

Clearcut

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The Ken Gordon School of Communication, Creative and Digital Media



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EDITORIAL



Photo: Stefan Jadoo

Joel's Legacy Lives On

Clarinda Jack

On Monday 23rd March 2026, the Ken Gordon School of Communication, Creative and Digital Media (KGS) team, along with the Nanton family, friends, graduates and students assembled to honour Joel on what would have been his 51st birthday. A tangible memorial of Joel's indelible mark was installed at the KGS.

Joel, like all of us, wore many hats: Christian, husband, father, son, brother, uncle, media professional and educator. To us, he was a friend who became family and with whom we worked hard, played hard and ate lots of good food.

Joel Nanton joined the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) in January 2007 as a Lecturer, then was promoted to Senior Lecturer and lastly Academic Chair of the Journalism and Media Department, a position he held for 12 plus years. As an educator, Joel's primary goals were to mentor students and to ensure that they got as much hands-on

experience as possible, through classes that simulated newsrooms, and internships in the industry.

He also dreamt of having a KGS publication to showcase the work of students, graduates and faculty. This began to take shape in 2013, when the very first edition of ClearCut was planned: complete with stories, pictures and layout. However, after all the work that the team did, ClearCut was not approved and officially published back then.

Fast forward to 2024, Sophia Edwards Knox, the Chair of the Digital Media and Communication Department, took up the ClearCut mantle, determined that Joel's dream would be realised. That first unpublished edition of ClearCut was posted on the KGS Facebook page on the 9th July 2024 to mark our intention to move full speed ahead with the publication.

With the assistance of several of our KGS team members - Kayode James, Editor-in-Chief; Blossom Keane, Nadia Joseph and Roddy Batchasingh, Associate Editors; Julie Gouveia Ferguson and John-Jason Kokaram, Design and Layout, Jodene Springer, our Executive Assistant, students, and graduates, ClearCut came to life. The first edition was released on March 23, 2025, in honour of our dear colleague and friend, Joel. Our second edition commemorated COSTAATT's 25th Anniversary in October 2025.

This was Joel's dream realised. Joel Nanton created a legacy that transcends time and which is woven into the hearts and actions of others. We are grateful for our friend and brother.

Nanton Nugget: Get out of the newsroom and do the work! ■



Photo: Stefan Jadoo

Joel Nanton's daughter, Jolene, installs the memorial picture with some help from Blossom Keane, who supported him when he headed the Journalism and Media Department.

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Photo: Akil Pegus

Canvas Café patrons share smiles and creative energy while working on their watercolours.

Canvas Café: “Creatives Need a Place”

By Kenya Roberts

Felisha Mohammed is the owner of Canvas Café, a St. Augustine home renovated into an aesthetic space for specialty cuppas, decadent pastries and all things art. It has become a restaurant, marketplace, studio and social hub for creatives of all stripes.

Before opening Canvas, the COSTAATT BA Graphic Design student and her art supplies were rejected from other cafés due to the potential mess. Felisha knew she had to

change the game and create a place for the misplaced. She searched for vacant spaces to house her dream, and when she found the ideal location at 7 Old Tim Road, she threw caution to the wind and took her shot. The Café’s

grand opening last August embodied the spirit she intended to capture daily: musicians played live music; artists sketched caricatures of customers, while others did beautiful henna artwork. Felisha intended Canvas Café to be a space

where people brought ideas and emotions to life.

“It’s basically a second home, not just to me but to others seeking a space to create,” reflected Felisha.

Felisha first recognised the Café’s real value when she witnessed the creative

rebirth of one of her earliest customers. A cancer survivor, the older artist’s zeal had been diminished by her battle with the disease. But the colour, coffee, and community she found in Canvas reinvigorated her, and she began painting again in the unique space. She hoped that the café would never close and never move. “It means so much to people, and you don’t even know it,” said the budding entrepreneur.

Sitting amidst vibrant hand-painted art and

**“I don’t want it to just be a place;
I want to connect
with the people that come in.”**

stacks of well-used books, Felisha juggled mundane managerial tasks and lively conversations with familiar patrons. Some were sketching and sipping, and others flirted and laughed on the couch. So acquainted is Felisha with her customers, that when one of them started

ordering, she was able to complete their sentence. They both chuckled at this, “Of course I remember!” From her sip-and-paint events to customers renting the space for birthdays and bridal showers, Canvas Cafe has become people-powered and art-driven.

Over the past eight months, the café has become a beloved space for stressed-out university students, idiosyncratic neighbourhood artists, and even families. Canvas Café is also a collaborative hub for entrepreneurial creatives to grow their respective crafts. Felisha wants

to continue supporting up-and-coming businesses and she has hosted displays and pop-ups with DIOSA Body Art and Design, Thai Artsy, Takumi Sushi, and several jewellery crafters. As the owner, she believes that co-operative energy can drive growth and innovation among

small businesses like hers. That community spirit, she says, is equally important for her customers. “The cafe is designed as a space where people can be more open and supportive to others’ work while exposing more of your own creativity.” ■



Photos: Akil Pegus

Stefan Jadoo: Behind the Lens

By Zoë Laydoo



"It's the ultimate convergence of storytelling, design, and human connection."

That creative convergence fuels BA Graphic Design student and photographer Stefan Jadoo's passion for his craft.

"The magic begins long before I ever pick up a camera," Stefan said in a recent interview with ClearCut. "I approach my work with the eye of both a photographer and a graphic artist, and the creative process starts with a raw concept. It's about building the mood boards, sketching out the narrative, and defining the visual language."

"To me, a picture does more than just tell a thousand words," he said. "It also allows people to ask a thousand questions. It allows the viewer to pause, interpret, and feel. A picture communicates the things that words simply cannot articulate."

Photography found Stefan during his second year at the Ken Gordon School (KGS), when he enrolled in a GRDE 215 Digital Photography class with lecturer Rangie Persad. By the end of this course,

Stefan realised he wanted to pursue photography professionally. Recognising the limitations of his smartphone, he soon invested in his first camera: a Canon T7. "It wasn't easy at first, trying to figure out how to get the best out of the camera," he said. Learning the instrument that would eventually become an extension of himself initially involved "countless hours on YouTube" and studying well-known local photographers.

The camera, however, was only one pixel in a bigger picture. "A vision on paper means nothing without the right people," he said. Alongside friends and fellow photography enthusiasts, he co-founded COSTAATT's Photography Club in September 2024, serving as its Vice President. The effort paid off immediately. Photographer Ameer Hosein, who attended the club's first meeting as a special guest, would go on to become Stefan's mentor and good friend. "His solid advice helped me to elevate myself as a photographer until I eventually developed my own style," Stefan said.

That 'style', as it turned

"To me, a picture does more than just tell a thousand words, it also allows people to ask a thousand questions. It allows the viewer to pause, interpret, and feel."

out, became literal, as Stefan developed a love for fashion photography. "The bold designs, the colours, the movement, the expressions, and the ability to tell different stories when they all come together... Being on set is electric!"

Stefan also poured his talent back into COSTAATT, contributing photos to ClearCut's inaugural issue, capturing candid moments at a Voice and Media Presentation Master Class with veteran broadcaster Dominic Kalipersad, and filming last

year's Bachelor's degree valedictorian speech.

"Putting your art out into the world requires vulnerability," he said. Nevertheless, Stefan has stepped boldly from the classroom into the industry, contributing to fashion and editorial projects for local designers and collaborating with prominent photographers and organisations. His work has been published in articles and displayed regionally and internationally. He displayed two pieces in sepa-

rate exhibitions at the Red House's Rotunda Gallery in 2023. According to Stefan, "That recognition is deeply humbling. It's the ultimate validation that the story we set out to tell didn't just stay in the studio; it connected, it communicated, and it left a mark."

His ethos has earned him a permanent job with Luvo Studios/Luvo Weddings: an award-winning Trinidadian photography company.

Stefan plans to one day open his own studio and publication house, to be named after his late father's business.

As a seasoned soon-to-be alum, Stefan shared his advice for those currently braving the e-classroom trenches: "Treat every assignment as the foundation of your future career, not just a grade. Don't wait for graduation to put yourselves out into the world. Success often favours those who actively create, recognise, and seize chances, as hesitation leads to missed opportunities. Look around the classroom, because those peers are your future collaborators and network."



We Create for Us

By Kenya Roberts

Forget the capes and cowls: sisters Anne and Kayleigh Williams are the dynamic duo we all need right now.

The pair write and illustrate Outrun the Night, a forest-bound fantasy epic in the vein of ElfQuest and The Lion King.

As AAS Graphic Design students, Anne, 24, and Kayleigh, 19, decided to create the story they longed for during child-

hood - a perfect blend of action, fantasy, comedy, and a tad bit of furry violence.

Outrun the Night follows the tale of five packs of majestic dire wolves who are cursed by their Creator for warring against each other. The curse stalks them in the form of a giant, murderous, saber-toothed cat called Silver Eye. To defeat her, they must overcome the disunity that created her and join forces as their ancestors once did.

"We look alike, and we like the same things," said Anne, who has since graduated. "We create for us," she said, referencing Gravity Falls creator Alex Hitch.

The siblings, who are often mistaken for twins, always intended for their story to focus on solidarity and cooperation. "Despite our differences, unity and cooperation are very important. United we stand, divided we fall," said Anne.

The canine versus feline webcomic explores interpersonal relationships and different dynamics in unity - especially found-family vs blood family. Anne and Kayleigh include personal touches so readers can find strength and solace in characters who overcome mental health challenges and social hardships.

If you have a story to share, go for it. Pursue your dreams for the love of creating and bringing people together with your work.

Outrun the Night has earned the artists an audience in the thousands, but Anne and Kayleigh try not to focus on the figures.

"People enjoy it, and we enjoy making it; that is the most important part."

On webcomic platform Comic Fury, Outrun the Night has attracted a community of fans who have emotionally connected to the sisters' work. They share fan art, heartfelt comments, tears and laughter that Anne and Kayleigh describe as



"validating" and "the best part of making Outrun the Night."

The community is spread across spaces like Webtoon, Comic Fury, Discord, Instagram, Patreon and their online character merchandise shop and is steadily growing. Mindful of that following, Anne and Kayleigh hope to become

full-time graphic novelists, and are planning to unveil a mystery project soon.

The sisters hope that their real-life journey can be as inspiring as their fantasy tale. "If you have a story to share, go for it. Pursue your dreams for the love of creating and bringing people together with your work."





Hundred of patrons enter Flava Village on January 22nd to view the free concert performance by soca star Patrice Roberts.

My Flava Village Experience: The Sweet Goodbye to Carnival

By Heidi George

Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago always feels like a season that arrives with a rush of colour, music and excitement. But every season must come to an end. For me, that moment really sank in one Saturday afternoon after class when

my parents, sister and I decided to pass through Flava Village one more time. I had already been there earlier in the season, on Iwer Night, when the place was absolutely electric. The crowd was massive, the music was pure soca, and the whole Queen's Park Savannah felt

alive with anticipation for Carnival. Everywhere you turned there were people laughing, dancing, liming and eating. The energy was loud, bold and infectious, the kind of feeling that only Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago can produce. But this time, it felt different. Flava Village itself

is a relatively new addition to the Carnival experience, a cultural space filled with food vendors, artisans and live entertainment created, by the National Carnival Commission and the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, to celebrate our culture and support small businesses.

Throughout the season it attracted thousands of patrons who came to enjoy the food, the music and the uniquely Trinbagonian vibe. Yet, on that Saturday afternoon, just before the village was scheduled to close for the season, the atmosphere had shifted.

It was still beautiful. The music still played, the lights still glowed and the smell of doubles, barbecue and corn soup still floated through the air. But the crowd was smaller. The energy was softer. There was a quiet understanding among the people there that this was almost the end. During Carnival, the stage had been dominated by nonstop soca. That was the soundtrack of the season, fast, loud and full of life. But on this day, the music felt more like a reflection of the journey we had just lived through.

The performers mixed things up. There was soca, of course, but there was also calypso. Then, in a moment that felt surprisingly perfect, reigning Calypso Monarch Terri Lyons slipped in a short medley of old Sunday school choruses into her performance. Suddenly, the entire crowd was singing. People who moments earlier had been quietly standing with their food were now lifting their voices together. Some waved little red, white and black flags. Others held up their phones. And as the chorus swelled, it felt almost like a prayer rising above the Savannah. At the top of our voices, we sang and asked for "a blessing" for our sweet country. At that moment, it felt right. Carnival had given us weeks of joy, music and freedom, but this felt like the gentle closing of the circle, a reminder of faith, community and hope.

As the evening went on, there was a strange

Photo: Robert Taylor



Photo: Robert Taylor

Patrons flock to Navin's Doubles at the NCC Flava Village, Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain.

mixture of happiness and sadness in the air. No one rushed to leave. Instead, people lingered. Families sat together finishing their food. Friends took their last photos. Little groups slowly "chipped" away as the DJ played the final songs of the night.

It was like everyone wanted to hold on just a little bit longer. Eventually, though, the music softened, the crowd thinned, and the Village began to quiet down. Carnival 2026 had come and gone, and Flava Village, this lively space filled with food,

music and culture, was closing its doors until next year. But as we walked back to the car, one thing was certain, this initiative was something special. It gave people a place to gather, to celebrate our culture, and to share in the simple joy of being Trinbagonian. And judging by the smiles and the slow goodbyes that night, many of us will definitely be back. Because if this year was anything to go by, when Flava Village returns next Carnival, the vibes will be waiting. And so will we.



Photo: Robert Taylor



Photo: Robert Taylor

A happy patron enjoys the Flava Village food experience.



Photo: Robert Taylor

Machel Montano performs at the Flava Village at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain.



Photo: Robert Taylor

Calypso Monarch Terri Lyons performs for patrons on the closing night of the Flava Village at the Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain.

Autistic, but Just Like Any Other Teenager

By Karen Dougdeen

My daughter, Isabella, was diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum at the age of 4. She is high-functioning. I am so proud of Bella, and a bit nervous to share our story, but I would do so in an effort to raise awareness.

April was designated Autism Awareness Month by the Autism Society of North America in 1970, a month that celebrates new beginnings, heralded by Spring. It is a time when we celebrate the contributions of persons on the Autism spectrum and advocate for inclusion.



Illustration: Isabella. Title: Sea Dragon

graphic design course at COSTAATT. She discussed it with the Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs who both agreed that Bella should be interviewed to determine her competence to be admitted as a non-matriculate student to do one course, Introduction to Graphic Design. Bella had an interview with one of the Senior Lecturers for Graphic Design who recognised her skills.

So, in September 2024, at the age of 13, she began pursuing the course with Mr. John-Jason Kokaram. This was her first and only face to face class and she enjoyed the interaction with her lecturer and peers. She found Mr. Kokaram to be understanding

and stern when needed, and thrived in his course. Upon successful completion, she took up another the following semester. This is where she encountered the online environment. The whole family had to get onboard to remind her of when to log on, show her how to enter the passwords and check emails and the e-classroom. Bella adapted really well to this and is currently pursuing her final course in the 5-course-Certificate in Graphic Design at the Ken Gordon School of Communication, Creative and Digital Media.

Her experience in Principles of Design with Mrs. Julie Gouveia Ferguson has been equally lovely. She describes 'Miss Julie', as she calls her, as a teacher with personality and a great sense of humour. Both lecturers have been very accessible and willing to assist whenever she has made contact by email or during classes.

Bella's challenge is not so much with the academics, but with the need to

were in secondary school and she was at home.

I cannot explain how gut wrenching it was to have Bella in the car while picking up her sisters from school. She was clearly grieving to be a part of the community of girls who were exiting at the sound of the last bell. She was on the outside looking in. As a mother, I felt double the pain for my child! I knew that I had to do something to make it better.

For Christmas 2021, Bella had asked for a drawing tablet. She started using the device to create beautiful and interesting freestyle sketches with colour and shading, and all of those design terms I don't know, but she certainly does. So, with this in mind, in 2024, I decided to ask my Head of Department, Mrs. Sophia Edwards Knox, whether there was any chance of her doing a

It is also an opportunity to highlight the talents of those on the spectrum and celebrate their gifts and abilities, which allow them to lead meaningful lives. The thrust to create awareness encourages respectful treatment and sensitivity towards those who think and act differently, and are neurodivergent.

Isabella's academic journey began at a small school in Curepe from 2015 to 2019, and she continued private school during the pandemic at her teacher's home once we were allowed to be out and about. She then pursued online courses in 2022, which was around the time when she should have written the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA). We opted not to have her do the exam because we felt it would be a lot of stress for her. By this time, Bella's two sisters



Illustration: Isabella. Title: Salt

make friends. She is like any typical teenager; she just wants to have some folks with whom she can chat, share ideas and have fun. It is not easy to find the time to balance the social things she needs, as I have a busy schedule, but we definitely try to make trips to the mall where she loves the shops, pizza and ice cream, like any other young person. She recently completed her Confirmation journey with her two sisters and we are thankful for the catechists' understanding

that she often wears headphones and draws on her tablet during the classes because it helps her to feel grounded.

I am so thankful that Mrs. Sophia Edwards Knox, Ms. Clarinda Jack and Dr. Naseem Koylass took a chance to offer Isabella this opportunity because the classes have given her something to look forward to each week and have kept her mind, eyes and hands busy. I glow with pride when I see the pieces she has created,

and I enjoy talking with her about what she is working on. Every day it is not roses and rainbows. Sometimes she has temper outbursts, called meltdowns, when everything overstimulates her and it is a lot. There are days when I too am tired and I have to be mindful of how I talk with her. But we are human and all a little weird sometimes.

I would not change Bella for anything. She is so talented and I am thankful that those at the College who decided to try

something different with her stayed the course with us. All she needed was some support and care, which is what most persons on the Autism Spectrum need. I am excited to see how her journey is going to unfold and I hope it is a stepping stone for Isabella for even more courses at COSTAATT.



Illustration: Isabella. Title: Lioness

The Last Voice in a Vanishing Profession

By Tiffany Wint

In an era when customer service reps are automated and computerised with artificial intelligence, the sound of a human voice answering the phone with warmth and certainty has begun to vanish. Despite our commercial sector's resistance to these advances, businesses are slowly adapting to this new technology.

Agostini Insurance Brokers (AIB) was ready for the change, but despite mergers, recessions, and reinventions, one woman remained. Her name is Kathy Wong Chong, she is 69 years old, and she has worked as a switchboard operator for over 40 years. She is one of the last of her kind in the insurance industry.

"It was a part of my life," she told ClearCut during a recent interview. "People think telephone communication is easy now. One tap or swipe and you can make a call now, but back in my day, I was the tap."



Switchboard Operator Kathy Wong Chong at her post in the 1970s.

Kathy started working at AIB as soon as she left school as a 17-year-old in 1971. She became a switchboard operator three years later. The company has since traded its switchboards for sleek digital phone systems, but Kathy remains one of the few who remembers the art of manually connecting voices across the island.

"When I started, everything was wires," she recalls. "I used to get shocked handling the cords when rain fell; I would sit in front of a big board with little lights. A call would come in, and yuh plug in the cord. You

greet the customers nicely, always remembering to be pleasant, find out who they want to talk to, and make the link. Sometimes I had to juggle ten calls at once, like playing pan."

Those calls came from all quarters: farmers from Rio Claro, shopkeepers from Couva, bankers from St. Clair. And while most were business as usual, some callers could be irate.

"You had to stay calm. The switchboard operator is the first voice they hear. You set the tone and it was often my job to calm down the irate clients," said Kathy.

Kathy's coworkers

would tease her for remembering every client by voice. "I never forget a voice," she said. "Sometimes I even knew who was calling before they said anything: the way they clear their throat, the way they breathe, the little pause before they start."

The job, she explains, made her part of people's lives in small, unexpected ways. She heard the crack in a customer's voice before they reported a fire. The tremble of relief when they called to close a claim. The exhaustion of a new car owner calling to sort out vehicle coverage. "We weren't counsellors," she says, "but we used to give a little comfort here and there."

One of her most memorable moments was from 2017, during the aftermath of Hurricane Bret. Phone lines across the Caribbean were in chaos, and the switchboard at the office was flooded with calls. "Everybody was frantic," she says, "We had a lot of flood claims that year; we

were trying our best to route calls through to the underwriting and claims departments."

Before retiring in 2023, Kathy helped the company transition to the technology that would replace her. And for a time, she was part of that new normal, as she provided the first voice for the AIB automated phone system. She enjoyed that last connection with the job she'd held for decades.

Retirement hasn't slowed her down. These days, she tends to her home garden, volunteers at her church's outreach programmes and spends time with her grandkids. Kathy now owns a floral arrangement business and caters for small weddings and funerals all over Trinidad. She is also very active at her church, in ministries such as Couples for Christ. She admits to feeling lonely at times, especially since the loss of her husband Chris, but she sometimes visits her old office, while running errands in Port of Spain, to reconnect with her colleagues.

Kathy remains with many fond memories of her work life. She wasn't the first switchboard operator, but she might very well have been one of the last.

Understanding Autism at COSTAATT

By Dr. Radica Mahase

Most people think about children when they hear the word autism. We often forget that autistic children grow up to be autistic adults and that Autism is a lifelong condition. It does not disappear when a child becomes an adult. At COSTAATT, you may meet students on the autism spectrum and have to work with them in groups, labs and other settings. That is why it helps to understand autism and recognise that autistic people experience the world in different ways. Some may talk a lot, some may speak very little, some may be very social, and some may prefer more space and quiet.

This is because autistic people process information, communicate and interact a little differently. An autistic person may notice details others miss, prefer routines, struggle with sudden change, or feel overwhelmed in noisy and crowded spaces. Some may find it hard to read social cues, understand sarcasm, or keep up with fast-moving conversations, or may not always know when it is their turn to speak. It doesn't mean that they are rude, strange or unfriendly.

During the course of your programme at COSTAATT, you may be expected to work in groups, attend labs depending on your programme, and take both physical and online classes. Chances are, you will meet students who are on the autism spectrum. They too are pursuing educational goals, but may need



Image AI-generated

support in certain areas, especially social communication or managing sensory stress. The problem is that our society judges people too quickly. If someone does not make eye contact, speaks bluntly, sits alone, avoids noisy activities, or keeps their camera off during an online class, people may label them as "off," "stush," "awkward," or "anti-social." Sadly, this is how we exclude people, and that is unfair, because autistic students too deserve the chance to learn, develop and excel.

So how can we navigate tertiary level studies with autistic classmates?

First, when interacting with an autistic classmate, keep it simple, respectful and genuine. You do not need to speak to them like a child or behave as though they can't understand. Just be clear, say what you mean, avoid unnecessary confusion, mixed signals

and teasing that depends on the person "catching on." Some autistic students may take words very literally, so plain communication helps. Be patient too. If somebody takes a little longer to respond, that is not a problem. Not everybody processes conversation at the same speed. Give them space to answer and do not rush to fill every silence. Understand that some autistic people do not like too much eye contact. Some may not enjoy hugs or physical touch. Some may seem quiet at first until they feel safe. In online settings, some may prefer to use the chat rather than speak out loud, or may feel more comfortable with their camera off. That should not be seen as disrespect.

Second, group work is one area where autistic students can either thrive or feel completely overwhelmed. Group

projects can be stressful for any student, but for an autistic student, unclear instructions, poor communication, last-minute changes and disorganised group members can make things much harder. One of the best things a group can do is create structure by being clear about the task, the deadline and who is responsible for what. Do not assume everybody understands vague statements like "somebody go handle the slides" or "we go sort it out later." If changes are being made, say so clearly and early. If there is a disagreement, do not gang up on the person or dismiss their ideas because they sound blunt or direct. Sometimes autistic people communicate very honestly, and that may come across as harsh when it is not intended that way.

Third, if you are working with an autistic classmate online, it helps to send clear messages, summarise decisions after meetings, and let people know in advance what will be discussed. Virtual spaces can create their own kind of stress. People talk over one another, instructions get buried in long chats, microphones cutting in and out can be distracting, and not everybody knows when to jump in. A simple message saying, "Tonight we discussing the introduction and dividing the presentation," can make a big difference. If somebody is quieter on Zoom, that does not mean they are not contributing. They may simply communicate better in writing or need a little more time to process before responding.

Fourth, instead of focusing only on what they may find difficult, pay

attention to what they do well. It helps to recognise strengths. An autistic classmate may be excellent at research, editing, organising information, designing slides, checking details, managing data, or keeping the group on track. In online classes, they may be the one who notices errors others missed or who ensures that the assignment guidelines are actually followed.

Fifth, physical labs and practical sessions also require some thought. For many students, labs can be busy, noisy and fast-paced. There may be strong smells, bright lighting, protective gear, lots of movement, and pressure to follow instructions quickly. For an autistic student, that environment can be overwhelming, especially if instructions are only given once or if classmates become impatient. If you are working with an autistic lab partner, be clear about safety procedures, roles, and timing. Do not assume they are confused just because they ask questions or want instructions repeated. In many cases, they are trying to make sure they get it right.

As we observe Autism Awareness Month this April, we should remember that autistic students are already part of the COSTAATT community. They do not need to be "fixed" in order to belong. They need respect, understanding and the opportunity to learn and grow like everybody else. Inclusion is not only for lecturers or support staff. It is the responsibility of all of us. It begins with simple things such as patience, clear communication and less judgement. If we can do that, then we can help create a campus where autistic students feel accepted, supported and valued.

A Lifeline, Not a Finish Line



[Image courtesy: JAMES OATWAY for CER.]

South Africa's Tutuka Power Station runs on coal.

By Suemita Teeluck

The World Meteorological Organisation predicted that the planet's long-term average temperatures will exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius for the first time in 2027, which is just a year away. This is 13 years sooner than previously estimated by the International Panel on Climate Change.

The scientific and legal limit of global warming is 1.5 °C. However, current fossil fuel expansion plans would take the world past 3 degrees of warming, and past the point of survival.

Many countries - particularly low and middle income, such as Trinidad and Tobago - face considerable constraints in their ability to transition from fossil fuels. Heavily indebted nations, those dependent on fossil fuel extraction and with limited fiscal space, need fair timelines, finance and support to manage the decline.

No mechanism currently exists to address fossil fuels and manage a fair transition away from oil, gas and coal. Despite talks of phasing out the

use of fossil fuels in over 24 countries, there has been no clear roadmap. The Paris Agreement, while a monumental step in addressing climate change and setting up the temperature limit, isn't structured or equipped to deal with the transition from fossil fuels. It doesn't even mention coal, gas or oil.

Insisting on fossil fuel phase-out or phase-in of renewables without considering equity, and the financial and technological support necessary to transition or avoid fossil fuels altogether, will not advance us toward the world we want.

The widespread recognition of the need to manage a just transition away from fossil fuel extraction has prompted the organisation of the First International Conference on the Phase-out of Fossil Fuels. This historic gathering will take

place in Santa Marta, Colombia in late April, and will focus on planning a sustainable path forward.

Senior government officials and civil society leaders from across the Caribbean convened in March 2026 at the Bay Gardens Hotel in Saint Lucia as a preparatory

session for the conference in Santa Marta, reaffirming the region's commitment to shaping international cooperation toward a fast, fair, and financed global phase-out of oil, gas and coal.

The convening took place at a critical juncture in international climate diplomacy. Despite growing global consensus on the need to transition away from fossil fuels, negotiations remain stymied on the central questions of governance, finance, and implementation. International climate and financing discussions continue to face gridlock, even as climate impacts intensify worldwide.

The world remains dangerously off track to limit warming to 1.5°C. The Caribbean played a crucial and leading role in securing the 1.5° C temperature limit in the Paris Agreement. Several

Caribbean countries have also joined the bloc of 18 countries participating in discussions on a Fossil Fuel Treaty, to manage a fair and science-aligned decline in fossil fuel production.

At the same time, we still must prepare for the inevitable shifting weather patterns to minimise the harm they will cause. We need to be prepared to take care of the millions of people who will take the brunt of extreme weather, sea levels rising, political instability, and the climate anxiety and grief that follow...especially in smaller nations like Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, would the world be better off if we had rapidly cut our climate pollution years ago? Maybe months ago? Even yesterday? Undoubtedly. But it is better that we start trying today than tomorrow. It is the only option we have left.

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Regional government officials and civil society leaders participating in the Global Just Transition from Fossil Fuels meeting, on March 2-3, 2026, in Gros-Islet, Saint Lucia.

[Image courtesy See.Capture.Inspire.]

Taking Flight: My Journey to a Mass Communication Degree

By Melanesia Martin

When I look back at the last decade of my life, I sometimes wonder how I managed to keep it all together - flying around the world, studying full time, building a marriage, and raising two boys. But then I remember, it wasn't about having it all figured out. It was about showing up, one day at a time, and trusting in God that each small step would carry me closer to my dream and His plans for my life.

I started my COSTAATT journey in September 2009, pursuing an Associate Degree in Journalism and Public Relations. I was full of excitement and ready to embrace the world of media. Just over a year later, in November 2010, life took me in a whole new direction - I became a flight attendant. That was the moment my balancing act truly began. Suddenly, I was learning how to juggle textbooks and takeoffs, exams and layovers.

By my third year at COSTAATT, I made a big switch and transitioned to the full BA Mass Communication degree. That decision meant more long nights and a heavier workload, but it also meant I was chasing something bigger than I'd ever imagined.

To make it work, I had to get creative. I often switched flights with fellow flight attendants just to make it to class in person at the Port of Spain cam-



Melanesia flying high.

pus. And when I did get to campus, I made every hour count.

Because I was balancing a job that took me out of the country several times

a week, my class schedule was, at times, very packed. In some semesters I handled four classes in a day (12 straight hours of class!), starting at 8:00 a.m.

and ending at 8:00 p.m. And this was pre-COVID, when most classes were in-person and required consistent attendance.

There were days I'd go

from City Campus on Melville Lane for my morning class from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m., walk over to the Ken Gordon School (KGS) on Alcazar Street for my mid-day class which ran from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., swing back to City Campus for the 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. afternoon session, and then return to KGS for the evening class from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. It was a 12-hour marathon of walking, note-taking, and learning: my feet ached, my brain ached, but I wanted it badly enough to push through the exhaustion.

During all of this, I achieved some milestones in my life. In 2013, I married Nicholas, my best friend and cheerleader. In 2014, I became a mother to Jaedon, and in 2017, to Jediah. Suddenly, my journey wasn't just about me - it was about us. There were moments I typed assignments with one hand while rocking a baby with the other. Times when I wrote essays after midnight because I had to wait until the house was quiet. Times when Nicholas would step in so I could catch up on coursework after a long flight. Times when Jaedon or Jediah would look up at me with tired eyes, and I'd remember exactly why I was pushing so hard. I wasn't just balancing careers and coursework; I was balancing dreams with diapers, deadlines, and dinners.

One memory stands

out, etched into my heart. It was my final year, and I was deep into my thesis, racing against a fast-approaching deadline. I had been pouring everything into it, when suddenly my phone rang; Jediah's daycare was calling. He had spiked a high fever and needed to see a doctor right away. I dropped everything and rushed to him. In that moment, no assignment, no deadline, no grade mattered more than being a mother. Later, I reached out to my then lecturer, Mr. Kayode James, to explain what had happened. His response was filled with understanding and compassion - he granted me an extension, which gave me the space to care for my son and still finish my work. That moment reminded me that ambition is important, but so is grace, both given and received.

My faith in God was the steady anchor through it all. There were nights I prayed for strength, mornings I asked for wisdom, and countless days I leaned on His guidance to keep moving forward especially when I wanted to give up.

Through the long haul of studies and flights, I was also blessed with steady

mentors. Mr. Roddy Batchasingh, who taught many of my courses and served as my academic advisor at COSTAATT, was a continual source of encouragement. He believed in me on days I doubted myself and helped me see possibilities when obstacles felt overwhelming. Today, we still stay in touch and have a great mentor-mentee friendship.

In 2017, I finally graduated with honors from my Associate Degree in Journalism and Public Relations. The following year, in 2018, I walked across the stage again, this time graduating Cum Laude with my Bachelor's in Mass Communication. Standing there in my gown, I wasn't just a graduate. I was proof to myself - and hopefully to others - that determination and resilience can carry you through even the hardest seasons.

Being a flight attendant taught me to listen and connect with people. Studying Mass Communication taught me to tell stories and give voices to others. Motherhood and marriage taught me patience, sacrifice, and unconditional love. Together, these roles shaped me into who I am today.



L-R: Melanesia Martin, Roddy Batchasingh, and Tarelle Julien (also a flight attendant and BA Mass Communications graduate).

ART & LITERATURE

Isis Amunwah



Isis Amunwah (BA graphic Design student) is a young artist with a passion for character design and illustration. She works across a variety of mediums, including digital art, watercolours, coloured pencils, acrylic paints, and pen work, with a particular focus on the rubber hose style.

Her journey into art began by observing and learning from her mother, who is also an artist. While she initially aspired to become an animator, her interests later shifted toward graphic and character design. She draws much of her inspiration from well-animated series and classic cartoons from the late 1900s.

As she continues to grow, she's focused on refining a distinct, recognisable style while steadily improving her skills over time.



Fighting Against Period Poverty

By Tiffany Wint

It's a primal smell; one the human brain is wired to recognise instantly. It is sharp, metallic, and unmistakable. It is warm and rusty like iron or copper. It is the suffocating scent of blood.

Tahira's cheeks grew rosy as the same blood had now rushed to her face in embarrassment, as the smell gained traction. She had felt it creeping on her, the dull pressure, the jarring ache in her lower back; but she had no sanitary napkin today. Another victim was glued to her seat, hoping no one would notice her unforeseen misfortune.

"I folded a paper towel into so many layers," she said, head hung low. Tahira hadn't expected the flow and wasn't prepared. "I use specific brands of pads because some brands give me a rash. I could not afford pads this month."

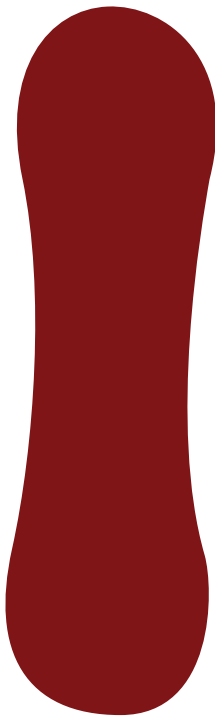
Tahira, a 33-year-old single mother, earns just enough as an administrative assistant to pay her bills and get groceries. On months that bring extra expenses, such as school-books or car insurance payments, pads are considered a "luxury" item. She isn't alone.

Across the globe, millions of women face the same dilemma. Period poverty is the lack of access to sanitary products, men-

strual hygiene education or waste management. It is often viewed through the narrow lens of girls missing classes; however, the problem doesn't vanish with adulthood. The problem follows women into office buildings and restaurants.

A 2023 study done by Medical Science and Discovery (MSD), which assessed period poverty among women in Trinidad and Tobago, revealed significant financial barriers surrounding the access to menstrual products. Three-quarters of respondents believed period products were unaffordable, and over half of the respondents struggled to obtain them. Many women had to borrow, switch brands, or resort to using improvised alternatives such as toilet paper, napkins, or paper towels. Most women reported that their workplaces did not supply sanitary products, and 99% believed these institutions should provide them.

Today, a wave of educators, activists, students and private companies are taking a stand to say



"ENOUGH." One of those NGOs is the Project YOU Foundation TT, led by their Chairman, Joshua Alexander, and a team of young professionals, who led the "Pads of Hope" initiative in 2024. What began as a social media call for donations has now evolved into a nationwide movement. In August 2024, Newsday reported on the launch of "Pads of Hope II" - 28,000 pads and other menstrual products were distributed throughout the country in various organizations, schools and homes.

Similarly, NGO Crown Her TT also works to reduce period poverty and promote regulations that would give every woman experiencing their menstrual cycle at least one free menstruation product. The organisation uses a collaborative, data-driven strategy to address the issue.

Feminine hygiene brands, like Always, have supported this drive. More importantly, there are governments who prioritise the eradication of period poverty. Canada amended its Labour Code in 2023 to require

that all federally regulated employers provide free menstrual products, inclusive of pads and tampons, to their employees. This move followed Scotland's 2021 legislation that made feminine hygiene products freely accessible as part of that country's universal healthcare system. Other countries like the United States and Australia have slowly begun to adopt anti-period poverty measures, though these moves tend to focus more on specific institutions like schools.

Menstruation is still stigmatised, leading to embarrassment, silence, and disregard. However, progressive organisations have begun to provide menstrual products in the workplace and implement flexible leave policies. Some offices have even introduced menstrual health awareness programmes to help the female workforce.

Ending period poverty in the workplace is not just a matter of hygiene; it is a matter of equality and economic justice. It is especially essential in the workplace, as it promotes gender equity, improves employee well-being, and enhances productivity. Workplaces can become truly inclusive spaces where all employees can perform at their best, free from the limitations of period poverty. ■

Period poverty is the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education or waste management.

The Courage to Begin Again

By Virmala Balkaran

Life has a way of undoing our best-laid plans. One moment you feel steady, the next you're facing an ending you didn't prepare for - the collapse of a dream, a path that suddenly disappears, or a circumstance that shakes the ground beneath you. Starting over after such moments can feel like the hardest thing to do. Yet it is in those very seasons of disruption that the courage to begin again becomes most necessary.

Starting over in uncertain times

I know this firsthand. In 2021, in the middle of a pandemic, I made the decision to start my degree at COSTAATT. I was in my late twenties, juggling full-time work, managing a brand, and carrying responsibilities that often felt overwhelming. Part of me wondered if I was too old or too busy to add "student" to that list. But I decided to put one foot in front of the other and just begin. Days turned into semesters, and semesters into years - and before I knew it, the time had passed, and the journey that once seemed impossible was complete. Looking back now, I realize the greater risk would have been never starting at all, simply because of fear.

Lessons from broken plans

More recently, I faced a different kind of beginning - the kind that comes not from choice, but from loss. Plans I had built with care suddenly unraveled, and

for a moment, it felt like the end of everything. But life, in its wisdom, uses endings as teachers. What I thought was failure was, in truth, a lesson in disguise. With time, I gained perspective and strength, and I realised that experience itself is a

form of wealth. Sometimes the new beginning isn't about chasing a dream, it's about picking yourself up, dusting off the disappointment, and walking forward with more wisdom than before.



Growth through resilience

Research in psychology often highlights resilience as the defining factor in how people recover from setbacks. Resilience isn't always about avoiding pain, but about reframing it: seeing obstacles as opportunities to grow. Every time we begin again, we prove to ourselves that failure is not final. Instead, it becomes part of the foundation on which the next chapter is built.

Choosing courage over fear

What holds many of us back is the belief that we must be perfectly ready before we start again. But the truth is, readiness is a myth. To begin again, we don't always need certainty: we simply need courage. We must have the courage to take one shaky step forward, even when we don't know how the story will end. I have always told myself that the time will pass anyway, and when it does, I will be grateful that I didn't let fear keep me standing still.

So when life interrupts your plans, or when you find yourself staring at a blank page where a chapter has ended, don't see it as the end of your story. See it as proof that you are still growing, still capable, still brave enough to start again.

Because beginnings are not reserved for youth or for perfect plans. They belong to anyone willing to try, no matter what came before. ■

Illustration: Cherele Melville

A Rainy Season

By Kirk Bhajan

October arrived with a deluge. But rain was the least of my concerns. My editor assigned me to investigate a tipoff about a group of animal traffickers haunting the distant coastal village of Cedros. The road to Cedros is one way in, one way out, through the wilderness of South Trinidad.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, I found myself on the outskirts of the village. The fading light played tricks on my senses and then it appeared, the mother of all potholes, yawning wide before me, eager to swallow my car. I swerved to avoid it, but the damage had already been done.

As I drove on, there was a sharp, insistent tap tap taptap tap taptap tap tap echoing from the front left tyre. I stopped and got out of my car. The breeze was strong and cold and tasted of salt. I inspected the tyre for any damage and found that a nail had pierced through it. I opened my trunk, in search of a spare, only to realise that too was flat.

As I peered into the forest that curtained the road, I discerned the silhouette of a man slowly advancing towards me. I waved nervously in his direction. He was massive in stature. Tendrils of hair covered his face like vines on a weathered tree. Thick, purple veins trickled the length of his rugged arms.

"Wham dey padna?" he asked.

"Flat tyre," I replied.

"No spare?"

"Unfortunately, not. Do you know if any tyre shops will be open around here



Illustration: François Le Blanc

As I peered into the forest that curtained the road, I discerned the silhouette of a man slowly advancing towards me.

where I can plug it?"

"Not this hour. And not here. Yuh in the bush now."

He kicked the tyre, "Crapaud smoke your pipe eh."

Whatever light there was began fading quickly and I could hear cicadas screeching in the distance. The cold sea breeze grazed

my skin. A moment of clarity then unveiled itself; I was in the middle of nowhere. A sudden flash of fear gripped me.

"I'm a reporter for the Tribune," I offered, desperation creeping into my tone. "I'm on assignment in Cedros."

He looked at me.

"A reporter, eh?"

"A reporter."

He pointed to the sky, then to the track he came from,

"The rain going and buss down bucket-a-drop jess now. And no taxi passing on the road this hour. I eh living far from here. Me and meh family. All ah we does fish and wok land. Yuh could stay by we until the rain pass and in the morning, you could travel to the town."

"And what if I never make it to morning?" I asked cautiously.

"Padnas," he said in a drawl, "If I was to do something to yuh, it woulda happen aready. Yuh safer with me than if you stay here by yuhself. Taxi eh go pass now but the forest full of jumbie and if yuh doh believe in that, when night fall, you eh know what kind characters does be on the road."

"I suppose I don't have much of a choice, no?" I muttered to myself.

"Yuh does ever really have a choice in this life?" he asked, as he stroked his beard.

He offered his hand. It felt as hard as tree bark.

"Dey does call meh Bois," he said with a rugged smile.

*

The trail to Bois' house was covered with moss and bramble. Walking was nearly impossible for me, but Bois strode with confidence.

"Yuh sound like a city man. How you really end up here padnas?" he asked.

"Like I said, I'm a reporter. I have to cover a story involving animal trafficking. Do you know

anything about that?"

"I probably know as much as you oui. Nowadays eh like before. Now too dangerous."

As we walked deeper into the forest, darkness enveloped us. I felt as if I was slowly slipping into a dream.

"Do you have service Bois? I'll have to call my girlfriend when we get to your place,"

"Yuh could try. But I eh sure."

"Well, it's ok. I just hope she doesn't worry too much."

"If yuh woman doh worry bout yuh, then something wrong," Bois said with a grin.

"True. True. But we don't live together. Not anymore at least."

"How come?"

"We lost a baby."

"Wha yuh mean?"

"She was married. Her husband left her. We hooked up. I got her pregnant. It was a girl. Stillborn. I never got to see what her eyes looked like. Never even got to hear her voice."

As we reached the threshold of Bois' home, a gentle drizzle began to descend from the heavens. I looked ahead and, in the distance, I saw the light of a flambeau dancing against the black. A figure emerged from the shadows, a boy no older than eight. He was small and dark skinned, with wiry hair. His collarbone was jagged and poked out of his back.

"Ma!" he cried,

"Ma, Pa reach. And he bring a man with him!"

The boy eyed me.

"The man look like he have money!"

Bois took the flambeau from the boy and with his other hand belted a slap across the back of his head. The boy scuttled away.

We entered the old wooden structure. The air overflowed with the scent of ripened bananas, many of which were wrapped in newspaper, scattered under a long wooden bench in the porch. Bois motioned me to sit. Two oil lamps hung on a thick, weathered beam above our heads. They swayed

in the wind and made our shadows look as if they were dancing.

From within emerged Bois' wife, her demeanour guarded yet hospitable. Bois introduced me as a journalist. She smiled politely and offered tea and a meal of sada roti and aloo choka. The boy ran to her side and hung onto her

thick thighs, his gaze fixed upon me with unabashed curiosity.

"Allyuh come inside," she invited.

The weather continued in all its misery as we all huddled along a small table, sipping tea. I quietly scanned the room in search of anything resembling something newsworthy.

"One night, a storm hit...Papa ask the bird for help. The bird sing and sing and sing until the rain stop."



Illustration: François Le Blanc

The only telling object I saw was in a collection of gardening tools – a sharpened cutlass that glistened in the dim light. Across the table, hidden partially under an oilcloth, was a birdcage. Inside was a doll.

Bois sat on the wooden bench. His yellowed teeth held a thick spliff. At his feet, the boy plucked at weeds sprouting through the floorboards, while scattered pots and pans collected rainwater. Bois lit the joint. Exhaling a puff of the pungent smoke, he ran his fingers through his thick hair and looked directly into my eyes. He seemed to wrestle with a decision before finally speaking.

"Ah want to show yuh something."

"What's that?"

He paused, a distant look in his eyes. "Yuh believe in forest spirits?"

I shook my head.

He leaned back, the chair creaking under his weight, and took another drag from his spliff. "Long long time ago, when meh great-grandfather was young, he used to walk all over the bush. One night, Papa find a bird, a green parrot, lying on the road. The wing did break so it couldn't fly. Papa take it home and nurse it back to health."

Bois' voice softened as he continued,

"But this wasn't no ordinary bird nah. As it start getting better it used to sing. Yes, sing. It used to sing a song I cyar even describe to you fuss it was...well you hadda hear it yuhself."

He paused, letting the words sink in.

"One night, a storm hit. The bird sing and sing, but the storm didn't want to stop. Papa ask the bird for help. The bird sing and sing and sing until the rain stop."

ART & LITERATURE

The Rainy Season

Continued from Page 21

Bois took one last puff from his spliff, stubbed it out, and stood up.

"Yuh ready to see for yuhself?"

"Show me," I whispered.

Bois led us to the back of his house, navigating the marshy yard with sure-footedness. Across the yard, there was a shed, its stout frame braced by sturdy pieces of dark mahogany beams, its roof sheltered beneath thick galvanised sheets.

"Allyuh remain here," Bois told his family. "You," he said, pointing at me with his eyes, "Follow me."

Cautiously, we made our way to the shed, the ground beneath our feet slick with mud. A massive door with a thick wooden brace barred our entrance. With practised ease, Bois removed the barricade, the door groaned as it swung open. I turned on my phone's flashlight.

"Careful with the light," he warned.

I heard the clinking of metal on metal. I shone the light until it fell on a large iron cage. Inside was a little girl, with bright eyes and long, dark hair that fell over her sandy-red cheeks.

"Come sweetie, look at the Mister. He does write for the papers. He come to see you." Bois coaxed, his voice unexpectedly tender.

The girl approached the bars with hesitant steps. I waved clumsily.

For a fleeting moment, uncertainty flickered in her gaze before she steeled herself, her lips parting in a tentative greeting. I heard the swishing of wet grass and felt the presence of the

mother and boy, looking on from outside. The girl took a deep breath, then closed her eyes. Then she began to sing.

It wasn't a tune so much as a current, something that rose from her like mist from the forest floor. Her voice wound through the rafters, through the joints of the wood and the seams of the roof, into the open night. It filled the air with a

trembling sweetness.

As the song deepened, the air inside the shed seemed to shift. The shadows on the walls took on a life of their own, dancing, swelling, then falling still. A strange warmth stirred in the pit of my stomach. Bois' wife let out a gasp. The boy clutched her leg.

A sudden breeze passed through, though the door was shut.

The girl's eyes fluttered shut. Her body swayed slightly, her limbs fragile and fluid, like something caught between forms. In her outline I saw a flicker, just a flicker, of something winged. Something wild. A feather where a curl should be. A glint of green where her skin met shadow.

"Stop she now," the woman cried.

The girl fell silent. She

backed away, as if drawn inward, folding into herself. She curled up on a patch of cloth and turned her back to us. Bois exhaled, heavy.

As we made our way back to the house he said, "I does keep she there to protect she from them hunters dem."

I forced a faint smile.

The rain had eased, leaving behind a veil of silence, as everyone in the house slept. I made my way to the shed, cutlass in hand. I opened it carefully, making certain no sound left the yard. She was awake, standing, as if she knew I'd return for her. I pressed my index finger to my lips, then prised open the lock to her cage with the cutlass. I took her by the hand. It was as soft as a petal.

A chorus of nocturnal insects smothered the sound of our footsteps as we ventured away from Bois and towards the beach. I lifted her into my arms. I walked and walked and walked until I could feel the weight of her head on my chest and the steady warmth of her breath against my throat. I walked further still until the sounds of the forest gave way to waves breaking in the distance.

"Where we going?" she whispered.

"To the shore."

"Oh."

"Hold on. We're almost there."

I felt the ground shift in texture from mud and rock to sand. The ocean was loud and threatening but I held her close.

"I have to let you down now," I said.

The instant her toes hit the sand a burst of laughter erupted from her. I held her hand for a moment, the both of us breathing in the salty air. The stars glistened

In her outline I saw a flicker, just a flicker, of something winged. Something wild. A feather where a curl should be. A glint of green where her skin met shadow.



Illustration: Francois Le Blanc

ART & LITERATURE

Asia Graham

Asia Graham (BA Graphic Design student) often depicts her passions through her art: fashion/costume design, character design, folklore, carnival, and comic designs.

Carnival, anime, and fashion have been big influences on her art. Carnival's

vibrant colours, animated activities and characters, anime's character designs and storytelling, and fashion from her mother's influence when she created her prom dress, are all depicted in one of her designs.

She chooses to create designs unique to her experiences and life in the Caribbean, so that one day her work would be recognisable in the industry for its uniqueness, and, maybe, further down the line for its excellence.

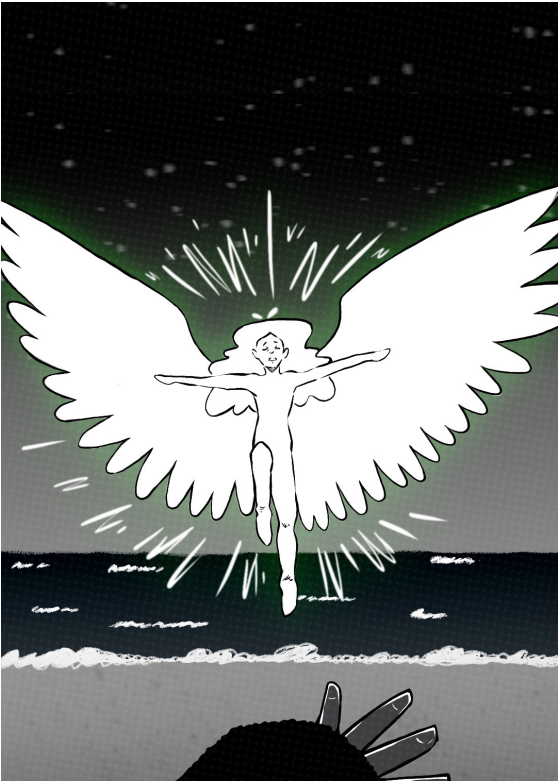


Illustration: Francois Le Blanc

I... saw her body take the shape of a parrot, with bright-green wings almost glowing in the darkness.

on the waves and the moon shone high and full. In the faint light, I glimpsed the outline of her cheeks swollen into a smile.

"It's time now sweetheart," I said through the sound of the waves.

She nodded in understanding and let go of my grip.

"Will I ever be able to come back?" she asked.

"I don't know."

She looked up at me, back from where we came and up at the moon above.

"Say goodbye for me, ok?" she asked, as she ran towards the waves.

And as she ran, she began singing her little song. I looked on, past the tears that were beginning to gather in my eyes and saw her body take the shape of a parrot, with bright-green wings almost glowing in the darkness.

I looked at her flap her little wings, as she rose farther and farther into the sky. I continued looking on as she flew away into the distance, swallowed by the darkness, far away from the cries and screams and tears of the strange land below her.





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