



The tourist's guide to Magicada

2070



Magicada, the forest among the stars

Aboard Cicada, Magicada is the amusement park which covers the surroundings of our three hotels: Agon, Alea and Ilinx. This amusement park is lively and peculiar, because it defies the image that is expected of an amusement park in space. Magicada is designed to resemble a magical realm, a mythical forest whose charms are tangled in a veil of mystery, symbolizing the rebirth and miracle of nature in the perilous environment of outer space.

Each corner of this park is perfectly designed and maintained to delight you and fill your heart with serenity. In Magicada, you will be surrounded by a mixture between the vividness of earthly life and the alluring enigma of outer space. You will discover how one may sit in the shadow of a giant mushroom and enjoy their tea, occasionally throwing a glance out the window to admire the view of our home planet from space. You will walk along colourful paths enveloped by rich greenery on both sides and enlightened by fluorescent lamps during hours of nighttime, with graceful shades of lavender purple, untamed yellow and radiant orange. Explore the fascinating tale of the emerging space culture by spending an evening at the opera or by trying to escape our labyrinth library, in which only riddles and hidden clues will lead you towards the exit.

Restaurants and shops are scattered all around this forest village sunken in the starry sea in the Low Earth Orbit. Enjoy a lively chat with the robotic hosts at Tito's Teahouse or choose from a large, exclusive variety of otherworldly, one-of-a-kind jewelry, decorated with precious moon dust and delicately sculpted fragments from the asteroids which pass by the Earth. Among many other fine dining locations, where you will have the opportunity to try out all traditional dishes that belong to the newly-born space culture, we will also gladly await your visit as the Stellar Sky Restaurant, the very first restaurant to be built beyond earthly frontiers. Our individual, intimate dining "cupolas" are endowed with large ceiling windows that reveal the extraordinary view of the Earth. *(Ask your robotic host to inform you in regard to the view below through an interactive tour; and leave a good tip if you believe their services were of high quality and made your dining experience worthwhile.)*

If you seek a more adventurous journey, we kindly encourage you to make the most out of your stay and experiment with numerous entertainment facilities. Much like a tropical beach hidden behind a waterfall of pouring stars, our magical waterpark will grant you a magnificent view, luxurious spa treatments and unmatched, thrilling rides. Challenge yourself and assess your physical capabilities in micro-gravity by completing all the courses in our adventure park and by testing out the unusual gym equipment in our sports hall. Don't forget to get a feel for space sports in our Olympic Stadium and stay tuned for the next edition of the Space Olympics and many other international space championships. Atypical gaming halls and the only casino of the Low Earth Orbit await you as well, exclusively on Magicada! Sometime during your trip, choose to immerse yourself in the wonders of the universe by visiting our grand observatory and venture into the unknown through an unequalled experience – spacewalks.

Enjoy this collection of articles from space tourists all over the world, in order to get a glimpse of what your destination has to offer. For more information, please browse through the tablet attached to the seat in front of you.

Thank you for choosing Cicada as your touristic destination. We will patiently wait for your arrival and hope that you will enjoy your flight, as well as the time spent with us.

Preparing for takeoff

Space travel is a lot easier now that the second elevator and first small settlements have been built: cheaper, faster and safer (accessible to children above 13 as well!). Back in the days, not everyone was allowed to spend their holidays in space.

I was chosen among the first space tourists. It's amazing how technology has evolved since then. What I remember most vividly about the days before my journey is the 5 month training camp (I used to complain about flight safety instructions; I had another thing coming).

It was me and 24 others (including the 2 pilots and 2 flight attendants), all above the age of 21. We would be spending the next months together, in the camp's headquarters. Upon arrival, we were all gathered in one of the hotel's conference rooms – most of us complete strangers, from all around the world. After introducing the journey itself, that was the least of my concerns, the pilots sharply dressed in their work uniforms, made it their priority to answer our questions, though not before giving us a brief description of what we were actually going to learn as trainees.

Afterwards, I hadn't slept the day before (I was tired, as I had been so agitated, I went straight to my room (I was tired, as I had been so agitated, I hadn't slept the day before), only to find a mighty pile of documents lying on the nightstand, among which were the papers we needed to sign, as well as a trainee guide and map of the headquarters. Foolish as I am, of course, I chose to burn the midnight oil and study the papers (although they were "due" the fourth day).



The next day, I overdosed on coffee and managed to survive (my fellow colleagues, in contrast, were curious and bright as the morning sun; but I felt superior – I had unnecessarily memorized the schedule by heart). We had breakfast and then attended a presentation regarding the attractions of the flight and of our stay; we would be taking a lot more such courses for the weeks to come, to become familiar with emergency procedures and the space environment. After lunch, I had to emotionally prepare myself for the second "class" of the day: the human body in space. Not half bad, as opposed to my expectations. Thankfully, we would given pills to combat nausea, which would arise from not being used to a 0 g environment. Otherwise, nothing too out of the ordinary. The activities for the day came to an end; we had dinner together in the end and got to know each other. It went well. The night was sweet and I slept like a log.

On the third day, I had naturally missed breakfast, but my new friend from India, Samman, took pity on me and brought me some food nonetheless – see, right then, I knew he was a friend to keep! Anyway, Samman and I were reasonably late to class and the others did not have to wait too long (we did receive a few deserved scolding looks). The pilots gave us a complex tour of our spaceship and discussed the contingency plans, which we would put into practice many times before the end our training. Afterwards, we were left to our own devices and we could freely start exploring the ship by ourselves. It was not as spacious and luxurious as the ones today, yet still not nearly as cramped as I had expected. It was on the same level as a first class plane flight, with comfortable seats and large computer screens. However, what caught my eye were the large windows; the view inspired me to write a few lines during my trip (the result, however, is quite embarrassing).

Elias Nilsson

AGE
53

NATIONALITY
Swedish

OCCUPATION
Spacecraft pilot

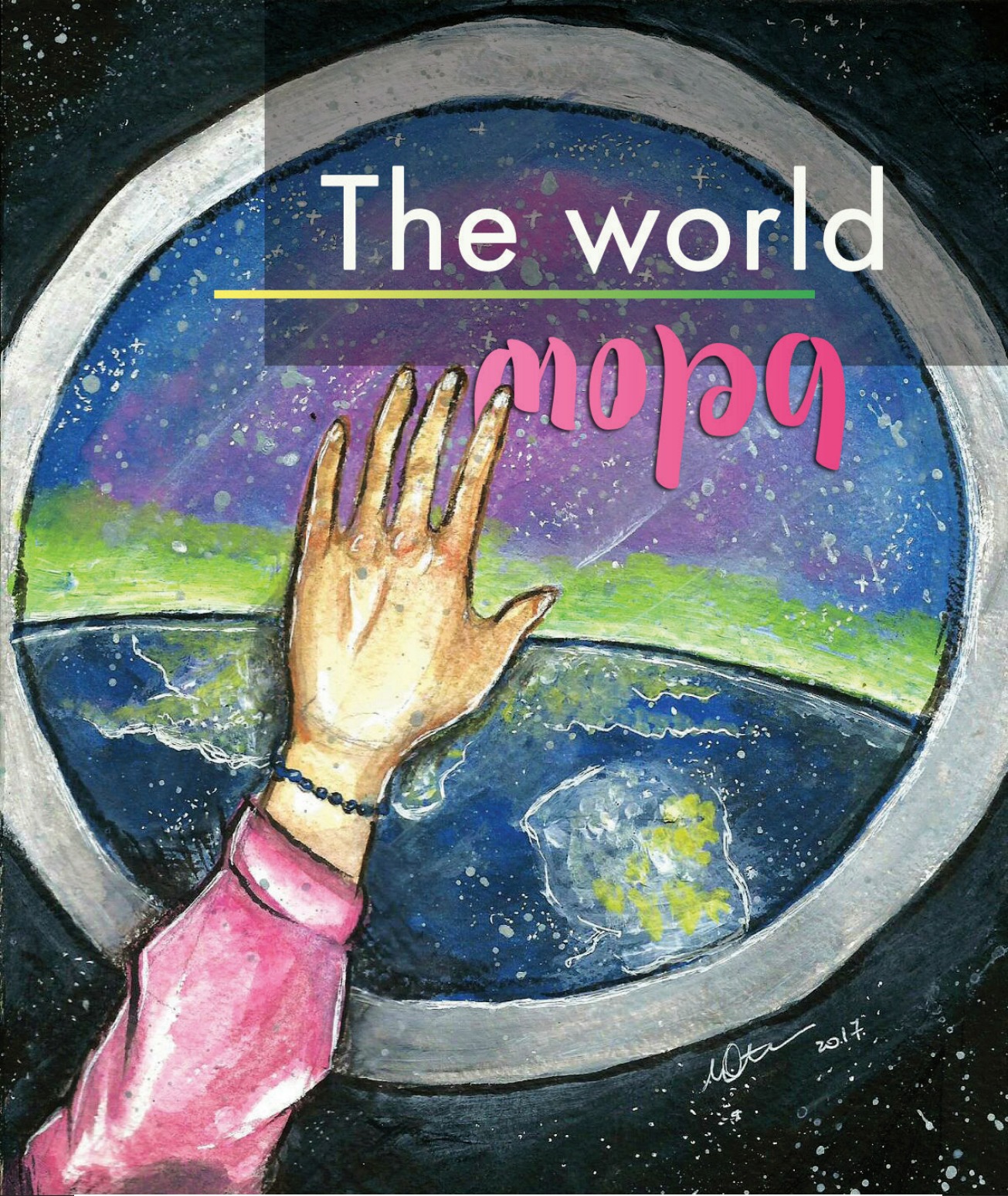


The next weeks were a combination of theory and physical training, to familiarize ourselves with the 0 g environment, as well as the launch and landing procedures. Quite funny, compared to 1-month training sessions today. In the beginning of space travel (accessible to the general population), numerous cautions were needed. Though not as complex as astronaut training, the challenge itself was still excruciating, yet fascinating all the same. Numerous days of centrifuge simulations, for the launch, water landing simulations, EVA training in a pool and improving our tolerance for rotation speeds. We trained as if our lives truly depended on it (which they kind of did). Although I was slightly jealous of Samman for beating my records each time, I found the experience rewarding, and I was motivated to pursue a career in space travel. I have now been a spaceship pilot for more than 10 years. I cannot tell you how many times I thought it would be easier to give up during training. I am so grateful I did not, because nothing could ever compare to my first journey in outer space; although its beauty cannot be conveyed in a few words, I will tell you this: it is worth it, much more than you could ever imagine.

Besides, if I had given up, I wouldn't now be traveling to space each year, with Samman and my lovely wife, Savannah, by my side...

The world

below



“ A light feeling of freedom began pouring down from my head to the tips of my toes, spreading through my entire body – it was ticklish, somehow warm and soft, like melted honey. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, so I could envision the reality of my current standpoint. It was exhilarating, as if my soul, condensed in a vertex of emotion, had left my body for a few moments, then soon came tumbling inside once again, like a thrill of energy, a spiritual shockwave. ”

It occurred to me that, even though I had been studying journalism for more than four years and had a natural talent for writing, I could not help feeling as if any attempt to convey the sublimity of this view through mere words would be incomplete and meaningless. In its entirety, what I saw when I entered the orbit was beyond my grasp and I hereby concluded that the evolution of literature (and art in general) would find its new home in outer space.

Everything I had ever known was down there. Each form of existence I had ever encountered. Brodered in the colours of life, the Earth looked fragile before my eyes; almost as if it could break. The thin layer of the atmosphere lightly enveloped the planet; its edges were pale and blue and I had the impression that I could dip my hands and feet right into it, as one would bathe in an ocean of air. The veil of the Earth was tinted green and red, right where it met the sharp rays of the Sun.

The shadows of the night languidly began to swallow the brightness of the day, and glittering drops of light followed close behind it. The city was but a mere canvas, an atypical chiaroscuro oil painting of the Renaissance. The line between day and night was so clear, so wonderfully sharp and real; all I had formerly envisioned as routine or normality on Earth I had genuinely evaded – a different reality began to unfold and I could not perceive its exclusion, its parallelism to the course of the earthly world, so elevated and terrifying that I could not help but choose to embrace it. An electrifying sense of belonging filled my chest and I truthfully felt as if I could cry. The reality of me crying in the absence of gravity was not as poetic, though. A blob of liquid covered my orbs, blurring my line of vision, and my tears, shaped like little spheres, slowly started floating away. A kind flight attendant helped me get myself straight: “You are not the first one to cry”, she said, offering me an elegant, reassuring smile.

Arami Chino

AGE
23

NATIONALITY
Japanese

OCCUPATION
Journalist



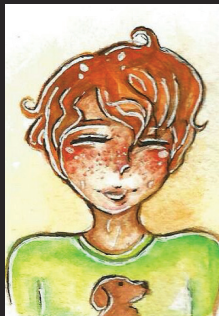
I snapped back to reality for a moment and proceeded to pull down the curtains. It was time to eat. The food was... quite minimalistic, to put it mildly. It was mostly stored in cartoons and plastic bags, either in the form of liquid or powder. I injected some hot water into a bag and made instant soup! And it tasted surprisingly good. Afterwards, most of us had fun trying to catch food with our mouths, mostly chocolate candy, which behaved decently in 0 g, but also water and other such beverages. After our meal, we began experimenting with our bodies in microgravity. Spaceships nowadays are very spacious. We entered the recreational room and had a blast playing three-dimensional twister, water ball ping-pong and a great variety of team games, which involved pushing our teammates to the other side of the spherical room and coordinating our movements so we wouldn't get stuck in mid-air.

There was still some time left before lights-out and I diligently returned to “sightseeing”. I am thankful I did so, because I eventually got to admire the ghostly silhouettes of the Aurora borealis, right before sleep. After tucking myself inside the soft sleeping bag and fastening my seatbelt, I calmly closed my eyes.

And I knew right then, that all I would feel in that moment, that day, and for as long as my fragile human heart would grant me its power, would be an exquisite devotion, radiating strength and everlasting fascination for the world below...



*The Magicada Waterpark: hot-tubs,
swings, vivid greenery and a sea of stars*



Martin Nguyen

AGE
13

NATIONALITY
Norwegian

OCCUPATION
Student

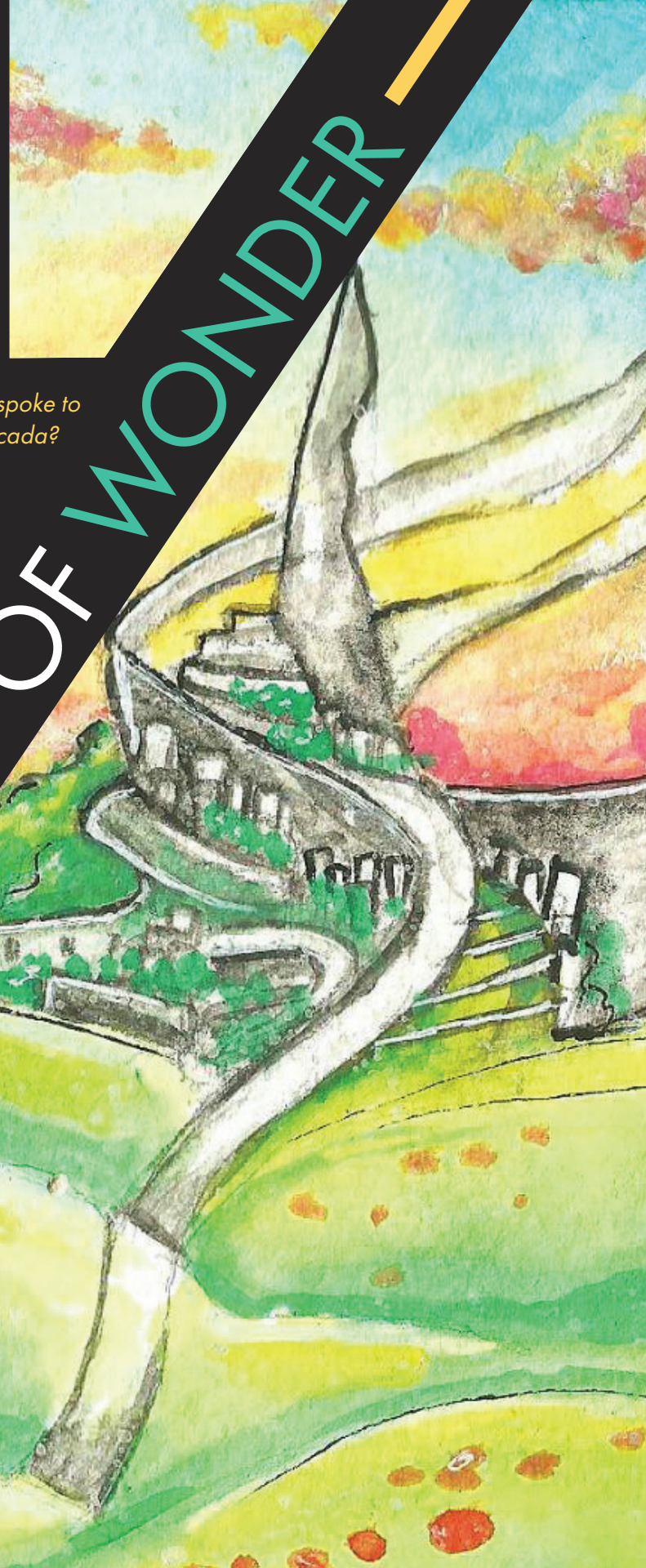
"Martin, come! Come, my son" he sweetly spoke to me as he grinned. "What do you think of Cicada? Huh? Did you like it?"

It was kind of a stupid question to ask. It was more than obvious that I enjoyed my trip there - as probably every normal human being. But I chuckled cheerfully.

"Would you like to write about it? About Cicada and its wonderful attractions?"



A LAND OF WONDER



Did I have a choice? Well, maybe, maybe not, but I would have chose to write about it anyway, even though I'm not very good at keeping my stories coherent, nor at expressing my feelings into words. I'm actually rather bad at it (and, to be honest, I would describe my experience as "woah!", "gaaaah" and "asjfen" if I could, but... I can't).

I've just turned 13 recently (the minimum age to cope with the flight up there) and I was able to get to Cicada (thanks to my father, who actually works there). Yes, he does. He's a scientist and he's trying to convince me to become one as well, though, to be honest, I would rather choose to become a NASA... astronaut! It's my dream. Or maybe this is not the right word - it is my goal! An astronaut once said that the difference between a dream and a goal is that a dream is near impossible to reach, while a goal is something that you can probably reach if you work day in and day out to make it happen. I want to do this and I will. I will achieve my goal one day.

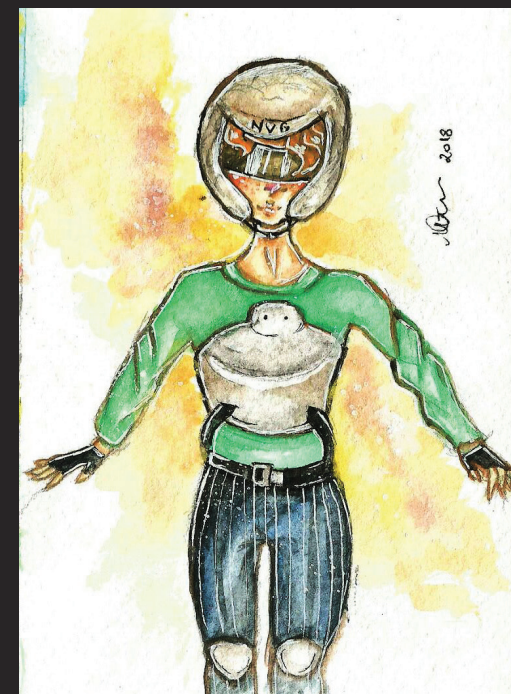
As for my experience on Cicada, I would say that my favorite location was The

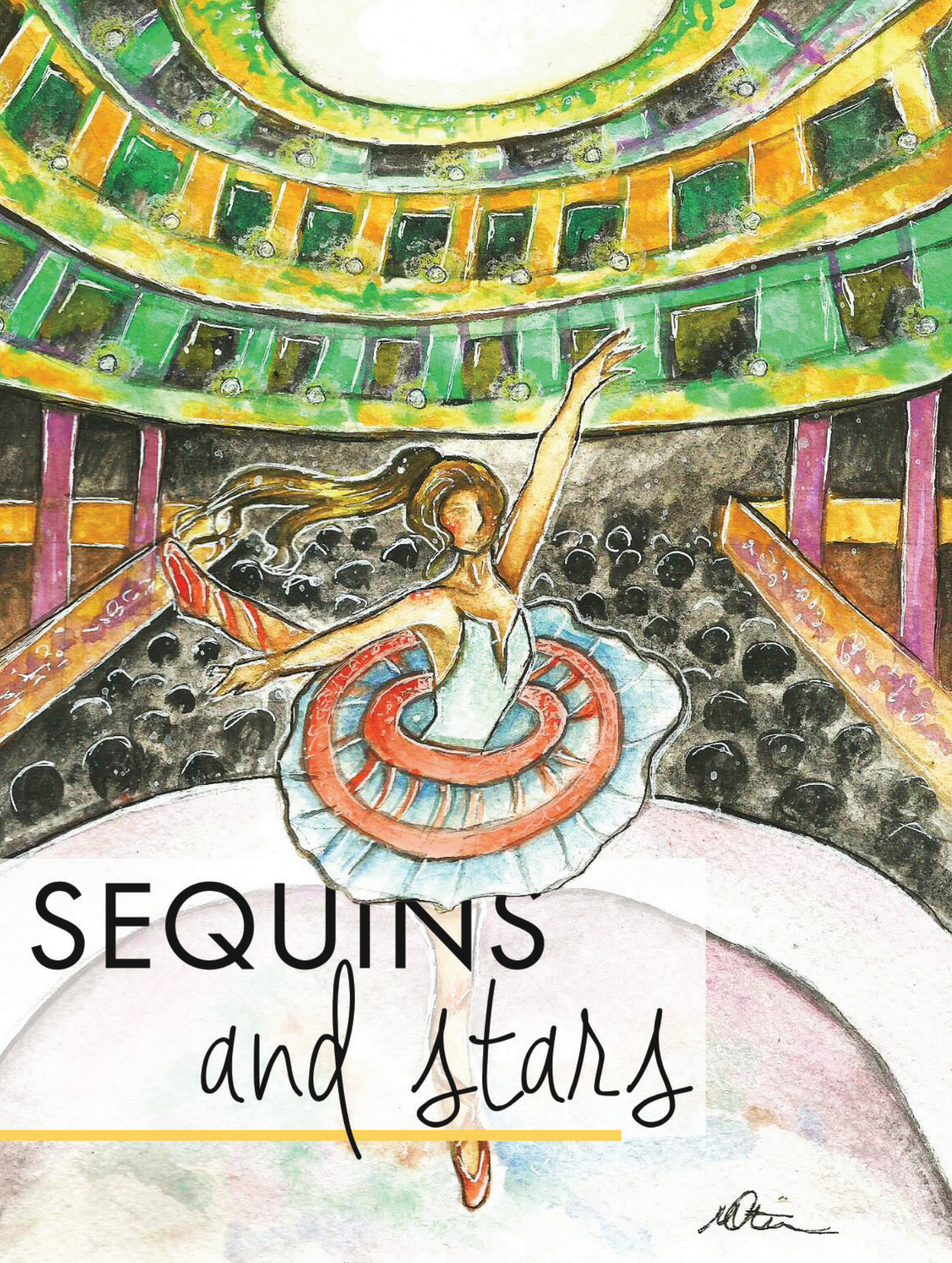
Magicada Waterpark. It was just so surreal how big and entertaining that place could be! There was this giant water slide that looked so exciting and dangerous (it wasn't), but unfortunately, I was too small to get on it. That wasn't a big deal, though, because there were plenty of other slides and fun attractions for me to try out. Hopefully until next year I'll have the right height.

Another nice thing I saw there was this Adventure Park (though I don't remember if it had a certain name or not) and it kind of felt like being on Earth at first. But just at first. It was very different because you simply feel lighter on Cicada and it gives you the impression that you are actually flying - which was amazing!

What else, what else... oh! The Gaming Hall - or "The Paradise" as I like to call it. I remember playing this game called "Sniper Storm"; I managed to get the highest score and then, when I took off my NerveGear, everyone seemed to be so shocked! They surely weren't very happy that a 13-year old boy beat them. There was also a fantasy game named "Preilla's World" where my character was an elf and I was able to fly! It was kind of weird, but very intriguing.

“ Overall, my experience was very pleasing and I hope my father will take me with him next year too! I'm very thrilled to try out more exciting things. ”





SEQUINS and stars

Alta

The opera hall was not what one would call extravagant, yet more of a well-blended combination of chic and picturesque. It possessed a silent harmony and placidity; almost as if the walls themselves were imbued with the comforting scent of old books and the refreshing coldness of the morning dew. Vibrant flowers were gracefully scattered all around the hall; it seemed natural, almost as if it were a marble palace in ruins, where plants found their way through the cracks in the walls and lifted their heads up towards the thin rays of the sun.

Like the park as a whole, the opera hall portrayed the image of world perfectly crafted and reborn by the grace of nature.

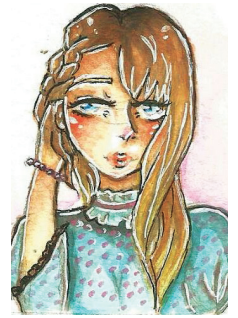
I took my seat in one of the middle balconies and quietly waited for the performance to begin. The show had never been presented in front of an audience before; that night, we were going to watch an adaptation of Sergei Prokofiev's Cinderella. The lights were dimmed and the curtains slowly began to fade into the darkness, unveiling the enlightened stage behind. Delicate stars were painted on its surface, all spinning and drowning in an ocean of color, and I thought that, maybe, I had seen it once in my dreams, when I had dared raise my mortal hand towards the serene pastel clouds that

Eméline Lefebvre

AGE
26

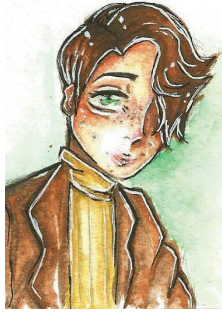
NATIONALITY
French

OCCUPATION
Model



enveloped the secrecy of the sunset. The stage was, in fact, a portal that led to the mystic world among the stars, a concave disruption in the course of time, revealing the beguiling abyss of infinity.

When Cinderella and her prince began their first dance, the stage started to spin irregularly, following the intensity and rhythm of the song. It seemed as if the ballet dancers were swimming in a sea of light, their movements as graceful as a swan's and their bodies as light as the snowflakes which curl their way through the weak, cold wind that still soothes the snowdrops on the last day of winter. From one part of the stage to the other, the two of them consequently jumped towards the center of it, where their eyes met once again and their love deepened. As they delicately embraced in mid-air, the tale which unfolded became so much more than an old folk tale; it was a story of passion and time, a story through which lovers slowly sank in the warm substance of eternity and explored the mysteries of the Universe through each other. When the stage stopped moving and the two ballet dancers posed in the middle of it, a rain of sequins began to pour down to where they stood; those raindrops, I thought, were stars, lost in an existential dance. And love was right in the center of this dance. The love we have for someone dear, the love we have for art, for beauty, for simplicity, for peace, for knowledge and divinity, for evolution and nature, for life, for the Earth, for the Universe and its alluring mystery...



Eric Rațiu

AGE
17

NATIONALITY
Romanian

OCCUPATION
Student

"I lift up my eyes and see in front of them a multitude of dreams and hopes lost through the infinity of stars, dancing in this giant, enormous ocean of dazzling aspirations. Who am I? How did I get there? How am I supposed to feel right now, standing in front of this boundless void I could only dream of - and not even that - before?"

I wished I could answer these questions, but my mind is empty and my heart is filled with pure glee. I feel like everything might disappear and I would wake up dazed in the very next moment I take another step. I feel dizzy and overwhelmed. I feel lost, but the joy is flowing inside of my poor, humble soul. I feel like this is what I've been waiting for my whole life. This moment - this very astonishing moment."

I remember writing this with the fastest speed I was capable of back then, after a long journey of figuring out my way back to the main torus (from the observatory) and then, of course, to the hotel. Or our way, should I say? Obviously, I couldn't get there without my parents, as I'm still a high-schooler and, to be honest, not as cautious as people would think I am.

My name is more or less important in this story, but for the sake of letting my readers know me and making my article as credible as possible, I will concede some of my personal information on this piece of paper. I was born and raised in Romania, a very small and rather unknown country in Europe. My family wasn't wealthy, it was actually far

Soaring in the

starlight

from that - not that I would have missed something during my childhood years, but I prefer to consider ourselves as a modest family rather than affluent. It wasn't easy for us to afford the trip to Cicada, but it was my dream to get there and I would have done whatever I could in order to fulfil it. And so I did. I worked hard, I earned my own money and I prayed for my goal to be achieved every day. Eventually, I succeeded. But that is not the point, I think the most important thing in this story is actually the reason behind my effort, my endeavor.

Since I was a little kid, I had this unusual, weird love for stars, galaxies, constellations - astronomy and everything that comes with it. Something like a passion, but even more than that. I was obsessed with studying and researching about it. I even asked my physics teacher a couple of times if we could add an extra subject about astronomy - eventually I failed, but he still helped me with this and that, as my desire to learn was so strong. I wish I could put in words the joy I felt when I had bought the tickets for the trip - not to mention boarding and all - I was in a total ecstasy I cannot describe.

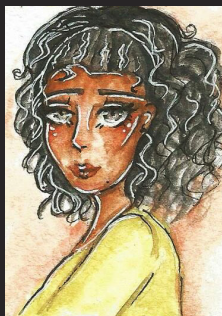
As I'm writing this, one month has passed since I saw my dreams flowing through the lenses of the observatory and I feel as excited as I felt back then. I feel motivated to go on with my passion and maybe - or surely - make a career out of it.



“It was amazing, surreal and out of this world - I would surely love to experience this again and I recommend it to everyone and each of you.”

A cup of joy with honey

I take small sips of flavored black tea as I put my thoughts on this small, rather insignificant looking notebook - which in fact is very precious to me (I have carried it with me everywhere since my very first flight eight years ago). Very, very precious. My expectations and hope, my deepest insecurities, my first impressions on space travel, on Cicada and (as a parenthesis) my first thoughts on Elias, the love of my life - everything is in there. And I sit quietly, waiting for him to show up, to gently kiss my forehead and tell me that it is time to go back in our adventures. As odd as it might seem, our jobs really do imply an all-time adventure - always the same trip, but never boring. Thinking back to the day we met, I recall a younger Elias, showing off the same cheerful smile and that daily enthusiasm in his sight and a more naive, panicky Savannah (I remember myself as a very antisocial and rather awkward individual back in my early thirties - Elias indeed did a good job working on that with me!). Both of us were fairly insecure (one more than the other, considering the fact that Elias already had a few years of experience as a pilot, while I was new to almost everything - the technology, the people, the idea of space traveling). It is indeed a great experience, but it is challenging to keep things

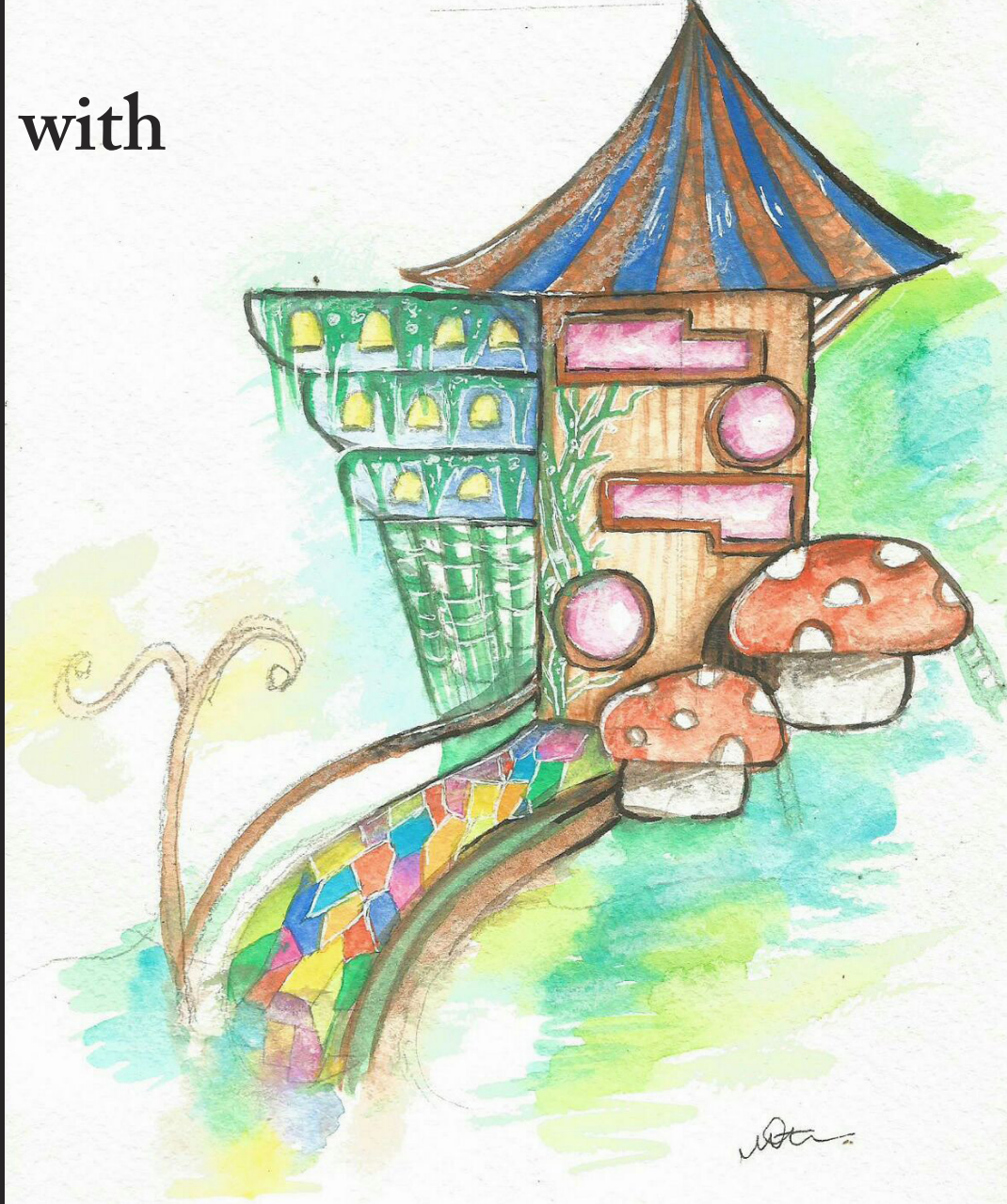


Savannah Nilsson

AGE
41

NATIONALITY
American

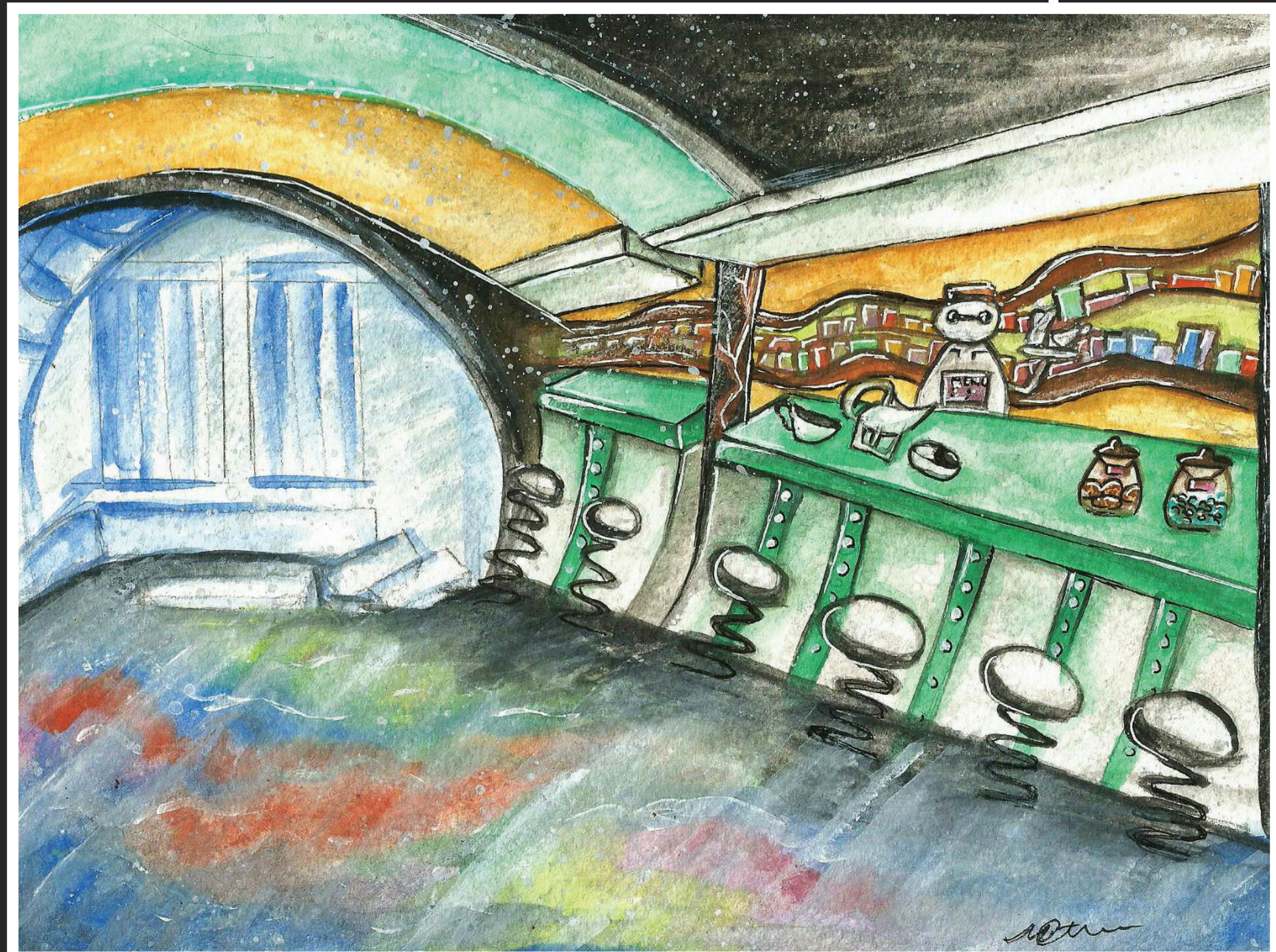
OCCUPATION
Flight attendant



in control on a spaceship. Even as a flight attendant, nothing is the same - it is much more demanding than anyone might think.

“Space travel is the peak of humanity and I am proud to be a part of it.”

As a young girl who had just started working as a flight attendant, I was always trying to make people like me; I wanted to get on the good side of everyone, though Elias wasn't "everyone", he was this charming Swede I looked up to and fancied. Somehow we managed to become friends - I used to hang out a lot with him and Samman. Withstanding our mutual attraction, we kept our relationship a friendly and kind of a collegial one - until a specific night that we would never forget. As a little reward for our hard work, we received coupons for a free dinner at SS Restaurant (StellarySky Restaurant). Somehow Samman got sick that night (later on I found out that he never was and the whole thing was done on purpose - he wanted me and Elias to spend more time alone) and this is how we took our friendship to the next level. He was so smart, charismatic and polite - his whole existence seemed surreal. We talked and laughed for hours and I just couldn't get enough of his amazing stories and hilarious jokes. He asked me to marry him on that same date, in that same venue, three years after our first date. SS Restaurant became such a huge part of our lives - we started our relationship, our marriage, our life together in that place. We've been married for five years now and we're enjoying our life to the fullest. I start giggling as I feel his hands on my shoulders and I think I have to end this story here (he is watching me laughing right now and his yellowish-green eyes analyze every word I'm writing). The only thing I want to add is that Cicada is a wonderful, exciting and dreamlike place and I'm gladly recommending everyone to visit it at least once - and P.S.: Don't forget to try SS Restaurant's food! It is AMAZING.



Tito's teahouse: a variety of otherworldly tea flavors and friendly robotic hosts

Space casinos are
lucky stars...

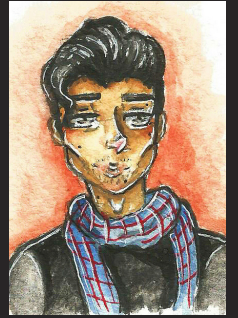
literally.

Ayaan Pradesh

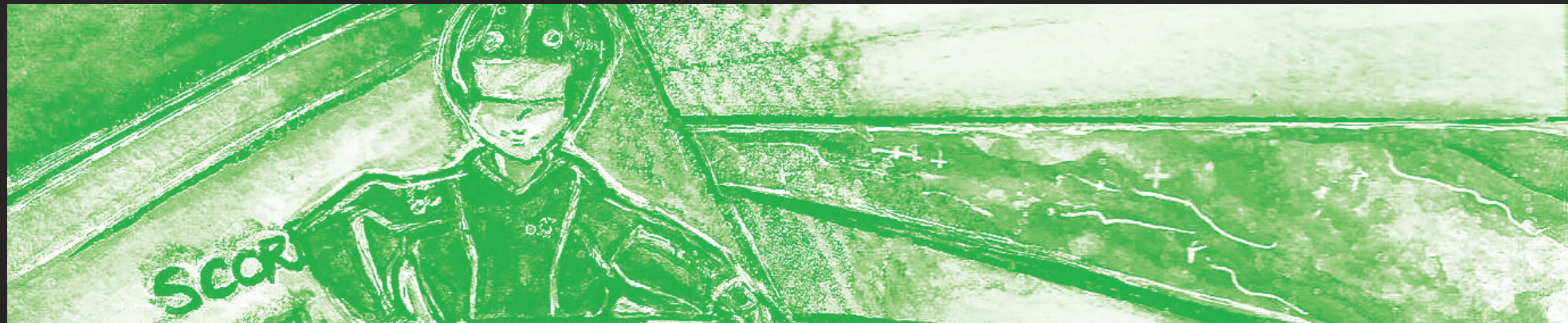
AGE
39

NATIONALITY
Indian

OCCUPATION
Entrepreneur



It was tempting, at first, because of the nature of the situation itself; gambling in space is not exactly routine and I have the deepest affection for such peculiarities. However, admittedly, there were other things about space casinos that caught my eye.



Though I have incredible luck anywhere, anytime and anyway, I felt as if circumstances were different 500 km above the Earth. And somehow even more in my favor.

In the Low Earth Orbit, gambling income is not taxable. Not yet, at least. And this means that, among others, I am free to place bets, play blackjack, roulette and poker... without paying taxes for the enormous amount of money I earn from it. A few consider it safer; I, however, tend to disagree. There is nothing safer about gambling in space. If anything, it is much riskier, yet at the same time much more thrilling and enticing. Which is why I like it. You see, when you keep winning more and more, round after round, and those below you can only squint their eyes and look towards the sun, in the hope that they would get a glimpse of you, your mind becomes a total haze. It exists beyond rational limits. Amidst this chaos, your

greed tries to take control and carelessly cling to that success. It is a foolish hope that is poison to all players. Tax incentives for gambling income in space only serve to feed that greed. So the beast to control becomes much more powerful.

To me, nothing is quite like being in the lion's cage, learning to tame that beast. And I had faced all the beasts on Earth, but this was one of a different kind. The beast was deceitful and I didn't know all of its tricks; the thought of losing all prudence hung above my head like the sword of the Damocles and I couldn't be

more elated. My heart was filled with delight and anticipation. I experienced a much more strident feeling of being alive than ever before. Bet after bet, game after game, always on the edge, numbers and scenarios were swirling in my head in a hypnotizing madness, and I could feel myself drowning in this abyss of avidity, where luck was but a feeble lifeboat floating on the surface. Adrenaline began to pump through my veins as the beast swung its tail through the water close behind me, when all I could do was swim

towards the enlightened surface of the water. And I knew that I would have to reach out my hands towards this luck and grab it, because it wouldn't give itself to me. It was time to risk, which meant it was time to have some fun.

So I played night after night and placed bet after bet, full of a fearless lucidity and excitement. And, as a side note, even though I knew little to nothing about Olympic sports in space, most of my bets went there. For the most part, as expected, I won.

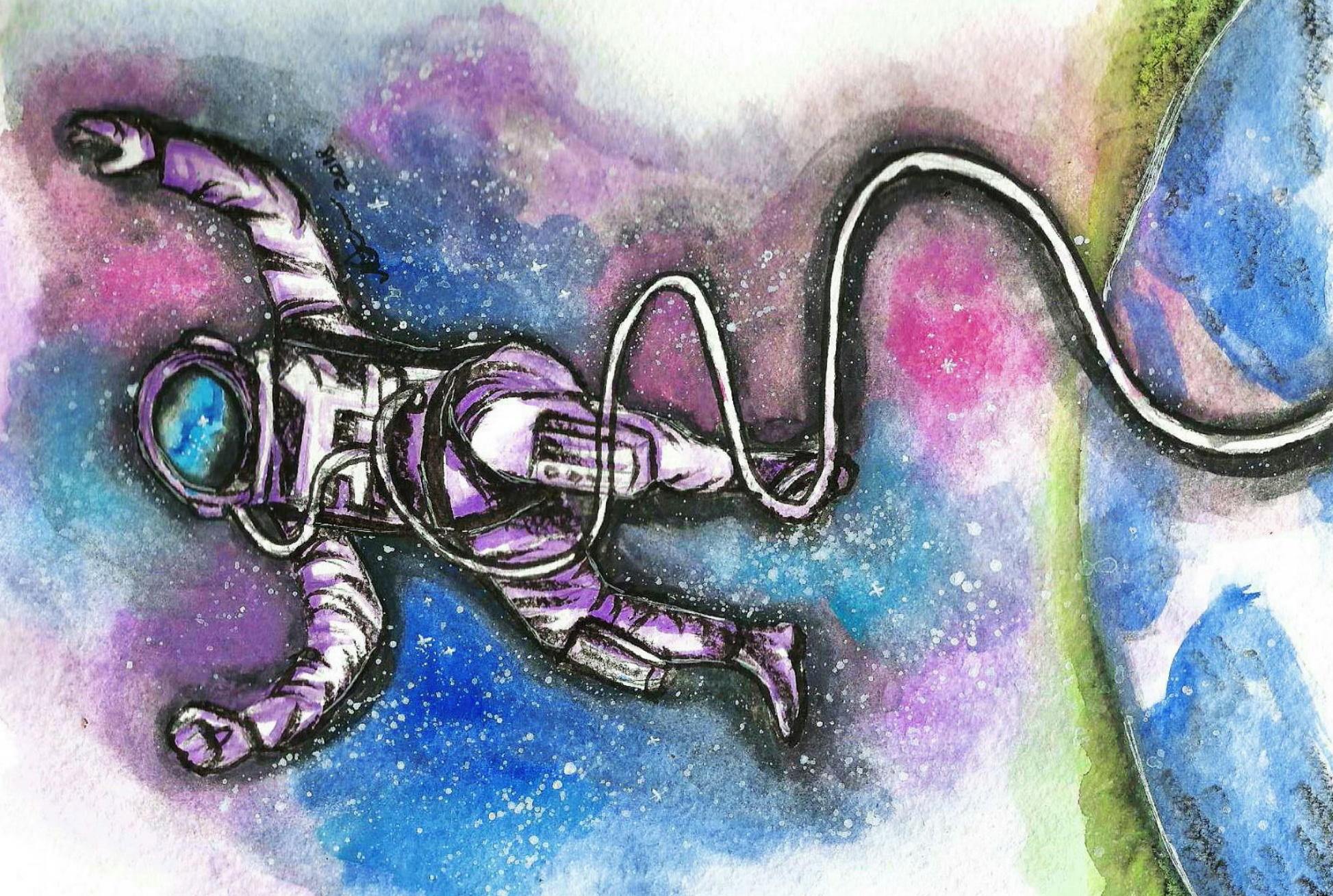
Hockey, in particular, was my lucky card.



Gambling on Earth is like cutting yourself a piece of cake to satisfy your desire, only to have someone take an enormous bite out of it. Many would get a taste of space gambling just to be able to enjoy this whole piece of cake. I'm a bit different.

I don't want that piece of cake, whether it's bitten or not...

I just want the whole cake to myself.

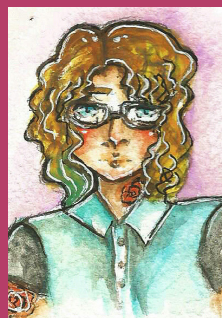


TO BE
BORN

again

Ten years ago, when I regained consciousness and my eyes hesitantly swallowed the sight of deafening white hospital lights, I was told I would never walk again. That did not resonate with me.

I have never believed in silent resignation. There are many ways in which this verdict was wrong. Ever since my accident, I've walked through countless dreams and stories, through the wonders of life and the joy of love, through faith and laughter, through the stars and far above the Earth.



Isaac Ethan Lee

AGE
32

NATIONALITY
Australian

OCCUPATION
*Comic book writer
Former band guitarist*

I patiently put on my astronaut suit and waited for the gate to open. Sooner or later, it was time for my first spacewalk to start. At the edge of the observatory, the world was relative. As my feet slowly began to detach from the surface of the spacecraft, I became a part of this exalting ambiguity; I drowned in the mild, lukewarm substance of creation and my soul melted.

In the beginning, I kept my eyes shut. I chose to explore my existence through sensory. I wanted to wait, to float far away, to lose track

of my own self and my surroundings. My hands and my feet were free and unchained. The welcoming void had embraced them and granted them its stimulating ruthlessness. My body was a fluid wave in a sea of stars. All I wanted to do was follow the course of this wave. Paradise unfolded in my mind. I calmly abandoned my conscience, my fears, my judgment... There was no Isaac, the melancholic guitarist or passionate comic book writer. There was nothing but a lingering sense of freedom that took over my heart. It

was so liberating, to just let go. To leave the illusion of quotidian life behind and bask in the glory of a much more careless and genuine form of existence.

When I finally looked down, I saw the mighty world way down before my feet. It seemed as if the string attached to my astronaut suit was an extension of the planet below, an umbilical cord which kept me safe and close to my earthly roots. I was a child in a mother's womb. I was born again and, truthfully, I had never felt as alive as in that very moment...

