

SPRING 2024

THE JOE



YOUR STORY?

is tiktok
is tiktok getting
is tiktok shu
is tiktok ba
is tik

SUNNY in full bloom!



CONTENTS

Feature 03

The Hypocrisy and Misconceptions Behind Banning TikTok in the United States...03

Campus 04

Tommy Orange & Ethan Hawke Visit SJNY...04

From New York To Rome: The Best Experiences That Come From Study Abroad...04

Arts and Culture 06

I Drank Around the World at Walt Disney World's Epcot: What You Should Know...06

Be Gay, Do Crime – Love Lies Bleeding and New Directions in Queer Cinema...07

Samina Mughal: Fashion's Resilient Icon...08

Ariana Grande releases LP Eternal Sunshine...10

City 11

The 2026 World Cup Final is Coming to the NYC Metro: Or Should it? ...11

A Commentary on Hedge Funds and the Housing Market...11

Sports 12

Staten Island's Wagner University Sneaks into the NCAA Tournament...12

Steady and Retooled is the name of the game for the 2024 New York Mets...12

This Juan's Ours: The 2024 New York Yankees are on the Chase for 28...13

Cricket's American Dream Takes Flight at the T20 World Cup...15

Fiction 16

Adam and Eve on the train...16

MASTHEAD

Editors Arianna Cubero, Tommy Gamba-Ellis

Contributors Daniel Christmann, Yashal Jalil, Andy Kasana,
John Oliveras, Hayden Reis, Christopher Stegmuller,
Barbare Sturua, Kristopher Vinski

Photography Hayden Reis

Art Andy Kasana

Social Media Hayden Reis

Design Thomas Gamba-Ellis, Yashal Jalil, Kristopher Vinski

Faculty Prof. Ted Hamm

THE HYPOCRISY AND MISCONCEPTIONS BEHIND BANNING TIKTOK IN THE UNITED STATES

Tommy Gamba-Ellis

If you are a college student in the United States, chances are that TikTok takes up a significant amount of your phone's daily screen time. Over the past five years, the app has become a global phenomenon compared to its humble beginnings under its former name Musical.ly, widely known as the lip-syncing app. However, the app is now under attack from the United States government, and their basis for their proposed ban includes hypocrisy, misconception, and racism.

Earlier this year, the United States House of Representatives passed a bill to ban TikTok, citing national security concerns as the primary reason. The app's parent company, ByteDance, is owned and operated in Beijing, which sent off the alarms throughout congress amid the feud between the U.S and China. According to CNN, there has been a report from a former employee regarding the insecurity of user information within ByteDance, where they said the company and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had access to user data. In reality, there are no confirmed reports of the CCP being involved with ByteDance, and the data for TikTok's American users is stored in Oregon and Virginia through the tech company Oracle. Also, every social media company in existence has access to user data, and uses that data in any way they please. Are we forgetting when Mark Zuckerberg leveraged people's information on Facebook for political ads in the 2010s? Perhaps it's okay for companies to steal your data, as long as they are American-based.

Congress's other argument against TikTok comes in the form of protecting children and their mental health. Yes, this should always be a priority when looking at all forms of social media as they have the potential to harm kids. However, children can be at risk when interacting with any platform, making congress's concerns disingenuous. According to their logic, all social media should be banned in the U.S; remember, it's to protect the children. During today's political climate, it is a rarity to see both parties to agree on practically anything, yet now most see perfectly eye-to-eye in contradicting the first amendment.

When discussing the potential outlaw of TikTok in the U.S., it is important to mention the age of our members of congress, which averages out to sixty-four years old. While the vast majority of individuals that age are gearing up for retirement, officials in Washington are making decisions regarding technology. Do we seriously think that ninety-year-old Iowan senator Chuck Grassley knows the ins and outs of TikTok?

The story would not be complete without the U.S. House of Representatives embarrassing themselves during the congressional hearings with the CEO of TikTok, Shou Zi Chew. Chew, who is of Singaporean descent, was grilled for hours during the hearing if he was affiliated with the CCP, and why he does not hold U.S. citizenship. For one, the CEO is not a citizen of China, thus making him unable to formally be a member of the CCP. It is also rather narrow-minded for Congress to just assume Chew's affiliations based on nothing more than his nationality.

While Congress gets to ban TikTok because of some false narrative that they ultimately came up with, it is us, the American people who are forced to comply with our elected officials disregarding the

first amendment. Generation Z has been expressing their disdain publicly on social media. Students at St. Joseph's are also feeling the ramifications of the potential ban. Junior Hayden Reis has amassed over 150 thousand followers on the app. "[TikTok] is a way for teenagers to express themselves and many businesses use it to grow their following," Reis explained, "If the app was to be banned in the United States the younger generation would be resentful towards the government."

TikTok is something that we as a society have never seen before. The way information is able to spread on the platform has been unreplicated by any app. Sure there have been knockoffs like Instagram Reels and YouTube shorts, but they are unable to master the algorithm that TikTok has created. Young Americans have every right to be upset by this, as it is a complete betrayal from our elected officials.



"Some admirers of Mr. Murphy said they were attracted to the Oscar winner because of another feature: his eyes. Or, as Hayden Reis, a 20-year-old student in New York, put it, "those beautiful blue eyes that put you in a trance."

The Joe's own Hayden Reis quoted in the New York Times (3-15-24) in an article regarding Irish actors and TikTok.

CAMPUS

TOMMY ORANGE & ETHAN HAWKE VISIT SJNY

Barbare Sturua



Actor Ethan Hawke engaged in a captivating hour-long conversation with Tommy Orange about the latter's new novel, *Wandering Stars*, at St. Joseph's University on March 5.

Hawke and Orange delved into topics ranging from the relationship between identity and a writer's literary voice to the intricate process of weaving together a narrative with multiple points of view. They also discussed the role that humor can play in addressing the complexities of racial and generational trauma.

Growing up in Oakland, California, Tommy Orange pursued a sound engineering degree before gaining an MFA at the Institute of American Indian Arts. He is a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Orange's 2018 debut novel, *There, There*, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Hawke, an engaging interviewer, asked whether in the wake of his initial success, Orange had a harder time completing *Wandering Stars*, his second book. "It was about a thousand times more difficult," Orange replied.

Wandering Stars serves as a continuation of Orange's acclaimed debut, exploring the lives of three generations of a Native family spanning across centuries. Through its narrative lens, it confronts the enduring legacy of generational trauma, shedding light on issues of substance abuse and addiction.

Orange explained that while he is not a fan of traditional historical fiction, he devised ways to incorporate past events—including the imprisonment of Cheyenne and Arapaho ancestors at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida—into his story.

Orange and Hawke also discussed the author's exploration of narrative structure and incorporation of multiple perspectives. Orange explained that he crafted the story amid the loneliness of the pandemic but that his wife's critical feedback helped him figure out what worked.

The event, hosted by Fort Greene's Greenlight Bookstore as part of its Brooklyn Voices series at SJNY, filled the auditorium. Many students, faculty and SJNY alums were among the over 300 attendees.



FROM NEW YORK TO ROME: THE BEST EXPERIENCES COME FROM STUDYING ABROAD

John Oliveras

If you ever wanted an escape from the noisy city while still attending college, then studying abroad might be the solution for you. Whether you're new to traveling or not, there is still so much to learn from a person's experience. Going to another country by yourself can feel intimidating at first, which is why I wanted to learn about the pros and cons of studying abroad from a fellow student here at St. Joseph's University.



Antonello is a student here at St. Joseph's University that went on to study abroad in Rome, Italy last semester.

When I sat down with Antonello, I asked him three important questions that would give any student a better understanding of the process and eventual lifestyle one experiences while studying abroad. Here are the main takeaways from what was said.

1. FIND A PROGRAM

Some universities might not offer a lot of options for studying abroad, so Antonello went on to find a program that coordinated with his upcoming semester through Academic Programs

International (API). Once you find a program that best suits what you want your study abroad experience to be like, your current school must approve the plan before anything can be confirmed. The program Antonello participated in was priced between \$15,000-\$20,000, but St. Joseph's University was able to transfer the awarded scholarship and grant money he had received into this program. That process significantly decreased the cost of the overall program. Antonello said that there was a lot of paperwork that needed to be done before he even went to Rome, on top of having to obtain a VISA in order to stay in Rome for the time being. Although the process might have been tedious, he says that the university helped him out the entire way.

2. DO YOUR RESEARCH ON LAWS AND CURRENCY IN THAT COUNTRY

During his semester abroad, Antonello was the only St. Joseph's University student in Rome. Aside from the immediate family he had in Rome, Antonello highly suggests that students need to study and do their research on laws within that country so that they can be safe. "It could be dangerous for someone that doesn't speak the native language."

You don't have to be fluent in the native language of the country you are visiting, but it is highly recommended to be aware of your surroundings. Rome is notably a major tourist city, making it a hotspot for pickpocketing. Since Antonello was staying at an international university called John Cabot University, his advisors would warn him not to go out at night or draw attention to himself by speaking a different language. Hustlers were also something to be wary of, as they prey on tourists to buy their creations even after they say it's 'free'.

As far as expenses go while in Rome, Antonello would go on to praise how inexpensive food and transportation was. He compared how much cheaper it was to live in Rome than it was to live in New York, especially because he never found himself spending more than \$10 USD for basic necessities and meals throughout one day.

3. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND STUDYING ABROAD FOR OTHER STUDENTS?

With no hesitation, Antonello immediately said yes to that answer. He would love it if other students got to experience what he did, because it truly was something that changed his life. You can brighten your horizons as a traveler while also gaining experiences towards personal growth. Overall, studying abroad is truly a once in a lifetime experience that many students should look forward to having if interested.

ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY JOURNALISM STUDENTS VISIT *THE NEW YORKER*



ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CELEBRATE THE ANNUAL HOLI FESTIVAL



ARTS & CULTURE

I DRANK AROUND THE WORLD AT WALT DISNEY WORLD'S EPCOT: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

John Oliveras

The first thing that comes to mind when imagining Disney are the Disney characters and the magic behind such a family-friendly place. With four world-class theme parks in Florida's Walt Disney World, it has always been a popular spot for vacationers across the globe. From all of the stress and anxiety college provides throughout a semester, I felt like I needed a nice spring break.

For myself, I decided to spend my spring break in Orlando, Florida drinking 'around the world' in Epcot, Walt Disney World's second largest theme park. The south side of Epcot features the 'World Showcase', where they display eleven different countries across the world. Each country's culture is highlighted through the way of their cuisines, architecture, and, in some instances, attractions. Most importantly for me, however, were the beverages offered in each country.

Eleven drinks, one drink for each of the eleven different countries. From Mexico all the way to Japan, this challenge is attempted by many and is hilariously failed most of the time.

One of the reasons why this trend is so popular is the content that individuals create across social media. The videos always show the participants getting progressively more drunk as the video goes on, which provides a good bit of comedic relief when watching someone who is intoxicated at Disney World.

For myself, I wanted to find the top three drinks in all of Epcot, and after getting a little tipsy to say the least, here are my favorite drinks from my experience drinking 'around the world'.

1. MOONSHINE SOUR

This drink can be found at the Regal Eagle's outdoor bar in Epcot's American Adventure Pavilion, fittingly located in the 'United States'. This amazing cocktail is made with Old Smoky Blackberry Moonshine, blood orange, lemon juice, and regular blackberries as a garnish. Moonshine alone has a very strong and unpleasant taste, but the fruitiness of the drink cuts down on the powerful taste. The tartness from the lemon juice was very refreshing to have in the blazing Florida heat, and if doing this challenge didn't put such a dent in my wallet, I would've gotten this drink three more times.



2. VIOLET SAKE

This drink can be found at The Garden House inside the Japan Pavilion at Epcot. This sake-based cocktail is made with prickly pear syrup, citrus juice, and of course, sake. As simple as the drink may be, it packed such great flavors. The sake was very smooth and every citrusy flavor that followed it never made the drink overbearingly sweet. Not only does this drink taste amazing, but it gets bonus points for being very aesthetically pleasing.



3. FROZEN CITRUS POMEGRANATE SLUSH

This drink can be found at the Oasis Sweet and Sips inside the Morocco Pavilion. It's a pre-mixed slushy with pomegranate and Absolut Mandarin Vodka. Even though this drink was the most basic out of the three, it still packed a bold amount of flavor. The slushy was nice and cold and you were definitely able to taste the vodka inside the drink. I would say that the only caveat to this drink is that it melts very quickly due to the Florida heat, so drink it fast and don't get a brain freeze.



This challenge was insanely fun to accomplish and something I highly recommend to try if you're of age to drink. The countries and gardens in Epcot are a beautiful sight, so if you ever plan a trip to Walt Disney World in the future, make sure you have a day solely for Epcot. Drink responsibly, have water always on standby, and don't bother looking at your bank account after this challenge is over. Save the depression for when you get back home.

BE GAY, DO CRIME – LOVE LIES BLEEDING AND NEW DIRECTIONS IN QUEER CINEMA

Andy Kasana

When a movie is described as a “crime thriller,” certain heady archetypes quickly come to mind – mobsters, car chases, old motels, damsels in distress. The images are steeped in old Hollywood nostalgia, operating, at least traditionally, on a masculine basis. Men are the heroes and villains of these stories, the cold drifters burdened by a dark past, eager to break the rules and get their hands dirty, forgetting entirely about their glistening female sidepieces by the film’s end.

Rose Glass’ Sundance 2024 baby and sophomore outing *Love Lies Bleeding* is, by this definition, an anti-thriller. The tropes are there, but they come with ample subversion. We follow jittery gym manager Lou (Kristen Stewart) and aspiring champion bodybuilder Jackie (Katy O’Brian) as they fall dangerously in love and attempt to escape the lurching perils of small-town America in the late 1980s. When Jackie is pulled deeper into the web of Lou’s criminal family, which includes a deep-voiced, gun-wielding Ed Harris as Lou Sr., and a slimy, wife-beating Dave Franco as brother-in-law JJ, their forbidden romance is pushed to a frenzied breaking point.

With a lesbian couple front and center in a plot still riddled with sex and blood, the story’s ultimate implications are suddenly different. Men – and horrible ones, at that – are now the annoyingly shallow stand-ins, balanced against female protagonists that are layered, endlessly compelling to watch, and queer in a way that doesn’t reduce them to a construct.

The scene of Jackie’s first visit to the gym perfectly captures how intoxicating yet universal the characters’ central infatuation really is. Lou eyes her from behind a deserted counter in slow-motion, dripping with desire in the stuffed afternoon air, melting to the synth pop beats of Gina X Performance’s “Nice Mover” as they share a knowing smile. We are there with them, enmeshed in their outsider perspective even as things go from bad to worse and they are forced to flee, with nothing to rely on but broken promises.

Glass knows what she’s doing by hooking us on this doomed love story, and it works precisely because we’ve seen it all before in a “straight” context. *From Blood Simple* (1984) to *Wild at Heart* (1990), lust tinged with fear has been the tonal vessel of now-classic films that have nothing to do with the gay experience. So why make the comparison? Because *Love Lies Bleeding* pulls from these heteronormative tales without undermining them, crafting its own, original narrative in the process. Swooping wide shots of the desert and a lonely Camaro traversing the dust roads are at stark odds with the more memorable nightmare sequences, the closeups saturated in crimson acting as a reflection of Lou’s spiraling subconscious. It’s two different worlds on paper, macho cool vs. feminine chaos, but that’s exactly the dichotomy that Glass is interested in and that grants her direction the nuance to rebuild the visual grammar of her predecessors.

The movie’s genius is a bit counterintuitive, then. It works as a queer film because its queer subject matter is made secondary to the larger story; it’s not about two women in love, it’s just about love, and two women happen to be the focus. “We functioned from a place of pure curiosity,” Stewart told NPR when describing how she and the cast approached their roles. “We weren’t underlining the point [of their

sexuality]. We just kind of let it exist, and I think that’s the way to go, from now on.”

With this approach, *Love Lies Bleeding* is the newest entry in a growing tradition of films that center on LGBTQ+ characters without making their gender or orientation the thematic summit. Just last September, Emma Seligman gave us *Bottoms*, a rom-com satire about two unpopular, queer high-schoolers who start a fight club to meet other girls and lose their virginities. Complete with niche references and enough camp to become the Gen-Z-coded *But I’m a Cheerleader* (1999), the movie was critically lauded, with *Variety*’s Owen Gleiberman applauding the unhinged humor and “scandalous misanthropy” embodied by the leads.

Even more recently, in February, Ethan Cohen’s *Drive Away Dolls* hit theaters to deliver a quirky road-trip farce about two restless lesbian friends that stumble upon an unlikely political conspiracy in Tallahassee, Florida. Although facing more mixed reviews than *Bottoms*, it has similarly amassed a cult audience drawn by the film’s over-the-top dialogue and self-aware plot.

Stories spear-headed by flawed, almost destructive queer characters have been around for a while, but the mainstream accessibility of those films is a very recent phenomenon. *Bottoms* was produced and distributed by MGM, the same studio that only decades prior backed musicals and comedies straying well into the territory of misrepresenting or parodying homosexuality. Universal Pictures fulfilled the same function for *Drive Away Dolls*, and *Glass* too owes at least a part of the creative freedom granted her by A24, the growing contemporary home to indies of all shapes and colors. “[I] went into it in an open, unpretentious way, led by wherever the story felt the most exciting,” she told *The Hollywood Reporter* about pre-production once her film got picked up by the studio.

Love Lies Bleeding does well by simultaneously looking back and veering its neck forward, thus dissipating preconceived notions of what on-screen gay relationships are meant to be. It’s lawless spirit and an ending saturated with magical realism make for a violently fun joyride, a must-watch for anyone excited by the tense ins-and-outs of a conventional form flipped on its head. Who knows; one day, the conversation could shift so much that this film might be called just another crime thriller. Until then, it’s the closest thing we have to a cinematic declaration of queer anarchism.





SAMINA MUGHAL: FASHION'S RESILIENT ICON

Yashal Jalil

In the ever-evolving world of fashion, Samina Mughal shines as a paragon of creativity, seamlessly weaving her Eastern heritage with Western influences. An acclaimed international designer, Mughal unveiled her latest creations at the New York Fashion Week GALA on February 10th, held in the opulent Paris Ballroom near Bryant Park—a night I had the fortune to experience, courtesy of a shared connection with Mughal.

Hailing from England, Mughal embarked on her fashion odyssey after graduating from The Institute of Art & Design. Although her degree was not in a creative field such as design, she had studied the business aspect of it with merchandising and digital retail. Over time, her fascination with the glitzy realm grew, drawing inspiration from fashion magazines, pop culture, music, films, and art. “My mom always said I was never one to let others dress me as I was too ‘opinionated’ to let anyone tell me what to wear or how to wear something. I think that’s why I love fashion and design in general. I believe it is a form of art and self-expression,” the British-Indian designer said.

The Samina Mughal Collection showcases her vision of providing accessible luxury for every occasion. The evening began with a sumptuous dinner and flowing wine arranged by Mughal, setting the stage for her three new collections, each flaunting a different flavor on the ramp. The first series featured a parade of elegant prom and bridal gowns, along with couture pieces for social events and red-carpet appearances, marked by bold silhouettes and intricate embellishments. While these designs didn’t align with my personal taste, they were undeniably striking.

The ‘Opulence’ collection, however, captivated me. It was a harmonious fusion of traditional Eastern cholis and Western plazos, marrying the rich embroidery and vivid hues of South Asian attire with the relaxed elegance of Western fashion. The men’s line presented a modern twist on the classic kurta pajamas blending Mughal’s cultural heritage with contemporary style. Her final Oscar collection closed the show with a dazzling display of glittery golds and a sprinkle of black. These tasteful cuts with a touch of avant-garde flair embodying the essence of contemporary glamor celebrated the modern men and women - innovative, glamorous, sensual, yet slightly edgy and eclectic. And, of course, ideal attire for anyone attending the Oscars.

Conversing with a Romanian attendee whose two daughters were walking the runway, I learned of Mughal’s broader impact on the fashion industry. She revealed that besides her design work, Samina Mughal is the founder and executive producer of SMGlobal Catwalk, an international fashion corporation. The company is famous for its international fashion events, model management, and training academy for the fashion and apparel industries. This platform not only showcases Mughal’s designs but also supports emerging talents in the industry. “I was a model too, and my daughters wanted to follow the same path so I sent them to Samina, who is known to train and support the new talent. My eldest has won several awards and is living her dream, thanks to Samina,” the mother said.



In August 2022, the fashion world was stunned when Mughal was diagnosed with breast cancer. Facing her diagnosis with remarkable courage, Mughal has since become a beacon of hope and support for other women battling the disease. Her efforts extend beyond her personal journey; through initiatives like the PINK Fashion GALA. The PINK Fashion GALA is an annual fundraiser event presented by the Relief Samina Mughal's Global Foundation that supports breast cancer survivors by providing education, early detection resources, and opportunities. Last October, Mughal's pink-themed collection graced the runway, with survivors themselves taking center stage—a powerful statement of her enduring spirit and dedication to the cause. “There were days where I thought I would die and that I was not going to make it, but here I am today; not just surviving but thriving,” Mughal said. The gala is a significant event that brings together fashion and philanthropy to make a positive impact on the lives of those affected by breast cancer.

Samina Mughal's journey is a vivid tapestry of resilience, innovation, and empowerment. Her collections are more than just fashion statements; they are narratives of her life's experiences, cultural roots, and her unwavering spirit in the face of adversity. As the lights dim on the New York Fashion Week GALA, her designs leave an indelible mark on the runway and in the hearts of those who witness them. Mughal's story and her creations remind us that beauty and strength can emerge from the most challenging circumstances, inspiring a future where fashion serves as a beacon of hope and transformation. After NY Fashion Week, she is now off to London to present her work, followed by Milan and later Paris.

CHECK OUT THE JOE WEBSITE!



ARIANA GRANDE RELEASES SEVENTH STUDIO LP *ETERNAL SUNSHINE* TO SHARE HOW SUPERNATURAL LOVE REALLY IS

Arianna Cubero

After nearly four years, Ariana Grande dropped her much anticipated seventh studio album titled *Eternal Sunshine*. Following the release of her 2020 album *positions*, Grande has fallen in and out of love, with a couple of milestones in between. From getting married, launching a cosmetic brand, filming an adaptation of the musical *Wicked*, getting divorced, and facing some serious backlash from the public, Grande has come out with her heart on her sleeve in her latest record.

Arguably the most beautifully written song on the tracklist is the opening song, ironically titled “Intro (end of the world).” The album opens with the question, “How can I tell if I’m in the right relationship? Aren’t you really supposed to know that sh*t?” But Grande comes to the realization that she had an experience she can’t stop thinking about and how that one guy has not been off her mind. She realizes that he may be the person she is really in love with, but does he feel the same way? “If the moon went dark tonight and if it all ended tomorrow, would I be the one on your mind... and would you be the one on mine?” Only 1:32 seconds long, Grande encapsulates the simple wonders that may cross the minds of people as they fall in love.

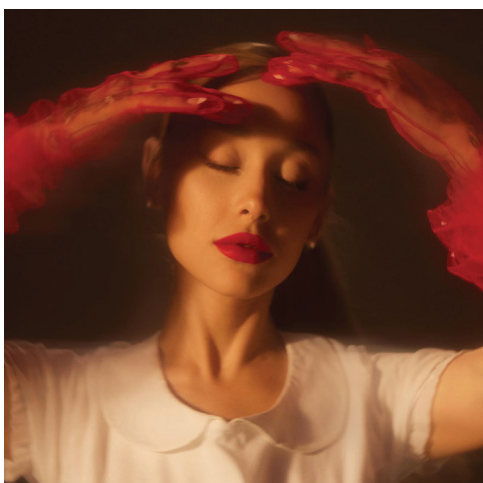
Further down the album, we hit the title track. The story goes as follows: Grande fell in love with the wrong guy, the kind she couldn’t change, a liar and manipulator. She continuously apologizes for wrongs she never committed, and he repeatedly makes her feel sorry for these mistakes. The two end up separating, but that only leads to even more of a desire for him. She may have found a better man, but there was so much comfort in the pain. “I found a good boy, and he’s on my side; you’re just my eternal sunshine.”

“We can’t be friends (wait for your love)” has become the star track off the album following “Yes, and?,” the debut single released in early January. “We Can’t Be Friends (Wait for Your Love)” describes the challenges of having to accept that what has happened cannot change and sometimes moving on requires a complete cut-off. Grande released the music video for the track, which follows the storyline of the film that inspired the title of the album: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. The music video follows Peaches, a heartbroken woman who goes in to have all of her memories with her former lover removed. Peaches, played by Grande, and her lover, played by Evan Peters, share moments of love and simplicity that we all experience at the beginning of a relationship. We see moments where Peaches remembers that these memories once meant something to her, but in the end, it is for her own good to let go and move on to better and more deserving love. Nodding back to the title of the track, Grande emphasizes in the video that in order for her to move forward with her life, she cannot be friends with her former lover as she and him should now wait for their love.

Although the album is still fresh for many listeners, fans are considering this to be one of Grande’s best. The record is cohesive as it shares some of the struggles Grande has faced following her divorce, along with what she has to say to those who think they are allowed to scrutinize who she has relations with. *Eternal Sunshine* is blissfully raw in songs like “Imperfect for You” and “Ordinary Things,” noting some of the simple things that make life and relations so easygoing to excruciatingly difficult. The album adds a more slowed-down R. & B. sound to Grande’s recognizable and familiar spunky pop discography. Shying away from high notes and the infamous “yuh,” Grande has shown growth and maturity from her freshman and sophomore records *Yours Truly* and *My Everything*, respectively, which Grande released fresh off the Nickelodeon stage.

For many Arianators like myself, nothing will truly compare to the *Sweetener* and *Thank U, Next* eras overlapping from 2018 through 2019. Following the terror attack at one of Grande’s shows in Manchester during her *Dangerous Woman* Tour in 2017, Grande turned her grief into art by producing 2018’s smashing success *Sweetener*. While engaged to *Saturday Night Live* alum Pete Davidson and recovering from the most devastating and cruel acts of terror to happen to Grande during her time in the spotlight, *Sweetener* shares a beautiful mix of love songs and songs of grief and healing. After her split with Davidson, Grande released the ultimate breakup album, *Thank u, next*. The title track, along with “Imagine” and “Break up with your girlfriend, I’m bored,” took over the charts all of 2019.

Eternal Sunshine articulates that love is not easy; you will make mistakes and face challenges that make you wonder how and why these difficulties arise. This album encapsulates not only the pain of divorce but also what it was like falling back into love while being under a pop culture microscope. Grande addresses speculation and responds to rumors about her love life; all in all, this album is a true story about all the lies.



CITY

THE 2026 WORLD CUP FINAL IS COMING TO THE NYC METRO: OR SHOULD IT?

John Oliveras

Metlife Stadium has been a host for some of the most iconic events in North American history, and now they can add hosting the 2026 World Cup Final to the list.

Along with the World Cup Final, Metlife Stadium is also going to be the host of eight matches throughout the tournament. The stadium itself has a capacity of 82,500 and will welcome global fans to this once in a lifetime spectacle.

Many issues have surfaced on whether or not having the World Cup Final in East Rutherford, New Jersey is the best idea. For example, the venue itself is 6 miles away from Manhattan. Many tourists and international fans are less likely to travel by car, so the MTA and NJ Transit public transportation are going to be flooded with people trying to get to the stadium all at once. The traffic will not slow down anytime before or after the matches either, which may cause train lines to delay. If the stadium was located within the state of New York, not only would it make the travel easier for both locals and tourists, but it would ease the stress of fans heading out of the venue.

Another issue with Metlife Stadium is the artificial turf they use on their field. During the last season of the NFL, many talented players have suffered season ending injuries due to the turf. Since turf grass doesn't have as much cushion as real grass, ankle and foot injuries are more common due to the lack of support. This issue has never changed or improved throughout the years, which has fans worried that some of their most beloved players might be vulnerable to injuries during the World Cup. Fans are calling for the installment of a natural grass field before the World Cup, that way players and teams won't feel like they have to adjust their playstyle just to accommodate a turf field.

Despite the controversy, fans are still very excited about having the United States as hosts for the first time since 1994. The World Cup is going to arrive faster than we all anticipate, and it is going to be must-watch television for everyone around the world.

A COMMENTARY ON HEDGE FUNDS AND THE HOUSING MARKET

Daniel Christmann

America is in a housing crisis. The media and right-wing politicians have gained the ear of the public by highlighting squatter stories that completely miss the mark. Squatters rights, or adverse possession are a major disturbance. Ironically, squatting may be the only way out of our current manufactured housing crisis.

New York City perhaps hosts the most volatile housing market in the United States, as purchasing a home in the city is over \$700 thousand. As this is an unreachable amount for most New Yorkers, many are forced to rent, but even that is quickly becoming impossible for the average person, with the average rent of a one bedroom apartment nearing \$4,000 per month.

High interest rates have stagnated the market and put financial conglomerates at an advantage in this seller's market. Now, hedge funds are hijacking the single-family housing market. Little is reported and debated that Hedge Funds are buying huge portions of single-family homes to rent and sell at premiums.

Currently, affordable housing stock in America has reached an all-time low. Contextually, affordable housing is defined as homes that people who make national median income can afford. In 2013, the amount of housing stock deemed affordable was near 50%, since then it has plummeted to a mere 13%.

According to the Urban Institute, in the first quarter of 2023, 27% of single-family homes sold during the first three months of 2023 were purchased by large financial groups. According to the Federal Reserve, fewer than 50% of Black and Latino households in the U.S. own a home, well below the national average of 66%.

There is currently a bill set to end these banking cartels from monopolizing the single-family home market. U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon wrote a bill attempting to end the catastrophe and bring housing costs back down to earth. The name of the bill is End Hedge Fund Control of American Homes Act, and was read in front of Congress on December 5, 2023. Senator Merkel and the bills co-sponsor Minnesota Senator Tina Smith suggest a tax be imposed on hedge funds.

Leading institutions in the single-family home grab are J.P Morgan, Blackstone, and Goldman Sachs. Blackstone, who thrived during the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, was opportunistic and began scooping up single family homes around the country.

As of the summer of 2023, multiple reports show that the national single-family real estate supply is at an all-time low at just 1.4 million units. With corporations aggressively buying and the market with such low supply, corporate home buyers are developing sophisticated strategies, harming working class families even more in the process. It is no wonder rents have gone up twenty-nine percent nationwide since the pandemic.

This bill from the Oregon Senator is perfect for the American people, the economy, and home ownership going forward. It is hard to imagine why anyone would be against it. For New Yorkers, it would open the opportunity for housing prices to lower, thus making rent more affordable in the process.

SPORTS

WITH JUST SEVEN PLAYERS, STATEN ISLAND'S WAGNER UNIVERSITY SNEAKS INTO THE NCAA TOURNAMENT

Kristopher Vinski

Clinging to a one-point lead with seven seconds left and only two guys on the bench, Staten Island's Wagner Seahawks knew they had to stay resilient, something the team had done all year. Looking for their first NCAA Tournament win in school history, the Seahawks got two clutch free throws from Sophomore guard Julian Brown to put the Seahawks up three points with under ten seconds remaining. The Seahawks were able to prevail on the defensive end as the Howard Bison missed three 3-point attempts as time expired.

After finishing sixth in the Northeast Conference (NEC), the Seahawks had a steep hill to climb in order to make the NCAA Tournament. After beating Sacred Heart by three on the road and Central Connecticut, the top team in the conference, by ten also on the road, the Seahawks now found themselves playing for the NEC Championship and a spot in March Madness.

Wagner led 41-30 with 12:38 remaining in the championship, but Merrimack scored off 13 consecutive points to take a 43-41 lead with 8:07 left to play. However, the Seahawks finished the game on a 13-4 run, becoming the first Wagner men's basketball team to reach the NCAA Tournament since 2003.

The team embraced the fact that they only had seven players on their roster by going even harder in practice not only to build the stamina to play a 40 minute game, but also because they had no other choice.

"Having seven players, I would imagine, some places they might just come into the gym and just, hey, let's go through the motions," head coach Donald Copeland said to NCAA.com, "we never did that. We prepared the right way. We expected to win even when we did lose."

While injuries happen in sports, many people use them as excuses for why their team under performs; not Wagner. Even with Copeland saying that four of the six injured players would've been penciled in as starters, the Seahawks never made excuses and united around how unique their situation was.

The lack of players not only required the guys who were healthy to step up, but also the coaches. Coaches, including Copeland who played his college ball at Seton Hall putting up 17 points of his own in an NCAA Tournament game in 2006, had to suit up during practice in order to give the player some competition. Copeland's players even took notice of his skills with guard Marvin Council Jr. saying he was most impressed with his head coach when they would be matched up against each other.

The win over Howard gave the Seahawks their first NCAA Tournament win in program history and set them up for a showdown against the North Carolina Tar Heels. The Seahawks kept the game close in the first half only trailing by 12 points going into the break. The Tar Heels, however, proved why they were a one-seed out scoring Wagner by 16 in the second half winning by a score of 90-62 ending the Seahawks' run.

All seven players logged minutes in the game with Brown and Council

leading the team with 18 points a piece. While losing is never easy, especially in the NCAA Tournament, what the Seahawks accomplished through so much adversity and truly showing their resilience shouldn't be overlooked.

Many people don't know that Wagner is located on Staten Island, however, this team put Wagner basketball back on the map. Their story of resilience and toughness will not be forgotten anytime soon.

"The things we did do in drill, they needed to be excellent and outstanding at it," Copeland said. "When they weren't I held them accountable. And they let me do it, and they had expectations of themselves, So I would say if there was a group to have seven players with it, I'm probably lucky it's these guys, honestly."

STEADY AND RETOOLED IS THE NAME OF THE GAME FOR THE 2024 NEW YORK METS

Tommy Gamba-Ellis

Major League Baseball fans were outright shocked with the results of the 2023 season for the New York Mets. Following a stellar 2022 campaign which saw the team win 101 games and narrowly lose the National East division to the Atlanta Braves, the Mets rolled over in 2023, winning just 75 games, finishing fourth in the NL East.

Everything that could have possibly gone wrong for New York happened last season. To start, generational arm Jacob deGrom left New York to sign with the Texas Rangers during the 2022 offseason. In need of a replacement, the Mets took a flier on 40-year-old future hall-of-famer Justin Verlander, signing him to a two-year contract worth over \$80 million. However, Verlander's age showed throughout his tenure for the Mets, starting just 16 games for New York before being traded back to the Houston Astros at the trade deadline. Max Scherzer also proved to be disappointing, having a 4.01 ERA in 19 starts with the Mets prior to being traded to the eventual World Series Champion Texas Rangers at the deadline.

Shortly after the 2023 season, the New York Mets fired manager Buck Showalter and general manager Billy Eppler, replacing them with Carlos Mendoza and David Stearns, respectively. Unlike previous management, Stearns' main focus this offseason was to retool and create a stable team without signing large names to high-risk deals.

The first priority for the Mets this offseason was to create a solid and dependable pitching staff, signing arms such as Luis Severino and Sean Manaea to short-term deals. Despite both having down-years last season, they have previously shown their capabilities to pitch at a high level, and have a lot of upside for this season. To bolster their bullpen, the Mets signed veteran relievers Jake Diekman and Jorge Lopez to one-year contracts, while also taking a waiver on Shintaro Fujanami. Lastly, the Mets re-signed Adam Ottavino, who finished last year with a 3.21 ERA over 61.2 innings, and acquired Adrian Houser from the Milwaukee Brewers.

**CHECK OUT
THE JOE
WEBSITE!**



At the plate, the Mets recently acquired all-star designated hitter J.D. Martinez, who finished last year with 33 home runs and a .271 batting average. His bat will provide some more depth in the middle of the order, and relieve some stress off of Pete Alonso and Francisco Lindor. In addition, New York signed utility-man Joey Wendle and outfielder Harrison Bader to one-year contracts, as well as acquiring outfielder Tyrone Taylor in a trade with the Brewers.

With the majority of the deals made this offseason spanning less than two years, it seems that Stearns is playing it safe and keeping the payroll open for next winter, where names such as Juan Soto will be available in free agency. Perhaps the biggest question for the Mets this season revolves around Pete Alonso, and if the team is willing to re-sign him to a long-term deal. If Alonso and the Mets refuse to agree on an extension before the deadline, he will hit free agency for the first time in his career.

A lot of eyes are also looking at catcher Francisco Alvarez, who finished his rookie campaign with 25 home runs. If he can take the next step and hit for a higher average this season, he could establish himself as one of Major League Baseball's elite offensive backstops.

While no one is expecting the Mets to win the National League East over the Atlanta Braves, the team has a decent shot to sneak in the NL Wild Card if everything goes right. From there, we have seen teams such as the 2023 Arizona Diamondbacks and the 2022 Philadelphia Phillies make World Series runs from the Wild Card, so nothing is stopping the Mets from making a similar run in the playoffs.



THIS JUAN'S OURS: THE 2024 NEW YORK YANKEES ARE ON THE CHASE FOR CHAMPIONSHIP 28

Kristopher Vinski

After a disappointing 2023, the New York Yankees made a big splash in the offseason acquiring three-time All-Star and four-time Silver Slugger Juan Soto from the San Diego Padres. The Yankees currently only have Soto for the 2024 season, signing him to a one-year \$31 million contract to avoid arbitration following the trade.

Additionally, the Yankees picked up two more outfielders during the offseason, trading for Alex Verdugo from the Red Sox and receiving Trent Grisham in the Soto deal. However, the biggest concern heading into the offseason was pitching, and in an offseason when star pitchers were all over the market, it almost felt like the Yanks lost more than they gained.

In the blockbuster trade for superstar Juan Soto, the Yankees gave away much young talent, many of which were pitchers who helped carry the bullpen through the 2023 season. The trade included Michael King, Jhony Brito, Randy Vazquez, and top pitching prospect Drew Thorpe, along with catcher Kyle Higashioka. After the trade, there was an expectation that the Yankees would be all-in on signing a high-leverage pitcher to add to the starting rotation. The Yanks signed Marcus Stroman, a Long Island native who pitched to a 3.95 ERA with 119 strikeouts in 136.2 innings pitched while with the Chicago Cubs in 2023. While Stroman is a solid addition to the starting staff, with all of the other big names on the market, it seemed to be somewhat of a disappointing pickup.

Reigning American League Cy Young Award winner Gerrit Cole

began the season on the injured list with an elbow injury which gave Nestor Cortes the Opening Day start. While Cole's injury is not as severe as fans initially thought, it has been shared that he will still be out for the first few months of the season. With Cole out, the Yankees added Luis Gil to the roster after Spring Training to fill the fifth spot in the rotation.

The lineup will unsurprisingly be headlined by Aaron Judge, who had an injury-riddled 2023 campaign after hitting 62 home runs on his way to winning American League MVP the season prior. D.J. LeMahieu also started the season on the injured list but will look to bounce back after batting just .243 with 15 home runs and 44 RBIs in 2023.

Once he returns to the lineup, LeMahieu will play all around the infield diamond, most likely spending much of his time at third base. While still unaware of when LeMahieu will return, the Yankees switch between letting utility man Oswaldo Cabrera and new acquisition Jon Berti get the start at third base.

The new season also brings high hopes for a bounce-back year from veteran first baseman Anthony Rizzo. Rizzo started last season on a tear until a collision at first base with Fernando Tatis Jr. of the Padres led to a concussion, ultimately leading to Rizzo's stats to decline drastically. Rizzo and the Yankees were unaware of the concussion until months later, but resulted in Rizzo missing the final two months of the season.

Giancarlo Stanton leaned down in the offseason with the goal of being on the field more consistently. Stanton's largest problem in his tenure with the Yankees has been staying healthy throughout the entire season. While the Yankees don't expect Stanton to be a high batting average guy, they expect him to provide another power bat primarily serving as the team's designated hitter.

The expectations for the Yanks are always the same, a World Series championship. The Yankees have struggled to get over that hump in recent memory, as this season marks the 15-year anniversary of their 2009 championship. On paper, they have all the tools to win World Series number 28. The biggest key for the Yanks is to make sure they stay healthy because with their skillset, sky's the limit.

ONSET VICTORIES FOR ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY BROOKLYN BEARS SOFTBALL

Hayden Reis

The St. Joseph's University Brooklyn Bears Softball team has started off strong in the Skyline Conference. With a record of ten total wins, four losses, and four conference wins, it's only the beginning of the Bears campaign, but their takings should not be ignored.

Junior captain Lauren Van Der Kamp was named Skyline Conference Co-Player of the week on April 9. "I think one of the biggest contributing factors to our success is the effort that we all put into the sport," Van Der Kamp said. "All of us put in so much work no matter the weather and no matter the location. We all work very hard on and off the field to make sure we give 110%."

The Softball team is no stranger to winning, being the school's strongest team in the athletics program. The Bears placed third in the Skyline Conference in the 2023 season and was the only team for St. Josephs to make it to the playoffs in the past year. What makes this team remarkable is their success despite their low numbers. The squad consists of just fourteen players and the head coach, Dino Mastropierro, is in his first season with the Bears.

"The most rewarding part about the softball team is having a group to go through life with," Sophomore catcher Audrey Scott states. "We win together and lose together but whatever the outcome is, the girls have my back and we sing together on the way home."

An average softball team typically consists of 16-18 players, with nine on the field at all times, so for the girls to be succeeding at this level of play with just fourteen players is superb. Five of their players are only freshmen and majority of the team origins are on the West Coast. The Brooklyn team is currently ranked first in batting statistics in their conference, fourth place for pitching stats and third place for fielding. Their biggest win perhaps has been upsetting sister school, St Joseph's Long Island in their double header against them on April 6. The team came away with two wins, 6-4 was the score of the first, the latter 16-8.

Payton Walker, a freshman on the team who was awarded Rookie of the Week, says that "Everyone on the team does a great job at executing the role that they are given for each game and adapting to the roles as they change," says Payton Walker, a freshman who was awarded Rookie of the Week on April 9.

We are now at the midway point of the 2024 Bears softball campaign, and hopefully the team can keep up their success for the remainder of the season.



Photos courtesy of SJNY Athletics

CRICKET'S AMERICAN DREAM TAKES FLIGHT AT THE T20 WORLD CUP

Yashal Jalil

In an unprecedented move that has stirred excitement across the globe, the United States, alongside West Indies, is set to co-host the ICC Men's T20 World Cup--the shortest and most popular form of cricket with games lasting three hours instead of five days. This historic event, which will begin in June this year, marks the first time international cricket's showpiece will grace American shores, promising to bring the thrill of cricket to a new audience.

The iconic Empire State Building in New York City was recently illuminated to signal America's warm embrace of cricket, a beloved sport worldwide. Two-time T20 World Cup Champion, Chris Gayle, and Ali Khan, a poster boy for USA Cricket, were present to kick off the worldwide trophy tour. The duo lit up the building to mark the start of the "Out Of This World" Trophy Tour, which will visit more than 15 countries across the globe ahead of the T20 World Cup 2024.

The primary objective of the tour is to give fans and legendary cricketers a closer look at the grandest T20I event to date. For those who are fans of baseball and football in the United States, cricket can feel like a distant relative. Imagine a sport where two teams, each with eleven players, compete on a vast oval field. At the center of this field lies the pitch - a rectangular battlefield. Here, players battle for dominance, with the batsmen aiming to score runs and the bowlers strategizing to disrupt their rhythm. At each end of the pitch, there are three vertical sticks called stumps, which form a wicket along with two horizontal bails on top.

The game's essence is the pursuit of runs - players hit the ball and run across the pitch, adding to their team's total. The objective is simple: outscore the opposition. The roles are well-defined: batsmen wield the bat, bowlers unleash the ball, and each has a crucial part to play.

Enter T20 cricket, a more adrenaline-fueled, fast-paced version of the sport. Each team gets a single innings, which is capped at 20 overs with each over consisting of six deliveries (pitches). This format condenses the action into roughly three hours, providing a more intense and viewer-friendly experience compared to the traditional, longer formats.

T20 cricket thrives on urgency, with players pushing boundaries to rack up runs quickly. It's a spectacle known for nail-biting finishes and powerful strikes, captivating fans worldwide.

To the American sports enthusiast, T20 cricket is similar to a high-octane baseball game - every swing is vital, and the excitement is unrelenting. It's a combination of athleticism, strategy, and sheer excitement, all packed into a compact, action-filled event.

The T20 World Cup 2024 will be a significant moment for cricket in the USA. The event will include 55 matches in different stadiums around the country, such as Texas, New York, and Florida. The opening match will kick off with a North American derby between Canada and the USA in Dallas, followed by a series of exciting matches, with the grand finale taking place in Barbados. On June 9, the much-anticipated Pakistan vs India match will take place in East Meadow (Nassau County), according to the schedule released by the ICC. The tickets for this match sold out immediately, reflecting the immense popularity of both teams and the significance of their matchups in cricketing history.

England is currently the reigning champions of cricket's T20 World Cup, having defeated Pakistan in the final held in Melbourne in 2022. However, this year's tournament is missing England's Test captain, Ben Stokes, who has chosen to focus on his role as an all-rounder in Test

cricket. This creates an opportunity for new talents to make their mark in cricket's rich history. This year's tournament is particularly noteworthy because Canada, the USA, and Uganda are making their debut in the Men's T20 World Cup.

The enduring enigma, however, remains: Is cricket poised to captivate the American spirit? The launch of "Willow by Cricbuzz," designed with the American cricket connoisseur in mind, promises a unique nexus for cricket in North America—offering live coverage of premiere matches, complemented by unparalleled reporting and insightful analysis. This, along with the debut season of Major League Cricket, lays the groundwork for cricket's potential rise to prominence in the US. The dream has been envisioned, the stage is set, and now the moment arrives to witness whether American audiences will embrace the grandeur of cricket, joining the global chorus of its enthusiasts.



FICTION

ADAM AND EVE ON THE TRAIN

Yashal Jalil

I took the Q train from the 7th Avenue station. Examining the interior, I spotted an empty corner bench and happily decided to sit there. It gives me great pleasure to be left alone, just me and my big white bag occupying the space next to me, with no one to bother with their presence. I wasn't this way three years ago; it's perhaps New York's cold breeze that has made me 'distant', as my mother said last night on the phone before I hung up on her in frustration. She doesn't seem to understand the peace and maybe even fun that comes with being alone. You can observe others around you, eavesdrop on their conversations, and take home stories to write about later, like the one I heard last Friday. I must clarify that this story isn't about me; I am just an onlooker, a storyteller as they would say in traditional English.

As the train stopped at Atlantic Avenue Terminal, two young individuals, a boy and a girl, stepped inside. At first glance, I assumed they were just another young couple out on a date with nothing interesting to offer other than sweet nothings and affection. I was wrong. It turned out that they, let's call them Adam and Eve for our convenience, were not romantically involved but instead the best of friends on their way to meet their respective dates.

"Why are you wearing that special dress?" Adam asked.

"It's a simple red dress; what are you talking about?" Eve moved her hand in a way to reject Adam's future assumptions, but that didn't stop him from continuing.

"When we bought it together, you said you'd set it aside until the right man comes."

"Well, then, I guess this is the right man," Eve declared.

"But you're literally meeting him for the first time! The first meeting can't be that special," Adam pointed out, placing his hand on Eve's shoulder for emphasis.

Eve laughed and stroked his resting hand, "Why don't you focus on your date, Ad? Is she the one?"

"I won't know until I meet her, I mean. I hope she is," Adam replied.

"Well, you look good. All dressed up for the right one."

They laughed as their fingers fondled while holding onto the train pole. After a few more comments about their appearances, Adam pointed next to me, suggesting that Eve takes a seat because of "the piercing heels" she's been wearing. This caused a rush of disapproval and fear in my veins, and I spread myself and my bag to take up more space. Luckily, Eve refused this suggestion. I sighed in relief and continued listening to them.

"I am so tired of going on these vain dates, Adam. I want to find true love, you know." Eve said in a melancholic tone.

"But, Eviee, it's highly unlikely for you to find someone who can keep up with your shenanigans."

"What shenanigans?" Eve asked, giving him a playful nudge.

"Like giving you my sneakers after you break your heels while chasing a Chris Evans lookalike."

Eve blushed, embarrassed or in love, I can't say. "That was one time! And, he really looked like him!"

"And, what about the time you stole that book from the bookstore? I had to go back and pay for it."

Eve laughed until she snorted. Adam laughed at the sound she made.

"And your snorts...no one can live with an animal like you," he teased, moving his hands in the air as if talking to a larger audience. Eve punched him in the arm.

"You're not perfect either. What man would scare away the kids so that he can take the slide?"

"You were with me!" Adam blurted out.

Both giggled until the noise of the moving train drowned out their voices. I wondered if their long years of friendship had blinded them to the love that had blossomed.

"If he's not the one, your dress will go to waste," Adam said at last. "Don't worry, I'll wear it again for the next date," Eve replied.

"And again and again. There's no hope for you. Or for me. We're hopeless," Adam sighed.

"We'll find someone in five years," Eve declared, quite optimistic for such a bleak statement.

"And if we don't..."Adam trailed off.

Eve laughed, and between those chuckles, she uttered, "Then we marry each other!"

"That's our last option," Adam replied, the light reflecting in his eyes. Someone's speaker played a romantic song: "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran, I think. It was quite a filmy scene, I must say.

The train stopped at 14th Street Union Square, and Eve prepared to leave. Walking out of the door, she turned around to wish Adam good luck on his date.

"You've got this," Eve said.

"Or, I'll wait five years," Adam replied.

Both laughed until the door sealed between them.

I watched Adam as he looked at his smiling reflection in the window, thinking about either his date or the five years he would have to wait to marry his true love. As for what happens next, I have no idea because I got off at the next stop. It's a train story, and now that I'm off the train, it ends here.