



PORTFOLIO

Sophie Amani

2023

The Trojan Horse in Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Reviewing episodes of the show Brooklyn Nine-Nine and its contribution to today's important issues for English Literature's Journalism Club, GLIDES, Vol. 27 (2022)

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Have you ever been afraid when someone asks you to discuss a controversial topic? Have you ever been too lazy to research current issues? Well, I have, and I'm certain that most people have too. A study by Andrea Samson (University of Fribourg) and James Gross (Stanford) says that positive, good-natured humor in response to bad news makes people feel better. That's why the show Brooklyn Nine-Nine (2013) has been a tremendous success.

A little about it, the show is set in a fictional police precinct in Brooklyn, and we follow the lives of a group of detectives. This show has been praised for its bravery in tackling hard topics as well as its diverse characters. The core characters are a gay black police captain, a black sergeant, a bisexual Latina detective, a Latina sergeant, and two white detectives. People appreciate the show for not playing into stereotypes of POC characters in sitcoms.

Within 8 seasons, we see them tackle serious issues such as racial profiling, workplace assault, and sexism, all while maintaining the comedy aspect of the show. The initial approach of this show's unique is to open

up the conversation in a light-hearted way, making it easier for people to openly discuss them. The writers try to relate the episodes to real problems happening in the world, and they do that while delivering comedy and maintaining respect to the issue they're tackling. Let's look into the episodes where this comedy TV show successfully raised social awareness through its amazing stories.

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"Moo Moo"

(Season 4 Episode 16)

Released in 2017, this episode foreshadows the protests in 2016 following the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile by the police. The episode spotlights the black sergeant, Terry Jeffords, as he was stopped by a police officer for no reason at all. Terry was walking in his neighborhood searching for his daughter's blanket when he was stopped and harassed by a police officer who wouldn't listen or believed him before knowing that Terry was a sergeant of the Nine-Nine. Terry's having a hard time dealing with the fact that the police officer apologized for not knowing that he was an officer sooner, not because he racially profiled Terry. The black sergeant spent the episode worrying about the future of his daughters while trying to file a complaint that wasn't approved by his captain at first. In the episode, we also witnessed Terry's colleagues, Amy and Jake, struggling to babysit his daughters and having to explain what had happened to their father.

"Gray Star Mutual"

(Season 5 Episode 18)

It's easy for women to feel insecure when working with so many men and that is the case for Amy Santiago, our Latina sergeant. Amy and Jake were set to marry soon, but with all the wedding preparations they have to do, they couldn't fully turn back on their duties as an officer.

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As a woman, Amy had a harder time balancing both, she felt as if shopping for her wedding dress would make her look weak to her subordinates. Throughout the episode, Rosa Diaz, her co-worker, tried to help her overcome her embarrassment. They spent the day trying to find the perfect dress when they got a call about a perp nearby. Amy had to chase him with the dress still on and that made her feel powerful. It's really quite sad to think that a woman has to prove herself a thousand times more to be fully respected as a person, and it's more frustrating when that happens in your workplace. That wasn't the only time Rosa and Amy had to stick together when being faced with sexism issues. In another episode, when Amy was feeling a little jealous of Rosa's promotion, Rosa says, "We work at a police force full of dudes, we got to have each other's backs, okay?". It's disappointing to see a lot of women not having each other's backs these days. Us, women need to be able to count on each other for these things because no one else will understand what we go through.

"He Said, She Said"

(Season 6 Episode 8)

Being a woman means your words aren't worth much when faced with the one of a man. This episode is all about a woman's journey in the workplace and this world. The precinct received a very interesting case in which a guy, Seth, says his female co-worker attacked him for no reason at all, he is pressing charges and identifying this as assault.

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After interviewing the female co-worker Keri, we find out that she acted out of self-defense after he sexually assaulted her. The firm had offered Keri a large sum of money if she let the incident slide, she would've taken it if not for Amy ensuring her that she needs to take a stand. Keri knows that this is a classic "he said, she said" situation in which no one is going to convict Seth on her word alone. On another hand, Rosa explains to Amy that Keri should've taken the deal because, in an almost impossible scenario that they win, Keri will still lose. She'll lose respect, name, reputation, and her job. It will be "two steps forward one steps back". Amy opened up why this case is important to her; she has experienced something like this before. After countless hours working the case, they finally got enough evidence, and Keri won. After all that, Keri had to quit the job she loved, she felt that the atmosphere in her office just changed, her career there is as good as over. Though Amy felt bad, Keri assured her that she is proud of herself for not letting Seth win and get away with anything. In the end, we see Keri's co-worker step forward about something similar that had happened to her, "Two steps forward, one step back is still one step forward".

Season 8

The events of George Floyd's murder in 2020 created a global "Black Lives Matter" campaign. As a TV show surrounding the lives of the NYPD, the writers and actors of Brooklyn Nine-Nine thought that it was inappropriate to treat the show as it was before. They decided to throw

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out the scripts they'd already written for the show's eighth and final season and reconsidered the show's perspective. They'd hope to be one of the contributors talking about these issues. Andre Braugher, who plays Captain Holt on the show says, "Can a comedy sustain the things that we're trying to talk about? I don't know. It could be a ground-breaking season that we're all going to be very, very proud of, or we're going to fall flat on our face... But I think this is a staff, a cast, and a crew that's willing to take it on and give it our best. I think we have a damn good chance to tell the kinds of stories that heretofore have only been seen on grittier shows".

Overall, it would be naive to expect a sitcom to solve the country's policing problems in 10 episodes. Instead, season 8 of Brooklyn Nine-Nine acknowledges what is wrong on its way out while still giving fans the humor they have come to expect. After all, it is a comedy sitcom. Here is episode one which discusses the situation after the indescribable actions of police officers in 2020.

"The Good Ones" - (Season 8 Episode 1)

We immediately see the impacts the events of 2020 made on the officers of the Nine-Nine precinct. Rosa has quit the force and became a private investigator working with victims of police brutality. Her decision to quit wasn't supported by some of her co-workers, one of them being Jake. He feels that by Rosa quitting the force, she thinks less of him for not doing the same thing. Jake jumps at the chance of working with Rosa again while trying to change her mind.

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During the case, they deal with body cam footage tempering by union officials which unfortunately also happens in real life. Rosa and Jake have different plans to get the real footage, when Jake's plan doesn't work, he gets frustrated and blurts out the truth to Rosa: he only agreed to work the case with her to prove to her that he's still a good person. Rosa rightfully gets angry at him saying that this case has nothing to do with him and neither does her decision to leave, all this is bigger than him. In the end, although Jake doesn't fully understand Rosa's decision to leave, he helps her out of trust, and they get the footage back. The injustice doesn't end there when they show the footage to the precinct's captain, her immediate reaction is, "I'm going to have to delete this". She resembles the, "one of the good ones" mentality and won't fire officer That's it, Jake then realizes that maybe no matter how hard he works or how good and pure his intentions are, he might be part of the problem.

Meanwhile, while all this is happening, Captain Holt is going through a divorce as a result of how hard being a black police captain has been during times like these. While all this has been going on, Charles Boyle, one of the detectives of the Nine-Nine, tries too hard to be an ally for black people. Terry, the black sergeant then tells him that he appreciates Charles's effort but explains that true allyship doesn't need to be some big gesture.

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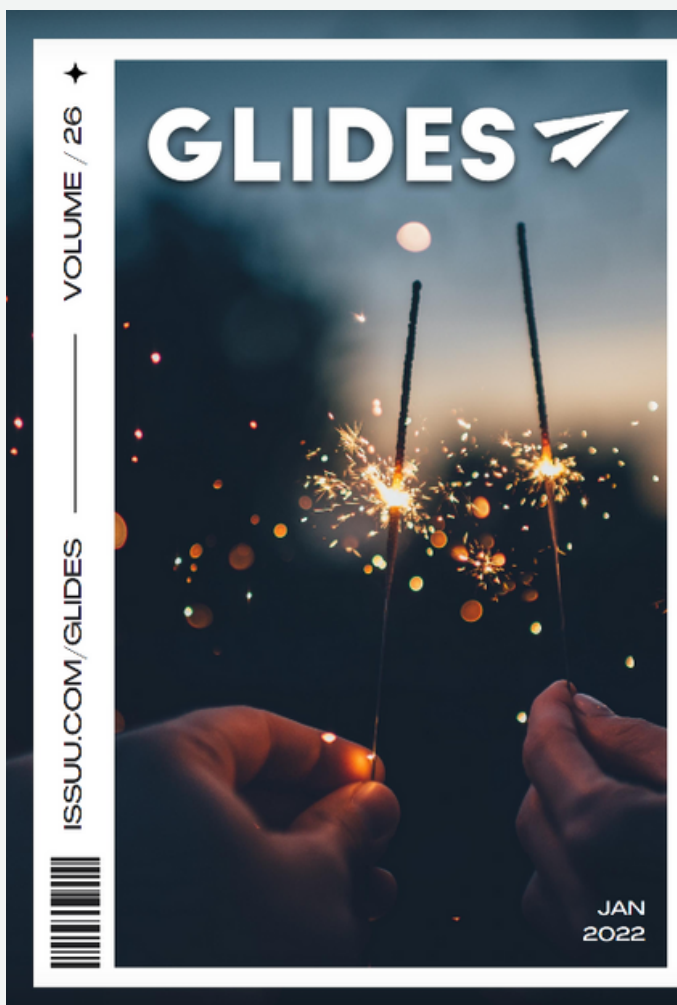
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What's special about Brooklyn Nine-Nine is that they don't shove all their serious, controversial topics into one special episode. Instead, in the final season, almost every episode touches on the idea of police reform. It's refreshing to see the writers take account of the real-life world problems happening at the moment and they take it seriously. If you're still not convinced of the moral principles of Brooklyn Nine-Nine, how many other shows feature an interracial gay marriage between an NYPD police captain and a Classics professor at Columbia as just a minor side-storyline?

Stepping Into A World of Justice

https://issuu.com/glides/docs/glides_26_2_

This article talks about sexual assault cases in the world, and how everyone is handling it in this new era. Written for English Literature's Journalism Club, GLIDES, Vol. 27 (2022)



SEXUAL ASSAULTS EPISODE 2021: A NEW HOPE HAS RISEN

BY SOPHIE AMANI

For years, society has slept on the issue of sexual assaults. It is even being dubbed "taboo"—making the conversation more limited. But it's 2021. The discussion of sexual assaults (SA) has been getting discussed more frequently, and now we have more hope than ever. Before we jump deep into the topic, let's start with the question: what is sexual assault?

According to the University of California, sexual assault is "When physical, sexual activity is engaged in without the consent of the other person, or when the other person is unable to consent to the activity."

Though younger generations are getting more aware of the matter, the media is pretty quiet on it. And when media outlets do post news about the sexual assault issues happening, they tend to talk more about who the victim is and less about the problem at hand. The media's coverage of sexual assault usually entails the victim's backstory—what they were wearing, their age, their school/workplace, rather than the assaulter and the crime they committed. What's more, the situation doesn't seem to get any better by the fact that the parliament has been denying the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill (RUU PKS) for years.

Many victims of sexual assault were fed up with how the media portrays sexual assault issues. Therefore, instead of waiting or doing nothing about it, they came up with their own movements seeking justice. For instance, a new viral trend had emerged in 2021 on TikTok, where strong and brave SA victims came forward to straight-up call out their assailants. Thankfully, the immense support they got on the platform finally allowed their voice to be heard. They are even brave enough to mention names and show pictures of their rapists. It's truly been such an inspiring and powerful thing to see how far they've come and for us to witness these brave people standing up for themselves.

2021 also marks four years since the birth of the #MeToo movement on Twitter. Charlotte Bennet, who came forward as a victim in that year, said "I'd like to think that now, we are believed," she said, "That the difference is, we are not convincing our audience that something happened and trying to persuade them that it impacted us. I would really like to think we're in a place now where it's not about believability—and that we don't have to apologize."

2021 has been a year of evolving, adapting, and learning. The amount of attention to sexual violence cases was unbelievable. People have started to see how serious these problems are. Victims are no longer being gaslighted by the public as much. Whereas the perpetrators are getting all the punishments that they deserve. It might seem like small progress. But at the very least, we are already heading in the right direction and thus can't push the brakes just yet. Let's keep fighting justice for sexual violence victims and keep shaping the world into a better one.



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Queerbaiting & How The Term Is Misused

This article talks about how today's society judges and labels someone too easily, they often use new terms incorrectly which is harmful in so many ways. (2021)

Queerbaiting is originally defined as a marketing technique that hints at LGBTQ+ representation but never truly depicts it. This way of marketing is very harmful to the LGBTQ+ community. Medias are using their lack of representation to bait them into watching a movie, show, or reading a book that might have a slight chance of representing them.

Nowadays the term Queerbaiting is used not only towards works of fiction but towards people as well. Celebrities have the unfortunate privilege of having to grow as a person while the rest of the world watches them. Everything they do can cause a commotion on social media as if everyone is involved in their decision making.

A tweet made by an influencer back in June described the situation in the best way possible. A tweet by @mattxiv:

“the conversation around queerbaiting has reached a confusing place – on one hand we say don’t worry abt labels and on the other hand, if an artist presents even remotely “queer” we interrogate them abt their sexuality? yes queerbaiting bad but also there are limits to this”

The tweet was made around the time when the media was talking about Billie Eilish possibly queerbaiting her audience. She posted behind the scenes pictures of her song “Lost Cause” music video;

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in the caption, she wrote "I love girls". This created speculation about whether she was queerbaiting. Her comments section is filled with people angry at her or people defending her over the hate comments. This 19-year-old woman is being chastised for simply existing. It's normal and hard enough for teenagers to experiment and grow to find themselves, especially when doing it in front of everyone.

Other celebrities over the years have been a victim of queerbaiting accusations. People like Nick Jonas, Normani, Ariana Grande, Rita Ora have all been bashed for doing something closely resembling queerbaiting. The problem is not if they meant to do it, but the fact that the queerbaiting term aren't meant for them, they're not works of fiction.

On this day and age, people are easy to judge and voice their opinions on social media. A lot of people don't do the extra research, they post their opinions disregarding the facts.

An ethnic professor in Lawrence University talked to Rolling Stones magazine about people that are "premature to critical thinking". He stated that false accusations are harmful to active movements online and made a very valid point;

"People also have to decipher the difference between those who are performing for the heterosexual lens and that queerbaiting, which are very different". Those false accusations can easily cause mental health issues for the victim, which in this case mostly young celebrities.

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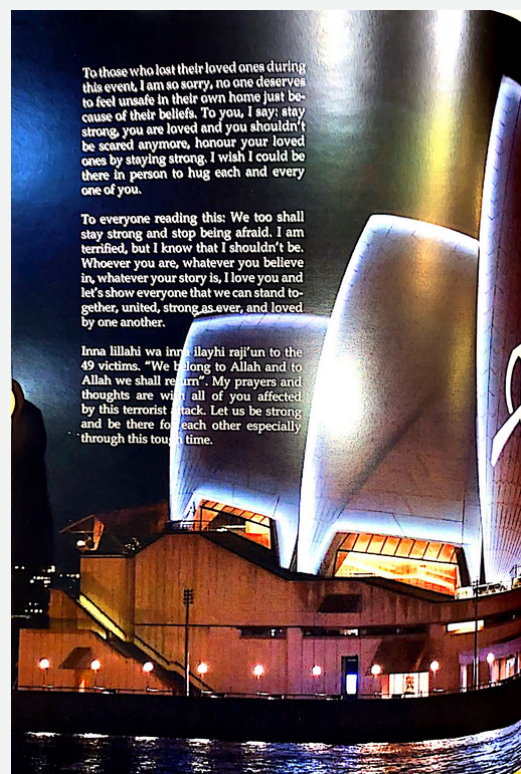
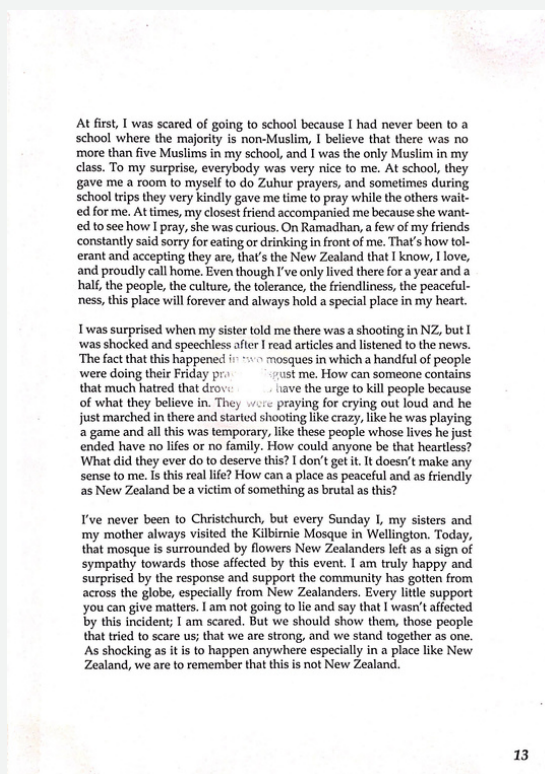
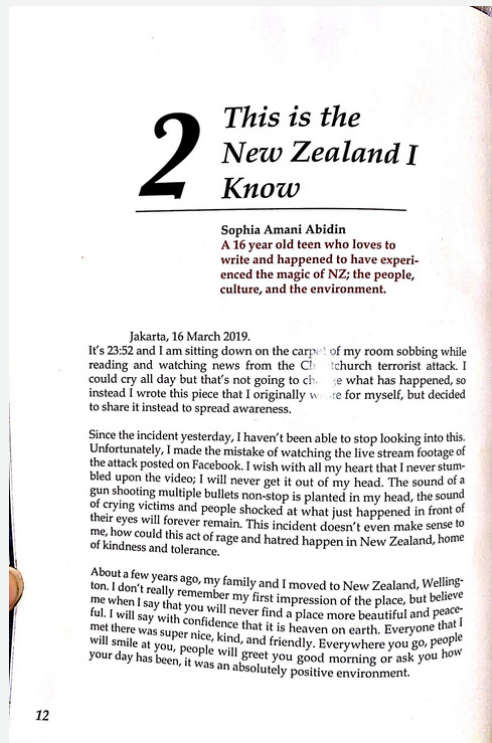
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In the end as human beings with ethics, all of us must tolerate people's occasional mistakes and be the best version of ourselves. Queerbaiting false accusations are as much of a big deal as actual queerbaiting in media. Therefore, we mustn't misuse the term as it will directly impact both the LGBTQ+ community as well as victims.

New Zealand's Darkest Day

https://issuu.com/mariaqb06/docs/1_year_commemorate

In this piece I talked about a terrorist shooting that happened in New Zealand, and how I view it as somebody who spent some time there. Virtually published in "Kotahi Aroha - One Love One New Zealand (1 Year Commemorating 15 March Christchurch Tragedy)" (2019)



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Its 23:52 and I am sitting down on the carpet of my room sobbing while reading and watching news from the Christchurch terrorist attack. I could cry all day but that's not going to change what has happen, so instead I wrote this piece that I originally wrote for myself, but decided to share it instead to spread awareness.

Since the incident yesterday, I haven't been able to stop looking into this. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of watching the live stream footage of the attack posted on Facebook. I wished I had never watched the video, I will never get it out of my head. The sound of a gun shooting multiple bullets non-stop is planted in my head, the sound of crying victims and people shocked at what just happen in front of their eyes will forever remain. This incident doesn't even make sense to me, how could this act of hatred happen in New Zealand, home of kindness and tolerance.

About a few years ago, my family and I moved to New Zealand, Wellington. I don't really remember my first impression of the place, but believe me when I say that you will never find a place more beautiful and peaceful. I will say that it is heaven on earth. Everyone that I met there was super nice, kind and friendly. Everywhere you go, people will smile at you, people will greet you good morning or ask you how your day was, it was an absolutely positive environment. At first, I was scared of going to school because I had never been to A school where the majority is non-Muslim, I believe that there was no more than 5 Muslims in my school, in fact I was the only Muslim in my class. To my surprise, everybody was very nice to me. At school, they

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gave me a room to myself to do Zuhur prayers, and sometimes during school trips they very kindly gave me time to pray while the others waited for me. At times, my closest friend accompanied me because she wanted to see how I pray, she was curious. On Ramadhan, a few of my friends constantly said sorry for eating or drinking in front of me. That's how tolerant and accepting they are, that's the New Zealand that I know, I love, and proudly call home. Even though I've only lived there for a year and a half, the people, the culture, the tolerance, the friendliness, the peacefulness, this place will forever and always hold a special place in my heart. I was surprised when my sister told me there was a shooting in NZ, but I was shocked and speechless after I read articles and listened to the news. The fact that this happened in two Mosques in which a handful of people were doing their Friday prayers disgust me. How can someone contain that much hatred that drove them to have the urge to kill people because of what they believe in. They were praying for crying out loud and he just marched in there and started shooting like crazy, like he was playing a game and all this was temporary, like these people he just ended the lives to has no life or no family, how could anyone be that heartless, what did they ever do to deserve this? I don't get it. It doesn't make any sense to me. Is this real life? How can a place as peaceful and as friendly as New Zealand be a victim of something as brutal as this? I've never been to Christchurch, but every Sunday me, my sisters and my mother always visit the Kilbirnie Mosque to learn. Today, that mosque is surrounded by flowers New Zealanders left as a sign of sympathy towards those affected by this.

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I am truly happy and surprised by the response and support the community has gotten from across the globe especially from New Zealanders, every little support you can give matters. I am not going to lie and say that I wasn't scared by this incident, I am still scared. But we should show them, those people that tried to scare us that we are strong, and we stand together as one. As shocking as it is to happen anywhere especially in a paradise like New Zealand, we are to remember that, this is not New Zealand. Thank you for those praying for everyone affected. Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un to the 49 victims. "We belong to Allah and to Allah we shall return". My prayers and thoughts are with all of you affected by this terrorist attack. Let us be strong and be there for each other especially through this tough time.

Queenstown: Where Paradise Resides on Earth

This is a travel writing of my experience
traveling to Queenstown, New Zealand.
(2023)

It wouldn't be all that bad to get buried in a place like this," I thought to myself when I witnessed the beauty lying in front of my eyes. The plane ride from Wellington was pretty short, the whole time I kept my eyes glued to the window looking at the cloud's abstract shapes. The hour then passed and I could slowly make out the island known for its scenic view, I gasped a little. Looking down like a bird I see mountains so beautiful and so many of them, colorful flowers everywhere, and in the middle of it all, a lake so big I could imagine all the different animals living there.

My family and I had always wanted to visit this place, we've always enjoyed the beauty of nature and here it felt like we were being hugged by Mother Nature. I lunged my suitcase down the difficult stairs of the plane while feeling a bit chilly, "Waaaaa! it's so cold!" I excitedly shouted to my cousin. Bracing the wind that made everything we carried ten thousand times heavier, we made it to the warmth of Queenstown's Airport. None of us were in a hurry to get back to the cold hell out there, but we couldn't wait to brace the beauty just outside this run-down building. To prepare for war against the spiking wind, we took our time rummaging through the suitcases taking and wearing every jacket, sock, glove, and shirt as armor. The second I stepped out, spears of wind greeted my layers of clothing making me feel a shiver down every part of my body. I winced and glanced around at my family who were all smiling painfully, excited but miserable, these Indonesians that are used to

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heat as hot as the sun. I clutched the thickest jacket I wore, slip my hands inside the pockets, and braced the cold that had welcomed me to Queenstown, my earthly paradise.

The drive from the airport to our Airbnb wasn't like anything I had ever experienced, everything I saw left me speechless. I had forgotten how to speak, so my tears expressed how breathtakingly beautiful it was. I almost felt bad for my uncle who had to drive while the rest of us were covered in "oohs and aahs" and our eyes trying to see everything all at once. "Look at that mountain!" "No look at that one with the house so up high" "Did you see those birds flying in a flock?" "Over there someone is skydiving!" "Look a gondola!" "The lake is so big!!!". The rest of the day was well spent trying to grasp the fact that we were really standing in what felt like paradise, my eyes adjusted to the beauty, though my heart never calmed accepting its fate of constant pounding as I never stopped being amazed at everything around me. I wouldn't have minded spending the rest of the trip just sitting down, admiring the view that I wouldn't be able to see every day, but my excitement to experience everything in this small town brought me to something that I have never heard before. Apart from the beautiful scenic view that I can't seem to stop talking about, Queenstown is widely known for its adventurous sports. Many people travel to this town for the sole purpose of bungee jumping, skydiving, skiing, mountain climbing, etc. Unfortunately, since I'm a scaredy cat and so is the rest of my family, we decided to try out a less dangerous sport.

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We woke up pretty early to drive to the bottom of one of the many mountains. The morning air was refreshing, no pollution, no cars honking everywhere, just me and nature. The first thing I noticed when we arrived was a sign that says "Lake Wakatipu", "Aaahh so that's what the lake is called" I said while pointing at it so that everyone recognizes the sign. Lake Wakatipu is at the center of everything, its vast water accompanies us everywhere we go on this island and I find it quite beautiful.

After waiting a while we split into groups and went up the mountain using a gondola. To be honest, it was pretty scary, just imagine being in a small gondola carriage that is moving upwards a mountain and it shakes every time you lift a finger. If you found that terrifying to picture, after getting off the gondola we had to ride a chairlift. Which is basically a gondola without the walls, yes, without the whole carriage, just the chairs. We had to go in pairs, so my cousin and I held hands as we slowly make our way to the man that helped us get into these chairlifts. We held on tight to each other as the automatic chair swoops us up and up and up till we were sitting mid-air. I could feel my body trembling and as I look down beyond my dangling feet, there it was, Queenstown. For a second I forgot I was scared of falling, how was it possible that this town looks even more beautiful from up here? I could see Lake Wakatipu sitting there silently, so big and mighty. I could see tiny people, tourists, and locals just trying to go about their day. Before I knew it I felt a squeeze from my hand and realized that it was almost time to hop off,

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the guy counted; one... two... three... and we both jumped out quickly before the chair catches us once more, "I want to do that again" I said.

At the top of the mountain we gracefully traveled to, there are many gift shops and restaurants, but we were there for a little attraction called the "Luge". Luge is actually a competitive sport where athletes race down a steep icy track using a sled. In our case, it would be pretty dangerous to ride one without proper training, and as I've mentioned my family is full of a bunch of scaredy cats so we would never do that, this was an easier version of it. It's an electric sled that we ride like a motorcycle on a pretty easy track going down the mountain, it's pretty fun riding while looking at the view. I couldn't help but smile as I watch my cousins slide down the mountain, their hair flying everywhere as they laughed trying to get it out of the way. Pretty soon we arrived back at the bottom of the mountain, in front of Lake Wakatipu which I admired from above early on.

You could say that we got a taste of Queenstown's sports attractions and wanted to do more, so the next day we went to check out something called the "Shotover Jet". Unfortunately, the day started with a loud rumbling of rain which meant we weren't going to be able to do a lot of things if it doesn't stop soon. It was like the sky heard our pleading and decided to set it down a bit for us to a drizzle. Unluckily the Shotover jet wasn't safe to ride yet, so we moved on to our next plan which was a highly anticipated one!

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traveling to Queenstown, New Zealand.
(2023)

As much as we've been engulfed by the scenery for a few days, it would be a lie to say that I'm bored of letting my eyes wander around this place. "TOOOOOT! TOOOOOT!" that's the sound that signals that I should probably already be on the cruise that was going to take us around the ginormous lake. I took my seat beside my grandma and enjoyed the swaying of the boat while they lift up the anchor and away we go. We were going to be on the boat for about an hour, so I decided to do a bit of exploring. The cruise was pretty big for a short ride, there were so many families sitting down and looking out at the panoramic view as we sail through the lake that had greeted us into this town. Suddenly I could hear a piano sound coming from the center of the cruise, where I found my mom, uncle, and aunt all singing along to nursery rhymes with what felt like hundreds of passengers all singing in harmony. I stood there smiling because I had never been that happy, watching my family sing joyfully with strangers singing songs while we are all surrounded by nature.

I had achieved everything I wanted from this trip. I've seen the breathtaking view, and I soaked in all the colors of the flowers, I enjoyed the cold, I experienced new things, and as soon as I left, I began to dream for the next time I'll have the opportunity to visit this earthly paradise. See you soon Queenstown <3

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