

Free Press



the
warmth
issue

meet the e-board

julia carmel



publisher

plamena diulgerova



editor-in-chief

helena ojarovsky



photographer

conner torpey



treasurer & online
content editor

linda zheng



illustrator

michelle zaurow



assistant editor

elizabeth short



assistant layout editor

deirdre delasho



social media manager

Hey hottie!

It's getting chilly in the Binghamtons, but we at Free Press live by the immortal words of Cardi B: a hoe never gets cold.

To keep you warm this winter we asked our writers to think about the things that keep them feeling loved and secure. From layering tips to spiritual practices, our writers brought us a million and one ways to fill our lives with warmth and light. Hopefully you'll connect to something in this issue and if we're lucky, you'll find and share your own ways to keep the spark alive this winter.

Thank you to the writers, who always surprise us with their jokes and musings, and to Stephen and Courtney, for making this cover magical. And to our wonderful e-board: thank you for giving this magazine your all. We hope this issue will keep your fire burning all winter long. That is, until our annual sex issue comes hot off the press.

**Stay cute and warm,
*Julia and Plamena***

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The beautiful full-color version of this issue is available at binghamtonfreepress.com!

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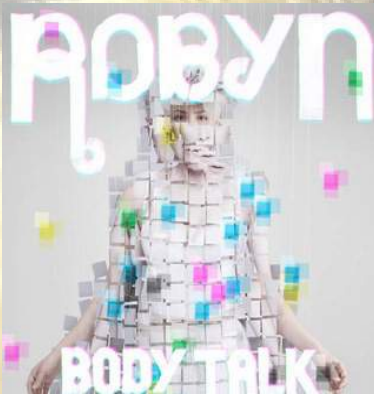
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It's December. Your high school friends are posting new photos with carbon copies of their exes. BuzzFeed keeps posting articles where they steal tweets about cuffing season. Your aunt keeps asking if you have a boyfriend yet.

Some would say that cuffing season is in full swing, but here at Free Press, we don't believe in cuffing season. If anything, we collectively despise cuffing season. So to remind you that it's never too late to dump your partner, we compiled a few breakup bops that inspired people to end their relationships.



"I was sitting in bed one night and I clicked shuffle on a throwback playlist and fucking 'Call Your Girlfriend' by Robyn comes on and I'm deadass sitting there like wow. She ain't it. I texted her and was like 'do you still like me?' And she said 'idk' So I broke up with her over text. Fun fact: we're both openly queer now."



"It was our anniversary and we hung out and went to dinner and whatever and then she was tired but it was karaoke night so I was like ok I'm gonna go honestly. I went with my friend and we sang Dancing On My Own and I was like this is so much more fun. We broke up like two days later lol."

DUMP HIM

by julia carmel



"A few weeks ago I was debating breaking up with my girlfriend because we were long distance and fighting over dumb stuff. One night I was hanging out with my friends and Boy Problems came on. I was screaming along to 'think I broke up with my boyfriend today but I don't really care' and I was like damn this bitch really gets it. I broke up with her the next day."



"My relationship wasn't working for me anymore and I was planning on breaking up in person, but then I got home on Saturday night only to find out that Ariana had just dropped thank u, next. I took it as a sign from the high heavens and did it immediately — Ariana would never steer me wrong, u kno?"

IMAGINE: LETTING GIRLS ENJOY THINGS

BY DEIRDRE DELASHO

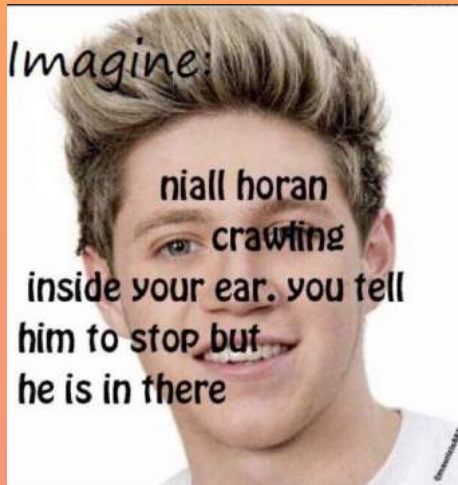
Niall Horan is crawling inside your ear. You tell him to stop, but he's already in there.

If this phrase brings a specific image into your mind and sends a chill down your spine, then you and I are ready to have a conversation.

I'm only 21, so I'm not sure if I'm really allowed to reflect on the "good old days" yet, but if I could I would look back on the height of the One Direction fandom. Between *Up All Night's* release in 2011 and the announcement of the band's indefinite hiatus in early 2016, the band got a lot done. In 2012, they appeared on an episode of *iCarly* about intestinal parasitic worms. Zayn dropped the sickest high note of his career in "You and I" and, realizing he could never top that, left the band in 2015.

I was deep, deep in the trenches for all of this, and unfortunately times are tough now for Directioners, considering Zayn's solo career peaked with "Pillowtalk" and I couldn't even tell you what happened to Louis. However, looking back on better times I'm sure we can all agree that one of the best things to come out of the One Direction fandom at this time was the "imagines."

An *imagine* was a popular meme template where a short prompt, usually accompanied by an image, calls you to imagine a romantic moment with one of the 1D boys. The best imagines are the ones that took a wrong turn somewhere. They construct an unexpected or even twisted reality in which Niall Horan is crawling inside your ear, Harry Styles is the donor for your teeth transplant, and Zayn Malik is for some reason gifting



#Imagine you come out of a teeth transplant.. "harry i'm out alive!" you scream.. "who do you fink gave you the teef?" he says, smiling



you lizards. And I'm sorry, but if I have to explain to you why these are funny then perhaps high-brow humor just isn't for you!

In the article titled "Do these nightmarish One Direction memes count as art?," author Kaitlyn Tiffany seems to suggest to us that no, these nightmarish One Direction memes do NOT count as art. However, in a poll attached to the article, 56% of readers disagreed with her. I'm a part of this brave 56 percent — these memes are absolutely art.

To Kaitlyn Tiffany, I say this: let young girls enjoy things! The best part about One Direction fans has been that they've never taken themselves too seriously. Yes, sometimes we are told to imagine that we are at a 1D show and while Louis is introducing *What Makes You Beautiful* he looks out into the crowd and says, "This song is dedicated to [your name]," but other times we are being told to imagine that Niall Horan is crawling inside our ears, and that we are telling him to stop, but he is in there! And that's just funny!!

The thing is, you can laugh at these memes and at the girls who made them as much as you want, but that doesn't change the fact that they were in on the joke. For some reason, people love to make fun of One Direction and other things that young girls like.

Before you say, "Wow, it literally isn't that deep"- that's exactly what I'm saying! It truly isn't that deep. Things like One Direction were created for and marketed towards girls, so why should we shit on them for enjoying them? We certainly aren't hurting anyone by staning One Direction and if high school boys are allowed to like Rick and Morty in that very specific way that they do, why don't we just Let Girls Enjoy Things?

recovering from an academic burnout

Fall Semester is almost over, and while I hope you made some great memories, let's be real: some of it probably sucked. It happens! Lectures, clubs, finals, papers, and all that other crap has probably left you feeling more than a little burnt out. Me too dude.

I'm a big fan of self care, but that means something different for everyone. Yeah, the first few days I'm home, I totally veg out and watch tv with my dog for

hours. But after awhile, I start feeling lazy, and a little useless. So I'm going to outline some different and useful methods of self care to help you rejuvenate and be ready to go for Spring 2019.

Let's start with some traditional self care: I love an old-fashioned self care night, usually filled with face masks, candles,

and the like. Honestly, it's nice to spoil yourself. In a perfect world, I have a full evening free, and I start it off by taking a bath while watching Netflix. I have enough time to shower, exfoliate and moisturize every inch of myself, I do multiple face masks, drink about half the tea in England, and I wake up the next morning fucking radiant. But more often, it's merely a face mask, some good music, and one cup of tea.

But that's the beauty of self care: it doesn't have to be perfect. Just do what you have energy for. Paint your nails. Watch that movie you've been putting off. Enjoy yourself and your body. Another thing to keep in mind: it doesn't have to be over-the-top extravagant. Everyone's budget is different,

so you can use a \$30 face mask from Lush, or a \$5 one from Target, what matters is your enjoyment.

Another thing I like to do during breaks is something I like to call "productive self care." As much as we'd like it to, the world doesn't stop on breaks. Maybe you're taking an online course, you've decided to work over break, or you have to apply for internships. It's hard to relax with stuff piling up, so I find it best to not take too long a period of total relaxation. Segment and organize the stuff you have to do, and then do it. When you start to get stressed, just take a few minutes and remember: you only have to do this for a certain period of time, getting some of it done will ease some of your stress, and that this is your time: don't let bullshit get to you. Everything your doing is for your benefit.

Another aspect of being on break (and the holidays tbh) is the ever obligatory socialization that you have to partake in. It's great to see friends from home and visit with family, but it's important to keep a balance. Don't beat yourself up if you just want some alone time and don't feel like going out. Don't answer any invasive questions from family members if you aren't interesting in discussing them. And don't respond to that girl from the study group who can't carry her own weight on this team.

It's **your** break. Focus on you, keep things running smoothly, stay positive, and you'll be ready to take the next semester by storm.



feeling SAD: steps to take when seasonal depression hits by madison pellnat

The term “seasonal depression” derives from a common disorder called seasonal affective disorder. Sometimes aptly abbreviated as SAD, this condition generally arises from a lack of natural sunlight, and a shift in the natural circadian rhythm that begins in the winter months of December and January, and ends when Spring comes about. This disorder tends to affect individuals living in the north more than the south, and predominantly effects women over men. When I first arrived at Binghamton University I felt extremely isolated, lonely, and homesick. College wasn’t something I was super excited for, it was more of an obligation that I had to endure to ensure I’d have a decent future. Immediately after classes started, my mental health began getting worse and worse, and as the weeks went on I was feeling too overwhelmed and unmotivated to even get up in the morning. As I noticed my unusual feelings of self-doubt and loneliness, I started my Sunday ritual of self care. I found that devoting a day, or even little bits of each day, to myself was improving my mental health immensely. So, whether you are feeling the “winter blues” or are dealing with something more serious, here are some of my tips for self care.

stay grounded:

With all of the craziness of school, work, and extra-curriculars, life can rapidly become an overwhelming mess. Find something simple in each day that makes you happy. Recently I began reading “Small Pleasures” by The School of Life, which engages readers in pointing out things that we should be more grateful for, that we often ignore. Whether it’s “being up late at night” or “daisies,” this book has helped me rediscover the beauty that can be found in simple things from our everyday life. It’s useful to remember small joys, especially because they’re often overshadowed by daunting readings and redox problems.

devote an hour (or 2) to yourself daily:

Have something to look forward to each day, or at the very least, once a week. One thing that I have been doing is finding the simple things throughout my daily routine that make me happy, and emphasizing that activity. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, my first class starts at 11am so I wake up two hours early and take my time getting ready. For me, it’s as simple as dressing up, doing something new and unique with my makeup, or even just getting a delicious omelette. Another thing that has kept me going throughout the week is a very small act of treating myself to a cupcake every Wednesday at the dining halls. If you need to go even simpler, you can watch an episode of your favorite show on Netflix, or go off campus to eat a meal.

keep in touch with people who matter:

Check up on your friends and family regularly. It’s good to keep up with them, and it’s always a reminder of how special that relationship is to you. Every Sunday I have a reminder in my phone to check up on my friends, especially my long-distance friends that I rarely get to see. On Sundays my whole family hops on Skype to chat for

an hour or two to catch up on our past week and talk about our future plans. This routine has helped me so much, and it’s always nice to remember that people care about you. You’re not alone, even when it really feels like it.

keep up with your physical health:

Although this seems all too obvious, mental health directly coincides with physical health, and vice versa. Whether it’s an extensive fitness routine, or calming yoga in your dorm, doing something at least once or twice a week is essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. While you may dread getting up to do it, you will never regret it, and it will usually boost your overall mood for the remainder of the day. Another big factor of your physical health is staying hygienic. While this may seem clear right now, when you’re in a slump, it can be easy to forget what you did or did not do that day. Try to remind yourself to do the little things in order to ensure that you are lookin’ and smellin’ great, which often makes you feel great.

getting more serious help:

Remember that there are resources on this campus if you need more serious help. These resources include the University’s “High Hopes Helpline” at (607)-777-HELP, the University Counseling Center, the Dean of Students, and the University Psychological Clinic. And if it is a case of Seasonal Affective Disorder, the university also provides free light therapy lamps, in Old Digman Hall, which help mimic sunlight, and can greatly reduce the effects of SAD.

Self love begins when you decide it does, so if you’re feeling down, take some steps that cultivate your overall happiness. You deserve some TLC, today and every day.

A Tribute to Turt

by elizabeth short

Summer brought us jean shorts, tank tops, and maxi dresses. Fall debuted our chelsea boots, cardigans, and dark tones. But winter? Winter brought knee length parkas and snow boots.

Don't get me wrong, I love the holidays and not having my foundation melt off my face, but on top of all the stresses of winter, not being able to express your style really sucks. It's hard to show off that bangin' outfit underneath a puffer jacket. Can you see the neckline of this shirt underneath the scarf? Nope. But fear not, here are some of the more beautiful aspects of winter fashion and some tips on killing the style game while staying warm.

First and foremost: the turtleneck. Oh turtleneck — can I call you turt for short? — what would a winter style list be without you? Pair it with a sweater on top, adorn it with a statement necklace, or let it shine on its own. Everyone can pull off a turtleneck, be it on a sweater, dress, or jacket. Keeps my neck warm and looks cute af? A true winter hero. We love a turt.

Another good option is to vary your outerwear. Puffer coats are never out of style, but having short and long coats can allow for nice, subtle changes. Teddy coats are also massively popular this year, and they make you look as soft on the outside

as you are on the inside. Plus, those things are warm as shit.

Slacks can surprisingly be your best friend. Sometimes it's too cold out for leggings, and jeans everyday can get repetitive. Getting a cute pair of trousers/slacks can class up a look and even become a focal point of the outfit if they're patterned. Thicker slacks can also be great barriers against that harsh wind that passes right through your soul.

One tip that I personally swear by is something that isn't often spoken on: Shop based on material. If you buy clothing made from thicker, more insulated materials like wool, you can get away with covering up less while staying warm.

Do some digging online and you'll find items that are secret weapons against weather, like fleece-lined leggings or flannel-lined jeans. Brands like Uniqlo (which is approximately half my closet) have clothing lines specially designed to be thin and comfortable while utilizing heat-retaining or wind-blocking technology. Their heat-tech tights? An absolute godsend.

Lastly, don't work against layering and winter accessories. Layers are a great way to add multiple dimensions to an outfit while staying toasty, so embrace the chunky scarf and knit hats! Stay cute, comfy, and most importantly, stay cozy.



across the snow

by jason russo

When a spark hits paper, the burn is slow yet steady, brilliant and methodical. It is easy to see where it will spread, the parts it will consume. It slowly eats its way through everything until all that remains is ash. What was once a clean sheet of white is now a mass of dust, an eighth the size of what it once was. Ruined.

The first time I saw him, I was a paperback book and he was a forest fire. I knew exactly where it would lead if I caught flame, but still I inched closer. Without even meaning to, his burn licked the edge of one of my pages and I ignited, curling at exactly 451 degrees.

The blaze moves away, and I am left sparking and spluttering, trying to dazzle just as brightly. I go about my days, kept warm by the thought of him. Every glimpse adds fuel and the flame roars louder in my chest. I gain strength and audacity and I reach out to share in his brightness. But he vanishes, and I smolder on my own, left to pursue other furnaces.

Soon, I'm wrapped around another, sweat racing down his back. I am burning him as my legs are wrapped around his chest. His heart is pounding furiously, pushing his blood through his veins, our bones grinding together, his breath cutting into my ear whispering what he thinks I want to hear. But my heart slows down when I realize he will never be him.

Now it's raining, like it's putting out the flame, and I'm stealing looks again. My coffee burns my tongue as I quickly force myself to look away to avoid suspicion. I stare out the window, tracing shapes from the raindrops that stick to the glass, the cold fogging my vision and the tears welling in my eyes mimicking the others and streaking ever downwards. I can never be like them, cold, wet, so malleable. I am rigid and direct in my longing.

Rain turns to snow. Jackets become mandatory and people hurry from door to door to avoid the flakes and the cold. But I walk slowly, feeling both sting my face and fingers, because feeling something is better than feeling nothing. I haven't felt the warmth of his flame in so long. I dream of being warmed by him in his bed, his arms wrapped around me, his heartbeat thudding softly against my ear. But instead I'm standing out here in the cold, watching him hold the door open for someone else. Watching him embrace him, hold him, giving to him all that should be mine, kindling in him what I'm longing to have kindled in me, some depraved and rabid animal that won't survive much longer.

As it closes, I finally get the look I've been craving, the one that I thought would save me.

It's gone in a second. The fire has finished its purpose, ravaged entirely across my surface. The wind blows ferociously, and the dust of what was once white and clean is now grey and scattered across the snow.





can i go anon as *“Lonely in Vestal”* ? by madison werner

I used to say that my home is not a place, or even a person, but an echoing feeling in your chest that arises when you run down a darkened hallway, high heeled shoes hitting the tiles. I found home in the snow falling outside an open window and in the abstract quality of voices shouting in the distance to a group of people I don't belong to. Home, as I came to understand it, was only the illusion of emptiness. Holiness was only a side effect of cheap fluorescent lights. As winter approaches, my cravings for comfort and safety increase, and it becomes more and more tempting to seek out odd atmospheres, where my brain derives a sense of home and a feeling of sacredness from specific qualities of light. This winter I want to resist the temptation to seek comfort in liminal spaces.

If I keep seeking out spaces with dim lighting and illusions of emptiness, I'll eventually be kidnapped by Otherworldly creatures. Think about it. A 24 hour CVS at 5:30 AM on a windy Thursday evening? - fairy territory. An empty public bathroom with dim fluorescent lights? - a portal to another dimension. Stand alone in the center of the Dickinson field at like 4 AM on a Wednesday - you can feel the angels watching you. They have hundreds of glowing eyes and they wait in the darkness between you and the void and just Watch.

Places that feel empty and have bad lighting tend to lack people, isolating me further. Winter break means going back to my parents' house and The Empty Cornfield of Loneliness behind my parents' house, where I can spend - and have spent - days in complete silence. I need to stock up on warm memories that involve Actual Living People before I leave Binghamton this winter... and also phone numbers. Give me your phone numbers. I want to text you in the hours when the world freezes to a halt to escape my delusion.

These places are only sacred because I have marked them so. There is no validity to experiencing safety and comfort just because you're in the Walmart parking lot at 2 AM. That feeling is entirely an illusion that my brain creates. I wanna find real safety and real comfort and real happiness this winter, rather than basking in emptiness or finding God in a dimly lit stairwell. I wanna get better this winter. I wanna be happy.

Satisfaction and apathy twist themselves together a lot in my mind. Sometimes, I can't tell the difference anymore. I think it's time to stop looking for the former in empty churches and the library stacks. Nothing I've found there has provided heat that lasts.

LOOK IN THY HEART, by sean glennon AND WRITE!

In boorish Binghamton basement (imagine) I sit, pad and pen, awaiting fantastical prose to roll onto the page... I always preferred ballpoint to gel... pad and pen... instead my mind wends towards kicks – day-dreamed affairs, ceaseless fawning over women, reading dramas aloud to friends at 3AM, streetgutter spitting, shirtless mountaintop Kentucky acid trips (hello God!), conversations with bums and jesus freaks and communists and sagacious old men about life, the man, the aforementioned women, and grape varietals – following beautiful cast-off army brats down Virginian alleyways, tweak – not work nor home nor money hold interest, my only pleasure now in camaraderie with those brave enough to cop to their own madness, holding command over their fear, souls from above, incensed on the drag, bent on feeling and feeling and expressing it all...

I've by some stroke wound up in a church parking lot, thinking in photomontage, buzzing on coffee and smokes, typical, knocked but God ain't here – since my sister's October death, my angel, all I think about is feeling and love, finding a lover who writes and laughs and dances and sings high, smoking and coughing, into the frigid openwindow December air on nighttime trips in backroad dark, reading me poems as I drive under some mix of intoxications, infatuation primarily – if I quit and split west or south, north? Will you follow? Won't you write? No UGGs or yogas but my shirt, once another's, walk barefoot in the snow just to feel with me? Won't you ruin my life? Put on some hoops and break my heart, baby.

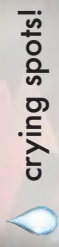
And I seek my circle of flighty, drunk, murderous, and lecherous writers, maybe in NY or Gloucester, MA, madmen whom live and speak freely, starving themselves to dig the hunger pains, spending their last dollars on liquor and inveigling cigarettes, fist-fighting to feel it, digging bonnie poverty and caressed by loneliness, way far, as in "What are you guys here for?" "THIS, man!" and point to mountaintops and follow their tangents and curves with your hand, glacially, and stay up until daylight on uppers and poetry...

O Binghamton, ever in chronos – come with me, girl – come with me, man, there's room! Let's chase kairos like a fix...

I'm leaving soon!

the campus map

map legend:



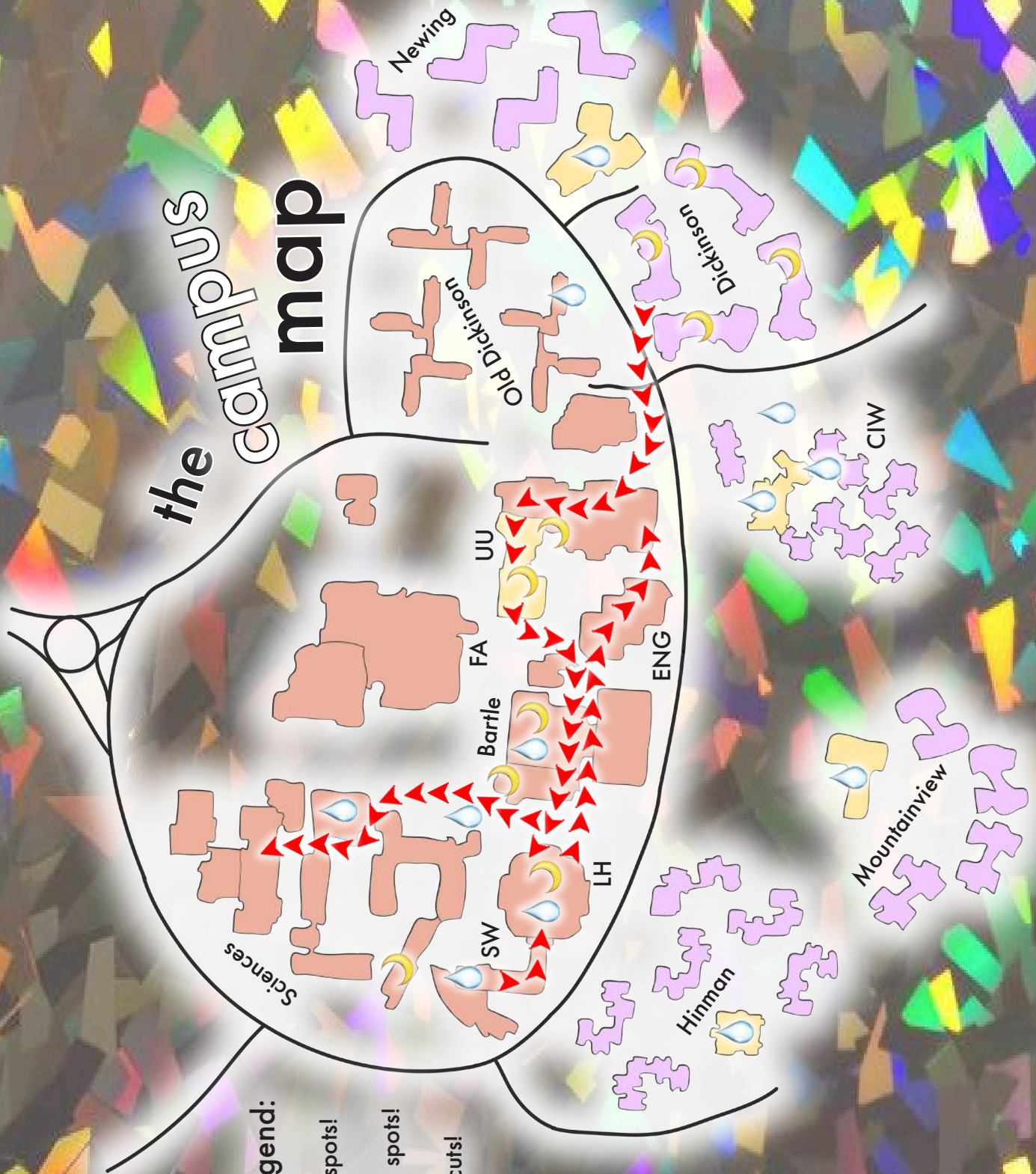
crying spots!



napping spots!



shortcuts!



Top Crying Spots:

The Student Wing
(main staircase, 3rd floor hallway, 3rd floor bathroom)

College in the Woods
(Cayuga 4/5 lounge, the woods, the dining hall)

Bartle Library
(every bathroom, the library stacks on the 3rd floor, "Those dark ass desks on the third floor.")

The Lecture Hall
(Lecture Halls 1-10)

Honorable mentions:

"Every dining hall."

"The tree in front of Einstein's."

"The fucking woods next to CIW. Also vomited right after."

"The gym."

"Gender neutral bathroom in the basement of Old Digman."

"Everywhere???"

Top Napping Spots:

"WHRW couches."

"LH 7 (but I sometimes wish I was able to stay awake in that class)."

"Dickinson lounges! Or alternatively... the Jazzman prime real estate booth things that people should start sharing because god knows one person doesn't need all that space."

"Food Co-op."

"Some corner desk on the third floor of the library."

"The bathroom at the bottom of the stairs in Academic B."

Shortcut Tips From the Pros:

"I go from the Student Wing, run through Lecture Hall to the Library, and cut through Engineering to get to the University Union."

"I always walk through the library to get to the lecture hall even if the room my class is in is on the other side of the building. I have yet to figure out how to cut through the engineering building though, but I know one of my suitemates does it when it's super cold out."

"I teleport."

"I don't understand people who walk straight through the spine in the middle of February."

"I'd rather be cold than walk through the smell of the marketplace."

"Is not going to class considered a shortcut?"



campus comfort food

by casey anderson

It's fair to say that a Binghamton winter is the furthest thing from comforting. Your outfits are layered and thicc, your classes seem to be further and further away from each other, your hands are always a nice shade of blue. But you're single, and cuffing season is in full-swing, so let yourself go wild and find warmth in some of these delicious foods across campus.

Mozzarella Sticks (preferably at C4)

Tbh I've only ever made this decision past 11pm, but who doesn't love a good C4 mozzarella stick? The walk-of-shame when passing the salad, the regret you feel when grabbing the flimsy cardboard. But it's all worth it when you bite into one of those beautifully fried, comforting bundles of cheese and oil and feel all of your worries melt away.

Pairs well with: A stolen diet coke (shh).

Tully's (Marketplace)

This should be self-explanatory. You cannot go wrong with these tenders. I'm a goddamn vegetarian and I'm putting them on the list. If you want to feel as though you're being embraced by the love and praise of your absent father, get yourself a tender dinner. Not to mention, they always throw one or two extra in your box.

Pairs well with: An overpriced Arnold Palmer.



Cakes & Eggs' Breakfast Sandwiches (Marketplace)

A hangover cure Dr. Oz would swear by. The perfect combination of grease and protein and grease. (Believe me, the grease will drip down your fingers and it'll be worth it.) If you're willing to spend marketplace-money before noon, help yourself to some good old between-class breakfast. It's the right way to start the day.

Pairs well with: White wine. Don't know why, but try it with a cheap Riesling and you'll see exactly what I mean.

Personal Pizzas (CIW)

Fair warning: they're not particularly good. In fact, they're decently bad. But there's something about them that makes you feel at home? I don't know if it's the warmth, or the unhappy surrender to the unworthy calories, or the miraculous way that they're burnt around the edges and undercooked in the center, but they'll truly change your day.

Pairs well with: Being alone in your room and watching that Netflix docuseries you're too embarrassed to start in the presence of others.

Sodexo Coffee (all fucking over the place)

Okay, hear me out. First off, it's like 40¢. Secondly, if you throw some ice in the cup before pouring, you're basically drinking a cold brew. I want to direct one of those buzzfeed-style videos where they make coffee experts blind taste-test dunkin' versus starbucks versus sodexo and see what kind of chaos ensues.

Pairs well with: A sodexo bagel and a diminishing meal plan.



setting the mood

**by rachel
slotnick**

With the temperature declining and the seasonal depression hitting, I hope that these songs help to defrost your weary bones and heavy souls. This playlist is intended to shed some warmth, some light, and some love into your days. Enjoy!

Never Going Back Again //

Fleetwood Mac

This song is like smiling again for the first time after a heavy depression. It's the warmth of a tight hug from an old friend who you haven't seen in far too long. It's an end to the bitter coldness of past mistakes and the mark of a newer, sunnier time.

Ribs // Lorde

If you've ever wondered what nostalgia sounded like — this is it. Lay down in a dark room, close your eyes, and let all the memories of your childhood flood back.

Here Comes The Sun // The Beatles

I was listening to this recently while walking down the spine as the sun was shining, and I couldn't help but feel happiness radiating from every cell in my body! What an uplifting song to soothe the weary soul.

I Could Die For You //

Red Hot Chili Peppers

I've been saying this will be my wedding song since I was in middle school. Imagine someone singing to you about how much they love you! Feel your heart melt!

Best Part (feat. H.E.R.) //

Daniel Caesar

This song is so relaxing. The slow tempo and ethereal blending of the two artists' voices will make it a bit easier to breathe.

She Can't Love You // Destiny's Child

Beyoncé begins this song with a low, husky, and soulful sound. This song is easy to listen to and sounds like a melancholy lullaby.

Pink Matter (feat. André 3000) //

Frank Ocean

Light some candles. Diffuse some essential oils. Take a relaxing bubble bath. Put this song on. Heaven.

R.E.M. // Ariana Grande

This song is so cozy! Being with the one you love can feel like such a dream. You can't help but feel warm and fuzzy on the inside when you listen to it.

Slow Dancing In a Burning Room //

John Mayer

The imagery in this song is unparalleled. The world may be ending, and we may be about to die, but at least we are slow dancing together. Such a sweet notion.

I'm Yours // Jason Mraz

Let's end this playlist with a throwback. Remember the first time you heard this? Simpler times, indeed.

Why do I not want what most
think is natural?

Mindful thoughts



by eric gaccione

Why do I feel the need to repress
my feelings, and make myself

Why am I so against the system of emotional commitment?
believe that something I want is not what I should have?

Is it because of what I've seen happen to others? Or is it the fear of not having that luxury of being able to waste time anymore? Is that a selfish, regressive trait, or one that shows raw independence? Where do I fit into the conformity debate? Is there any space left for me?

Power is my weakness. It gives me the ability to shallow my own existence, and the emotions of others, at the expense of obtaining short-term ego trips. I'm doing it for all the wrong reasons. Yet, I haven't found someone or something that has allowed me to be rid of my current routine.

I am not afraid of change.

Rather, I am at a point where I do not want to lose what I possess. The skills I have honed will go to waste; the nights will become predictable; the excitement will be lost. Rearranging my mindset will force me to compromise everything and everyone I idolize. Stagnation will carry throughout my life regardless; it will take different forms. I do not see an upside.

I am afraid of change.

Letting a new soul in will open doors and close chapters. Legacies will be lost, memories will fade, people will disappear. Learned behaviors and abilities will morph into daily duties. Responsibility, if you will. Do not tell me otherwise. I have seen the pattern

of attempts to counter this inevitable circumstance. It never ends how they want it. It never ends how I want it. I will have to take advice, for better or worse. I will be forced to listen. I will not have an option.

I need options.

I need to be able to go. I will always have a reason, and I will always have a purpose, whether or not someone thinks it is substantial. I am always able to make myself proud of my own decisions.

To back up even the most ludicrous actions. If I change, someone will be there to shoot them down.

To talk me off a ledge.

To lend a hand.

I don't want a hand.

But I may need one.

Help is unavoidable. People will give it without being provoked. The good ones can guide you. The great ones will let you figure it out on your own. The best ones combine the two. They distance themselves, only to let you create images of what they would do. Asking is productive. Envisioning is successful.

Risk is fun. I live for danger, small or large. Right now, I am either at a crossroads, or a peak. Either way, forward is the only direction.

Sink or swim.

*The choice is all mine,
with everyone a part of me.*

cracking joints

by julia carmel

As sweat drips off my nose, a man bun enters my peripheral vision. A gentle hand twists my leg an inch further.

“You’re holding a lot of emotional tension in your hips,” the yoga teacher whispers before slipping away.

We move into pigeon pose, and I press my taut muscles. I exhale and let the weight of my thoughts drag me down, silently hoping they’ll pop my hip joints open.

Sometimes, in my dreams, I crack all my joints open. It isn’t painful, but my subconscious wants to know how it would feel. I want to melt into the earth and feel all of my synovial fluid seeping out at once, releasing my joints into the ether.

Breathe in. Lengthen. Breathe out. Twist.

Pop. Pop. Crack.

The routine temporarily releases the busy thoughts that keep my mind from floating away. I wring out my body to drain my mind, and every worry seems to swell inside of my bones and make them ache.

My journey to crack every joint in my body started with my knuckles. Nothing beat that satisfying crunch that came when I bent each folded finger backwards, working my way down the line.

But I didn’t stop there. I learned how to swirl my hands and pop the fluid in between my wrist joints, releasing soft and rhythmic bumps as I move my interlocked hands in a figure eight.

Bored in an anthropology class, I learned that my left shoulder can release a double pop if I pull it up and to the right, horrifying my weaker classmates as my tension leaks into the silent air.

Sometimes it’s enough to roll my neck and pop the joints of my upper spine. But when my mind grows heavier and denser, I let friends walk on my back, crushing each vertebra to get a few satisfying crunches.

Maybe one day the foundation of my mind will crack. Emotions will fill my bloated spine and contort my body, dragging my flesh down. If I’m lucky, I’ll be stretched into the cosmos.

When I finally float away, I hope my hips are filled with stardust.

the thing and me

by conner torpey

"Hey, you want to watch a movie?"

No. Absolutely not. How fucking dare you?? I'm appalled that you, YOU, think I have a casual two hours to waste at 8:30 p.m. on a Tuesday. I HAVE VAGUE THINGS TO DO.

Listen, I didn't like watching movies for a while but I like movies! I really do. I swear. Look, here are some movie titles Scary Movie, Scary Movie 2, Scary Movie (Reboot as an audiobook). See?? But really, I do view myself as sort of a dormant movie geek. I'll go all in on any arthouse films if you put them in front of me, but I'm not going to seek them out.

Even when I was in high school, going to the local cinema joint, (aka United Artists Stadium 16), was the bottom of the barrel for plans on a weekend. Please be mindful that this was a small barrel. It was such an anti-social activity at its core. Why put all this effort in just to arrive somewhere and sit next to each other silently? Like... I can do that by myself perfectly fine without blowing \$20 on the next "WHO'S GONNA BE IN THE MOVIE" movie produced by Marvel/Disney/General Electric/ YOUR GOD/Trader Joe's.

But, much to my surprise, something changed this summer. I was in Binghamton for an internship which may have been the worst thing for me. It was less than a month after I was diagnosed with social anxiety, and the abridged story is that during August of 2018, I broke down on the phone with my mother for the first time since I can remember.

The word "miserable" almost captures my state at the time. It was my first chance to really start fresh as someone who finally knew what was wrong with themselves and that just didn't happen. Things got better after

you start taking meds right? But no, fuck you, it doesn't. It's just the start of piecing yourself back together. I wasn't ready. I mean most people wouldn't be, people don't like to talk about their mind being broken so we don't. If you have a problem, figure it out. Somehow.

So watching *The Thing* seemed like a perfectly fine idea in comparison as opposed to whispering to myself how terrible I am at asserting myself in the middle of my third shower.

The film is great and all, Kurt Russell is hot, and so forth. But when I looked over from couch to another to see my pal looking like they dislodged their jaw, I felt a bit of a jolt go through me. I cracked a smile and I think I got it right there. You spend a lot of time in your head with social anxiety, you forget what it's like to have an experience with someone other than yourself.

I spent the rest of that night exchanging horrified glances and mortified screams like a 7 year old yelling at his parents, "YOU SEE THIS TOO!" My excitement remained at a high more so because I wanted to see how everyone would react with me to the next inhuman abomination. I was having fun because I was with people.

The summer went on after that night and so did my crappy internship with my anxiety obediently following right behind. I fell behind in work at times, I would stay in bed all days, all the classics. After an awful day though, I could always throw in our group chat that super simple question: Do you want to watch a movie? With the lights off and only the vague glow of the TV to illuminate us, I would crack that same smile from that first night. Not really for what I was about to watch, but for everyone I was going to watch it with.



