

Perspectives



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Little Cellophane Child

Jade Goh

She asked me one day, perched on my knee. Little cellophane child — translucent and transient.

All day you spend, in darkened rooms with a million fireflies for candles, a silver chalice with abandoned dregs of Guan Zing leaves and Equator beans, furiously fighting qwerty. Daddy, how do you expect solitude to change the world if yours consists only of four walls?

Haven't you heard about scientific mavericks? They have changed the world, and broken the skyscape with bruises of glass and silver, captured the brilliance of a thousand sunsets behind a globe. Daddy, they left a man on the moon, he was made out of crimson sinews and vermillion emotions — just like you or I. You say you're saving the world. How?

I am a writer, I replied, my little cellophane child. Without me, you would be nothing. You would be ephemeral as sunshine-tipped daisies that whisper with the wind, as breathless as shadows tripping across brick pavements. With my words, I breathe you emotion, mortality. Through adjectives and nouns, I give you reason and rhyme. You bleed red, not rainbows, because I write it so.

My physical environment may be of four walls, but what of yours? You wander around the corridors of society's mores: footsteps hushed by the red velvet of tradition and observed by the august portraits of men, 109 years old. Yet, I do not doubt that you will walk through each and every one of the multitudes of walkways, rebuild glass ceilings and dismantle pagodas. You

will form new paradigms and reconstruct archetypes. You will build cities from clouds and dead men's dreams.

How many dreams can you live off though, until there is nothing left to build on? Will you turn to your brother in order to satiate unwonted desires? As your empires fall, you will build new ones, taking from the earth what you will soon have to give back — ashes to ashes, dust to dust. You will challenge landscape, bartering skies and sycamores for concrete and steel, yet you will never be satisfied. Your mavericks are the nexus between stagnant morality and this unrelenting quest for happiness.

Here I am, I am your light. I will hold your hand through the darkened corridors of society and I will illuminate your way. Tradition stifles you; this convention, which ironically challenges you to build bigger and better frontiers, to build the tallest building in the world. Here I will remind you, that it is not silver or gold that runs through your veins, but crimson and scarlet. When you bleed, you will bleed red.

My little cellophane child, how young and naïve you must be to believe that happiness is proportional to material things, how sheltered your cities must keep you from the outside world. Science has painted your world opaque and grey, corroding once definite moral boundaries in pursuit of this ideal of happiness.

I once wrote of love, of anger, of vice and of virtue. With my pen I captured the basic human emotions and they have been transformed into fables and templates for modern-day fairytales. 'Was there ever a tale of more woe, than of Juliet and her Romeo?' Despite the revolutions that have taken place and the laws of nature defied, we tend to forget that we are only mortal. Our world resembles a giant chessboard in which its masters recycle its transient pieces, until the queen has been sacrificed and the king killed, only for new masters to take over and the whole charade to start again.

My written words anchor our mortality. They remind us that we inhabit single moments in time. So, what is it to be human? Camus, one of the literary forefathers of existentialism, affirms our mere existence in the world, challenging our divine

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self-perceptions. As a race, we do not serve a purpose other than that of survival. So, what are we essentially surviving for?

You spend your days, harnessing your tomorrows into tangibles in order to hold your happiness in your hands. However, you neglect the fundamentals of your own humanity. I write to illuminate and to help you redefine and discover what it means to truly be alive. With the plethora of morality issues present in contemporary society, it is no wonder your own morality is compromised. It is no wonder that despite the laps of luxuries you find yourself amid, you can never absolutely achieve true nirvana.

Your self-annihilating, internal conflict threatens to engulf you as you forget what it means to be human. With my pen as a witness, I have watched the rise and fall of kingdoms led by pharaohs, so concerned with their divinity that they marked the brevity of their lives with monuments of sand and gold. Caesar was so consumed with the expansion of his empire that he was assassinated in a court of his closest friends.

My literature spans across the generations, addressing adages of life and exploring the peaks and troughs of our existence. There is a beauty in suffering; it is akin to the beauty in happiness.

But is beauty not found in simple things — a brush of color against rose's lips, or in the burnt gold of sunset clouds?

My daughter, you forget what beauty essentially is. It is hope. Remember hope? That harbinger of courage, that thing with feathers? Beauty is synonymous to hope that it is pure and transcendent and timeless. It is true beauty that will furnish envy and inspire lust, but it is also beauty that spurs us to eradicate desolation and turn the tide against our follies — this sort of beauty is free of charge. It is this exquisite concept of beauty that gives us a reason for living, and hence we discover what it is to be human.



Jade Goh wrote this in 2008 when she was in Year 12 at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria.