

BASIS SCOTTSDALE GAZETTE

Into the Woods Jr.

BASIS Scottsdale theatre production was proud to present – for two nights, December 14th and 15th – *Into the Woods*. We took it upon ourselves to see the show and report for those unable to make it.

When we entered the gym, we found two columns of MPR benches laid out in front of the stage. The lack of staggering later made it harder to see the show easily. The theatre also provided a small concessions stand, where mark-ups rivalled those on the school vending machine.

Backstage, minutes before the show began, Jaiya Patel (current junior), who's been the technical director since her freshman year, expressed her excitement for the play. She reports, "The kids have been working really hard since August and are very excited." Elsewhere, the lower school kids were spotted in a circle, completing their pre-production rituals.

by: Valerie Polukhtin and Mintra Waram



Source: basis.scottsdale.theatre on Instagram

SAVE THE DATE

Pre-Comps: 1/16-1/18

MLK Jr. Day: 1/20

Senior Sunset: 1/31

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Finally, the play began.

The show opened with a heart-warming show of gratitude towards everyone involved, from the faculty including Mr. Navarro and Mr. Weise to the parents' supporting their student actors. The show production includes two graduating seniors, Azara Donahue acting as the witch and Hillary Phan as head of marketing. Lavanya Bhatia led the show as student director.

The cutest character by far was the cow. Or should we say the cows. The character was split between a trio of fifth graders, Elena Prain, Caitlin Heany, and Jason Olson, and although their lines were few, they might have been the most loved characters.

Winnie, starring as the baker's wife, impressed us all the moment she took to the stage. Her acting was incredibly compelling, and her singing at times made us forget this was simply a high school production. In a few quick moments captured with her post-production, she elaborated on her love for musical theater and desire to pursue it professionally. Between juggling up to ten hours of rehearsal per week, voice lessons, and outside-of-school musical auditions, her schedule is completely packed, but Winnie expressed she wouldn't trade any of that for an easier time.

Despite her incredible talent, when asked, she said she wouldn't transfer to a different school like Chaparral because she loves the environment at BASIS and the chance to be a star here.

By far, the most surprising scene was when the big bad wolf, Jaggar, pounced on little red riding hood. Jaggar truly encapsulated that role. He even leapt a solid three feet into the air before pouncing, highlighting his incredible dedication to the part. The audience audibly gasped and laughed at the display, making it one of the most memorable moments of the night.

The production was a testament to the dedication and passion of everyone involved. The teamwork between the cast, crew, and directors ensured that the production was both professional and heartfelt. While visiting backstage, the passion from the characters, the organization, and the planning was very evident and made the play go on without a hitch. From the smallest detail in the costumes to the breathtakingly synchronized set changes, every element reflected immense effort and care.

In specific, the costuming and sets were ethereal. Despite the quantity of princesses, each of their costumes felt unique—the iconic hood of little red, Rapunzel's prop tower, and Cinderella's dress transformation.

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In addition, it actually felt like we were transported into the woods, the fog machine adding to the fairytale-esque aura.

However, our main critique of the show lay with the sound production. Although we're painfully aware of the constant budget cuts around the school, we actually found the issue to be with voice projection. Many of the younger actors, such as the cows, spoke in very hushed voices, making it hard to pick up on the words, and the music's volume often completely overshadowed any singing. Donahue's singing was incredibly clear, projecting very well, but we struggled to pick up on many of the other characters. Additionally, the narrators' rushed, quiet tones gave the story the air of being called on in-class to read aloud and rushing through your paragraph rather than the lilting tones of a storybook.

Overall, the play was a delightful experience filled with humor, heart, and an undeniable sense of passion from all involved. The energy of the cast and crew was palpable, and the moments of brilliance, like Jaggar's leap, made it an unforgettable production! I can't wait to see what Musical theater has in store for the next play!



Source: basis.scottsdale.theatre on Instagram

Shawn's Suits

If you've ever walked through the halls of school and wondered about the kid in a three-piece suit, you're not alone. Shawn, a high school freshman, has become a legend with his commitment to wearing a suit every day, no matter the season. But what's behind this bold fashion choice, and why does he stick with it?

A love for fashion doesn't drive Shawn. As such, he doesn't care about what's in. To him, it's all a matter of mentality. "People care more about comfort these days than presenting their best selves," he says. While most of his peers wear sweatpants, hoodies, or even just shorts, Shawn believes how you dress reflects how you think about yourself and the world around you. "It's not about fashion," he says. "It's about how you carry yourself. A suit sets a tone and speaks to how seriously I take my day."

His journey to wearing suits began about two years ago, and though Shawn remains tight-lipped about the whole backstory, it's clear some defining moment sparked the change. "It's a long story," he admits, but he boils it down to one central idea: "It comes down to a shift in mentality." For Shawn, the world of high school is about more than fitting in or being comfortable; it is about showing up as your best self. "If I only cared about being comfortable, I could wear shorts and a T-shirt daily. But that doesn't get me where I want to go."

by: Mintra Waram

Shawn has seven suits and is not stopping. His favorites depend on the season. In hotter seasons, a light tan suit works; on colder days, it would be the regular Irish wool suit. "I don't mind the heat," he says. "I just prefer lighter fabrics when it gets warmer. It's about comfort, but in a different way."

Of course, some days, Shawn takes a break from his usual formal attire. He quickly points out that his casual wardrobe still holds a special place. "I own jeans, boots, and cowboy hats for when I'm not wearing a suit. That's only when I'm working with horses," he grins. But those moments are rare.

The next time you see Shawn in his perfectly fitted suit, don't think it's about fashion; it's a way into his mindset. In a world where many students are more concerned with comfort than presentation, Shawn proves that how you dress matters. It is not about fitting in but rather about standing out. Shawn is doing just that, one suit at a time.



Source: Shawn

CURRENT NEWS

ComplexCon 2024

ComplexCon returned in spectacular fashion at the end of 2024, taking over the Las Vegas Convention Center with its unforgettable blend of music, fashion, art, and pop culture. Over the weekend, Saish S., Cole Y., Kamran A., Enzo A., and I, took a trip to Vegas to visit many iconic fashion brands, splurge on merch, and experience Playboi Carti's live performance.

ComplexCon's fashion booths were the first major attraction. For the whole day, attendees were treated to exclusive drops and collaborations from some of the most well-known designer companies, but also a plethora of rising underground fashion brands. From artists' brands like Cactus Jack and SP5DER to designer artists like VETEMENTS and Handmade Rust, ComplexCon showcased limited-edition collections that featured a blend of streetwear and designer fashion. Cole notes that he "enjoyed shopping in Carti's booth the most, because we waited like an hour for that and all the pieces were very cool." Saish adds that "all the clothes there were super sick. It was fun to walk around—there was Narcissist stuff, Anonymous Club collabs, No Fear collabs, and there was Pelle Pelle—the Pelle Pelle jackets were insane." Indeed, the Playboi Carti x Pelle Pelle Leather Jackets were awarded the title of Best Apparel at ComplexCon.

by: Aarush Ravichand

But beyond the merchandise itself, among the ComplexCon attendees were many well-known pop culture celebrities and music artists, but also more niche micro celebrities and media icons. These stars could be found walking around the convention center, shopping around while greeting fans. Saish reflects, "Emwell, who's one of those micro celebrities, said he liked my shirt. Which was super sick. 42 Ceo was also really, really fun. He said we had a lot of energy and filmed a video with us." Similarly, Cole comments, "my favorite celebrity was 42 Ceo for his cute smile and enthusiastic attitude."



Source: Google Images

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Kamran, too, favored a smaller, less-known icon: “My favorite celebrity—he’s not super big—I met was Kanye’s stylist. Because he was really cool and genuine, a down-to-earth guy. You could tell he didn’t have a crazy ego, and actually liked interacting with people. I love him.” Enzo, though, recalls a different celebrity: So I saw this guy in a brown leather jacket. And I couldn’t really see who he was until he turned around, until I realized he was Guram, Demna’s brother, he runs VETEMENTS. That was insane. I guess it was just craziest to me because I think of him as such a high end celebrity rather than one of these micro celebrities we’ve seen all throughout the day. He’s like one of my highest-level inspirations.” Though all of the booths immersed us in the world of style and fashion, Enzo remarks, “I think that the booths that were most important to us were the ones that we met cool people at.”

Finally, at 6 PM, the shopping booths closed, and the concert doors opened. The festival’s concert was the centerpiece of the event, headlined by Playboi Carti and his collective, featuring Destroy Lonely, Ken Carson, and HXG. But first, Metro started the evening with an electrifying mix of songs, hits from his newer “We Don’t Trust You” albums but also from his older albums, like *Heroes & Villains* and *Savage Mode II*. But the crowd went wild when he brought out Offset to perform several Metro x Offset songs, like “Ric Flair Drip” and “Bad and Boujee.”

The night continued with gripping performances from HXG, Destroy Lonely, Ken Carson, each of whom performed two to three of their most high-energy tracks. “The crowd environment with NOSTYLIST was really good, it was better than I thought it would be. “Because I feel like I kinda got sick of the song, it’s a little older, and it’s over-listened and stuff like that,” Enzo remarks. However, it was Playboi Carti’s performance that truly stole the show. Carti delivered a powerful set that included all of his I AM MUSIC singles as well as some new, unreleased tracks that he performed for the first time. While Kamran most enjoyed hearing “Different Day” live, Cole notes that his favorite was “BACKR00MS because Carti got up close to me, and I like that.” After performing 14 songs, the show was finally over.

ComplexCon 2024 was an unforgettable celebration of creativity and culture. It brought together music, fashion, and art like never before, setting a new standard for what a cultural festival can be. Without a doubt, every attendee left with memories of an extraordinary weekend that showcased the future of pop culture in all its vibrant forms. And although Playboi Carti did not drop I AM MUSIC, we can rest assured that he is dutifully working sleepless nights to deliver the album to its true potential. Meanwhile, we can enjoy similar projects like TELESCOPE by TWXN, featuring AI Playboi Carti and AI Travis Scott.

Blaze in the Palisades

by: Andrew Kang

“Death toll rises to 16 as Palisades Fire expands east to Brentwood and Encino, officials say at least 5,000 structures have been destroyed, more than 100,000 people displaced from evacuation zones.” -NBC4 Los Angeles

The ongoing Palisades fire has ravaged thousands of homes and already ranks among the most devastating natural disasters in Los Angeles history. At the time of writing this article, the fire has burned 23,654 acres with only an 11% containment as reported by the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAPD); even so, the burn area is only expected to grow. Firefighters are doing everything possible to contain the devastating fire and ensure that everyone evacuated safely.

But how did the Palisades fire ignite in the first place?

Shortly after midnight on New Year’s Day, 72-year-old Francine Sohn saw a small brush fire across from her Pacific Palisades neighborhood in western Los Angeles; thankfully, however, the local firefighters were able to contain the fire, leaving no damage. But just a week later, the same thing happened, only this time more disastrous and significantly greater in size. Beginning in the backyard of the vibrant Palisades Highlands, it quickly spread across surrounding mountainsides and neighborhoods, resulting in the Palisades fire as we know it.

While the exact cause of the fire remains under investigation, city officials and residents presume that it’s due to the recent drought, dry vegetation, and high winds reaching a staggering 80 miles per hour.

In an attempt to control the hectic situation, a curfew has been implemented from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the areas impacted by the fires to both keep residents safe and crack down on looting. Additionally, several emergency declarations were recently established. L.A. Mayor Karen Bass declared a state of emergency on the 7th. Similarly, California Governor Newsom did the same for the Los Angeles and Ventura counties after meeting with fire officials in Pacific Palisades. Furthermore, President Joe Biden approved a Presidential Major Emergency Declaration on the 8th in response to the wildfires, directed the Department of Defense to provide additional aid, and sent 10 Navy helicopters equipped with water buckets to the Palisades.

The fires continue to destroy historic landmarks and homes, leaving more than a hundred thousand residents displaced. To help in fighting the fire, people can donate to LAPD’s wildfire emergency fund or even send food and non-food resources like toiletries to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

Our hearts go out to all those affected by the fires.

The New Age of Volleyball

Until recently, American collegiate volleyball players lacked access to professional volleyball opportunities in the United States; however, this past year everything has changed. With the establishment of a third professional women's volleyball league, the Pro Volleyball Federation (PVF), starting with four professional teams in 2024, the federation has expanded to eight teams all across the country with the most popular being the Atlanta Vibe and the Orlando Valkyries.

The current teams in the PVF include the Atlanta Vibe, Orlando Valkyries, Omaha Supernovas, Indy Ignite, Grand Rapids Rise, Vegas Thrill, San Diego Mojo, Columbus Fury. Based on statistics from the singular previous year of the PVF, some of the outstanding players we can expect to see again are Leah Edmond on Atlanta Vibe, Morgan Hentz on Atlanta Vibe, Reagan Cooper on Omaha Supernovas, Brooke Nuneviller on Omaha Supernovas, Brittany Abercrombie on Orlando Valkyries, Kaz Brown on Orlando Valkyries, and Ronika Stone on San Diego Mojo.

In the 2025 draft, several top NCAA players were selected to join the league, with the number-one draft spot being held by Merritt Benson, a former Nebraska Cornhusker, who is now an Opposite for Atlanta Vibe.

by: Payton Dymek

Other notable drafts include Ally Batenhorst to the Omaha Supernovas, Mia Tuaniga to Atlanta Vibe, and Anna DeBeer to the Indy Ignite.

Last season, with the help from powerhouse Brooke Nuneviller garnering 22 kills and 17 digs, the Omaha Supernovas won the title of 2024 PVF champions; however, this year, it's difficult to predict a winner. With each team bursting at the seams with talent from top NCAA collegiate programs, teams are looking stronger than ever and are only predicted to become more competitive as the league expands and teams evolve.



Source: Google Images

New Year, Same Story

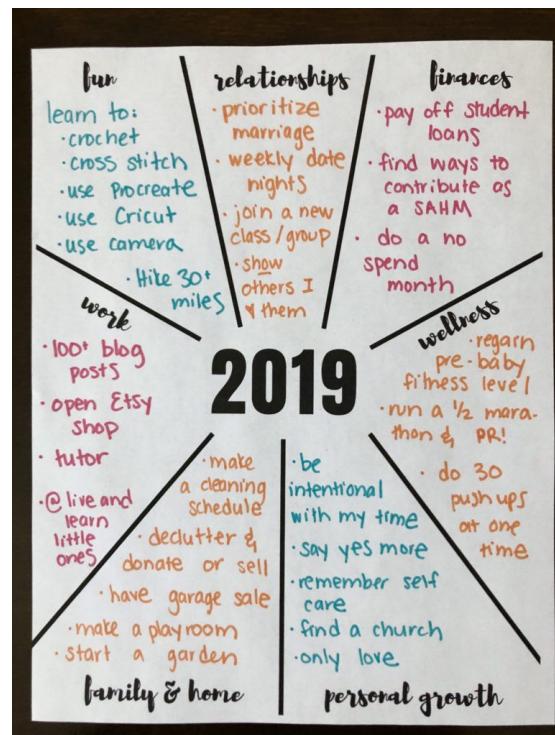
by: Neha Jasthi

As the calendar flips to a new year, many of us feel the desire to make a fresh start. The tradition of making New Year's resolutions allows us to reflect on the past year and set our intentions for the year ahead. These promises to ourselves often focus on self-improvement, growth, and change. But why do we make resolutions, and how can we turn them into lasting habits?

The practice of setting goals at the start of a new year dates back thousands of years, with ancient civilizations like the Babylonians making promises to their gods for a better future. Today, we continue this tradition, but now our resolutions are personal commitments to make positive changes in our own lives. Whether it's getting fit, learning a new skill, or simply being more organized, New Year's resolutions serve as a way to mark the beginning of a new chapter in our lives.

Every year, certain resolutions become more popular than others. While everyone's goals are unique, here are some of the most common resolutions people set. According to a 2023 survey by YouGov, 44% of people made health-related resolutions, such as exercising more or eating better, making it the most common type of resolution.

About 32% of people aim to learn something new, whether it's picking up a hobby or mastering a new skill. Improving time management is a top priority for 35% of students and professionals alike, who focus on staying organized and prioritizing tasks. Financial resolutions are also common, with 24% of people aiming to save more money or reduce their debts. Additionally, 22% of individuals set goals related to personal growth, such as practicing gratitude, being kinder, or adopting a more positive mindset.



Source: Google Images

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While it's easy to set goals at the beginning of the year, sticking to them can be much harder. In fact, research from the University of Scranton shows that only 8% of people actually achieve their New Year's resolutions. So how can we make sure our resolutions last? First, it's important to set realistic and achievable goals. Instead of aiming to drastically change everything, focus on small, manageable steps that will lead to bigger improvements. Tracking your progress is another key to success—whether it's through a journal, an app, or a calendar, keeping tabs on how far you've come helps you stay on track and celebrate milestones along the way. It's also essential to be kind to yourself. Everyone slips up from time to time, but setbacks don't mean failure. The key is to stay focused on the bigger picture and keep pushing forward. Lastly, accountability can make a huge difference. Studies show that people are 33% more likely to achieve their goals if they share them with someone else. Whether it's a friend or family member, checking in regularly can help keep you motivated and on track.

New Year's resolutions aren't just about achieving specific goals—they represent the opportunity to reflect, grow, and challenge ourselves. Setting resolutions allows us to focus on areas of our lives we want to improve, whether it's physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Even if we don't achieve every goal, the process of setting and working toward them can help us build better habits, learn more about ourselves, and grow as individuals. So, as we step into this new year, let's take a moment to think about the changes we want to make and the person we want to become. Resolutions are a powerful tool to help us shape our future, but it's our commitment and determination that will turn them into lasting change.

Here's to a new year full of promise, growth, and the resolutions that will help make it our best year yet!

Self-Care New Year's Resolutions

 Unfollow creators or pages that bring you down.	Create routines in your life that focus on what you need.	Take deep breaths, laugh, and meditate more often.
Focus on adding more of something or doing less of something.	Commit to at least one act of self-care each day.	Declutter your life in physical and emotional ways.
Do something that's good for your mental health every day.	Surround yourself with a loving and accepting community.	 Focus on making rest a priority in your life.

SelfLoveRainbow

Source: Google Images

REVIEWS

Book Review: *Bunny* by Mona Awad

If a man told me, “Your beauty is nuanced and labyrinthine, like a sentence by Proust,” I’d probably gape at him like a fish, wondering who this weird, pretentious man is. That’s exactly the line the boyfriends of the fellow girls in her a writing program at Warren told our protagonist Sam. If you’re not already curious about this novel, let me add that their heads all explode only a few pages later. Interested now?

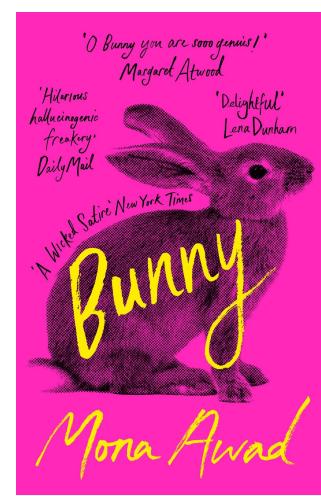
Mona Awad’s novel *Bunny* follows our protagonist Samantha Heather Mackey, one of five students in her last year at a highly selective MFA writing program at Warren University. The book opens with an outdoor party celebrating the start of a new school year, and from the onset, Sam establishes herself as “not like other girls.” The four other girls in her program are, according to Sam, sickeningly close, absolutely besties cooing over one another, adoring one another, living in the same privileged world of vacations at the Hamptons and villas in Europe. But worst of all, they always call each other Bunnies. Bunny, I love you, and Bunny, I miss you, and Bunny this, and Bunny that.

Sam’s just not like that. She dresses in gothic clothing; her stories are more horrifying;

by: Valerie Polukhtin

she grew up in a poor household, mother dead, father hiding out in Mexico. Her one consolation is her friend Ava, who dropped out of a nearby fancy arts school and now works with categorizing moths, creating art in her free time rather than under the guidance of a pretentious institution. Together, it makes Sam’s time at the school just a little more bearable.

Until Sam gets an invitation to join the Bunnies’ Smut Salon. Ditching Ava, it transforms from a one-off instance to a regular occurrence, until Sam is eventually inducted into their cult.



Source: Goodreads

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There, she learns their greatest secret: the Bunnies are able to transform real bunnies roaming around campus into men. But these creations always have some kind of flaws: misshapen limbs, quoting odd poets, a lack of hands, and of course, their heads might randomly explode from the strangest triggers.

From there, we follow Sam in her drugged state as she's inducted into the cult, makes her "first" creation (more complete and real than any of the other bunnies' ones), rescued by Ava, and eventually returned to enact her revenge. The sheer wackiness of the story keeps you hooked until the end. Whether you finish the book believing the "it's all in her head" interpretation or seeing it as a piece of magical realism, the story is still full of hidden meanings especially geared towards writers.

Sam's disgust with the privilege of the Bunnies and the meaningless fluff of Warren most likely in some ways reflects Awad's own frustrations. During their workshops, Sam is frequently told to "explore the Body," even keeping a tally of the sheer amount of times "Body" is mentioned. In the story, Warren creates this artificial, pretentious world of writing, where not only her department but also the poetry one is frequently showing this dramatic, pained anguish without any real sense of anchor for the writing. Not to mention, the students of the Warren campus create an exaggerated view of the outside world, huddling in taxis from place to place.

Awad sneaks in these little phrases to remind the reader of the stark contrast from the clean, picturesque buildings of the campus and the dirty, muddled surroundings.

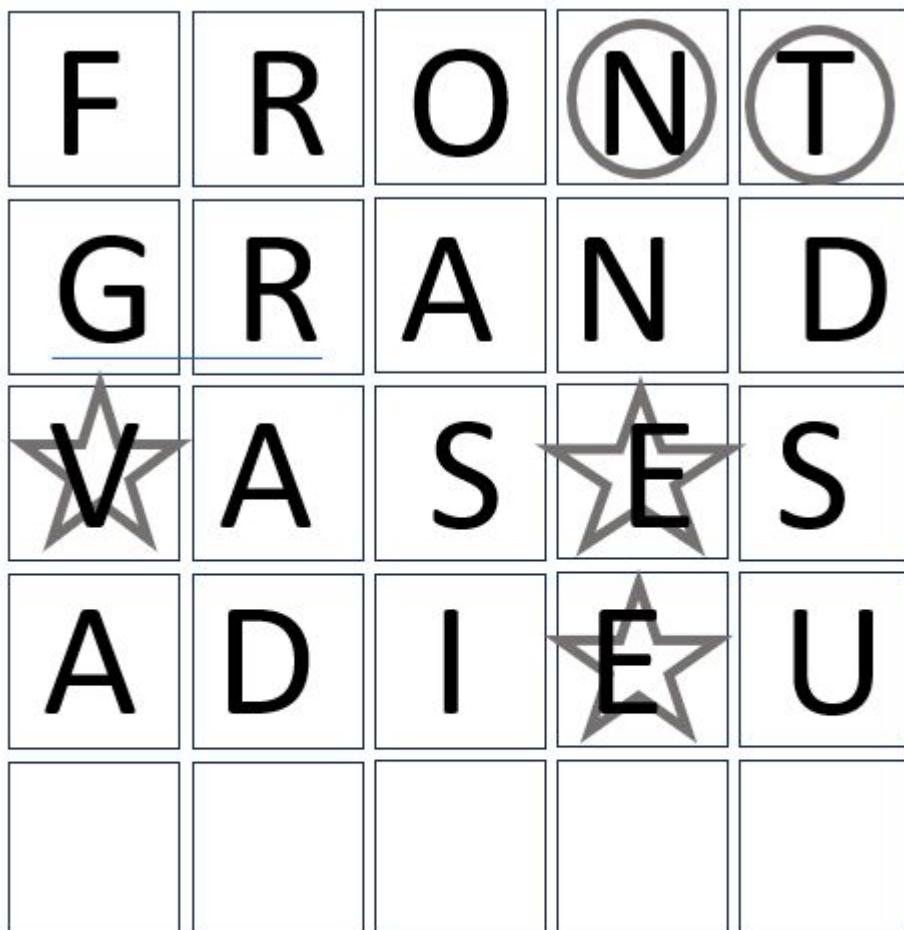
Additionally, the creation of these "bunny-men" could be a direct reflection of the writing process, how you pour so much into your art that it seems to take on a life of its own, growing beyond it. And killing these "bunny-men" might represent culling your drafts, how despite your emotional attachment you must eventually chop your darlings. The writing style in Awad's novel keeps you enraptured the entire time. Her fast-paced writing matches the pace of the constantly-changing plot. Additionally, her switches from the singular to plural narration – 'I' to 'we' – as she joins the bunnies shows the all-consuming nature of cults and peer pressure, making the reader really feel connected in mind to the other girls.

The main annoyance with the novel is really just Sam's character. Within the first few pages, her constant emphasis on how she's not like the other girls and self-pitying nature is drowning. Literally. It becomes more and more annoying listening to her complaining about the system, about the girls, about the privilege, about this entire world to an extent that you just become fed-up. But if you can move beyond Sam's annoying character, this novel is most definitely worth the read.

PUZZLES

El Wordo

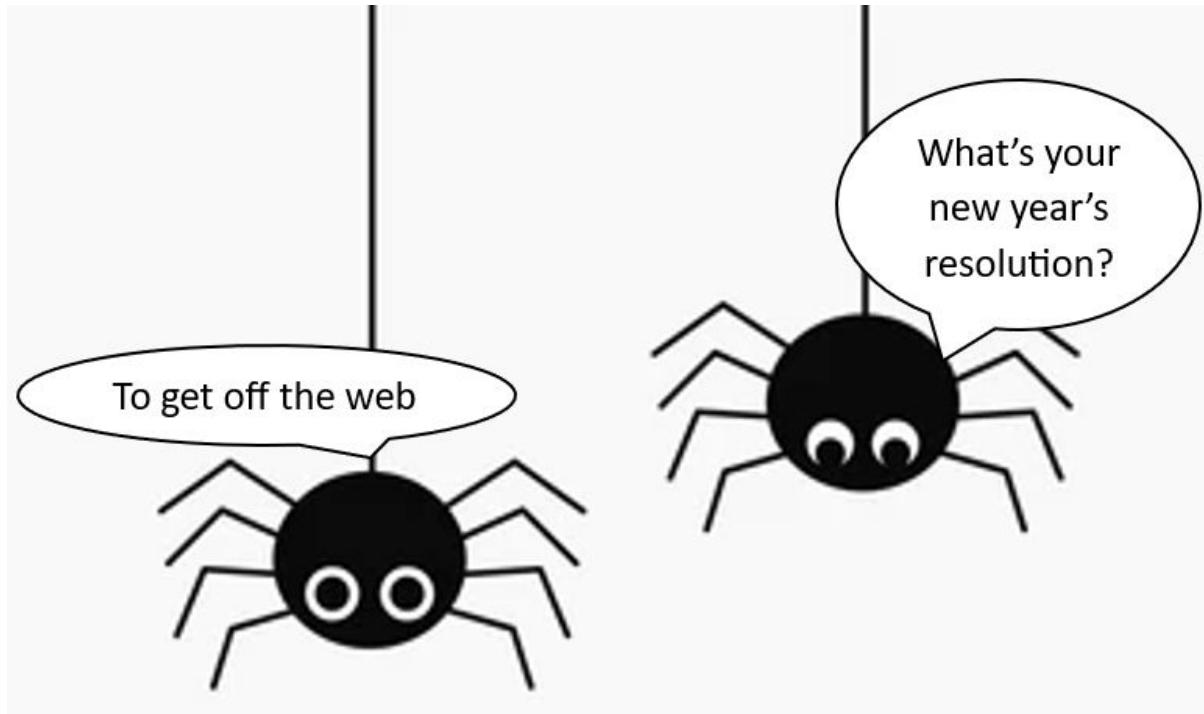
by: Neha Jasthi



= right letter, right place



= right letter, wrong place



Picture credit: Shutterstock

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