is. Phew!

I don't know if you could tell—well, you totally could, let's not kid ourselves—but I talk a lot. My brain kinda goes “waaaahh” all raspily like those Toad—the Mario character—covers on YouTube. Have you seen those? Of course you have.

So, which piece do you play in Monopoly? How many people prefer the dog but play another piece more than half the time because somebody else likes the dog slightly more?

You know how after a caterpillar goes into the cocoon it becomes soup? All the enzymes in the caterpillar digest it into caterpillar muscle ligament protein goo. When the caterpillar's eating all the leaves and four strawberries and five oranges and a pickle and some salami and one piece of cherry pie or whatever, does it, like, know that it's going to become soup? Does it know that it's okay because it'll be a hotter version of itself afterwards? Wait, do caterpillars even know butterflies are related to them? The mother butterfly doesn't even hang out with the baby caterpillar or anything.

Does she know I'm not mad at her and that I wish we talked more but that I'm worried if we start talking now it'll be awkward and life-ruining? Do you have a favourite element? And if you do, it's totally hydrogen, right? Yeah, no, it's definitely hydrogen. Stupid question.

Hey, is there a limit to how many things I can ask? Don't count the element question. Don't count the limit thing either. Thanks.

phone-in
question

// JOY KIM
PHOTOGRAPHY // ANDREA TSU
DESIGN // DORA DUAN

Was I actually allergic to the shrimp tempura that one time or did my throat and mouth just kinda buzz because I felt nervous hanging out with him? Why did you make the numbing itchy Pop Rocks sensation the anxiety thing? Is it just my anxiety thing? Is having a shellfish allergy on his list of those little things that make people less attractive that people pretend not to have or only put personality traits on?

I know grades don't matter or anything and that money isn't really a good measure of success, but is there a quantifier for human value? Like I know you shouldn't base everything off of your career or university and what some person you've never met thinks of you, but they're judging your application—and that's the culmination of who you are, right? Hey, while we're here, what's my credit score?

Do you have a favourite person? Is it like that bit in the first season of The Good Place where there's a leaderboard of everyone's score tallied off of all the things they ever did or thought or put out into the world? Does watching a Toad cover of Hozier's "Take Me To Church" on YouTube lower your score?

There are twelve protons in every carbon atom in the universe, so at least that's true all of the time. Between the elementary school graphics of everyone on earth standing in a ring holding stick-figure hands and nuclear weaponry and Doordash GPS and game theory and Fantastic Mr. Fox by Roald Dahl, what's the closest we've ever gotten to the truth of it all?

Wow. Okay, I didn't realize I talked for that long. Sorry. Um, take as much time as you need... I'm only eating lunch anyway!

...Ahhh. I see.

Thank you for your time! Throughout infinite amounts of galaxy and space void and hydrogen atoms and cocooning insects and organisms, thank you for picking up my call.

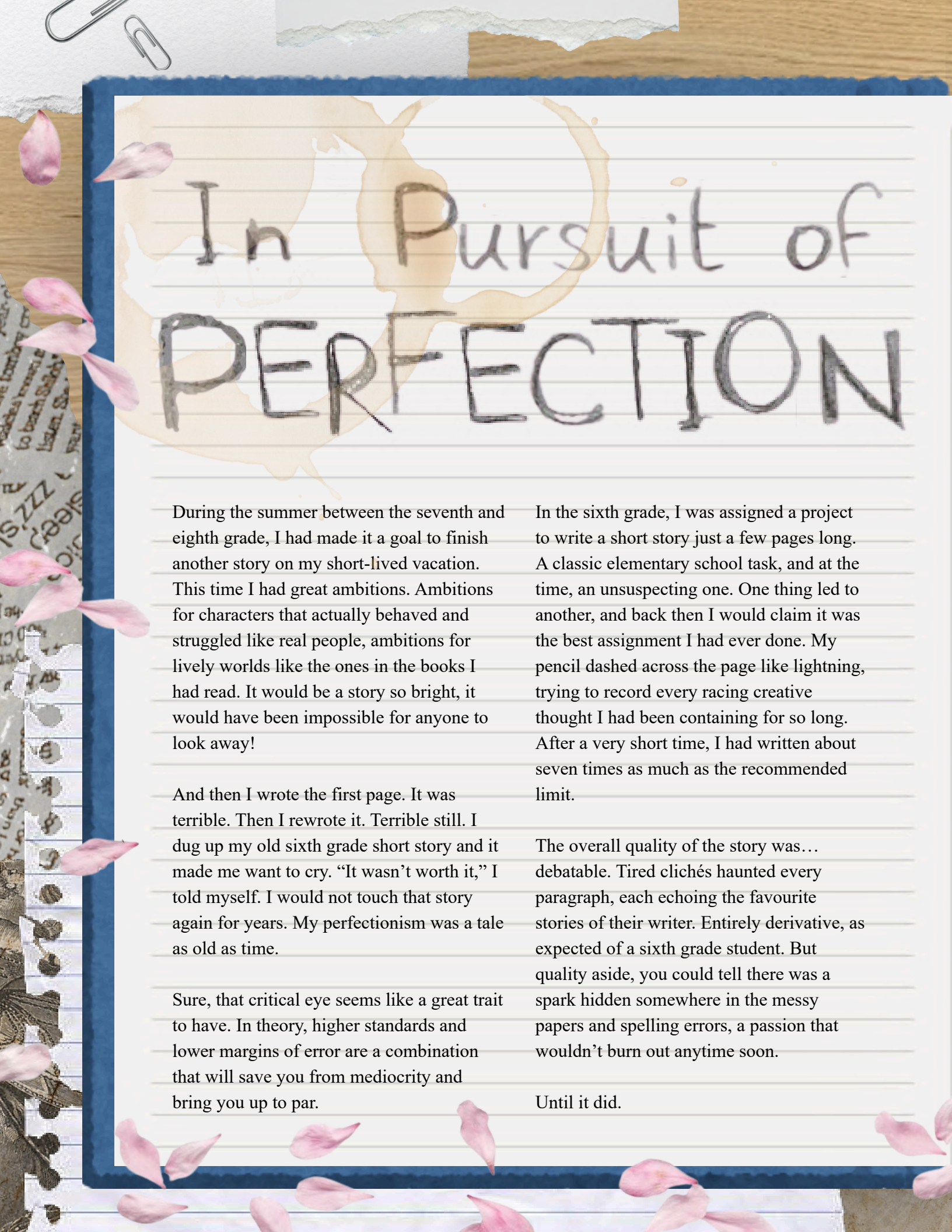
<<Huh? Dude, you can't seriously still be mad about the Cherry Garcia. Look, I replaced it. In the freezer. I think Gabe got out again, by the way.>>

Oh, shoot. I didn't hang up. Sorry.

Love you!



is to the universe



In Pursuit of PERFECTION

During the summer between the seventh and eighth grade, I had made it a goal to finish another story on my short-lived vacation. This time I had great ambitions. Ambitions for characters that actually behaved and struggled like real people, ambitions for lively worlds like the ones in the books I had read. It would be a story so bright, it would have been impossible for anyone to look away!

And then I wrote the first page. It was terrible. Then I rewrote it. Terrible still. I dug up my old sixth grade short story and it made me want to cry. "It wasn't worth it," I told myself. I would not touch that story again for years. My perfectionism was a tale as old as time.

Sure, that critical eye seems like a great trait to have. In theory, higher standards and lower margins of error are a combination that will save you from mediocrity and bring you up to par.

In the sixth grade, I was assigned a project to write a short story just a few pages long. A classic elementary school task, and at the time, an unsuspecting one. One thing led to another, and back then I would claim it was the best assignment I had ever done. My pencil dashed across the page like lightning, trying to record every racing creative thought I had been containing for so long. After a very short time, I had written about seven times as much as the recommended limit.

The overall quality of the story was... debatable. Tired clichés haunted every paragraph, each echoing the favourite stories of their writer. Entirely derivative, as expected of a sixth grade student. But quality aside, you could tell there was a spark hidden somewhere in the messy papers and spelling errors, a passion that wouldn't burn out anytime soon.

Until it did.

That is, until you become disillusioned with your own expectations. Under the shiny, appealing appearance of perfectionism, there lies a fear of failure, and obviously, that's something we don't want. But when we're too focused on achieving our incredibly unrealistic goals, tons of other problems stem from our fears. In truth, perfectionism is a double-edged sword with one side much sharper than the other.

And it affects so many of us high school students each and every day. Marks are an easy example: grade inflation is so prevalent to the point that students have spent many a sleepless night studying in a haze of self-loathing and weariness. Also, that student who procrastinates the very things they love? It's because they fear failure. The ones who seem to do so well in class but are still unsatisfied with themselves? They're chasing the impossible. My eighth grade story fiasco? It was this perfectionism that prevented me from writing my story in the first place.

I know failure is a scary thing that we've all thought about at some point. If we don't have perfect grades, skills, lives, bodies; what worth do we really have? How do we shake off this awful feeling?

Let's look back to my story that could have been. The only real reason it never came together was because I had been tirelessly comparing my work to others and sabotaging myself in the process. I thought my stories were bad, but it had only been my third time writing anything of value. Knowing that, it's no surprise they didn't turn out well. After all, you can't improve unless you write dozens, hundreds of bad drafts. Looking back on it, I think deep down I had plenty of good ideas.

And I know this is a cliché as old as the ones in my sixth grade story, but it's one that's been getting brushed off as a lame motivational quote for too long now. It's just a fact that getting better at something takes ages, from writing English assignments for school to learning an instrument or sport to gaining the skills you need to simply survive.

So don't let failure stop you. Write that story. Finish that draft. Learn that piece. Talk to that person. Write that speech. You might fail. In fact, there's a good chance you will. But failure isn't the end.

In fact, three years later, I'm still writing my story.

// JONAH HEATH
PHOTOGRAPHY // EMMA ZHU
DESIGN // ERIN CHEN



Tame A

: Dust Bunny :
TODAY!

Achoo!

Rabbit-fie fact: the average bunny's tail is five to ten centimetres long, give or take. If you didn't know they even had tails, that was a two-in-one.

Achoo! Achoo!

Woah. Excuse you. Anyway, unlike the sentient species, there is no hard-and-fast length limit for a dust bunny's tendrils. They'll just keep growing and you'll just keep sneezing until you finally submit to your yearly spring cleaning.

Achoo!

Okay, there's definitely something in the air (it's not love, it's dust). I know decluttering isn't exactly riveting, and it seems super time-limiting for us students... but let's fix that. Shall we?





Three tips for Spring cleaning: HIGH SCHOOLER EDITION

① Sort Out School Supplies

Now that second semester is well underway, it's the perfect time to reconsider what past notes and lessons you actually need for your future education. This goes for any gigabyte-greedy online assignments too. Carefully organise work from first semester that you want to keep, but get rid of any dead weight. Chances are you're still holding onto worksheets from previous years, stowed away in a messy corner of your room or your computer. It's okay to let those go.



② Curate Your Closet

The weather is finally getting warmer, and with any luck, we'll be able to switch to our spring selections of clothes soon. Yeah, you heard me. It's time to shelve away puffed-up parka sleeves in favour of light jackets and sweaters. If you're anything like me and you have clumps of clothes just lying around, fold those away too. Trust me, a closet reorganisation come spring is always helpful. First of all, you won't sweat buckets in the heating-up halls, and second of all, you'll have an easier time picking outfits in the early mornings.

③ Bring Your Busy Bureau To Order

Not feeling any productive pep these days? A messy desk may be the culprit for your close-calls in class, so tackle it now. To start, make sure to get rid of obvious distractions (cough cough phone). That alone will help a lot; ideally though, you should keep your desk free from all non-school matters so you have more space to work and more brainpower to focus on your academics. Once all uncalled for clutter is cleared away, the final step is to dust off the desk. Eventually your brain will associate the spiffy space with your study sessions, and that's when all your hard work will pay off.

See? Spring cleaning doesn't sound so bad now. Go get those dust bunnies. Don't let me catch you sneezing again.

// ALEX YANG
DESIGN // KATRINA LAM
GRAPHICS // CANVA



1000011

Anonymous 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

>Since when did Skrilla and LaMelo Ball become synonymous and associated outside of the worlds of basketball and rap?

>> Anonymous 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

“Doot Doot (6 7)” blew up all over the internet as the background music for basketball highlight reels of LaMelo Ball, who’s exactly 6 feet 7 inches tall (top three most entertaining basketball players alive, and he’s not no.3). The song wasn’t mainstream, but it grew. Soon it would take the world by storm.

>> Anonymous 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

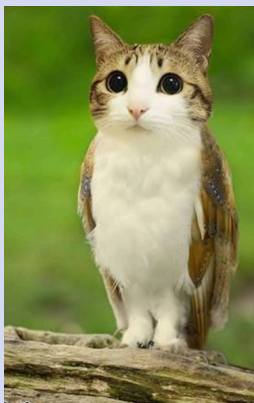
A few weeks after the edits started becoming popular, Taylen Kinney, a basketball prospect in the Overtime Elite league, became strongly associated with the phrase after a clip of him ranking a Starbucks drink while saying “six, seven” repeatedly with hand gestures went viral on social media.

Then it started to blow up within the sports world. From college sports teams to Shaq, the phrase took over live games every time the numbers were found. As the trend grew mainstream, it didn’t lose meaning.

>It never had any to begin with.

>> Anonymous 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

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“6 7” was stupid from day one. It was a number, a song, a couple of clips stitched together by the internet’s collective crappy attention span, and somehow, that was enough. There was no deeper layer to peel back, no hidden joke waiting to be discovered.

And then, naturally, it got worse.

The edits got louder. The clips got shorter. It was so easy for anyone in the world to learn it. One number. Three syllables. The whole punchline was reduced to just saying “6 7” at increasingly random times, like some kind of verbal jumpscare. And the more meaningless it became, the more it spread.

Which sounds dumb.

>Because it is.

But it also kind of makes sense when you think about the events that this generation has grown up in, like COVID.

When everything shut down, we all got shoved online at the same time. School? Online (do kids these days still know what alt tab does?) Social life? Online. Entertainment? Online. You weren’t just occasionally surfing the web anymore, you were quite literally living on the internet. And when you’re consuming that much content, your brain starts optimizing.

>You WANT that dopamine rush.

>>

 **Anonymous** 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

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Something that hits instantly, something you don't have to think about after sitting through hours of Google Meet pretending your mic is broken or that your Wi-Fi doesn't work. The simpler the joke, the better it performs. And "6 7" is about as simple as it gets.

At the same time, real life started feeling just as absurd as the internet.

You'd open the news and see politicians like Keir Starmer be halfway through a classroom visit before suddenly hitting the "6 7" just to draw a reaction from the kids even though it was specifically banned by the teacher.

The contrast was insane.

>We didn't jump straight from normal jokes to "6'7." We slid.

We went from Slender Man lore that took actual commitment, to Kermit reaction memes that needed context, to Rickrolls that at least had a setup and payoff.

Then "Ohio," where the joke is just... a place.

Then Skibidi Toilet, where the joke is noise and movement, but it was at least a real series that a content creator was working on (it has its own IMDb page with twenty-seven seasons and eighty or so episodes already).

Then Italian brainrot, when the rise of AI-powered image generators created absurd photos that became characters with names (my personal favourite is Tralalelo Tralala).

>>

 **Anonymous** 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

Memes have stopped being jokes and started becoming our default form of communication. Maybe that's the most bizarre part of all these meaningless trends.

From the outside, it looks like humour has completely fallen apart. Like we went from clever setups to shouting numbers for no reason.

But from the inside?

>It works.

So the next time someone randomly says "6'7" in the middle of a completely normal conversation, don't try to find its meaning.

>There isn't any.

>There never was.

>And somehow, that's exactly the point.

>>

 **Anonymous** 04/20/26(Mon)21:42:23 No.133758008

// ADRIAN TENG

DESIGN // SYLVIA DING

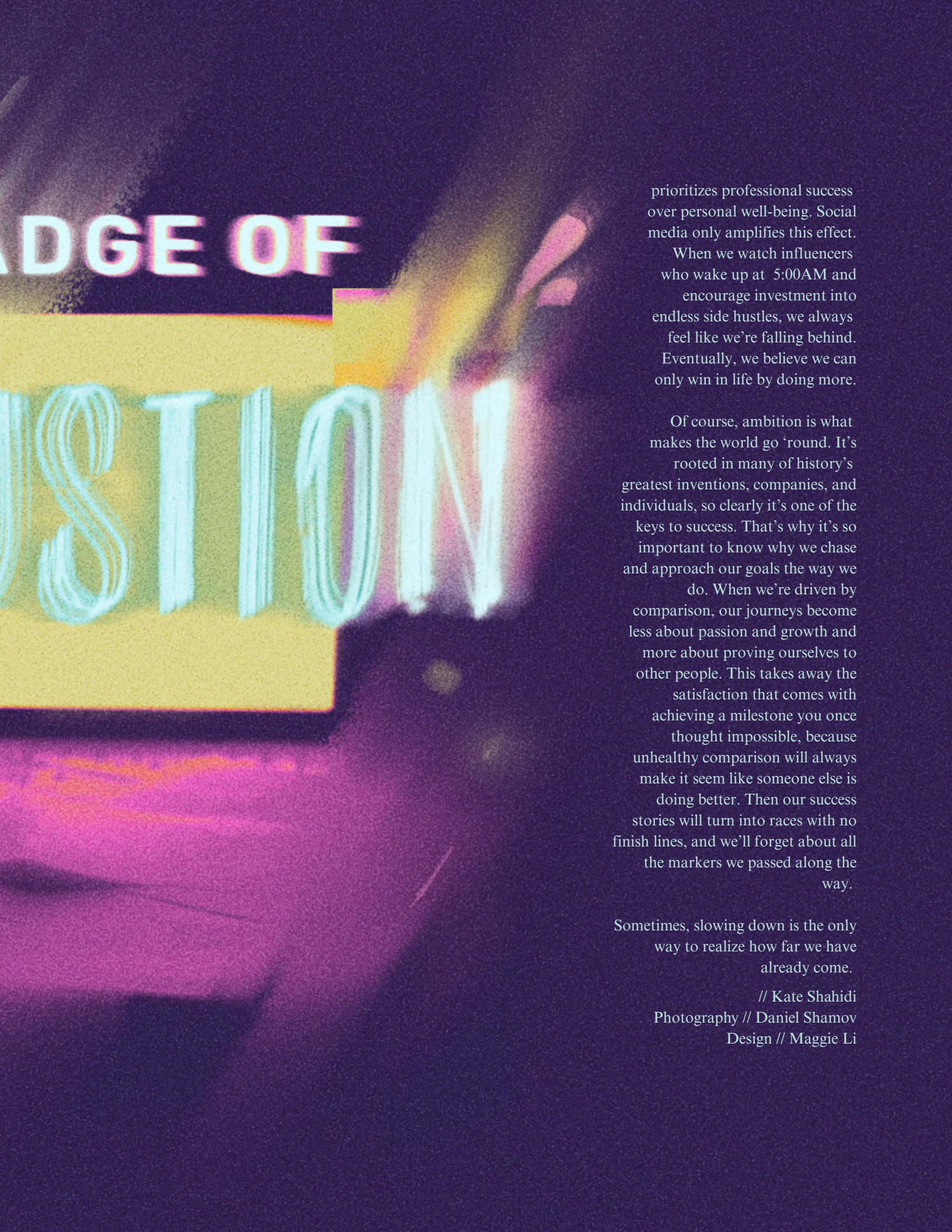
GRAPHICS // PINTEREST

“You only slept five hours? Well, I slept three hours.” We’ve all been around this type of person before. You know, the one who treats exhaustion like a badge of honour and is almost adamant that it makes them better than everyone else—because how can you be ambitious, intelligent, or hard-working if you sleep at a normal time, spend your lunch periods out with friends, or take a moment to breathe? Today, this type of behaviour is everywhere and unfortunately it isn’t just an isolated case. We applaud the sleepless and the overworked, believing that sacrifice is what makes success truly meaningful. But why do we do this to ourselves?

At its very core, it’s a psychological issue. Simply put, chasing success creates a dopamine-driven obsession; each goal reached, each all-nighter pulled, each task checked off gives our brains a hit of satisfaction that leaves us wanting more. We do this a couple of times and eventually we form a cycle. However, it’s important to understand that ambition isn’t the problem. Needless to say, everything comes with its own opportunity cost and it’s completely natural to have to give something up to achieve a goal. The problem lies in the competitive aspect of sacrifice. Why has chasing more become an unspoken contest, where each extra hour worked is a way of proving who’s more worthy of winning? In North America, this phenomenon is most commonly known as “hustle culture.” First coined in 2019, this mindset glorifies constant work and

A person is sleeping in a bed, their head resting on a pillow. In the background, a neon sign is visible, displaying the words "THE BA" on the top line and "EXHAU" on the bottom line. The sign is brightly lit with a yellow and orange glow, contrasting with the dark, dimly lit room. The person's face is partially visible in the foreground, appearing to be in a state of rest or sleep.

THE BA
EXHAU



DGE OF

STION

prioritizes professional success over personal well-being. Social media only amplifies this effect.

When we watch influencers who wake up at 5:00AM and encourage investment into endless side hustles, we always feel like we're falling behind. Eventually, we believe we can only win in life by doing more.

Of course, ambition is what makes the world go 'round. It's rooted in many of history's greatest inventions, companies, and individuals, so clearly it's one of the keys to success. That's why it's so important to know why we chase and approach our goals the way we do. When we're driven by comparison, our journeys become less about passion and growth and more about proving ourselves to other people. This takes away the satisfaction that comes with achieving a milestone you once thought impossible, because unhealthy comparison will always make it seem like someone else is doing better. Then our success stories will turn into races with no finish lines, and we'll forget about all the markers we passed along the way.

Sometimes, slowing down is the only way to realize how far we have already come.

// Kate Shahidi

Photography // Daniel Shamov

Design // Maggie Li

