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The Gravity of Us

by Phil Stamper → Pg. 6

Mother:

An Incoherent Tale → Pg. 8

The Lost Traditions of

Christmas

Ho-Ho-Hope you had an interesting time reading our last edition of the newsletter because this month's edition is going to be filled with love, hope, joy, and peace. Any guesses why? Yess! It's Christmas. The season to spread love, peace, hope, and joy to every stranger you meet. Every Christmas we look forward to all the festivities, traditions, foods, sweets, etc. But have you ever wondered where the celebration of Christmas actually began? How did these traditions actually start? How were some of the traditions lost as we moved forward in time? Well not to worry because this article has all the answers.

We all know that Christmas is celebrated because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born to the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. Christmas day marks the nativity of our Lord. People celebrate Christmas by going to church to attend mass, decorating their houses with colourful decorations like lights, festoons, etc. They make a replica of the scene of the nativity which is widely known as the "Christmas Crib". Either bring a natural or artificial tree and decorate it and put the Christmas star on top of it and this tree is called the "Christmas Tree". But during olden times there were some traditions that were forgotten as the world modernised. Some of these traditions were unconventional but were deemed significant to Christmas. Here are some of the traditions we lost:



1. Burning of the Yule Log:

Burning a log in celebration of Yule started well before medieval times. It began as part of the winter solstice festivities. The candles and lights associated with Christmas, meant to symbolise guiding beacons for the Christ child, may have evolved from the Yule log, which was lit to entice the Sun to return as part of the *jól* (Yule) festival in Scandinavia. Interestingly, the Yule log was originally an entire tree! Families would bring the trunk of the Yule tree inside and stick the big end of it into the fireplace. The Yule log would feed the fire through the 12 Days of Christmas (from Christmas Day through the evening of the 5th of January—known as Twelfth Night). The ashes of Yule logs were said to be very good for plants.



2. Celebrating the Twelfth Night:

Twelfth Night is a Christian holiday, celebrated on January 5. It marks the twelfth and final night of the Christmas season and the coming of Epiphany. Contrary to popular belief, Christmas is not just December 25. That is only the first day of Christmas and it includes the eleven days that follow. The Twelve Days of Christmas begin on Christmas Day (December 25) and end on Epiphany (January 6). There is also a popular belief that it is unlucky to leave Christmas decorations hanging after Twelfth Night, though some may leave them up until Candlemas. Other popular Twelfth Night customs include singing Christmas carols, having one's house blessed, merrymaking, as well as attending church services.



3. Appointing the Lord of Misrule:

In England, the Lord of Misrule – known in Scotland as the Abbot of Unreason and in France as the *Prince des Sots* – was an officer appointed by lot during **Christmastide** to preside over the **Feast of Fools**. The Lord of Misrule was generally a peasant or **sub-deacon** appointed to be in charge of Christmas revelries, which often included drunkenness and wild partying.



4. Telling a scary Christmas story:

Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* is pretty much the only Christmas story with ghosts, so it may surprise you to learn that Dickens wasn't exactly working with an original idea. When *A Christmas Carol* was first published in 1843, it was in line with two long-standing traditions – observance of the Christmas holiday itself, and the practice of staying up late to tell ghost stories on Christmas Eve – both of which had begun to fall out of favour by the mid-19th century. *A Christmas Carol* revitalised both. During Christmas Eve, families used to sit in a circle and take turns in telling a scary Christmas story which is a tradition we should bring back.

There are not only these but a few more that we have lost. The traditions above were either banned or were not appropriate for the modern world. The ones above are a definite need to be revived. To end this article, I would love to ask you, what are your favourite Christmas traditions?

-Russell Azavedo
SYBAMMC

Christmas Recipes

Not all Christmas's are grand, not everyone feels the need to go to great lengths to enjoy all that the holiday season has to offer. Sometimes, we have a quiet, peaceful Christmas. One that does not spend hours in shopping, decorating, and cooking. If you relate, or are curious anyways, this one is for you. Here are some quick and easy recipes for a calm, warm Christmas:

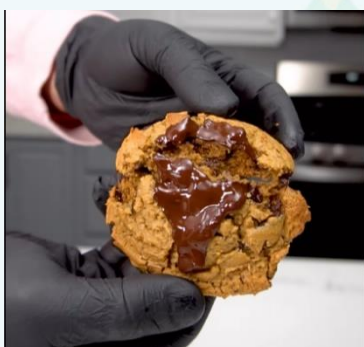
Cookies for Santa

Ingredients:

1. 1 cup brown sugar
2. 1 cup of peanut butter
3. 1 whole egg
4. 1 tsp. of baking soda
5. ½ cup of chopped chocolate

Procedure:

- Mix it all in a bowl
- Scoop in a tray
- Pop it in the oven at 350 degrees for 9 minutes
- Andddd you're done! No seriously that's it, enjoy!



A brownie for the night

Ingredients:

- **Brownie Base**
 1. 3 cups of crushed up Oreos
 2. 2 tsp. of baking powder
 3. 1 ½ cups of milk
- **Middle layer and Ganache**
 1. 1 cup of heavy cream
 2. 1 cup of hot heavy cream
 3. 1 ½ of chocolate chips

Procedure:

In a bowl mix the crushed-up Oreos, baking powder and milk. Pour into a pan lined with butter paper and set in an oven at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes. In another bowl take one cup of heavy cream and whisk until somewhat thick and turns into whipped cream. For the ganache, mix 1 ½ cups of chocolate chips and 1 cup of hot heavy cream till the chips have melted. To serve, grab a dish and place the brownie base, add a layer of whipped cream, and top it off with the ganache and chocolate sprinkles. Enjoy your chocolate brownie dish!



Bribe the elves with a pudding

Ingredients:

1. 2 cups of milk
2. 5 ½ tbsp of sugar
3. 6 tbsp of cocoa powder
4. 2 ½ tbsp gelatin powder
5. ½ cup of chocolate chips

Procedure:

Whisk together the milk, sugar, cocoa powder, and gelatin in a vessel on a medium low heat and bring it to a slight boil. Add chocolate chips after the contents of the vessel have blended and keep mixing stirring for another 2-3 mins. Wait for it to cool down, pour into a dish and keep in the fridge for a few hours till fully set. And there you go ready to serve chocolate pudding!

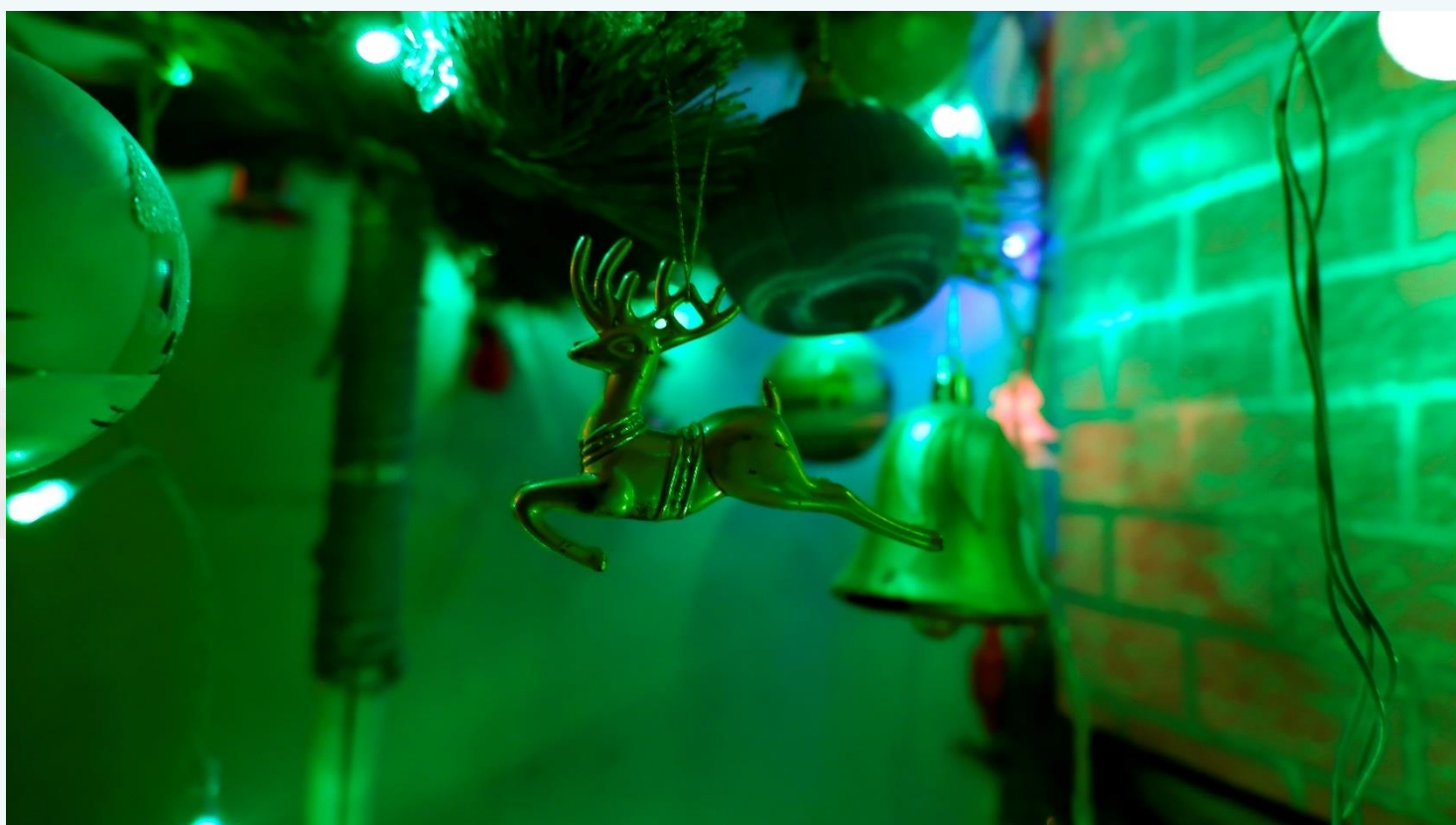
Credit for all recipes:

Instagram - @patrickzeinali



-Joshua Ohol,
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FEATURED PHOTOGRAPH



- Malcolm Rodrigues, SY Bcom

Book Review

The Gravity of Us

"There's something gratifying about kissing someone goodbye."

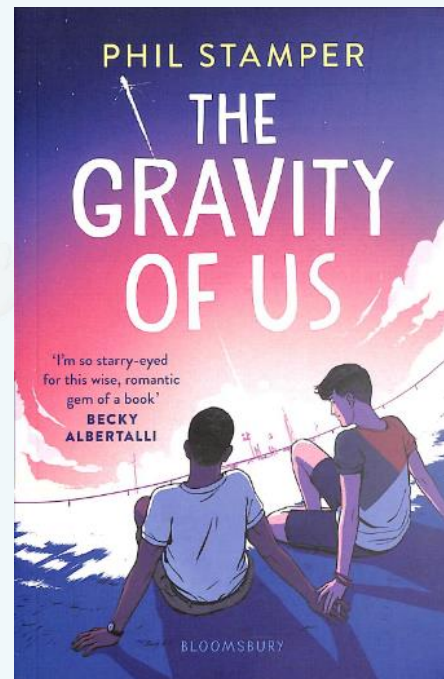
The Gravity of Us by Phil Stamper is a coming-of-age story that follows the life of a teenage boy - Cal. Many have called this a queer love story, and while that is partly true, the story has two more plots to it - journalism and astronomy, and I don't believe that calling it just a queer love story would give justice to it.

The story begins with Cal in NYC who is quite the micro-influencer with a significant following on a video-sharing social media platform which is similar to YouTube. The story begins with this journalistic element and continues to dominate the story as compared to the other two plots.

Cal's father - an aspiring astronaut, was overjoyed when he received the news that he'd be accompanying a few other astronauts for NASA's first mission to Mars. At this point in the story, you see that Cal isn't happy about this as it meant giving up his life in NYC, an internship which he secured at BuzzFeed and his best friend - Deb. He, along with his family, would have to begin a whole new life in Texas, AZ, which for a gay teenage boy like Cal, isn't the best place for his well-being.

Although after the move from NYC to Texas, Cal found himself in quite the situation. Leon - a young boy similar in age to Cal and the son of another astronaut, catches Cal's eye. They initially begin as friends but as the story evolves, so does their relationship. But just when things seemed to be getting better, another hurdle comes Cal's way.

Cal can't upload any more videos on his account on the video-sharing app as all the astronaut's families were going to be on a reality TV show and all his content needed to be approved before being posted. One reason for this is quite obvious - viewership.



The broadcasting channel that was covering this entire journey to Mars didn't want to lose viewership, especially to some kid who doesn't use any professional equipment. Another reason, the broadcasting channel wanted to control the narrative and personal vlogs from the son of an astronaut who's going to Mars would trump any reality TV show.

While all of this is going on, the relationship between Cal and Leon continues to grow, and the relationship is quite magical. I mean, two teenage boys getting to be together and navigate this phase of their life together is something truly precious because this isn't the case for most queer teenagers.

The story also has great mental health representation - anxiety and depression to be specific, family issues that many stories just avoid, and how egotistical teenagers can be. My main drawback with this book is that it tries to blend a gay love story, journalism and astronomy, which is too much to digest as many plotlines aren't properly finished and could have used more time to convey all the emotions that the story intended to. This being said, I would recommend reading it as it is a great feel-good book before going to bed.

- Cliff Coutinho,
SYBA.

Movie Review

Falling For Christmas

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas." Christmas is not only a season of joy, love, and happiness we celebrate with loved ones, it's also a time we celebrate with ourselves. So this Christmas, crawl up under your cosiest blankets, pour yourself a steaming drink of hot chocolate, and tune up the sounds of a movie night. "Falling For Christmas" is the perfect movie for the perfect Christmas. Lindsay Lohan plays a pampered heiress who loses her memory in a skiing accident and ends up in the care of a lodge owner widower on Christmas in the 2022 American holiday romance comedy *Falling for Christmas*. Using a script by Ron Oliver and Jeff Bonnett as her source, Janeen Damian makes her directing debut with this movie. Additionally playing supporting parts are Chord Overstreet, George Young, Jack Wagner, and Olivia Perez.



Rich, spoiled heiress Sierra Belmont (Lohan) intends to spend the holiday season with her narcissistic, Instagram-obsessed boyfriend - Tad Fairchild, at her father's (Jack Wagner) luxury ski resort (George Young). She expects her dad to offer her a job as the resort's "Vice President of Atmosphere" so she won't have to spend her days lazing around in champagne, caviar, and designer clothes. She is hesitant about the position because she knows deep down that it is not what she wants to do. She thinks about being an influencer like Tad, who coerces her into becoming one of his accessories and gets her to accept a marriage proposal on a mountainside. Tad is knocked out on one side of the mountain, and Sierra suffers from a concussion, but fate steps in and causes a disastrous fall.



Fortunately, she is saved by a widowed single dad Jake Russell (Chord Overstreet), who was passing by.

Sierra is stuck because she has acute amnesia and no identification. Jake offers to house this lost soul in his modest family inn with his mother-in-law Alejandra (Alejandra Flores) and precocious daughter Avy (Olivia Perez), being the kind-hearted man that he is until someone comes to claim Sierra. His competitors, as well as the urgent need for repairs, are causing his business to struggle. Since he is still mourning the death of his wife, his personal life also needs to be fixed. Like her hotel tycoon father, Sierra, who is determined to be a blessing rather than a blight, makes the area better in more ways than one as Tad searches for her.

In Lohan's hands, her character gains a soulful sense of comedy, tenderness, and vitality that could otherwise have been one-note. When forced to play someone who is utterly intolerable, she is funny, showing her comedic muscles by pratfalling over a Barcalounger or down a smooth flight of stairs. But when the mood is melancholy, she has a gentle side as well. In passages that reveal the content's resonant warmth and deep feelings, she and Perez have great chemistry. *Falling for Christmas*, delivers subdued, quiet work, deftly dipping into humorous and heartfelt elements. Catch this whimsical movie on Netflix and make it your weekend watch this Christmas!

- Jovita Chettiar
SYBA-B

Mother: An Incoherent Tale

This relationship of ours is so complicated,
One moment I dislike you, the next I'd wanna sacrifice for you;
This relationship of ours is topsy-turvy,
One moment I wanna run away from you, the next I wanna feel your motherly love, too.

Mom, why are we like this?
Why do I always understand you, but you, never do;
Mom, why are we like this?
Why do I always listen to you, but you, never do?

However, we are and whatever we have is only ours,
A mother-daughter bond is far more complicated than this universe;
A mother-daughter bond is very exceptional for these humans and their diverse.

Sometimes I think, do you despise me so much that you don't want me?
Sometimes I think, do you love me so much that you just can't let me be?

But all I know is,
This relationship of ours will never be forgotten,
It'll always come with a price and will never be for free,
After all, I'm what you could've been and you're what I might be.

- Aishwarya Bhatara,
FYBA.

THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

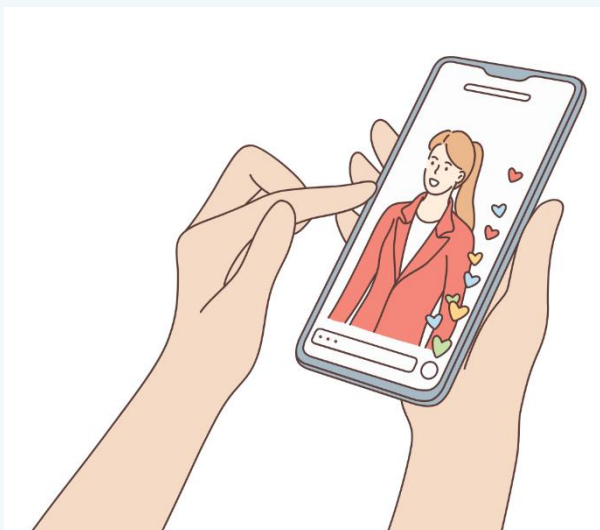
A DISTORTED REALITY

“Just take one last picture, from this angle, I promise.” We’re all guilty of troubling that poor friend to get that ‘perfect shot’ of us that makes it to the gram.

For most, one of the first things we do on waking up is reaching out for our phones and opening social media. And oh! Before you know it, you’ve already walked into an alternate reality!

Now whether we like to admit that media frames our definition of beauty or not, social media and body image share an inextricable link. While body dissatisfaction is a growing concern, what’s more alarming is the unfavorable methods undertaken to achieve those standards. There has been an increase in the consumption of steroids, laxatives, diuretics, and even measures like extreme dieting that have been undertaken.

“Photoshop and filters present people and things in their best light,” says Emanuele, (senior director of Mood Disorders Center, a national non-profit.) “It creates a distorted fantasy world and raises the bar on what people perceive is ‘the best’ way to be.”



In an article King University posted, they mentioned how Florida House Experience, a healthcare institution, revealed how not only women but also men are susceptible to this unhealthy body comparison. They conducted a survey that closely examined the link between media, body image, and confidence. The survey revealed that 87% of women and 65% of men make body comparisons with what they see on social and traditional media. Out of which, a good 50% of women and 37% of men make adverse and detrimental comparisons. They go on to explain how an article written by Time highlights how an excess of editing software could be the root cause of an ‘unfavorable self-concept’ and how ‘selfie-holics’ now have the potential to edit pictures in a way that draws parallel with makeup and other beauty products. This thereby results in a divide between reality and perception, which heightens the distance felt between people’s authentic self vs their digital persona. These standards then push us into not only hiding our flaws, but now totally obscuring them. In fact, today, even our most unpretentious and real features are highlighted by filters, and posting a normal non-edited picture will never be the same again.

In a rather interesting experiment the BBC conducted, female undergraduates were asked to click a selfie on an iPad to which they had to upload on either Facebook or Instagram. One group was required to take a selfie and post the exact same thing without editing it or any additional touch-ups, while the other group was given the privilege of doing so. It was observed that even when given the freedom of retouching their images, the women felt worse about themselves than from when they entered the experiment room. An after-effect of this experiment saw how the

participants wanted to know about the number of likes they'd received before knowing how to feel about their post. "There's this rollercoaster of feeling anxious and then getting reassurance from other people that you look good," says Mills. "But that probably doesn't last forever, and then you take another selfie."

Celebrities or fashion bloggers use social media as a platform to manage their impressions for their consumers or viewers. We end up craving for the things they have then, be it make-up, or clothes from our favourite brands. Do we really need it or are we just doing it because we've given into social norms because of peer pressure? Although somewhere at the back of our minds, we know that what's portrayed online is not real, we subconsciously try to achieve those unrealistic standards. We must not let media get the better side of us or deceive us. It's important that we look beneath those filters and realize what we see on media is not the real self but the "ideal self." Viewing pictures that are projected in an inauthentic or deceptive way, just to perpetuate beauty, can be detrimental. We mustn't use filters to an extent that it affects our mental health. So, who then is beautiful?

- Alicia Dias,
SYBA



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