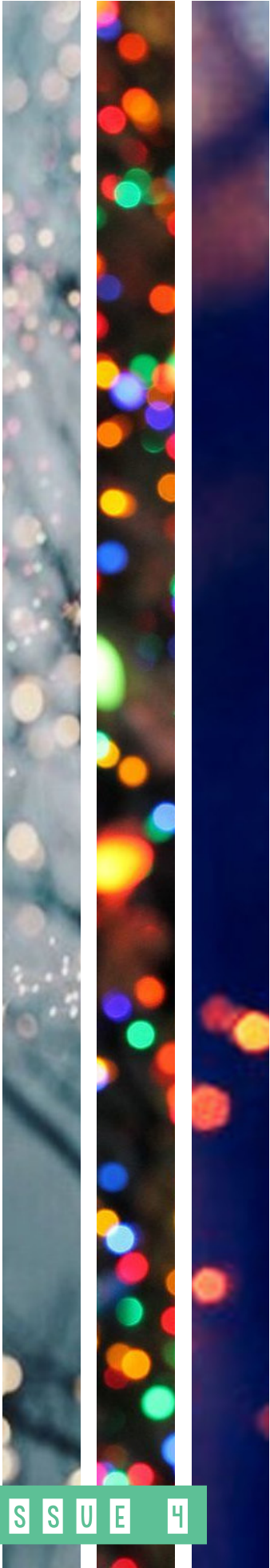


Cedar Sentinel



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DEC. 2017



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SPONSOR MR. MACDONALD

Editor Messages

ALANNAH
TJHATRA
EDITOR IN
CHIEF



Hi everyone!
I'm gonna be real with you: this issue was a struggle to do. Although I enjoyed it, there were a few issues along the way. But since you're reading this, it means the December newspaper is printed, so it's all good. :)

Christmas is just around the corner and I know everyone's looking forward to the break. Many dorm students are going home, and community students are looking forward to a relaxing two weeks of doing nothing. A lot of you are going travelling (to warmer/better places, I'm sure.)

As I'm writing this, I realize that it just might be a white Christmas this year (in contrast to the past two years where we've had wonderfully brown-green Christmases.) Even though it's extremely cold, I am reminded of that song in the hymnal that makes me feel extremely warm -- the lyrics go like this:

*Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want Thee forever to live in my soul;
Break down every idol, cast out every foe—
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

*Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow,
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Jesus came down to our dirty, dusty, sin-wrecked world to set an example, to love humans, to care, to sacrifice. So while our sins were red as crimson, we could be washed clean. Our hearts could become pure: whiter than snow. And every single time we sin, we are covered by the grace that ran through His blood on the day He was crucified -- on the day He did for us the greatest act of love.

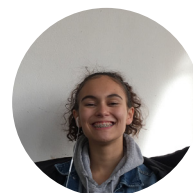
Please enjoy this festive (and specially extended) issue of the Cedar Sentinel.
Have a wonderful holiday!

-- Alannah Tjhatra

Peace
love
joy

KACEY
MORGAN

ASSISTANT
EDITOR



It's Christmas! Well -- the Christmas season anyway. With snow now covering the ground, there is that feeling of wanting to snuggle into a blanket while watching Christmas movies and drinking hot chocolate. I know some people think Christmas is a supersecular holiday and maybe for some people it is, but Christmas is also about family and the overall warm feeling that accompanies this holiday. Of course, the most important part of Christmas is giving to others and remembering the ultimate gift we were given, the mercy and grace God gave us by sending His Son. Don't forget to share that gift with everyone this holiday season.

-- Kacey Morgan

Prize Winners

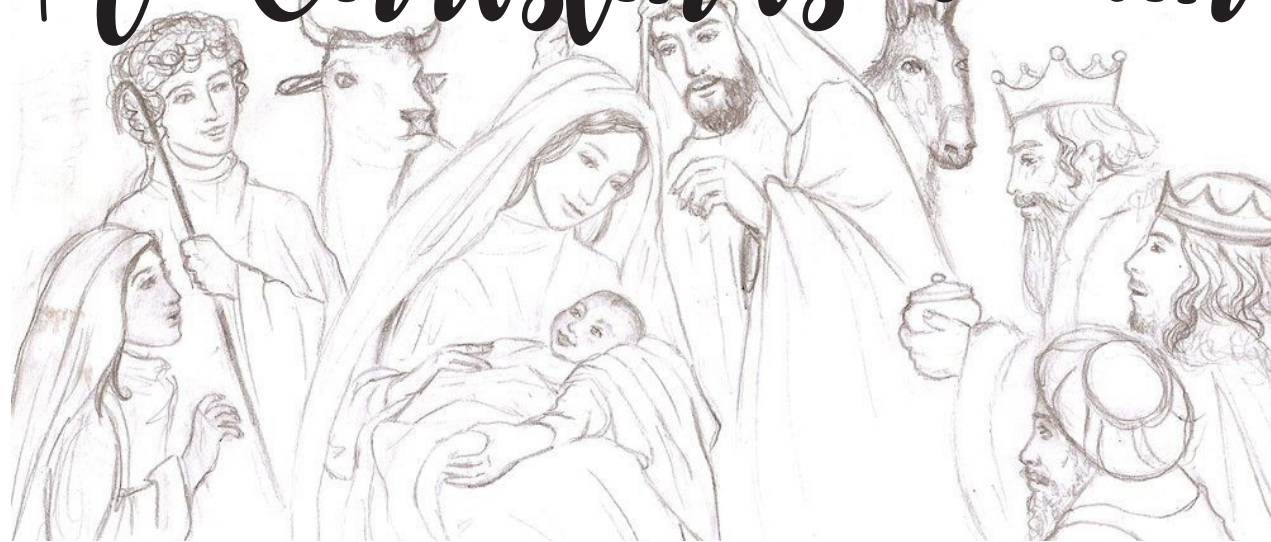
Congratulations to Bianca Silva, Joshua Onuotu, and Matthew Dowdle for winning November's contest! There will be more contests, draws, and games to come, so be sure to check the Cedar Sentinel in future months for more!



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(prize eaten)



A Christmas Poem



The best time of year evokes the joy
shared
It softens the hearts of those who
never cared

The jolly and the holly and the bustling
'round town
Will bring all good feelings and wipe away
the frown

Families reunite and hugs are given
Long fights and quarrels are forever forgiv-
en

A fire is made and faces are shining
Hands are getting warm and chairs are
reclining

The gold star on the tree shines oh so bright
It reminds us of the birth that silent night

He was born a baby to make us free
For His great promise that we might see

He left His great kingdom to live on earth
That's why the wise men recognized His
worth

They perceived Him as a majestic King
Even though He didn't own a royal ring

They knew His great powers came from
above
From God Almighty who sends us His love

Our job is to accept the love today
'Cause Christmas isn't all about the sleigh

Why would you celebrate the man in red
When Jesus died and His own blood He
bled

Now that you know you have a job to do
Jesus dies so we could share His love too

Help is needed this holiday season
But you must do it for the right reason

Put Christ in your Christmas this holiday
His name wasn't meant for you to throw
away

Don't forget why the star is on the tree
It is a special gift for you and for me



The True Meaning of Christmas

It's that time
of year again
-- students are
all on a "brain vaca-
tion," just wanting
Christmas to come
already. Teachers
are trying to get us
all prepared for our
exams, but we, as
students, are telling ourselves
that we'll have bare time to
study after Christmas break.
Dorm students are excited
about going home, sleeping
in their own beds, and eating
some good food. Christmas
is a time when most families
come together to bond and
spend time with each oth-
er. It is meant to be a time
to give thanks to Christ and
celebrate Him for everything
He has done for us, acknowl-
edging all the prayers He's
answered and the blessings
He has given us.

However, as time has
moved on, most of the world
now views Christmas as a
huge, personal birthday par-
ty. Little kids look forward
to opening their gifts from
their parents, siblings, and
Santa Claus. We have forgot-
ten what Christmas is really
about, and it's about time that

WHY WAS JESUS GIVEN TO US?

we realize and fix this prob-
lem. In Luke 2: 4-19, it says,
'So Joseph also went up
from the town of Nazareth in
Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem
the town of David, because
he belonged to the house and
line of David. He went there to
register with Mary, who was
pledged to be married to him
and was expecting a child.
While they were there, the
time came for the baby to be
born, and she gave birth to her
firstborn, a son. She wrapped
Him in cloths and placed Him
in a manger, because there
was no guest room available
for them.'

And there were shepherds
living out in the fields near-
by, keeping watch over their
flocks at night. An angel of the
Lord appeared to them, and
the glory of the Lord shone
around them, and they were
terrified. But the angel said
to them, 'Do not be afraid. I

bring you good news
that will cause great
joy for all the people.
Today in the town of
David a Savior has
been born to you; He
is the Messiah, the
Lord. This will be a
sign to you: You will
find a baby wrapped
in cloths and lying in a man-
ger.'

Suddenly a great company
of the heavenly host appeared
with the angel, praising God
and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest
heaven, and on earth peace to
those on whom His favor rests.'

When the angels had left
them and gone into heaven,
the shepherds said to one an-
other, "Let's go to Bethlehem
and see this thing that has
happened, which the Lord has
told us about."

So they hurried off and
found Mary and Joseph, and
the baby, who was lying in the
manger. When they had seen
Him, they spread the word
concerning what had been told
to them about this child, and
all who heard it were amazed
at what the shepherds said to
them. But Mary treasured up
all these things and pondered

them in her heart.”

Why did God send His Son, Jesus, down to earth to save us, while knowing everything that was going to happen and what He was going to have to go through? Jesus was given to us so that one day, we could all make the choice to follow Him and believe in Him. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins, our lives would just end with our death- no eternity with Christ.

Personally, I view Christmas as a gift from God. It is a time that we are all (usually) thankful, whether it is for the right reasons or not. Most

people are in a happy, thankful mood. Christmas is a time to be with your family, it's not about Christ's birthday -- it is about His power and His divinity. I don't think that anyone can fully understand what it meant for Jesus to be born as a baby in a manger. We cannot explain how He was fully human AND fully divine. In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul explains, partly, about Jesus' perfect character, and the truths behind Christmas.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For . . . all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all

things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

Christ is our everything. He is our Father, He is our Creator, and He is our King. He was a baby born in a manger in Bethlehem, and He made all things.

CARALYNN
CHAN



PHYSICS

FIELD

TRIP:

THE CN

TOWER

On November 28 at 9:00 am, 32 students along with three other adult supervisors, including our Physics teacher Mr. Pilapil, climbed on a school bus and went on the Physics 11U field trip to the CN Tower. Previously, we watched a documentary about the CN Tower, but it was nothing compared to physically being at the there. We arrived at the base of the CN Tower at 10:30 am.

First, we went to a wall display where we learned some interesting facts about the CN Tower. The main reason why we came to the CN tower was not to be tourists, but to complete a worksheet

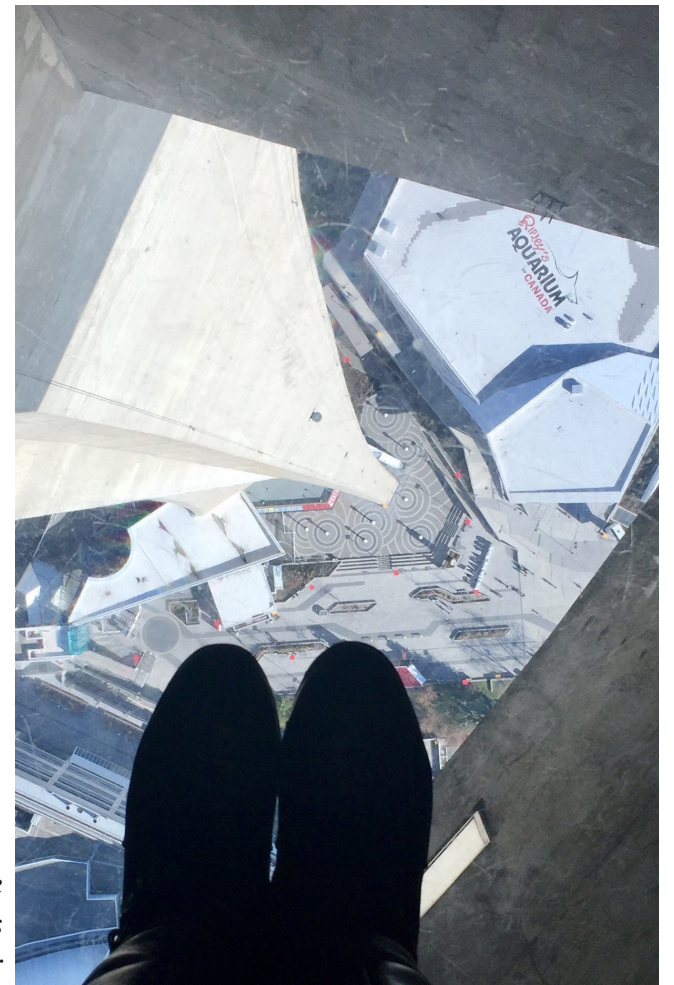
about the tower by finding information, looking at displays and observation points. We learned that the CN Tower was originally built to be a television transmission tower that would stand over all the other buildings. There were many challenges that the builders of the CN Tower faced when they were constructing it. They had to make sure that the CN Tower would not be damaged by extreme weather conditions — from high winds to lightning strikes, to extreme temperature changes. On the display wall, we found out that the CN Tower is struck by lightning an average of 75 times per year.

To combat this, the builders had copper strips running down the total height of the CN tower, so that the lightning strikes would dissipate harmlessly into the ground. In addition, the tower was built to withstand winds of 418 km/h (260 mph.) To counter the strong winds, there are two tuned mass dampers high on the antenna mast of the CN Tower. The weighed rings (that were compared to hula hoops) move in the opposite direction when the wind pushes the tower, minimizing the sway.

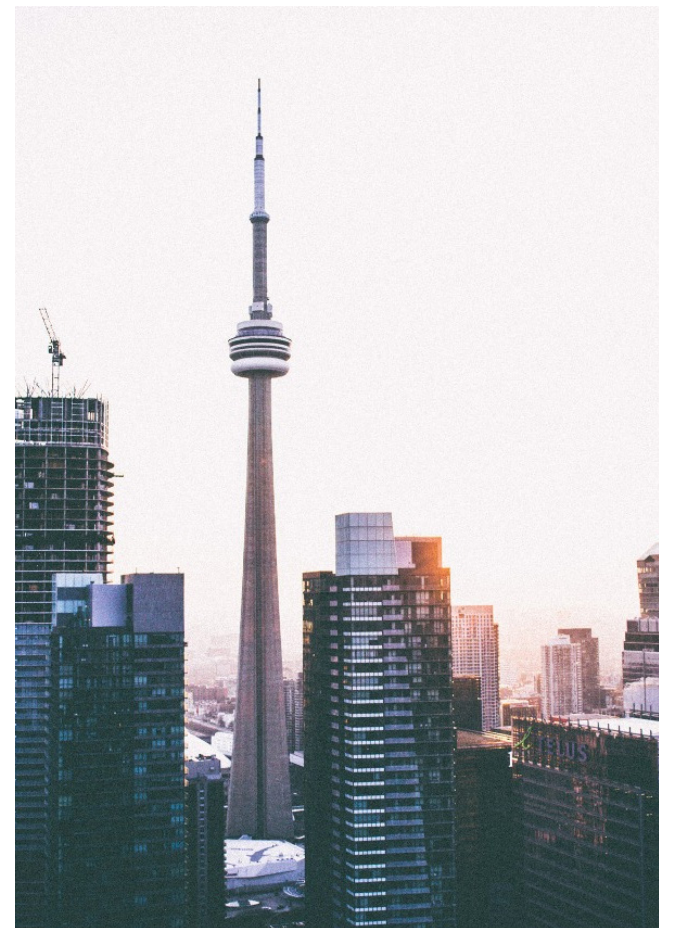
Beside the wall display, there was a smaller model of the CN Tower behind a sunset panel with Christmas lights and sound effects that mimicked lightning strikes and storms.

Our class went on to a green screen where we took a group photo of all the students on the trip. In Mr. Pilapil's office, there is a collection of green screen photos with previous Physics 11 students on their own CN Tower trips — now my class will join the ranks of students who decided to take Physics 11 at King-sway College.

We also went on an elevator ride to the lookout level. There was a CN Tower guide who rode with us on the elevator ride and told us facts about the CN Tower elevator. She told us that the elevators move at 20 feet per second, which is about 15 miles per hour. On our worksheets, we had to explain the sensations we were experiencing on the CN Tower elevators which were related to Newton's First Law of Motion -- but it was kind of difficult to think about when



The glass floor





The photographers' quality pictures



Simcoe Place food court



squished in an elevator with 14 other classmates and a tour guide.

At the lookout level, we had to describe the weather patterns — luckily, the weather was quite lovely when we went on the field trip. We had to identify recreational, environmental and functional elements of the roofs of the buildings below the CN Tower. Aside from that, we had to list other additional activities besides the lookout that were available at the CN Tower, such as the looking glass, Sky Walk, restaurants, and kiosk shopping.

Then we went to the glass floor where some of my courageous classmates in Aerials decided to do handstands, while the photographers in my class took quality pictures of them.

Sadly, we had to leave the CN Tower but we were able to go to the Simcoe Place food court to buy food — we left the place at about 1:45 pm. We had to endure the bus ride back to Kingsway College and arrived back at school at around 3:20 pm. It was an insightful trip where we learned so much about the CN tower not only as tourists, but as students.

EOWYNN
MACDONALD



If You Ask Me...

If you ask me, “Who are you?”
I would say, “Me.”

If you ask me, “How old are you?”
I would say, “Too old.”

If you ask me, “Why do you read?”
I would say, “To escape reality.”

If you ask me, “Do you love me?”
I would say, “Maybe.”

If you ask me, “You you love yourself?”
I would say, “Sometimes.”

If you ask me, “Why only sometimes?”
I would say, “I’ve made mistakes.”

If you ask me, “How many mistakes have you made?”
I would say, “Too many.”

If you ask me, “How many times have you put yourself down?”
I would say, “Too many times.”

If you ask me, “Why did you put yourself down?”
I would say, “Because I’m not worth it.”

If you ask me, “Who told you to put yourself down?”
I would say, “The world.”

If you ask me, “Where are your friends?”
I would say, “In my books.”

If you ask me, “How are you are doing?”
I would say, “I don’t know.”

If you ask me, “Why do you hate yourself?”
I would say, “I don’t.”

If you ask me, “Why do you put yourself down?”
I would say, “Because I’m not worth it.”

If you told me, “But that makes no sense!”
I would say, “It does.”

If you asked me, “How does that make sense?”
I would say, “Just because the world hates me, doesn’t mean I do. I live in my own worlds.”

If you asked me, “What do you mean?”
I would say, “I have lived many lives. I have played many personas. I have loved every single one of them.”

If you asked me, “How is that possible?”
I would simply say, “Through my books.”

I would say, “I have lived many lives. I have played many personas. I have loved every single one of them.”

If you asked me, “How is that possible?”
I would simply say, “Through my books.”

I would simply say, “Through my books.”

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, but a man who never reads lives only one.”

~George RR Martin

Cultural Night

ANNA FLORES



Are there enough decorations? Did I text Pastor Page about borrowing the keyboard? Will there be enough food to feed all the guests? All these questions flooded my mind throughout the past few weeks. The cause of all of this was our grade 11 fundraiser, Cultural Night. Especially throughout the last 2 weeks, I was

immensely stressed over this event that was soon approaching. So many things had to be done, and it was a struggle to get everything to run smoothly. It got to the point where I was dreaming about “Cultural Night” every night for four days straight before the actual program happened. This experience taught me three lessons...

- 1) *when planning an event, don't put all the pressure on yourself... don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.*
- 2) *make sure to keep a positive attitude, don't let negative comments rain on your parade.*
- 3) *trust God and let it all come into place once you've done your part.*

Organizing an event that 150 plus people will come to can be very stressful, especially for someone who's never done anything like this before (AKA me.) Making sure decorations were designed, printed out, cut, and taped was only a sliver of the responsibilities. It seemed as if talking to teachers to ask for permission to use table cloths, a sound system, a keyboard, tables and so on would be an eternal process. The thing that I did wrong was that I



thought that I could handle it all on my own. A team is meant to work together, it's not just one person doing all the work.

I finally realized that I couldn't do it all on my own when Aubri Nurse, a wonderfully supportive friend of mine, asked me one day, “Do you need help with anything, Anna? I can't believe you're doing this all by yourself.” She really made me think, and that's when I learned to loosen on the reins and ask for help. The next day, I asked Aubri, Selena, Alannah, Madison, Bria, Clesha, and



Emily to help with some decorations... and surprise, surprise... IT WENT 10 TIMES FASTER. As Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.*”

Another factor when planning an event is to make sure to keep your head up, your standards high, and your negativity below eye level. Even though I had much support from my class for this fundraiser, there were still those who straight up told me to my face that it would not work out. Comments were made that could have easily called off the



whole event because of the negativity in them. Knowing in your heart that what you are doing is for the good should be a strong enough boost to make you persevere through the situation. Once negativity takes precedence, everything will start to go downhill. Keep your mind focused on what needs to be done, and on the goal you aim to achieve. As the Ziglar quote states, **“Positive thinking will let you do everything better than negative thinking will.”**

Even after all the work and effort that you put into a project, there is only so much you can do. It gets to the point to where you have to just let everything fall into place. Your work is done, so sit back and enjoy. **Let your effort speak for itself.**

Cultural Night finally came

around on Sunday December 3, 2017. The cafe was being prepared 3 hours prior to the event. Hustling and bustling of busy students and sponsors filled the room with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. Once the clock struck 5, it was time to see all of our hard work come together. The turnout was unbelievable, over 150 people showed up. We were only expecting to use ¾ of the cafe. As the night went on, all the tables were filled, and there were still guests who were on their feet! The amount of food that the parents cooked was astonishing. All of the students had a great time seeing their family show up to support them, as many came from outside the city. As guests filled their plates with delicious food, positive comments rang

throughout the cafe as everyone was enjoying themselves immensely. Once it was time to present every culture’s performance, us classmates all stood on the side to encourage and support each other. We were so united even though all different cultures were being represented. After all the hard work and dedication put into this event was done, we were finally able to sit back and watch how it would pull through.

As a wise man once said: “Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty, and persistence.”



CURTLY
NEWLAND



Hey everyone, recently we had the guys VVA Party. Every few months we have a night of food and fun which is meant to bring us closer together as friends and brothers. This year our student representatives voted on some activities. The end result was driving to Bowmanville to see Christmas lights, and then heading to Whitby for Skyzone. After our evening devotional in the dorm, we made our way to the busses.

To be honest, I thought that driving all the way to Bowmanville just to see Christmas lights would be a waste of time — but it was an

AMAZING sight. There was one main road with a bunch of smaller roads branching off into residential streets. Everything was bright and lit up. Anything that could be decorated with lights was lit up. Blue, red, green, white and gold mixed together in a flurry of colour. It was obvious that the residents had really tried hard to see who could spend the most money on the most extravagant lights. Some of the houses had lights, decorations, a Ferris wheel, skylights in the yard, projectors and much more.

Seeing these houses really made me stop to think about

the things we value in life and how we spend our money. I also began to think about the motives of the people who were willing to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars a year on just making their yards look pretty. I have to assume that many of these people just wanted recognition in their area so they could feel good about themselves. This is something that almost everyone does in one area of their life. Whether we

THE VVA PARTY

spend our money on cars, electronics, clothes, shoes, or Christmas lights, we all want to show off in our own way. There is nothing wrong with showing off a bit, but we should have a limit where we take a step back and check ourselves. We need to stop, take stock and see how we might be better using our money.

After Bowmanville we headed to Skyzone; it was amazing. I’ve been to Skyzone many times but every time, I go with different people and the park adds new things for us to try. On top of the regular trampolines, there was dodgeball, volley-

ball, a running wall, and a small parkour section. After being given our sky socks, we had an hour and a half to enjoy ourselves on the trampolines.

The feeling of freedom reminds me of what it might be like when we get to heaven, walking on the clouds in a city of gold. The gift of eternal life, to live together with God in heaven, is a gift freely given. We just need to reach out and accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour. It’s a simple thing that many people fail to grasp. It is a Christian’s duty to spread the good news of this gift to the world. Jesus’ last words

reminded us of this mission. Matthew 28:19-20 states, “Therefore go and make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Christmas funnies

why are you dressed like a christmas tree



so people will put presents under me



"Mrs. Claus bought me a smartwatch! It knows when you are sleeping, it knows when you're awake, it knows if you've been bad or good..."



LORANN JARRETT



Wait... No Christmas?

It felt like my childhood was being ripped away from me. December had just begun in the year of 2016, as Denar (my youngest brother), my dad and I were on our way home from school.

I decided to joke around with my father -- I asked him, "So Dad, did you get me anything for Christmas yet?" As I asked him, I raised my eyebrows a couple of times while poking him with my elbow. My father took a double take as he looked at me.

"Did you not get the memo?" He asked me. "We aren't celebrating Christmas anymore."

I looked at him and started dying of laughter, but as I was laughing, I realized that his face hadn't changed in the slightest. He was serious. I stopped laughing. Minutes passed as my brother and I looked at my father in silence.

"Are you serious?" I asked. My father glanced at me as he nodded his head.

"But why?" I didn't get to

finish my sentence as he interrupted me.

"Because it's a pagan holiday."

"I know, I told you guys this along time ago!" Denar and I exclaimed together.

My father then began to

" DID YOU NOT GET THE MEMO? WE AREN'T CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS ANYMORE. "

spit out more and more facts — He wasn't born in December, He was born in the spring. There was no snow where He was from. What did Santa Claus have to do with anything about this? They say "Merry Xmas" to take "Christ" out of "Christmas." Many more reasons were given, but I already figured out that my family wouldn't have Christmas again. My brothers and I tried to ask for Christmas for the rest of the month, but of course, it proved to be useless. I did my research to

try and save Christmas, but the more I looked into the subject the more I thought cancelling Christmas maybe was a good decision. I could not find anything to back me up.

As Christmas quickly approaches I can only tell you all one thing. Don't focus on the presents, stress and decorations. Use the holiday to get closer to your loved ones, and God. Even though it may not be Jesus' birthday, take this time to celebrate His life and what He

has done for you and those you care about throughout the years. I am not telling you to delete Christmas from your life, but to just spend it as joyfully as possible. Have some laughs, make some memories, eat some good food, put your feet up, this is the season where you can enjoy yourself with a breather away from school. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy new year — and be ready to say goodbye to 2017!



We All Seek Shelter

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Our own Saviour was born an immigrant, a refugee of sorts. Mary and Joseph had travelled a large distance from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem...all for a political mandate they did not fully comprehend.

Worn out from their journey, the pregnant woman and husband sought shelter but were sadly turned away at every place they went. They had no other choice, but to take shelter at a stable. Amongst the farm animals, the blessed mother gave birth to the Messiah, and she laid him in a manger.

This scene has become so forgotten and misplaced over the centuries. When people hear about Christmas, they think of gift-giv-

ing and crossing off their wishlists. They think of Santa Claus and Christmas Trees. They think of Home Alone and seeing their families.

Of course, these things aren't negative, not at all. It just crowds around the real reason for Christmas. The dismal scene has been titivated over the centuries. The pungent animals weren't comforting. The frigid air of the desert night engulfed the stable. The miasma of manure was unpleasant. The overall atmosphere for giving birth was unhygienic, to say the least. And what would the young parents have for supper that night? They would have been lucky to salvage a crust of bread.

The humble nativity is

what Christians around the world originally celebrated at this time of year. For some, it's meaning has hollowed out so excessively, that for most, the Saviour of our world is but an afterthought, ignored. Yet for others, it can be something much worse.

A parallel can be drawn inbetwixt the young family then and the wave of refugees searching for a safe place to live today. They are deficient in food and clothing, and they have been turned away from one shelter after another. They only want an amnesty from the political and physical warfare that threatens their survival. They even come from the same part of the world: the Middle East.

The Bible perpetual-

ly tells us to welcome our neighbours -- our immigrants -- and to treat them like ourselves. As it says in Leviticus 19:34, *“The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself.”*

Jesus himself beckoned his disciples in Matthew to care for “the least of these”, a disclosure that can apply to our fellow refugees. He described the likeness of serving others, to serving him. *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a*

stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me,” Matthew 25:35-40.

In North America, some treat Christmastime as a season of fervent xenophobia. The latest current events: terrorist attacks, the villainy of the Islamic State, the ruthlessness of ISIS; they all make it easy for demoralized politicians to advertise discrimination. Every refugee must be a criminal, an intruder, or a terrorist. To some, even the orphaned children aren't victims, but

future enemies.

How does this type of hatred contrast with the child in the stable who loved us all? How can one fathom this in justifying to the one who told us to treat our neighbour as ourselves? We are all immigrants. We are all creations of the Most High. We all were born a Saviour who sacrificed His life for us. Remember that the next time you're window shopping. Remember that the next time you're antagonized by your brothers and sisters.

KIANA
KAPINIAK



Sitting wrapped in fuzzy blankets, fire crackling, sipping a hot drink. It's the perfect scene. Outside the wind is howling and you feel like an icicle instantly if you dare step out. However, inside your warm house snuggled up in hoodies and blankets, what could be better? Winter is so beautiful! All the imperfections of the world get hidden away under an elegant layer of white fluff. It's as if God had come down and cleansed the earth. Everything is just so peaceful

and gorgeous, and for those few hours after a snowfall, everything is flawless. There is nothing quite so enchanting as watching snow fall down slowly from the sky or lifting your face up to catch snowflakes on your tongue. The freezing wind piercing your face like knives as you fly down a hill at full speed on your sled. The tired, sweaty bodies that somehow miraculously remain cold even after climbing all those sled hills. The satisfying thump of hitting your target dead on with your snowball.

The gentle, pillow-like landing of falling backwards into a pile of freshly fallen snow. The accomplished smiles after you finish building a snowman. Winter is just full of joys that you can't experience during any other season. Not only this, but there are countless activities that you are only able to do when the winter and snow roll around. You can have snowball fights with friends, build quinzees, or go sliding around on the iced-over surfaces. You can go snowshoeing, skate on an outdoor rink,

go tubing, or best of all...you can go skiing (or snowboarding)! Every winter, I eagerly wait until the first ski mountain opens so I can get back on the slopes. The long, freezing chairlift rides, the getting lost exploring new trails, and the flying feeling you experience as you ski down a hill all contribute to making ski days fun and memorable. There will never be something I enjoy more than skiing, from getting air from a glorious jump to falling and having your skis fly everywhere, every portion is a part of the learning and fun. Somedays it is snowing so hard, you can't see three feet in front of you, and you think you are about to ski off a cliff and die, those are the adventurous times. Other days when the sun is shining and the powder is fresh, it is a magnificent, aesthetic view that you can't help "aaahing" over. There are other stunning sights to look at during the winter time, such as Christmas lights. There is nothing quite as breathtaking as an extensive display of lights. It does not just have

to be lights on buildings either. Some of the most extravagant light displays I've witnessed have been with nature. At the Capilano Suspension Bridge, there are lights along the bridges, in the trees and hanging over the water, making everywhere you turn a jaw-dropping sight. But at the end of it all, winter is linked with Christmas, and



with Christmas comes all things warm and fuzzy. Christmas songs are played, yummy treats are given out, and everyone is just generally friendlier and in a much better mood. Presents, concerts, plays, free things, carolers, Christmas vacation... and let's not forget the reason for the season, Jesus' birth. I mean, is there anything to actually com-

plain about? Sure, people might drive slower when it's snowy, but instead of complaining, just enjoy the beautiful sight outside. Events get cancelled and things might not always go as planned with winter weather, but if you put a positive spin to all the negative things that happen, you will be set to enjoy an amazing winter season. Just remember, this is the season that after a cold, tiring, long day, you can come home, curl up on the couch with a cup of tea, and watch your favourite Christmas movie. All things warm, cute and cozy happen in the winter, and if you think we could really enjoy those things without the cold and snow, then you're wrong. Just like we need to go through bad times to really appreciate the good, so we also need the freezing days of wind and snow to appreciate the fuzzy blankets and warm cup of hot chocolate we have waiting for us at home.

A FEW THINGS TO DO THIS WINTER :

- Stick candles in the snow and light them up at night, it's extremely beautiful.*
- Shovel some neighbours driveways (especially if they're elderly), they most likely will be super appreciative and might even whip out some cash or a yummy treat as thanks :)*
- Make snow paint (add food colouring to water and put in a spray bottle) and go out and paint your yard.*



CHLOE XU

Thanks to globalization, countries are able to share their cultures on a larger scale, and people are able to take part in the vibrant atmosphere and happiness of having more distinctive festivals. Christmas is a bustling season that knits you and your community together through the harmonious melody, as well as exciting gift-sharing moments. There are many choices of presents to send to your friends at Christmas -- yet there is one, adored more by the gift senders in China during the Christmas week, that might startle you.

Think about it: how would you react after receiving a plain apple on Christmas Eve from your uncle? Probably, it would drive you into disappointment and boredom. However, a custom in China on Christmas Eve reveals the difference between the Western and Eastern worlds.

In China, the thing you see at every corner of the market during Christmastime is the apple, wrapped in delicate decorative paper. Why apples? How did that happen?

Many speculations have tried to explain the root of this unique tradition, but not all of them are accepted by the public -- some of them are ridiculous, or failed to be proven. The most reliable one tells us that giving an apple as a gift at Christmas is resulted by a trick in the language. In China, Christmas is also known as "the eve of peace" (ping an ye). Coincidentally, the pronunciation of "apple" in Mandarin, "ping guo", perfectly matches with the word "peace", "ping an." Therefore, apples are always indicated to be the fruit of peace as well.

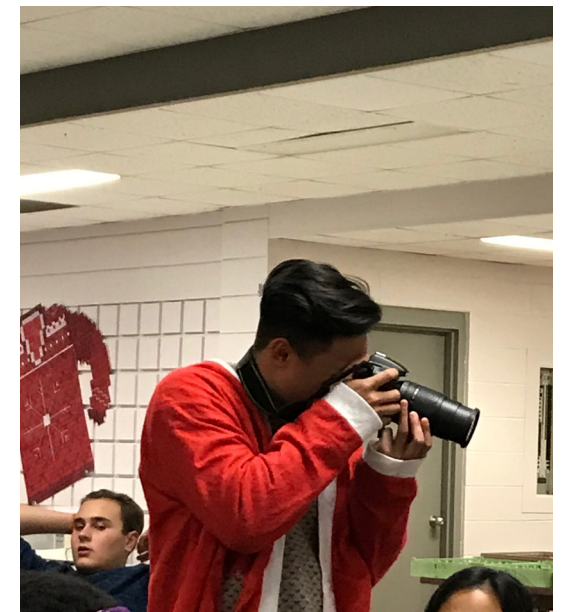
On Christmas Eve, families gather together to share wishes and blessings with each other. Most of the blessings focus on the topics of peace, harmony, and safety. Because of the pro-

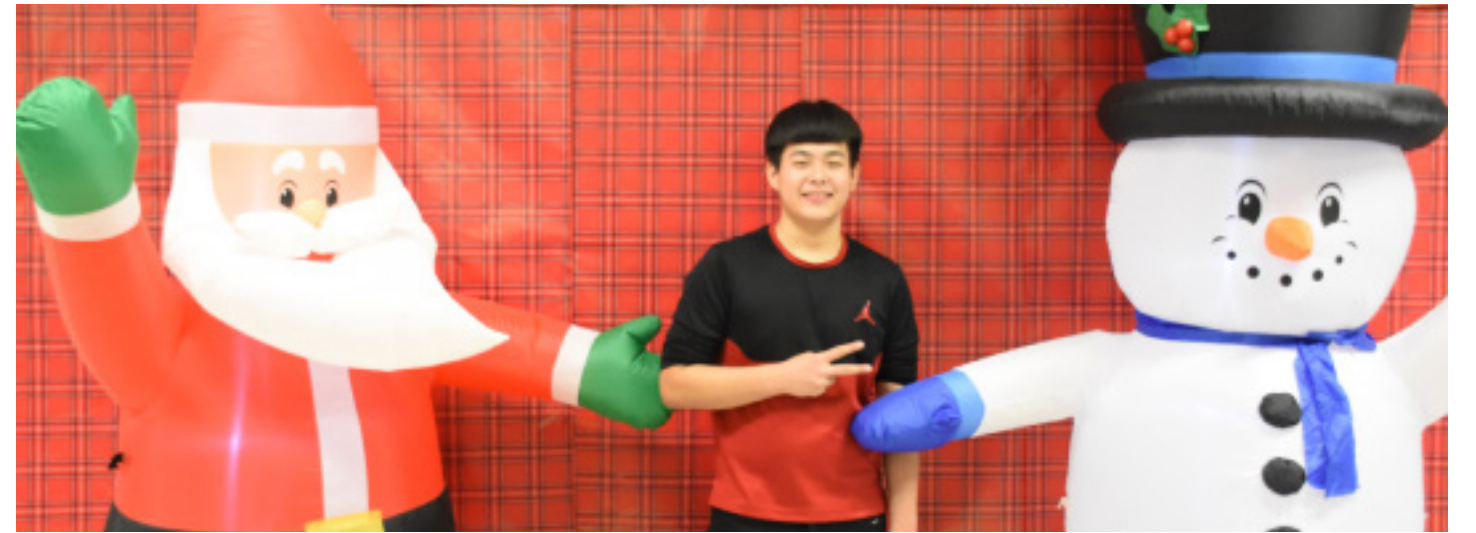
nunciation, "apple" has become a prevailing symbol that represents peace and best wishes. Despite the fact that receiving numerous apples as the only gift for Christmas from everybody around you may cause you to become apple-sick, Chinese people still view the apple as a rewarding present for the ones that they care about -- to devote blessings to them in health and peace for the upcoming year. Thus, it is common to have a hill of apples stocked in your fridge after Christmas Eve.

Although we always hope to receive presents that match our favours or touch our heartstrings, it could be argued that a plain apple, which condenses all the sincere blessings from the ones you care about, can make the mundane fruit meaningful. So don't be surprised if you receive an apple with a smiling face from your Chinese friends at Christmastime. That represents their best blessing to you and it shows you how unique you are!



SA Christmas Party: A Photo Collection







ANONYMOUS

Giving

As festive seasons of Christmas and New Year are gathering their strength, almost everybody seems to be in a good and cheery spirit. And along with the Western style of consumerism and the tradition of gift-giving, you get a recipe for creating “a season to be jolly”.

But, I might add that a certain segment of the population, even within our circles of family or churches or communities, not to mention globally, have plenty of reason not to be jolly due to various circumstances.

Many of us, and it is rightly so as Christians (also it seems the right time of the year to do so) want to be generous and giving. After all, the Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:35: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We give for many reasons. Only we ourselves know the sincerity, the wholeheartedness, and the motive of our giving. We should give, not because it is a tradition to do so, not to earn favour, not to buy friendship, not even to be labelled as good and generous.

About 2,000 years ago, Jesus arrived and died for the ungodly: us. The world cel-

brates His birth every year around this time (of course, the actual time of His birth was a lot earlier than December.)

In Romans 5:6-8 it says: “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

When Christ appeared in person, He didn’t wait for us to get ready. He presented Himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and too rebellious. God put His love on the line for us by offering His Son while we were of no use to Him whatsoever.

Why would God do such a thing? Why did God give? We can ask ourselves a similar question during this festive time: why do we give?

He gives, not because of anything we have done, but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Timothy 1:9).

“He is the one who saved us and called us with holy calling, not based on our works but on His own pur-

pose and grace, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

Notice *when* the grace is given.

Not on our deathbed. Not once we settle securely into the truth. Not after our baptism. Not after we overcome our biggest temptation or after we obey all the commandments. Grace was there “before the beginning of time.”

Grace is never given as a reward for anything we do or don’t do. The only qualification to receive grace is that it is our greatest need; a need for a Savior. God acts towards us in His gracious ways because that is the kind of God HE is. HE is LOVE.

Perhaps when we give during this festive season, or any time of the year, we can give because we, too, could share or express love and grace to others that we derive from HIM.

The Giant and the White Bird

KEVIN
ZENG



It was morning. The sun still climbed the sky. The Giant opened his eyes and heard a crisp cry, he did not know what it was. It was not one of his birds, but something far sweeter that was coming from high in the sky; it made him feel amazing. He walked out of his house in three steps, then went two more steps to find the source of the sound. At last he found it, and he was shocked to see where it had come from. It was not one of his creations; he recognized it at a glance because she was not a brown bird — she had the colour that the giant wished for. She had pure white feathers...so beautiful, innocent, pure. It was a bird that was different. She was gracious and wonderful, showing a unique kind of beauty. The Giant felt so stupid; he did not think that the world could actually contain such a thing. He immediately knelt down, prayed, thanked all of them. The White Bird seemed to be

scared; she shook her wings, soaring into mid-air. After finding a height of security, she began to circle around the giant, observing him. The Giant did not know what to do, he also created birds, but none as free as her — so refined, so smart. He was afraid that she would leave him, so he reached out and tried to catch her. This made the White Bird startled. She jerked her wings in terror and flew away. The Giant panicked, he took large strides as he chased after the White Bird. He kept running and running.

He opened his mouth, and a deep throaty voice came from him. "Come back! Come back!" But he could not catch up to her, so he sat on the ground, disappointed, as he watched the White Bird fly farther and farther away. He did not create anything on this day. He tried to pinch out a bird as beautiful as the White Bird, failing miserably. He could not do it. No matter how

hard he tried, he could not create something that was even one-tenth of her likeness. Eventually, the Giant returned to the stone house early to sleep.

He did not know how long he slept, but his rise was accompanied by that familiar yet strange voice. He remembered this voice, so he got up excitedly and rushed out.

Yes, *White Bird, she is back.* The Giant smiled, he looked at the White Bird and laughed out in delight. This time, she did not fly away but instead hovered in the sky. This time the Giant did not go to arrest her, instead, he reached out to indicate that she shouldn't be afraid. After much hovering and seemingly endless observation, the White Bird finally flew to his fingertips. The Giant finally had the opportunity to closely observe her, she was so perfect. Everything was flawless.

"You, what are you?" The White Bird twisted her neck

and looked at him with vigilance.

No one had ever asked him such a question, no one had ever even spoken to him.

"I do not know." The Giant shook his head in disappointment.

"Where did you come from?" The White Bird asked.

"I ... I do not know, I was born in the mountains."

"Then you have a name?" Was the White Bird's third consecutive question.

The Giant's face was covered with disappointment and confusion. "I ... do not know."

So the White Bird did not ask any more questions. She adjusted her body, a pair of translucent eyes carefully looked at the giant.

"Then you have a name?" This time, it was the giant who asked.

"With or without." She seemed to decide that the Giant was not malicious, so the White Bird did not act so cautious.

"Where did you come from?"

"I'm from the South like my friends." The White Bird tilted her head and looked at the Giant. "I think you are like a man, only bigger."

"Man?" Giant looked puzzled, "What is a man?"

"Those who live under the mountain...ah, have you never seen it?" The White Bird asked curiously.

"No, I've never been off the hill."

"Why not?"

"I cannot go down," The White Bird heard the feeling of loss in the Giant's voice.

"Are those people like me?" For

a moment, the Giant felt as if he was no longer alone.

"The same...but not the same." The White Bird fluttered her wings. "They look like you, but they are very small, and they do not understand what I say."

The Giant did not respond; she had told him a lot and he did not know HOW to respond. He had so many things to ask her, but did not know where to start.

"Well, I should go." The White Bird shook her wings and flew into midair, ready to leave.

"Wait a second!" The Giant reached out, "Will you be back?"

"Maybe." The White Bird was gone without waiting for the Giant to hear it.

With a deep sigh, the Giant sat on the ground, looking at the White Bird's lopsided flying figure. His chest felt somewhat beat up.

...

Since that day, the Giant no longer made all of his creations. He only prayed daily, before sitting in front of the stone house and waiting for the White Bird. And she came every day, becoming more and more familiar with the Giant. She was no longer afraid of him and treated him as her friend — they chatted many times. The Giant liked to ask the White Birds all sorts of things about the world, letting her tell him a variety of stories. The White Bird had been to many places, many had seen her before. The Giant liked to listen to her talk about white birds' beautiful, different customs. He liked to listen to stories of people — man. What the Giant wanted

to see, the White Bird went to see for him. She was his set of eyes to see the world. For him, she saw the famous mountains and rivers.

"Why did you come here?" Asked the Giant one day when he saw the White Bird.

"We are here to escape the winter." White Bird said.

"Then your friends, let them see me."

"No," Whitebird shook her head. "They cannot fly."

Giant's eyes contained a trace of disappointment as he asked, "Why?"

"Maybe the sun god does not want them coming up."

"What is the sun god?" Giant's words are full of doubts.

"It's a belief, a power, a thing that creates everything." As the White Bird turned her head to the horizon and looked at the fallen sun, "I, man, and the mountain, are made by the sun god. You, you are also."

"The sun god..." The Giant bowed his head and looked at his own hands, "...created everything."

Looking at the sun a little over the sea, the White Bird said, "Well I'm leaving, see you tomorrow."

That day, the White Bird left and the Giant thought a lot. Before, he never thought about who he was, where he came from.

The power to create everything is in the sun god...then I am the sun god? If the sun god created everything, then what created the sun god? In this non-stop thinking, the Giant finally tired to fall asleep.

He did not know how long he

slept, but he was awakened by the White Bird with a branch in her mouth, which had several red fruits on it. The Giant had never seen anything like that before.

"What is this?"

"Food. Do not you eat?" Asked the White Bird curiously.

"I do not eat." The Giant shook his head.

"Then you will not be hungry?"

The White Bird asked again.

"No." The Giant shook his head again.

"Then taste it," said the White Bird, dropping the branches on the ground and taking a fruit in her mouth. She slowly flew to the giant's mouth and put the fruit in. "What?"

"There's no feeling." The Giant shook his head.

When she heard this, the expression of the White Bird changed. "I'm going to tell you something funny. I saw it today — a marriage."

"What is marriage? What is marriage?" It seemed that every time the White Bird spoke, she made the Giant curious.

"When two people fall in love, they get married," The White Bird explained. In fact, the White Bird herself did not quite understand.

"Love? I do not understand, then you marry when you are in love?" The Giant asked.

"How can someone only love one person, and be willing to marry him?" White Bird said, "We can only be married once in a lifetime."

"How can I fall in love with someone?" Asked the Giant, "I also want to love someone."

The white bird shook her head. "To love someone is to want to stay with him or her, and share every second of life with the other."

At that moment, the Giant realized that he might fall in love with someone.

Boom!

There was a thunderstorm; the clouds covered the entire sky, shading the sun, the world dyed black. White lightning flooded the sky, black and white overlapping, making the United States look like an abstract painting. During this scene, the wind whistled wildly. The Giant stood up facing the wind and looked at the sky, the White Bird having panicked.

"I'm going — I'm going to find my friends." Then, the White Bird flew into the wind.

"Why don't you stay a while? Look at that, how beautiful the sky is." Said the Giant, trying to retain her.

"What are you talking about?" The White Bird became more and more scared. "I'm leaving now. I'll come back tomorrow."

Saying this, The White Bird left. This time, she flew for a long time.

The White Bird was thinking. She wondered why she and the Giant were so different — because he is not a bird, and she was? She did not like it. But she did not want to give up, she wanted to try again.

The Giant, waiting day after day, no longer even slept. He just stared blankly at the sky, forgetting even to pray...just waiting for

the White Bird to come back. Finally, she returned with a big red flower clutched in her feet.

The Giant did not know what it was, but he felt good about it and he liked that colour.

The White Bird put the flower in his palm. "I'm sorry, I was dragged on by some things. How are you?"

"I'm fine." The Giant always said that. But the flower was so dazzling, so he asked, "What is it?"

"This is a rose — the most beautiful flower." The White Bird shook her wings so that her feathers fluffed. "Quickly smell it, it is my favourite thing."

The Giant hesitated, but he still put it in front of his nose and took a whiff...

"I can not smell it."

"Why!" The White Bird exclaimed.

The Giant shook his head, "I'm sorry, I do not know. Maybe the sun god does not want me to smell."

The White Bird shook her head, saying nothing. She gave up, she was disappointed...why was it like this?

"I..." The Giant put the rose on the ground, "I want to tell you something."

"What..."

"I think, I love you." The Giant said, a little nervous.

"You...what are you talking about?"

She was shocked, not knowing what to say. "I..."

"What's wrong?" The Giant looked at her. "You said that you want to be with someone you

love. And I want to be with you — not only now, but later."

His voice was low and calm, but it hit the White Bird fiercely.

Her heart trembling, the White Bird said, "No."

"Why?"

"Because I will not stay here forever." The White Bird said.

"Winter is coming, I must keep going.

So I cannot stay here. I still have my family going back."

"Really, you cannot stay?" The Giant's voice was full of frustration as he said, "But I love you."

"You do not understand." The White Bird shook her head. "You cannot understand."

"Then explain to me." The Giant once again felt a deep type of desperation.

"But I do not love you." The White Bird turned around, "I cannot stay here, my heart does not belong to you."

"But my heart is yours." The Giant said, overwhelmed and hurt.

"You do not have a heart...we are from two different worlds." The White Bird turned around, "We cannot talk about this. I still have important things to do." Then, the white bird took the

rose.

"You are leaving me?"

"There is no point to stay. You do not understand."

This time, she did not even look back, did not leave a with the promise of "I will come back."

She just left.



not know what he was asking for.

I am not a sun god, and in the end, to whom do I pray?

The White Bird did not come again for a long, long time. The Giant looked to the sky every day, waiting, waiting.

Finally, one day, the White Bird came again and she looked at the Giant, but she did not come near.

"I'm leaving, maybe I'll come back, maybe not, but I'll remember you."

This time, the White Bird even stopped looking at the Giant's eyes. She began to feel that there was only empty darkness in her own eyes.

The White Bird was gone.

The Giant did not speak. He wanted her to stay, but he knew she would not. He

knew she would not come back anymore. The Giant was sad, maybe angry. He did not know what happened to him, but he began to curse, curse the creator of everything, why should the world be beautiful to him?

The White Bird was gone,

and the winter was coming. The white snow blanketed the mountains and covered everything. The world was silver. The Giant watched the bright white colour in front of him. He no longer felt that white was beautiful. He started to feel bored; he felt that there was less to be happy about in his life. So he shouted in the direction he last saw the White Bird

go: towards the sky. This shout vibrated regret, but there was no response.

And one day, in a final cry, cracks appeared in the Giant's body, one by one. He knelt, lowering his head. He was broken, yes, it turned out that he was also made of soil, just like his creations....

The people in the mountains heard shouts too, but they did not mind. There is no longer a giant on Sun Mountain, Sun Mountain is still. The people of the mountain are still farming daily and praying, as if the giant never existed at all.

