

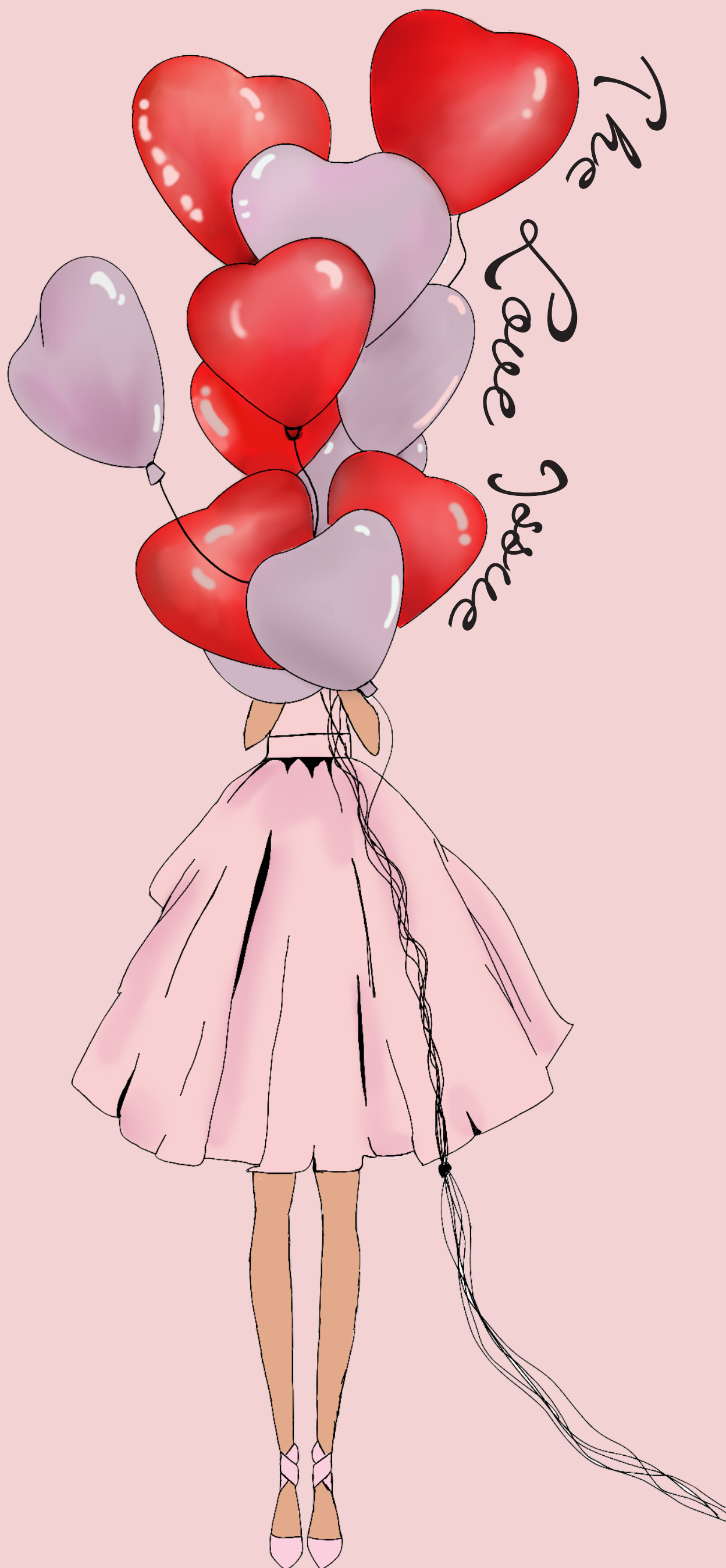
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HARVARD

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THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969



# MASTHEAD

February 15, 2024

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# In the News

*Short briefings of upcoming news developments on Harvard's campus poised to make waves.*

BY LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26

Since returning to campus, Harvard has made several strides in reversing its missteps from last fall, such as creating task forces to tackle both Islamophobia and Antisemitism on campus. However, the aftermath of the events of last semester, ranging from campus demonstrations to presidential resignations, continue to unfold with no clear resolution in sight. Moving forward, we will be reporting updates on important developments each week—here are some of the most anticipated ongoing stories:

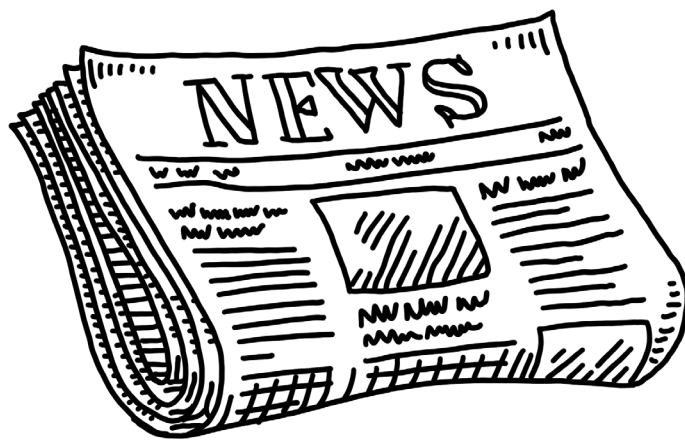
## **Harvard University's Search for a New President:**

Since the resignation of former Harvard University President Claudine Gay, Harvard will soon begin its search for the University's next president. Harvard Provost Alan Garber '76 is currently serving in the interim role and has confirmed he will not return to his previous position. Though no official timeline has been confirmed, so far two additional members have joined the Harvard Corporation, and the announcement of the official presidential search committee should be soon to follow.

## **Campus Protests and Discourse:**

Last semester saw dozens of campus protests and discourse in response to the Israel-Palestine conflict and frustrations with the University. With Harvard officials hardening its position on protest guidelines, such as prohibiting classroom disruptions, and

student activists feeling repressed by the University, the coming weeks could present a standoff as students and administrators navigate increasingly challenging circumstances. Since returning, a 'Die-In' led by the organization Harvard Out of Occupied Palestine was held on Feb. 12th on the Widener steps, and pro-Palestinian students and affiliates rallied at the Science Center on Feb. 8th.



## **The Harvard Corporation and the Board of Overseers:**

Both the Harvard Corporation and the Board of Overseers, who previously held a more behind-the-scenes role in campus leadership, have recently been thrust into the spotlight, receiving criticism for the role they played in the way the last few months at Harvard have unfolded. These groups will have a large say in leading the University through its leadership crisis, especially by choosing its next president. Co-CEO of KKR Joseph Bae '94 and former CEO of Merck and Co. Kenneth Frazier '78 recently joined the Corporation, and billionaire donors like Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Ackman '88 have offered their endorsements for various candidates for the Board of Overseers. Each governing body will play a crucial role in deciding Harvard's future.

## **Decisions of the Ad Board:**

Two high-profile campus protests were met with disciplinary action by the University. Eight students who occupied University Hall for 24 hours to advocate for a ceasefire of the Israel-Hamas war, as well as four student organizers of a 'Week of Action' for Palestine, were subject to meetings with the Ad Board. The ultimate decision of the Ad Board, the administrative body that regulates undergraduate student academic and social conduct, is still underway.

## **Congressional Investigation:**

In December, Congress announced it would be opening an investigation into Harvard over claims of antisemitism and limited free speech. The move came in the wake of Claudine Gay's highly criticized congressional testimony. Since their announcement, Congress has accused Harvard of obstructing the House investigation by withholding and redacting requested documents.

LAYLA CHAARAOUI '26  
(LACHAARAOUI@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) IS THE  
MANAGING EDITOR OF THE  
*INDEPENDENT.*

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

# Data-Driven Dating

Harvard's Datamatch uses mysterious Algorithm™ to foster community relationships.

BY CLARA LAKE '27

It was the week before Valentine's, when all through Harvard, singles were stirring, with hope in their hearts.

Their survey answers were entered into Datamatch with care, in hopes that finding love soon would be there.

The lonesome were nestled, all snug in their beds, while a computerized cupid "Algorithm™" toiled, several steps ahead.

Harvard students might go all four years without finding a special Harvard someone. Yet, it takes less than seven days for Harvard's very own data-driven solution to provide an opportunity to not spend Valentine's Day alone. The rumors are true—Datamatch has returned for its 29th season of love. An online matchmaking service, Datamatch uses an "Algorithm™" to suggest matches for users based on their desire to find "love" or "friends." Available a week before Valentine's Day, students at Harvard and 50 other colleges can create a profile and fill out a survey of lighthearted questions. The "Algorithm™" runs once the survey closes at 11:59 p.m. EST on February 13th, and students wake up on Valentine's Day to find the resulting matches in their inbox.

The original Datamatch was launched on Harvard's campus as a paper survey in 1994, one year before the launch of the pioneering online dating website, Match.com. In the 30 years since its analog beginnings, Datamatch has seen significant development in both its popularity and algorithm. "The algorithm gets quite complicated, hence, they use machine learning techniques to create matches," stated one of this year's Supreme Cupids, Nadine Han '25. As a Supreme Cupid, Han shares a co-president-like role in the Datamatch organization with Lily Liu '25.

The "Algorithm™" matches students at the same college based on their survey answers, profile information, and other Datamatch site

interaction. Of the matches suggested for each user, they can select who they "match" with, i.e., who they are interested in meeting up with. A number of sponsored meals are available for mutual matches to take advantage of at nearby restaurants, an enticement for users to go through with seeing where it leads.

Most dating apps let users control their interactions with others, based on their preferences. According to Supreme Cupid Han, Datamatch differs from this model since users can personalize their profile and survey answers, but it is the "Algorithm™" that selects matches. "We pick people for you to interact with," she explained. "This idea of having a customized algorithm that decides what might be best for you...is also really exciting and different."

Han thinks Datamatch has become popularized at Harvard for "this concept of casual matchmaking slash low stakes opportunities to meet other people." In 2023, 60% of Harvard students filled out the survey, according to Han. "Harvard is the highest percentage, by a good margin" stated Howard Huang '26, Datamatch's Stats Lead. "I filled out the survey because everyone else was doing it," explained Tali Wong '25.

Amid the developing world of artificial intelligence and data science, it is no surprise that data-driven problem-solving now extends to the dating realm. "Technology has gotten to a point where we can leverage them to find partners," said May Soshi '24, a Teaching Fellow for the Harvard course Critical Thinking in Data Science. Students in this course examine algorithmic biases and ethical considerations in data science models and data collection.

People tend to romanticize algorithm-based dating platforms, said Queenie Luo, PhD student and Teaching Fellow for Critical Thinking in Data Science. "They think algorithms and math is more objective," she stated. "They think data science can help them to reach a broader range of people."

The downside of all of this? The scope of the actual algorithm. "The Datamatch survey is very rudimentary. It's not complex at all," said Soshi, having taken the survey in the past. She voiced that dating algorithms are dependent on only the data available. "There's so many things to consider when it comes to dating," she said.

"You need to be able to use numbers to quantify things, and you'll lose a lot of information in the process."

"We live in a digital age where everything is very heavily focused around social media and the internet," said Han. "On one end, it might seem a bit impersonal, because it's not a human who's making these decisions for you. But I think on the other end, you're able to reach a lot more people."

Soshi also recognizes the lighthearted nature of Datamatch. "It's a fun lit-

tle activity for college students to engage in," she said. "You can find friends, you can find potential romantic matches, and you might go on that free meal day and it might be a fun story."

Despite the draw of Datamatch and its success stories, it inevitably does not work for everyone. "No one matched me back," said Wong about her experience with Datamatch last year. According to Huang, 33,338 of the 179,842 algorithm-suggested matches last year resulted in mutual pairings, or roughly 18.5%. Datamatch cannot currently tell whether a mutual match goes through with a free food outing.

When considering why students may not follow through with a match or take advantage of the opportunity for free food, Wong thinks that finding a true match may not have been an intention in the first place. "People fill it out for the curiosity of who they're going to match with and less for actually looking for something," she said. "At Harvard, people are busy. Free food is exciting, but going on a date with someone you don't know could be kind of awkward."

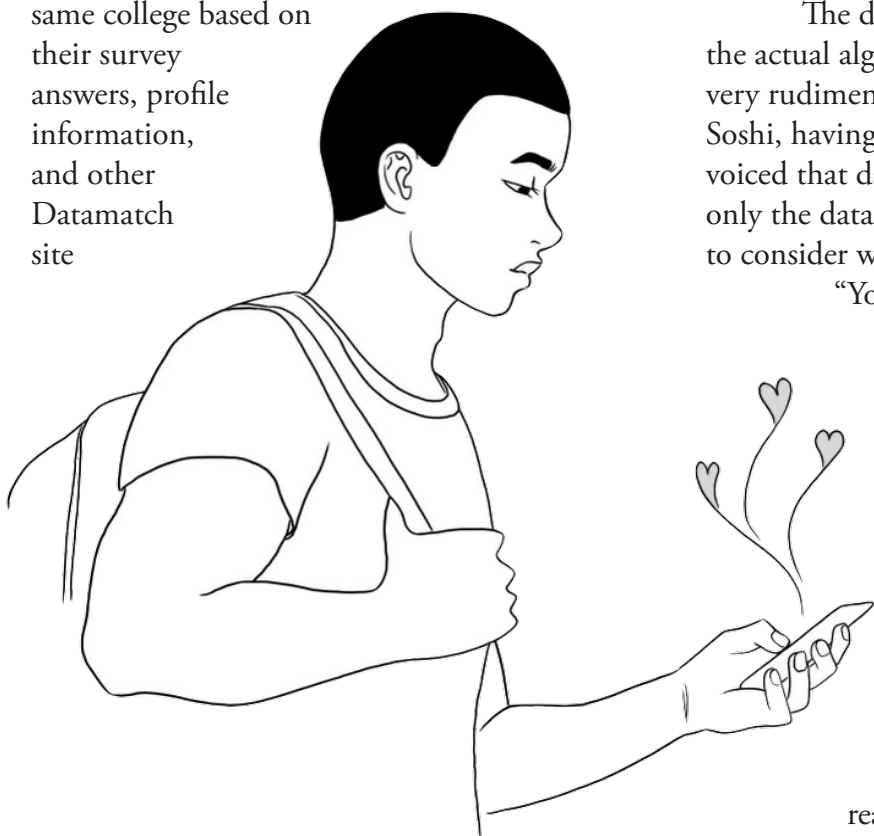
Ultimately, the Supreme Cupids envision Datamatch as a fun activity for Harvard students. "Datamatch is much more lighthearted and not super serious," said Supreme Cupid Liu. "I would say there is some value in having some sort of technical algorithm contribute to how people get matched together, although only up to a certain extent."

"We're here for the student body," said Han. The team works to present Datamatch in an appealing light. "The less intimidating this type of application is, I think the more likely people are to engage in it," she said. "The tone of the website is very light-hearted and I won't say goofy, but right now, it's a video game retro theme," said Liu. In this fun spirit, the survey contains twelve multiple choice questions with five comical answer choices. For example, in response to "What's your Roman Empire?" a user could respond that it is "My p-set buddies to lovers arc fantasy." To see more questions, fill out the survey yourself!

Beyond providing an opportunity for Harvard students to connect, one of Datamatch's goals as an organization is to teach compers about coding languages and technical tools. A fall semester boot camp prepares Datamatch Team hopefuls to contribute to the site in various capacities: Algorithm, Statistics, Design, Business, and Web. "We're just a bunch of people who take a semester to learn something new. And then we kind of apply it to this huge project that has thousands of people on it," said Han.

The hard-working team and popularity behind Datamatch make it an enduring annual activity. "It has kind of become a Harvard tradition at this point," said Liu.

**CLARA LAKE '27 (CLARALAKE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WONDERS HOW HER FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH DATAMATCH WILL GO. GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27**



# Stop and Smell the Roses

*A profile on John Selletto's Petali Flowers.*

BY CAROLINE HAO '25

In the heart of Harvard Square, tucked away on Mount Auburn Street, sits Petali Flowers—a floral boutique that has been a community staple since its owner, John Selletto, opened the store in 1989.

Walking into Petali feels like stepping into a different world. Surrounded by every color under the sun and the delicate fragrance of lavender, you know you are in a special place. Selletto thinks so too. “We tend to take people, when they come in, out of their world and into ours,” he told me.

“A long time ago, my brother and I traveled throughout the Southwest, trading with the Indians. We bought old Mexican furniture, all kinds of things—and we opened up a store on Newbury Street with those items. We were there for quite a while. Then, Harvard approached us and wanted us to open up here. That led us to the Smith Center, where we had a couple of stores. Then, this space opened up, and I asked Harvard if I could rent it out, and they asked, ‘What do you want to do with it?’ I told them I wanted to open a flower shop—and I’ve been winging it ever since.”

Petali’s allure extends beyond its dreamy atmosphere—it is a testament to Selletto’s discerning eye for floral trends and quality. With

flowers sourced from around the world—Italy to Japan to Holland to California—he ensures that every stem that graces the shelves is beautiful, memorable, and fresh. “I buy what I like... The flowers always hit you,” Selletto said. Petali also sells a variety of trinkets, from handcrafted soaps to stuffed animals to puzzles and board games. “We’re a really good gift store and a really good flower shop,” he added.

Selletto believes that Petali’s role transcends retail—he sees it as a conduit for fostering connections with the community. “We know a lot of people from just seeing them come in over and over,” he said. From helping boyfriends out of the doghouse (“Monday is a doghouse day,” he tells me) to witnessing the milestones of his customers’ lives, Selletto and his team at Petali are the custodians of cherished moments. “A college student, like yourself, will come in for four years. Then they’ll go off, come back, and say ‘Hey, I’m getting married... Can you do our flowers?’”

In addition to helping everyday Cambridge customers, Petali serves a number of nearby schools, from Harvard to Boston College to Northeastern, for special events. “We do a lot of flowers for the University and for events like Man of the Year and Woman of the Year,” Selletto said. “We make baskets and bouquets [for Man of the Year and Woman of the Year], and we don’t charge... It’s a Harvard thing and we like the people.”

As Valentine’s Day approaches, Petali is a haven for people seeking the perfect flowers to express their love. While red roses remain the perennial romantic gesture, Selletto also recommends the more free-spirited flowers in orange, pink, and purple. “Colors are important,” he added. “We have unique flowers some people have never seen...and whatever we have in here, people seem to love. Pantone’s Color of the Year each year is also popular.”

Amidst the flurry of romantic gestures, Selletto and his



team remain attuned to the quieter, yet equally pivotal, moments. Anna Mae Becker, Petali’s Floral Design and Sales Manager, told me about a memorable encounter from this past fall. “Last semester, a young girl came in and said, ‘I’d like a small bouquet, something posey, because I’m going to ask this girl to be my girlfriend.’ Then, she leaves, and another girl comes in later looking for a similar thing. We wrap it up, send her on her way, and we think to ourselves ‘I wonder...’ At the end of the day, we saw them walking together with the flowers they had gotten each other. So they asked each other to be each other’s girlfriends on the same day.”

As our conversation wrapped up, Selletto showed me his current favorites—effervescent, orange-pink wild roses—and told me about the new Japanese porcelain dishes he ordered. Before I left, he gave me a bouquet of light pink tulips. I told him that I’ll be back next week.

**CAROLINE HAO '25 (CAROLINEHAO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) LOVES ALL FLOWERS, BUT ESPECIALLY RED ROSES.**

**PHOTOS BY CAROLINE HAO '25**



# Are We Ready for It?

What to expect from Harvard's first-ever Taylor Swift course.

BY AVA REM '27

Whether you are in her top 0.5% of Spotify listeners or only listen to her music when forced to while shopping, it is safe to say that we have all had a run-in with Taylor Swift. But for people in Lowell Lecture Hall every Monday and Wednesday from 12:00-1:15 P.M., what was once their guilty pleasure and hobby is now their English homework.

As announced by the College last fall, Professor Stephanie Burt has heralded in a new wave of Swifties with her course titled “Taylor Swift and Her World.” However, as the syllabus states, this course is not only meant for die-hard fans of Taylor but also for “the merely Swift-curious...as [well as] people who just want to read poems and stories about celebrities, music, and musicians.”

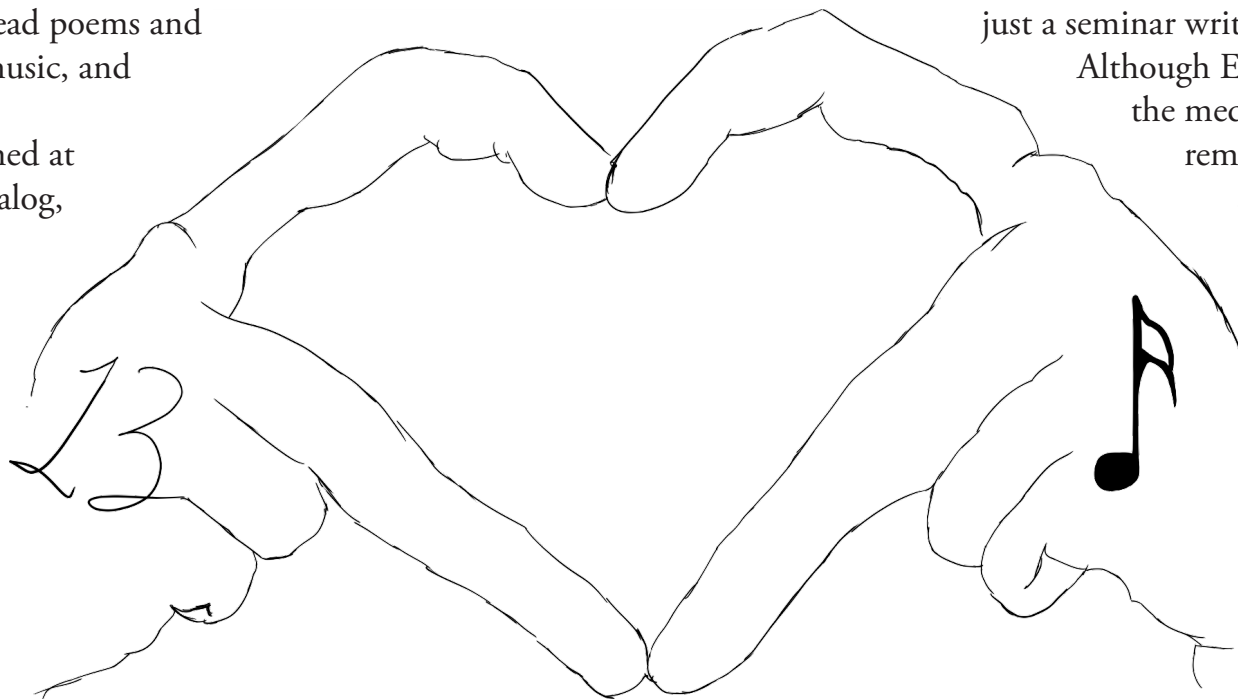
With a syllabus aimed at exploring “Swift’s own catalog, including hits, deep cuts, outtakes, re-recordings, considering songwriting as its own art, distinct from poems recited or silently read,” Burt expresses a desire to provide students with the tools to spot connections between the mainstream lyricism of Swift and historically significant literary canon, including prose by Willa Cather, James Weldon Johnson, and William Wordsworth.

In reference to the literary movements analyzed in class alongside Swift’s discography, Dominick Lombard '27 described the larger appeal of an English course that is rooted in both the new and old. “By analyzing these movements and styles, we can discover what makes Swift’s music and brand so appealing to large audiences—tapping into genres and preferences that have helped others propel to stardom...[and] literary movements and techniques [that] don’t die or end but evolve,” he noted.

On a more personal level, Lombard went on to explain that his “why” for taking the course stems from where he grew up. “I am originally from Westerly, Rhode Island, where Taylor Swift has the mansion that inspired her song, The Last Great American Dynasty. You could say Swift-fever took over my town, and since then, I’ve been interested in her music and fame. I have enjoyed examining how literary movements evolve and change even into pop culture and contemporary music,” he said.

However, despite wielding immense economic and social power, Swift’s importance is still questioned by many, especially in higher education. Harvard, and Professor Burt in particular, have received criticism about no longer being taken “seriously” because of a course based on Taylor Swift. In an email interview with the Independent, Burt spoke on this media attention. “Most of the professionals have been sympathetic and lovely; I have turned down a few invitations to appear on right-wing talk shows [since] they shouldn’t be so mean,” she said.

While this course’s subject material may come as a shock to some,



Harvard is not unique in its creation of a course based on the global superstar. Colleges around the country, including Arizona State University, University of Florida, University of Texas, NYU, UC Berkeley, and Stanford, have all created courses that offer students the opportunity to examine Swift and her lyricism through different lenses of social psychology, marketing, entrepreneurship, and music theory.

Due to the heightened popularity of Taylor Swift courses in higher education, it should be no surprise that Burt’s course has already received much attention from media and news outlets. In fact, on Monday, February 5th—the day after Swift took home two Grammys and announced her 11th album “The Tortured Poets Department”—NBC was granted exclusive access to film Burt’s lecture. “We have had to tell a lot of TV people that they can’t bring cameras into the classroom [since] Harvard made a deal with NBC,” Burt noted.

These unique media opportunities, although “overwhelming” at times, are something Burt appreciates. “I like attention, and I very much like helping the TFs and TAs, who are brilliant, get attention too,” she said.

Similarly, Burt enjoys sharing the spotlight with students. “I love that some students are making TikToks [because] student-created media attention is always better than when professionals from outside Harvard descend.”

Speaking to the dynamic between students, the ten TFs, and herself, Burt noted that “there’s a real sense of performance.” Since “Taylor Swift and Her World” is a new course, Burt has put to use skills she has learned from teaching other new courses. “Sometimes I’ve made mistakes in how to teach them. I think I’ve learned at this point about clarity and organization in a large course and how that’s different, what needs to be done to steer a large course, how it’s not just a seminar writ large,” she commented.

Although Emerson Utgaard '27 calls the media attention exciting, she remarked that the course itself seems to be “disorganized” because of its size. “It seemed like the teaching team was still figuring things out [and] like the class was 100% catered to Taylor Swift super-fans,” Utgaard explained. “Even though [the class] was advertised as a class for everyone, a

casual fan would be completely lost in the sea of sometimes obscure references used by the teaching team.”

Due to its disorganized nature, Utgaard says that she ultimately decided to drop the course after the first week. “I took the class to have joy and balance in my life, to give me Lover or Fearless energy. Instead, it was giving Reputation, and thus: Look What You Made Me Do,” she commented.

As with any new course, these mixed student reviews come with the territory. In other words, as Burt acknowledges, everyone is in a different “era.” While Utgaard is in Reputation, Burt said, “The class is Fearless. I think I, personally, perhaps alas, might be in 1989.”

**AVA REM '27 (AVAREM@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS NOT, ALAS, READY FOR THIS CLASS AND DROPPED IT.**

**GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27**

# Why is Harvard So Single?

Many Harvard students have a lonely Valentine's Day. Why is love so hard to find at Harvard?

BY ROBERTO QUESADA '27

Lowest acceptance rate and lowest body counts” is how Sidechat, the anonymous social media app, characterizes the Ivy League. While it's a bit rude, the quote isn't entirely wrong. According to The Crimson, approximately twenty-five percent of respondents in the graduating Class of 2022 survey were single for all four of their college years, and thirty-nine percent were only in one relationship. As Valentine's Day approaches, one is left to wonder: *why haven't more Harvard students posted those corny Instagram stories? In other words, why are so many Harvard students single?*

There are many reasons why someone might remain single at Harvard. One posited theory is that students are afraid of rejection. As high-achieving students, it can be a big blow to be rejected and excluded from extracurriculars, internships, and research opportunities. Adding dating to the mix can present a risk of further self-esteem damage. Psychology Today explains that fear of rejection is a significant hurdle to dating, as it discourages people from reaching out to potential partners. This could lead to students keeping their crushes in their heads, rather than making a move.

Another theory is that Harvard students might have very high standards. As Eric McDowell writes in Business Insider, when people know they have options, they often look for someone who they find

(even if it's just by a bit) more attractive or charismatic than the person immediately in front of them. This can cause people to put potential partners off as they endlessly wait for a perfect lover. With high standards for extracurriculars and personal achievement, it could be possible that some Harvard students have similar, unrealistic expectations for love.

Not all students agree with this reasoning. Exchange student Alexia Ferreira '25 thinks that Harvard is actually much less judgemental than her school in London despite its competitiveness. “As a [temporary exchange student] who's just come onto campus now, I don't feel like I was particularly judged, not even from the standpoint of a romantic relationship. I'm here for two semesters. I'm not looking for anything. But I didn't feel I got the sense that it was a very judgy campus. I feel like my campus back in London is so much worse.”

The complexity of campus dating culture can be seen in another phenomenon happening at colleges around the United States: hookup culture. An article by Shemeka Thorpe and Arielle Kuperberg, Public Health and Sociology researchers, respectively, explains that 72% of college students have hooked up by their fourth year. At Harvard, the trend is similar.

Students in the Class of 2022's Crimson survey generally had more sexual partners than they did dating partners.

A senior in the Class of 2024 elaborated on this point. “I think that because people think [hookup culture is] a college culture thing... They automatically bias whatever they want to automatically be that, even if they may actually want more... Perceptions of what college life and love should look like feel restricted to that.” Still, some students enjoy hookup culture and don't necessarily want a relationship. Then what explains the

students who do want a relationship and can't seem to strike luck?

The biggest factor we found can be encapsulated in one word: time. Harvard students are overcommitted, and this often conflicts with their dating goals. A member of the Class of 2027 weighed in, saying she was too overwhelmed to pursue love. “I'm very busy with academics, and it's hard to sacrifice any of that for a relationship,” she said. “I think people are very focused on academics, very focused on their future, and they don't really want to risk any of that or put time into anything else at this school just because they only have it for a certain amount of time.”

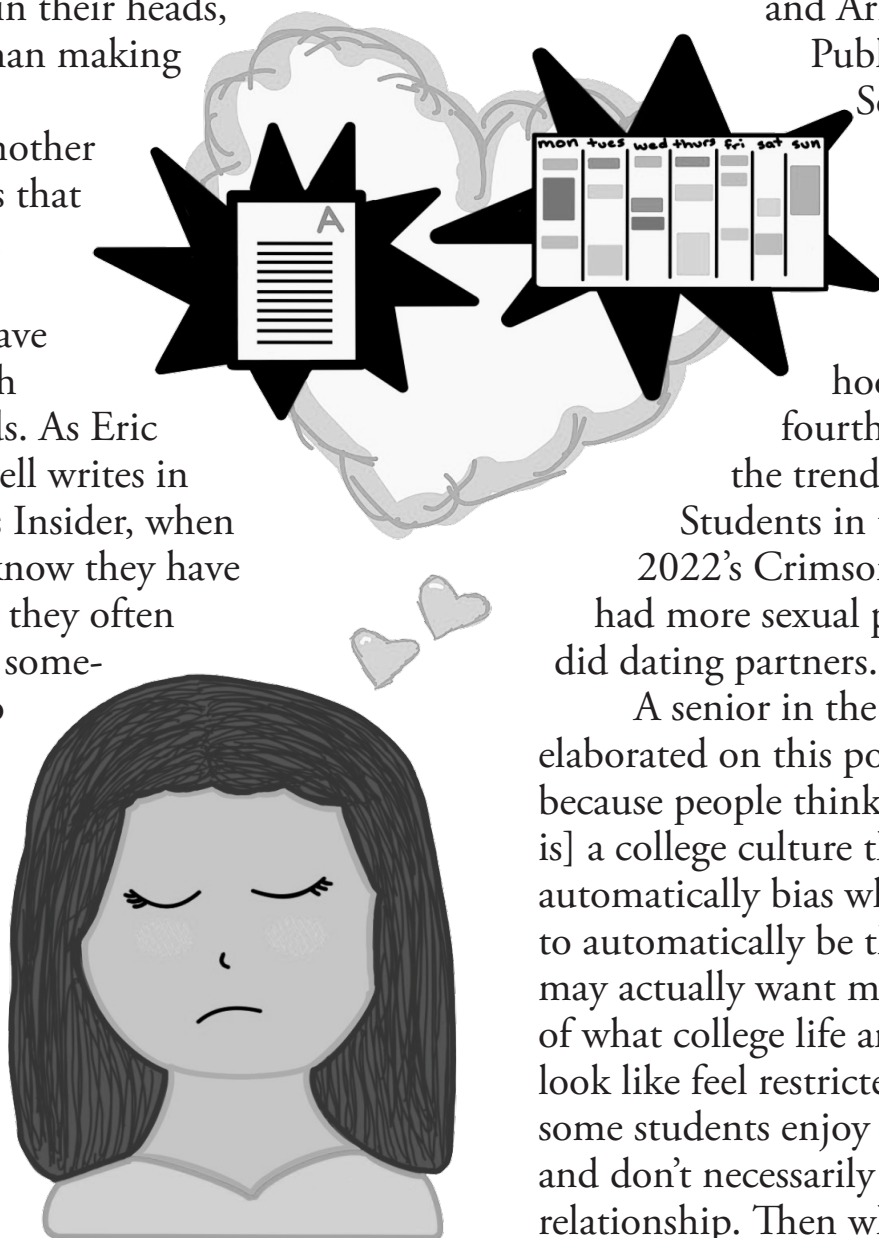
It is not all gloom and doom for the singles of Harvard College, however. Rishi Mohan '25 felt that having a relationship is doable, it just takes investment. “Everyone can find time in their schedules for something or for exploration, whether it's a new club, whether it's a relationship, whether it's a social something,” he said.

For single people looking for a relationship, Mohan said to not be afraid. “People put on a good facade at Harvard and everyone internally is a little unsure of themselves. Don't be afraid to just ask and get over the hump.”

When Valentine's Day comes around and you, the single pringle, are stuck in your dorm scrolling through Instagram posts of cute couples, know this: you may be alone, but you are not alone. There are many other single people at Harvard who are all waiting for their moment. Who knows, it may come soon!

ROBERTO QUESADA '27  
(ROBERTOQUESADA@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU) WILL BE SINGLE NEXT  
VALENTINE'S DAY, OR WILL HE?

GRAPHIC BY SOPHIA  
RASCOFF '27



# The Love of Doing Nothing

*Reconciling our relationship with mundanity.*

BY MARBELLA MARLO '24

**A**round this time last February, my eyes sprung open as the morning light flooded my 10 ft. x 10 ft. dorm room. Icy wind chilled the side of my body through the window I intentionally placed next to the head of my bed and cracked open as far as dorm regulations would allow. I hated shades, I hated stuffy air, and I loved the daily invasion of sunlight and winter breeze preceding my morning alarm each day. But this morning, another sound woke me up—not the sunlight, cold draft, or ring of my iPhone alarm. It was my dad's voice.

I thought I was dreaming. My dad lives 3,000 miles away in California, and I had not heard or expected any visit from him. I refused to get out of bed and shut my eyes to force myself back to sleep. Not long after, a collection of male voices—two I could distinguish—were quietly muffled behind my bedroom door. Still, my lack of interest failed to motivate me to get out of bed and see what the commotion was about. When I opened my eyes for the second time, my older brother was smiling down at me.

"Surprise!" he whispered. My dad was standing behind him with a grin matching his son's.

My furrowed brows and half-smile exhibited my confusion enough to initiate an explanation from the two of them. Jake had just returned from Peru and was moving to New York City, so my dad flew in to help move him in. The logistics made no sense in my head since my brother could have easily flown into New York instead of Boston, and my mom typically enjoyed decorating and organizing our move-ins, but I chose to not ask any questions. He told me he would take the two of us to breakfast.

On our sunny walk to Flour Bakery, Jake recounted his experiences traveling through South America: going on solo visits to different beaches and cities and experiencing the culture of our mom's Peruvian heritage. When his soliloquy faded, my dad cleared his throat.

"So, guys, your mom has—um—throat cancer," he croaked. "It's stage three, but...she's had it since November, and—and everything should be okay. She's going through treatment now."

The only response he got was the sounds of our boots crushing salt and snow. My stomach dropped.

Since November? November? It was February then, so she had been fighting cancer without us knowing for four months, of which I'd been home with her for only three days. For Thanksgiving, my parents encouraged my brother and me to stay on the East

Coast. I did not question it and enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner with a good friend in Connecticut. For Christmas, my brother was in Peru, and I opted to only go back home for three days. I was taking the LSAT that January and wanted as few distractions as possible while studying for the test. I flew from California to Cambridge on Christmas Day and spent all of January in Widener stacks studying for a test I would ultimately fail. Maybe not actually fail, but enough so that I'd have to both re-study and retake it.

But I did not know my test score until later that same day I received news of my mother's illness, when I got the dreaded "LSAT Scores are now available" email. Until then, my justification for spending the entirety of winter break alone in my dorm room in snowy Cambridge, while I had my childhood bedroom and a warm and welcoming home on the beach in California waiting for me, was the toxic notion of opportunity cost that I believed I was wasting if I took any time off.

Little did I know that my mother was struggling with cancer all that time. That her consistent coughing during our phone calls was not just a "cold" she was getting over like she repeatedly assured me it was. That she was traveling an hour each day to UCLA to receive treatment, and that radiation and chemotherapy would soon leave her skinny, with damaged hair, and no voice. Caught up in my schoolwork, I had no way to recognize it and no way to know.

Even if I am missing out on a fun winter break, I thought to myself, it will all be worth it when I get a good LSAT score. Spoiler alert: it was not.

Yet the absurdity of my willingness to sacrifice time with friends and family in the pursuit of a good test score did not strike me until this winter break when I actively vowed not to touch, think, or even feel the slightest guilt in staying away from any school or work-related obligations. I read pleasure books, went to church, oil painted, played tennis, spent more time at the beach than I did indoors, and said yes to every opportunity and invitation to travel, meet new people, and be with those that I love.

This shift in perspective was an exercise I had to actively force myself to practice. I found myself daily voicing the shame I felt neglecting my thesis, grad school applications, apartment hunting, or anything else on my list of to-do's that would ultimately find their way into my life. And I strongly believe that the majority of Harvard students would have felt the same.

They teach us many things at Harvard. They teach us how to contextualize the mor-

als in novels, how to structure organic chemistry reactions, how to build financial models, how to interview, and how to network. They teach us a lot about that.

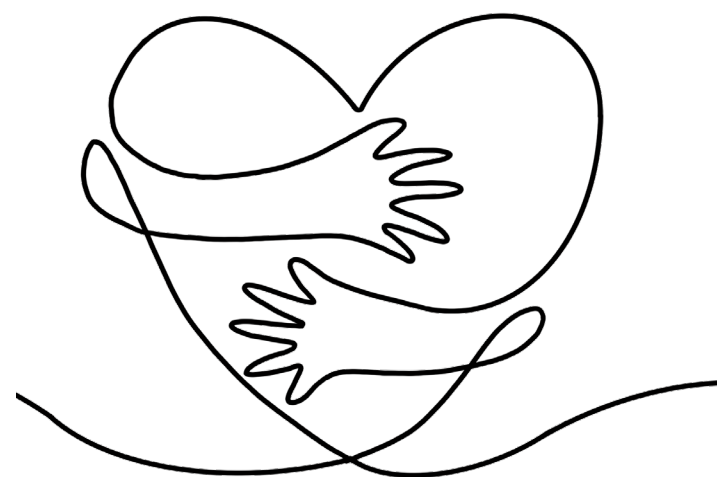
But they don't teach us about the brevity of life. They don't teach us what to do when you're told your mom has cancer, or how quickly life can change before you know it. They don't teach us how to enjoy the mundanity of simply existing with others or how therapeutic hobbies truly can be. They don't teach us how to love doing nothing.

It's not Harvard's responsibility to teach us these things, nor is it anyone's responsibility to stop us from our tendency to weigh the opportunity costs of every single minute of our lives, comparing what we're doing with what we could be doing and how this decision will impact our future. While Harvard students are all gifted with different talents and skills, our one unifying factor is the commitment we once made to our future: a commitment we are all likely still in pursuit of.

But I do believe that it is our responsibility—including one I am actively keeping myself accountable for—to not forget about the fundamental qualities that make us human. We are incredibly capable of doing and achieving so many things, filling our Google Calendars and coffee dates to maximize both productivity and experience. Yet we are less capable of pursuing—and much less enjoying—something that ironically should take considerably less effort: doing nothing. Instead, I advocate for a more intentional emphasis on downtime, appreciating rest enough to balance our ambitions with tranquility.

**MARBELLA MARLO '24 (MMARLO@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU)'S MOM IS HEALTHY NOW AND READING THIS ARTICLE FROM 70° CALIFORNIA SUNSHINE.**

**GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26**





# Decline of the Man Hunt

Why post-grad single Harvard women struggle in the dating field.

BY KATY LIN '26 AND RANIA JONES '27

Little girls around the world are bestowed a fragment of destructive wisdom—if you play dumb, he'll probably like you more.

And there it is, the beginning of our problem. Women everywhere are encouraged, no, programmed, to believe that if we shield our intelligence in the face of a man, then he will like us more. We may be attempting to come off as sensitive and sweet, rather than intelligent.

An epidemic is plaguing this generation. There exists a complicated dilemma: If a woman seems too smart or accomplished, she is deemed as non-dating material, challenging, and overbearing. *But why do we as a culture perpetuate this? Why do we propagate the idea that women cannot be both smart and attractive?*

For men, the idea of dating someone more intelligent than themselves may actually be a turn-off. At a glance, the opportunity to revel in a girlfriends' 'halo effect,' which refers to the idea of seeing the good in everything someone does, can be appealing. But for many men, that illusion pops the moment a woman's success, God forbid, threatens to surpass their own or make them feel worthless. Men simultaneously want smart, accomplished women *and* women that they feel superior to—an impossible duality.

Anachronistic perceptions about inequality of the sexes still exist, most notably when it comes to sexual attraction with coed circles of super accomplished college undergraduates. In an article in the *New York Times*, Dr. Larry Summers cited research showing that more high school boys tend to score at very high levels on standardized math tests, whereas high school girls tend to score significantly lower. He goes on to write that it was "important to consider the possibility that such differences may stem from biological differences between the sexes."

Judgment for breaking highly-valued norms is not a burden solely felt by women. While the notion that a career-motivated woman may step back from familial duties can turn heads, so does a man who complacently approves of this action. Even if a male

partner may internally be satisfied with the idea of being surpassed intellectually or financially by their wives, the dissecting eyes of others already act as a significant disincentive.

Though the concept of a breadwinning wife married to a stay-at-home husband has become much more common in recent years, traditional locker-room talk does not exist without demeaning such roles. You would be scant to find many men willing to accept insults on their masculinity by other male friends in a world where "sit-down-and-look-pretty" girlfriends are heralded, nor would you find many



male partners willing to receive confused glances at family reunion dinner tables when bringing a girlfriend back with significantly higher academic and professional treatments.

These hyper-traditional sentiments can also be furthered by women themselves. Stigmatization against lower levels of traditional success is much harsher on men than on women—the idea of a male "protector" still holds strong, even resurfacing over the past few years across social media with the rise of "trad-wife" content and hypermasculine podcasters. While 71% of American adults believe a man should be able to financially provide for his family, only 32% share the same sentiment towards women. A male partner who is not able to provide (or at least not to the same extent as his female partner) may be seen as weak or incapable—failing to live up to this widely shared expectation.

Even without this internalized

stigmatization from the side of the woman, there is no joy in a relationship filled with insecurity—particularly not if those insecurities detract from one's achievements. As an often unhappy but necessary result, excluding these factors by being upfront about college degrees or other achievements may siphon a woman's dating pool down to a meager few willingly eager or accepting towards an Ivy-educated lover.

None of this is to say that the dating lives of single female Harvard graduates are the worst of the bunch; Harvard's marriage rate (examining graduates married by the age of 34) stands at #38 amongst the top 50 most selective schools. We also, strongly, do not believe all men are automatically predisposed to a woman who will not steal their proverbial spotlight. It is, however, often true that social and cultural notions are slow-moving in comparison to the rising education levels of women. Although no comparison to a southern school's ring-by-spring mantra, there exists an unfair pressure for Harvard (or other prestigiously educated) women to find long-term partners during college or at their corporate workspaces—where male counterparts may be more accustomed to financially successful women.

Even with no soon end to the unbalanced responsibility of men to be the primary financial provider, or more importantly, the notion that they should be, it should not mean that women stay compliant towards this perception. There is no need to settle for less in a relationship more demeaning than mutually satisfying.

All this to say, to our fellow Harvard women: keep fighting the good fight. It'll be worth it in the end to find a partner of any kind willing to be your biggest cheerleader (pom poms and face paint galore). Be unabashed at how driven or capable you are—it may scare the unworthy away. You, after all, are a force to be reckoned with.

**KATY LIN '26 (KATYLIN@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS ADAMANT HER CHILDREN TAKE HER LAST NAME. RANIA JONES '27 (RJONES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) BELIEVES IN BRAINS OVER BEAUTY, ALWAYS.**

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

# Blue Cuban Waters, Blue Man Group, Blue Lipstick

*Award-winning actress Annette Bening makes a splash as this year's Hasty Pudding Woman of the Year.*

BY MIA TAVARES '27

**C**on Tuesday, February 6th, 2024, Annette Bening was honored as Hasty Pudding's 74th Woman of the Year (WOY). The Woman of the Year award is the Hasty Pudding Theatricals' (HPT) oldest honor, bestowed annually on "performers who have made lasting and impressive contributions to the world of entertainment." The festivities began with a parade through Harvard Yard, which included the Blue Man Group. The Blue Man Group was a hit, silently waving colorful streamers, taking selfies with fans, and spreading paint on people's faces and hands. They kissed video camera lenses and took Polaroid photos of parade-watchers that they sealed with marks from their blue lips.

Bening, the star of the show, arrived in style atop a convertible Bentley while surrounded by a mix of make-shift security guards (football players and male Hasty Pudding business staff members dressed like Men in Black characters) and the cast of Hasty Pudding Theatricals' 175th production, *Heist, Heist, Baby*. Behind her rode the producers of HPT, Madison Pankey '24 and Hannah Frazer '25, who sat on either side of Chelsea Vuong, Miss Massachusetts 2023.

After the parade, Bening was roasted by Hasty Pudding President Joshua Hillers '24 and Cast Vice President Nikita Nair '24, where she was presented with the traditional Golden Pudding Pot, along with a feathered hat and a slice of cold pizza. "We're absolutely thrilled to honor Annette Bening in this milestone 175th anniversary year for the Hasty Pudding," said Hillers. "Hot off her Oscars nomination for Best Actress, we're excited to present her with the most prestigious award in the entertainment industry."

During the roast, Bening joked that she was neither excited nor particularly inspired to be receiving the Pudding Pot, classifying it as her least important award. But despite her offhand wisecracks, she admitted during the press conference that she was very happy to find out that she would be receiving the award, as her husband Warren Beatty won the Man of the Year award in 1975 and her sister-in-law Shirley MacLaine won Woman of the Year in 1963.

Indeed, Bening is no stranger to awards, having played a multitude of  
ARTS | 10 complex, multidimensional

female characters throughout her career. Most recently, she was Oscar-nominated for her portrayal in *Nyad* of Diana Nyad, a 64 year-old marathon swimmer who attempts to become the first person ever to swim from Cuba to Florida. According to an interview with IndieWire, Bening trained for over a year to prepare for the role. During filming, she spent 30 days in the tank and swam up to eight hours each day. In addition to the physical exertion, Diana Nyad was an emotionally complex role. When asked about her portrayal of strong women at the WOY press conference, Bening explained that she believes the best approach is to understand that a "strong woman is also a flawed woman... [She's] a real woman."

During the roast, she was asked to act like a seagull, a reference to her 2018 performance in *The Seagull*. In the moment, she jokingly credited her outstanding improv performance to Michael Chekhov, a critically acclaimed Russian actor best known for developing the 'psychological gesture.' At the press conference, Bening was asked to elaborate on her acting training and how her philosophy has changed throughout her career.

"I was really lucky, I went to an amazing school called the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. I really needed that. I had gone to community college at San Francisco State, but I had never met an actor when I wanted to be an actor. But I knew I loved the theater and I knew, as an audience member, that I was dazzled and [so I] started doing plays when I could. And I just wanted to follow that." She continued to



express appreciation for her acting teachers and concluded by saying that "one of the most important things in modern acting that's stressed is listening. So much of acting is really just receiving, and taking in what's happening, rather than feeling responsible to do something."

Minutes later, Bening did just that as she sat down to watch *Heist, Heist, Baby*. Throughout the show, she seemed enraptured by the student-written dialogue, the live orchestra, and the cast's talent. Yet it was not the first time in the day that Bening had been kissed by talent, so to speak. During the parade and twice at the press conference, Bening posed with HPT members as they kissed her on the cheek, a tradition carried throughout all of the Woman of the Year and Man of the Year festivities. At the photo portion of the conference, Maureen Clare '24, a member of HPT tech, and Crystal Manyoun '26, the show's assistant choreographer, posed on either side of Bening as she held up her monogrammed Pudding Pot. Final shots of Bening show her with blue lipstick on her cheek.

Yet while Bening was left with a smudge on her face, reminiscent of the Blue Man Group's prior messy activities, the audience was left with excitement and appreciation for the gracious guest. As Bening exited the theater for the final time, she was celebrated by an admiring standing ovation.

**MIA TAVARES '27**  
(MIATAVARES@COLLEGE.  
HARVARD.EDU)'S MOM IS A  
HARDCORE ANNETTE BENING  
FAN.



PHOTOS BY JORDAN  
WASSERBERGER '27

# Exploring The Attic

*A treasure trove of hand-picked vintage clothes.*

BY SOPHIE DEPAUL '27

**N**estled on the corner of Mass Ave and Bow Street, The Attic Cambridge peeps out at the semi-basement level. It's easy for passersby to miss it, but if you know what you're looking for, it's worth the trip down. I certainly thought so.

This isn't your average thrift store. Every piece of clothing is hand-picked by Jenna E. Cea-Curry, owner of The Attic. During my conversation with her, I watched as she stood over two big boxes of vintage clothing that she was in the middle of unpacking. "I kind of just pick whatever I like, something that I would wear myself," she explained. Cea-Curry is a recent graduate of Suffolk University and now works full time running The Attic. It's obvious that she brings a young energy to very old clothes. "I feel like not a lot of places in Cambridge Common do this... I didn't want it to feel stuffy—I wanted it to feel fun."

Heaps of leather jackets, jeans, crewnecks, and t-shirts hang in the front room, surrounded by an assortment of vintage jewelry and accessories. Glittery tops, shoulder-padded dresses, cable-knit sweaters, and boots line the walls in the back room. Unlike your average thrift store, I didn't find a single Shein tag sticking out

from any of the clothing.

Cea-Curry sources most of her clothes from a clothing recycling center, Bay State Textiles, where she runs a separate wholesale business out of their warehouse. "Otherwise, I'll source overseas," she said, gesturing to her computer where she conducts video calls to choose clothing from the UK. "Sometimes I get some designer Italian vintage."

As an avid thrifter, I descended upon the racks and pulled out a Gray Golden Lions cotton t-shirt. One issue: it was \$25. Most of the items on the racks are upwards of \$20, relatively high for used clothes. "I keep most of my stuff around 20 to 40 bucks," Cea-Curry explained. "Like t-shirts, for example. If it's single stitch and it's older, if it's a band tee, that's obviously going to be priced higher." For a college kid, that may be a bit out of budget. The real gem for students is in a tiny room in the back with overflowing treasure chests of clothes—the bins.

I then spotted the hanging sign "green: \$10 blue: \$7 red: \$5." "I want to keep it kind of reasonable because I know it's students in the area," Cea-Curry explained. Here, there are four bins of unorganized clothes, just waiting to be picked through by a creative shopper. It was here that I found my first steal: a colorful vintage 90s jacket. Turquoise, pink, and lavender, the lightweight windbreaker was all that the 90s strived to be. It caught my eye immediately, as I noticed it was only \$10. It fit perfectly, void of stains or damage. Checking out, I felt like I was pulling one over on them. When looking up its brand, Bocco, I discovered it no longer exists anymore. I found similar ones on Etsy reselling for \$40-\$50.

Cea-Curry explained how the clothes end up in the bins. "Most of the stuff in the bins...are vintage. A lot of the stuff in the bins is stuff on the racks that hasn't sold in a while... The stuff I don't necessarily want on the



racks I'll take out of wholesale [and put in the bins]."

I also pulled out a long-sleeve black cardigan with a white outline that clips together in the middle. The end of one sleeve was a little wrinkled, like someone had tried to iron it and instead melted it. Fairly unnoticeable, and for five dollars, I could look past it. The tag read, "All That Jazz, a Chorus Line Company." A brand from the 70s to early 90s, most pieces now are only found on thredUP or eBay. I was very happy with the purchase.

"First of all, the condition is a huge part of it. Obviously, if it has a stain or something, the price will be lower." Cea-Curry said, with respect to pricing. "I don't really go by brands that much unless it's designer... I have Diesel, Miss 60, Gusto Barcelona, stuff like that. I'm obviously going to price it higher."

The clothes that don't get bought off the racks or discovered in the bins end up being sent to The Attic Brooklyn, NY, run by Cea-Curry's sister, or sold wholesale to other vintage resellers in the area. But in my opinion, you'll want to catch the pieces first at The Attic Cambridge. Here, the clothes are specially curated for the style of today's vintage shoppers, and with a little digging, can be affordable too.

**SOPHIE DEPAUL '27 (SOPHIE\_DEPAUL@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS WRITING THIS WEARING A PAIR OF \$14 JEANS FROM GOODWILL.**

**PHOTOS BY SOPHIE DEPAUL '27**



# Harvard Parties Aren't Dead

*How Reverb, Harvard's underground electronic music group, is redefining Harvard nightlife.*

BY KAITLYN HOU '27

**A**lthough Harvard students might disagree about many things, it seems like they all can agree on one: Harvard parties suck. Pre-game in a dorm. Go to a function with mediocre music. Eat Jefe's or Joe's. For a school filled with extraordinary talent and people, going out is often an unremarkable experience.

Yet one group on campus is breaking this narrative. Reverb, Harvard University's premier electronic music collective, has begun to spice up Harvard's nightlife. Throwing parties featuring talented student DJs, Reverb is infusing Harvard with a new energy and vibrancy. Instead of hearing the same old party soundtracks, Harvard students are vibing to pulsating beats, dancing to innovative soundscapes, and letting loose.

Reverb was launched in the fall of 2022. Since then, the group's popularity has skyrocketed. This school year, they have sold out all of their events, including "Welcome to the Jungle," "2001: Bass Odyssey" in December, and most recently, "Sin City." The founders and executive board members Dylan Rhee '25, Rick Zhou '25, Hanna Pak '24, Robert Escudero '24, and Alexios Stavropoulos '24 have made it their mission to bring electronic music to campus.

"We didn't really like the fact that every single Harvard party would play the same Top 40 songs, and there was no party experience that was really centered around music," co-founder Rhee explained.

In addition to DJ-ing, Rhee produces his own electronic music. Electronic music is a wide genre encompassing any music that is digitally made with computers and synthesizers. A popular type of electronic music is EDM (electronic dance music). Reverb experiments with a wide variety of subgenres, from dubstep, to house, to techno.

"We all wanted to share our passion for electronic music... The problem was we also couldn't find people, and there was really no opportunity for us to find them because there was no community that existed at Harvard,"

Rhee said.

At Reverb's most recent party, "Sin City," tickets sold out in less than 48 hours. For just \$5, students danced to a curated lineup running from 9:30 P.M. to 2 A.M. featuring four Harvard undergraduate DJs and an open bar. The cutting-edge sound system, high-quality lighting, and visual effects transformed the Currier Ten-Man suite into a nightclub-reminiscent venue.

As the night progressed, Reverb's tech and deep house music entranced the crowd. Washed in a kaleidoscope of red, purple, and blue, the dimly lit suite pulsed with infectious energy. Instead of the awkward "small talk-mingle-chug drink" cycle, bodies swayed and danced, every individual was letting loose to the thumping bass.

"It takes a lot of time to find music and to try and create a vibe and work the crowd," co-director Stavropoulos said. Stavropoulos, stage name Alexios, captured the crowd with his signature deep tech style. Notably, his remix of Sammy Virji's "Sinking Sailor" filled the room with laughter and synchronized movement. Rhee added, "There's a big misconception that the DJ is basically just a glorified jukebox." At Sin City, however, it was clear that every beat was crafted with care to build up the party's atmosphere.

The stereotype around Harvard students is that they do not know how to have fun. They are too uptight. They are too serious. They are too studious. "I think the recipe for a really good party is...you're there to hear new stuff to meet new people. That's what the whole point is—new experiences," states co-director Escudero. This new philosophy is proving that Harvard students want to, and are able to, have a lot of fun.

"There's something to be said about losing yourself in the music... If you don't know the lyrics, you don't know the song, you're really listening. And you find yourself within what's almost like a visual or spatial field." From Auckland, New Zealand, Zhou, a co-founder, has brought the international popularity of house music to Cambridge. Since Reverb's inception, there has been overwhelming positive feedback. "We're focusing on the spring for now... We're gonna try our best to put on really cool experiences."

Event and Brand Manager Hanna Pak explained, "I think one of the goals of Reverb is to make a more inclusive party space but that's not just like the same music." Harvard's party culture is unique compared to other universities. Besides dorm parties or parties hosted by student organizations, final clubs dominate the social scene. With Reverb, "There's just no exclusivity from it. Whoever gets tickets gets tickets," says Stavropoulos. Reverb is focused on bringing fun for all. "My entire life goal just boils down to wanting people to have fun because of things that I am doing," Pak added. Rhee also provided insightful context about what it feels like to put on these events. "The goal is to make [the crowd] hear songs that make them really dance..., but they also think, 'Oh, I didn't know that I liked this before, or what is this song?' That's the best moment."

Selling out with 185 attendees at Sin City, Reverb hopes to continue to heighten its reach and elevate its events to a greater scale. "It's a grind for sure," Rhee concluded. "It's a huge time commitment. We never count the hours. We just get lost in it." As for the popularity of electronic music at Harvard, it seems to be only growing. "I think it's been a really pleasant surprise how responsive people are to music they don't know they like," Pak said.

Reverb is redefining what it means to party. With an open mind, it is clear that Harvard students are eager to shape a more dynamic and exciting night culture on campus.

**KAITLYN HOU '27 (KAITLYNHOU@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) THINKS THAT LISTENING TO HOUSE MUSIC WHILE STUDYING IS ALMOST LIKE BEING AT AN ACTUAL PARTY...ALMOST.**

**PHOTO BY KAITLYN HOU '27**



# Till Death Do Us Part

## A Galentine's murder mystery story.

BY ILANA FEDER '26

**B**rittany had one hand on the phone, the other on her best friend's head.

But Securitas had come too late—Sarah was dead.

...

It was a cool February morning, the smell of love in the air.

Teddy bears and flowers roamed the Yard, but Sarah didn't care.

A romantic dinner with roses, she'd dream and she'd pray.

But here she was, single on Valentine's Day.

So she called up her girls and established a game plan.

Tonight's festivities will commence, with or without a man.

Brittany was on candy duty, Jess on drinks.

Sarah on decor, all the reds, whites, and pinks.

Brittany had a boyfriend—Tasty Basty is where they met.

But he delayed V-Day plans until the next night.

He needed to finish his stat p-set.

Jess's love life was more chaotic.

A guy on the water polo team, a drummer, and even her TF.

Her office hours are normally very erotic.

As for Sarah, she'd never had much luck.

She just sat in an Econ lecture and daydreams about how bad she wants to...be in love.

Sarah's daydreams had always been particularly elaborate. The weeks leading up to the big V-day were no exception—her mind began to wander in every class. She dreamed about how her Harvard bachelor would pick her up on his electric scooter and take them all the way to the nearest Cheesecake Factory. After their Michelin star quality meal, they'd come back to campus and exchange gifts. He'd whip out a peanut-free heart-shaped box of chocolates. Going into anaphylactic shock would totally have been a buzzkill, so he paid attention when Sarah shared that she was deathly allergic. In exchange, Sarah would gift him the GenEd quiz answers. Then, they'd sit by the Charles River for the rest of the chilly night. True love.

But of course, this perfect night was just a dream. The only pieces of it that were reality were Sarah's peanut allergy and that she was a selfless classmate who didn't mind sharing her answers to just about anyone that asked.

One of Sarah's roommates was Brittany.

Brittany and her boyfriend Matt made eye contact in the basement of Tasty Burger during a "Mo Bomba" mosh pit, and it was love at first sight. It was only the second week of school, and Brittany had sworn she wouldn't allow herself to get into any committed relationships in college so early on, but Matt just couldn't be passed up. 5'8", chocolate-brown hair, tennis team, from Greenwich, Connecticut, and an Econ-major charisma to him—he was perfect. He was the type to listen to rap music, act like he knew all the words to these so-called favorite songs of his, and then proceed to sing every word incorrectly. But as long as he was loyal, Brittany believed he could do no wrong.

Jess wasn't looking for true love on this



Valentine's Day, or in general. She'd reward herself with 20 minutes of Tinder time after finishing each reading she had to do for her seminar. After a busing her Tinder swipes, she'd just move on to the next app she had in her phone. Although she came in with low expectations for the hook-up scene at Harvard, she realized she was in prime location to match with people from other schools. When her Mom called to ask why she seemed to be at so many different schools on Life360, she lied and told her she had joined the Club Basketball team, and games were held late so as not to interfere with class.

Sarah, Brittany, and Jess had a perfect friend group dynamic and believed that nothing could ever come between them. Their personality differences initially confused them because they thought Harvard put roommates together based on similarities. Then they realized that they had all put "Don't know a thing about sports, but LOVE to watch sports games...Men's Lacrosse, Football, Tennis..." on their roommate questionnaires. The confusion was quickly resolved.

It was 5:30 P.M. and already dark outside.

Sarah got back to the dorm first and began her interior design process. She covered everyone's desk with heart decorated table cloths and hung up a pin the arrow on the cupid game against the door. Jess came back next looking slightly annoyed, wondering how she had just spent \$30 on Hawaiian Punch and pink lemonade at CVS. Brittany came home 20 minutes later, her forehead sweaty and her eyes bloodshot. She explained that she was just running, as she didn't want to be late, and that the chill in the air caused her eyes to water. Brittany placed three red heart-shaped boxes of chocolate on her desk.

The girls sat around the common room and alternated between listening to Taylor Swift songs and watching episodes of "Gossip Girl." Hours of TV will always get you in the mood for chocolate, so the girls decided it was time to crack into the candy. Brittany abruptly stood up and went to pass out the boxes of chocolate. They each thought it would be much more fun to pick out a chocolate without looking at the key that shows what each one is. So they ripped off the back of the box, also ripping off the ingredient list and throwing it out. Sarah quickly realized she forgot to check for peanuts, but Brittany reassured her that there were none and that as her best friend, she would never do anything to hurt her. Therefore, the only thing Sarah was truly scared of was picking the orange cream flavored chocolate. That one was disgusting.

As the chocolate touched Sarah's tongue, she was relieved to discover that there was no taste of orange. As she began to chew, however, the crunch of what sounded like a peanut echoed throughout the room. Sarah tried to quickly spit it out, but it was too late. The allergic reaction had begun. Jess saw the fear in Sarah's eyes and immediately ran to get the epipen, but it was nowhere to be found. She turned to Brittany for help as Sarah's breathing couldn't be heard. To Jess's surprise, Brittany stood above Sarah, her eyes tearing but her mouth smiling. "I was with Matt the other night," Brittany said. "He got up to use the hallway bathroom, so I took the opportunity to look through his phone that would not stop going off. You, Sarah, had been sending him the GenEd quiz answers. But it didn't end there. He's been secretly taking Sarah on scooter rides and was planning on taking her to The Cheesecake Factory. I wasn't going to let that happen."

Sarah was brutally murdered as a result of jealousy and vengeance. Still, she died happy knowing that her class daydreams were on the verge of coming true.

**ILANA FEDER '26 (ILANAFEDER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES ARTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT.**

**GRAPHIC BY CANDACE GARDNER '26**

# Nude Beach Dysphoria

BY KYA BROOKS '25

**A**t some point in my girlhood, undefined,  
I drew in a broad breath which I never released.  
So long I've been the lone moon of a solar system forsaken.

Acne —

pockmarked like a seagull scooped out the pulp of my face,  
cratered like a sallow gray planet  
marinating in a toxic atmosphere of discontent.

Oh, to trade this jaundiced Jupiter of a body  
and join the constellation  
of naked silhouettes in my orbit.

Picture me standing there, bare,  
nude but not indecent.  
Be imaginative if you dare.

Oh, to be liberated and free,  
thighs, paunch, cellulite as far as I can see.  
Is it so great a sin  
to breathe easy and rest content in my skin?

Sophomoric shame burdens my bones,  
my unpolished self,  
a trembling vessel of raw emotion.  
Nostalgic for a time I didn't exist,  
sheltered safe inside my mother.

Call them scars by any other name —  
collagen,  
damaged tissue marring my surface,  
memoirs of trauma on the landscape of my body,  
raised fibers of flesh erupting from under,  
bursting from below, uncontainable.  
Hideous.

How can anyone love these lesions?  
Stomach these stigmata?  
Who could digest my defaced, my disfigured, my vandalized facade?  
Ridden with rosacea, lifeblood pooling under my cheeks.

Standing now in riptide, I feel the pull.

Baptism —

I crave the shock of cold plunge,  
to emerge clean, pure,  
and shake off the scorn of stares like dripping ocean excess.

See me crouched like a sunning creature,  
head upturned?

Longing to feel alive under golden light,  
thrust from the mundane.

I beckon the breeze,  
sea salt on tongue and harsh grains gripping my toes.

I worship the sea and praise small luxuries.

Come, tide, and slough off these scars.

Weather me, waves, and

let my imperfections whirl away in undertow.

If I bleed, all the better.

May it spill into the sea and attract sharks,  
who circle and chomp at my insecurities.

May my metallic scent pervade the air,  
and the clotted crust of wounds heal over,  
red planet rust.

Oh, to slip out of these scars,

this marred surface of mars.

Scrape it all away.

The urge to cast off clothes, and be reborn  
in renaissance.

To shed this exoskeleton like a serpent,  
and abandon this battered skin on the beach.

To shake this shame and strip —  
unabashed as the day I materialized, immaculate,  
from the womb.

Oh, to step from shadow,

visceral miseries of my psyche exposed by daylight.

A naked nymph,

descending like a pale apparition on the unsuspecting  
masses.

My spine won't shiver,

nor will I shrink within shell.

I meet their gaze steady,

don't flush or recoil.

I float with the best of them,

one with the rest of them,

and let my spirit surge like a seagull,

away from high tide.

**KYA BROOKS '25 (KYABROOKS@  
COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WRITES  
POETRY FOR THE *INDEPENDENT*.**

# A Review of Donald Glover's New Show *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*

*The stylish remake of the blockbuster brings laid-back energy and spy thrills in equal measure.*

BY ARI DESAI '27

**L**oosely based on Doug Liman's 2005 film starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, Amazon Prime's new *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* only really relates to its predecessor by name. The show deviates from the premise of the original, which saw the two stars play a husband and wife unaware that the other is a spy working for a rival organization. The reboot instead follows Pen15's Maya Erskine and co-creator of the show Donald Glover (otherwise known as Childish Gambino) as two spies paired together as an undercover married couple, navigating their relationship along with high-octane missions.

Over the course of eight 45-minute episodes that fly by during a sleep-deprived night or two, the couple's relationship develops alongside their larger-than-life spy escapades. Co-creator Francesca Sloane, who worked on the surrealist comedy *Atlanta* with Donald Glover, brings much of the laid-back hangout sensibility of *Atlanta* to this show. Much of the joy of watching *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* unfold lies in the nonchalance of its action sequences—a quiet, reflective scene of kitchen contemplation set to Alabama Shakes could quickly descend into a shootout.

Yet, this is not to say that the action sequences are poorly staged or lazy. Sloane, Glover, Erskine, and the impressive slew of guest directors behind the show strike an endlessly watchable balance between adrenaline-filled set pieces and dramatic heft with the more tender, vulnerable moments between the couple. The breathless final episode

is essentially one long action sequence that makes fantastic use of the show's setting in New York City for several dynamic, well-choreographed fight sequences.

Episodes span various destinations, including Lake Como in Italy and ski slopes in Switzerland, that are gorgeously shot and make for exciting, sometimes Bond-esque, set-pieces. However, it is in this sometimes fantastical realm that the show can falter—it alternates between indulging in over-the-top devices like truth serums and trying to imagine what a secret spy organization might look like in grounded, real-life. This is where the realism of the show's dialogue and the more surreal plot elements can clash, making it difficult to buy into Glover and Erskine as spies.

But it is in that realism that the show finds its heart. Glover and Erskine's chemistry bounces off the screen and prompts the audience to genuinely invest in the relationship, which perfectly supplements and adds emotional weight to the action. Glover has an effortless charisma about him that is well-suited to his character, and Erskine brings both likability and a complex standoffishness to Mrs. Smith. So much time is dedicated to understanding these two characters and their complex dynamic that viewers will find themselves wanting more of it by the end of the final episode.

*Mr. and Mrs. Smith* is also an exceptionally well-directed show; Hiro Murai, who directed many

episodes of *Atlanta* and *Barry*, helms the first two episodes, and Glover directed the season finale. All of the individual episode directors are great at capturing the same understated visual language that made *Atlanta* so engaging episode-to-episode. The action is not choppy or edited to incoherence like many modern action films. Instead, the show uses long takes to let the viewer actually watch the fight sequences unfold. Beautiful wide shots let us take in the many environments the show finds itself in, from exotic locales to the stylish apartment inhabited by the titular characters.

The show's marketing plays up its impressive roster of guest stars—and they do not disappoint. From Paul Dano to Alexander Skarsgard, there are a number of surprise appearances in parts of varying sizes, all of which fit perfectly into the world built by Sloane and Glover. Sarah Paulson plays a therapist in one of the season's highlights, a quasi-bottle episode that really unpacks the relationship and lays much of the thematic groundwork for the final episodes.

*Mr. and Mrs. Smith* uses its overplayed, spy-movie setup to underscore the various stages of its titular pair's relationship over one short season. It is a sort-of romance, sort-of action flick, sort-of hangout comedy that you will not be able to get enough of.



**ARI DESAI '27 (ADESAI@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WATCHED THE ENTIRETY OF MR. AND MRS. SMITH INSTEAD OF DOING HIS P-SETS.**

**GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY '27**

# High Heart Rates: From Competitions to Crushes

*How do intra-team relationships affect the team dynamic?*

BY BREAGH BRIDGE '27

The all-encompassing name for when two members of the same sports team start some form of relationship—either brief or long term—has been affectionately dubbed “teamcest” by collegiate athletes around the country. This phenomenon is not nearly as vulgar as its unfortunate nickname suggests, but it is still taboo amongst the 42 rosters of Harvard Athletics. After all, spending countless hours on and off the track, pitch, court, or field with your teammates makes closeness inevitable. With the culture of sports team mixers on campus, athletes spend a lot of time partying together, and one day or another they’re bound to fall for each other.

While it’s tricky to navigate romantics in the environment of a tight-knit team, this does not deter athletes from doing so. There is careful consideration of all the risks by teammates who decide to take the plunge and start dating. “We’re still together so it’s not something I went into thinking, ‘Oh, this is going to be like a two-month thing,’” said Julian Schmitt ’23 of Harvard Nordic Skiing. Intra-team relationships are not something to take lightly when the new team dynamic affects the success of a team. “Because I think the damaging part is when you have a small team and then you have a breakup,” he said.

Keeping relationships a secret is nearly impossible. “Everyone on the team is so close and all the girls are in the same locker room,” said Milly Cooper ’27 of Harvard Radcliffe Lightweight Rowing. “We are a tight group—we’re ‘The Women of Weld.’” Cooper has experienced a few flings with boys of the Harvard University Boat Crew (HUBC). Being open about your personal life is often a way to bond with one’s teammates. And, according to Cooper, for the Women of Weld, it simply adds to the effect when they glance over at an HUBC

boat and recognize a character.

Schmitt would even go as far as to say that the jovial atmosphere at team practice was amplified by his relationship with a teammate. “I honestly thought people enjoyed giving a little rib every once and a while... You know you get the boy’s banter going.” Having strong bonds within a team makes athletes excited for practices and enjoy their time with their teammates. For many, the teasing that comes along with an intra-team relationship only makes a team stronger.

For example, intra-team relationships are not a crossover between Women’s Lacrosse and Men’s Lacrosse because these are teams that are large and separate. Where “teamcest” becomes a source of drama is on the small teams—those who share a boat house or a coach, or a co-ed team such as skiing or sailing where proximity is at an all-time high. “I think we are still close, and I think it’s getting closer. I think having everyone in the same boathouse... we’re seeing each other a lot more, we’re doing more things together,” said Cooper. This close physical proximity sets the stage for athletes to cross paths with their romantic partners when they’re trying to be “locked in” at practice.

The support for situationships within a team is not always so enthusiastic. “Having a thing with someone on the men’s team was weird, especially when other people did not know. We felt like we had to be super secretive and that people would notice,” said an anonymous senior female athlete.

Sports teams are not a social club—they have a job to do, and that is to compete. Some athletes may want to minimize the distractions brought on by an intra-team relationship.

The question of whether teammates are bothered by “teamcest” is a key factor in maintaining the stability of the team throughout. The trust between teammates to do the right thing for themselves and the team

is paramount. However, at the end of the day, word will get around about an intra-team relationship. “Does everyone know everything about everyone? Yes. Is that a bad thing? No, because everyone is really fun and really genuine and it’s not all gossipy, you know it’s like, ‘Ah we’re a team,’ a little shared rowing teamcest is bound to happen,” Cooper said.

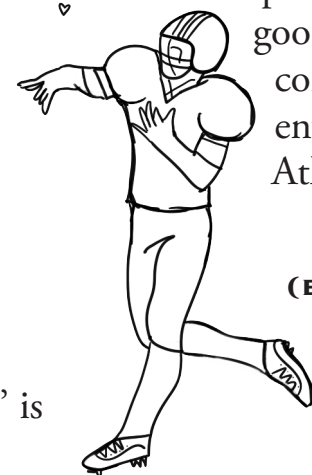
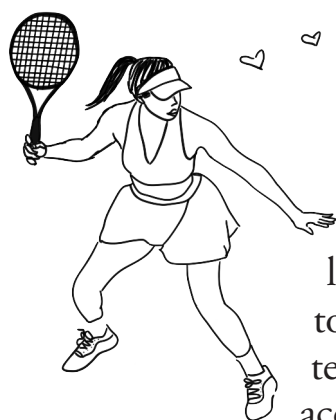
“I don’t know if I ever really told [my coach]. I think he figured it out by the end... But he knew. I don’t know, at one point in the season he knew,” said Schmitt. Athletes generally want their coaches to respect them and trust their dedication, so it is understandable that the coach-athlete relationship remains professional. But when spending so much time together, a couple inevitably becomes a part of the team’s dynamic.

Having someone you can rely on while you’re going through a similar life experience is always relieving, and often a piece of the puzzle for a successful relationship.

Whether it’s as simple as solving the issue of living on a “similar schedule, [so] you don’t have to think about, ‘Ugh, we have practice at different times,’” as Cooper explained. Beyond that, being able to relate to your partner rather than the annoyance of, “Oh, you’re talking about a sport I know nothing about,” said Cooper. It may also strengthen your relationship. “We were sharing the same experience,” said Schmitt, discussing the way he found his girlfriend Madeleine Kitch ’24. Today, they are still together after dating for two ski racing seasons, and continue to study, train, and race together. They found a positive in empathizing with each other’s good and bad days in competition in the intense environment that is NCAA Athletics.

**BREAGH BRIDGE '27 (BREAGHBRIDGE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WROTE THIS ARTICLE WHILE CRAMMED IN AN AIRBNB WITH HER TEAMMATES.**

**GRAPHIC BY GABI PONIZ '26**





# A Sad, Empty Beanpot

*This year's men's Beanpot brought a crowd no different than any other Harvard sporting event.*

BY KATE OLIVER '26

Much to the *Indy Sportsbook's* sadness, Harvard Men's Ice Hockey was not successful in upsetting Northeastern in the first round of the Beanpot Tournament. Still, we saw an exciting game this year, with a Huskies win 33 seconds into overtime after tying it late in the third period.

There was a second disappointment from the opening round game: the sheer lack of Harvard fans. TD Garden was full of various shades of red, but there was a shocking lack of crimson for the second year in a row. Beanpot is a cornerstone of Boston Collegiate sports, so the lack of attendance truly begs the question—*What is stopping Harvard students from going?*

Northeastern packed their student section, referred to as the Doghouse, and by the end of the first period occupied three sections of the stadium. They were accompanied by

Northeastern cheerleaders and several posters, banners, and flags showcasing their school pride. Harvard students, on the other hand, barely filled the singular section on the other side of the ice designated for fans, even though this section was supposed to be sold out. The Husky fans were also rowdy, ready to throw insults toward the Crimson—"Daddy's money," "UMass Cambridge," "Nepo-baby," and "Hey, you suck," all made the list after both Northeastern goals. After the Huskies took the lead in the first period, it seemed as though there was not a single Harvard fan in attendance.

The first Harvard goal from Ben MacDonald '27 in the second period seemed to minimally revive the Harvard crowd, to the point where a student section was identifiable. These cheers, however, were drowned out by the sea of Huskies that continued to grow through the second and third periods. Any Harvard gear spotted on the jumbotron was met with a chorus of boos. The only

cohesive "Let's go Crimson" chant heard throughout the entire game came at the beginning of overtime... from the Boston University fan section.

Why were there so few Harvard students at the game? The student section, where tickets were priced as low as \$15, sold out prior to the game. By comparison, one Northeastern fan told the *Independent*, "In the last round of ticket releases, two tickets were going for \$230." Despite this, the Northeastern tickets were also sold out. There is always the option to buy tickets through Ticketmaster, which often leads to a better view of the actual game. However, the fact remains that the three other Boston-area schools consistently put Harvard's student section to shame.

While it is not as easy for Harvard students to attend Beanpot, the lack of a direct T-line should not be a logistical barrier large enough to prevent students from supporting players. In comparison to the big sporting events this past fall, Beanpot is quite literally in our backyard, not a two-hour ride away. While there might not be a school-wide tailgate for this competition, there are several added features that come from



having the game at TD Garden. The annual sled race, which Harvard won this year, in addition to school-specific trivia competitions with Dunkin' gift cards as rewards make the competitive atmosphere enjoyable, even when stone-cold sober.

The lack of Harvard fans was also felt by Northeastern fans, who were stuck cheering against a non-existent student section. Northeastern Senior Hans Van Der Sande told the *Independent*, "It sucks [that Harvard has no fans] because when we played BU and BC the last two years, there was so much more." Another Northeastern Senior, Daniel Colon, added, "The more they care, the more we care," referring to an opponent's student section. Understandably, it seems that every year, the school that plays Harvard feels they have pulled the short straw—not because of the competition itself, but rather due to the lack of enthusiasm by Harvard fans.

Ultimately, Harvard students are missing out on an opportunity to showcase their school pride and play into every stereotype characterized by Northeastern chants. If Boston University's student section proves to be the loudest supporter of Harvard Men's Hockey, maybe it is time for Harvard students to organize, get a mascot, and show out for their student-athletes.

**KATE OLIVER '26 (KOLIVER@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) HAS NEVER BEEN TO A PROFESSIONAL SPORTS GAME IN BOSTON.**

**PHOTOS BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27**



# Sports Spotlight: Ben MacDonald

*A profile on one of the Men's Varsity Hockey's rising stars.*

BY JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27

It is no secret that the 2023-2024 season has been rough for Men's Varsity Hockey. The team has weathered a season-long storm of injuries, and as result currently sits with a losing record of 4-14-4. That said, the injuries have also given the younger players a remarkable opportunity to step up and quickly develop their skills. The hope, at least from all of us who watch this team night in and night out, is that the increased ice time will help shape the young guys into true hockey stars. If all goes according to plan, this time next year we'll be talking about how Harvard is once again one of the best teams in the NCAA.

One of these rising young players is Ben MacDonald '27, a freshman forward hailing from Weston, Massachusetts. MacDonald grew up just 20 minutes from Cambridge and spent his childhood watching, playing, living, and breathing hockey.

The son of Lane MacDonald '89 and grandson of Lowell MacDonald, MacDonald acknowledged that hockey runs deep in his blood. "My uncle works in the booth for the Penguins...and my grandfather actually played for the Penguins, so it's in the family," MacDonald said. "I was a big fan of the Pens. [I] love Sidney Crosby. I had a life-size fathead of him on my wall for as long as I can remember."

Before coming to Harvard, Ben was drafted in the 3rd round of the 2022 NHL Draft by the Seattle Kraken and played in the British Columbia Hockey League with the West Kelowna Warriors. While he was there, he put up an impressive 50

points in 52 games. So far at Harvard, he's been electric. With 11 points in 22 games and 4 in his last 5, MacDonald has been on a tear. For him, however, the individual statistics don't seem to matter: "I'm not thinking about that too much right now. I'm happy where I'm at and just want to help the team do the best we can." MacDonald went on to comment that, "It's tough to win if you're not playing together as a team, and you're not working together for a common goal."

According to MacDonald, the community elements of the team are really special. "I've only been here a semester but [the guys] have obviously become some of my best friends already and are going to become lifelong friends for sure. So just spending time with the boys in the locker room is honestly the best part, I'd say. We do our best to try to convene and get the boys together whether it's watching a movie or anything really."

As playoffs and the end of the season drew near, MacDonald's outlook was pretty positive. "No one likes losing, so it's definitely tough for everybody. But we're such a young team, and I feel like we have so much upside. We just need to keep working hard and getting better, and I feel like we've been progressing pretty nicely." One of those recent games was the Beanpot tournament, where Harvard lost in a heartbreaking 3-2 overtime. Despite the result, for MacDonald, that night was a dream come true.

"Being in the stands, it's cool—you're actually watching a college hockey game. But actually living it is something completely different. So it was honestly something I'd always looked forward to and always wanted to do."

Concerning Harvard's ongoing student attendance issues,



MacDonald reiterated how important it is to have a fan presence at the games. "Obviously I want as many people there as possible. I think it adds a little more juice for the players and just makes that atmosphere a lot more fun. It's more fun in the stands when there's more people there—when you get a couple chants going, yelling at the goalie. I don't think a lot of stuff beats that."

Outside of hockey, MacDonald has been loving his Harvard experience. Living in Matthews and planning to study Psychology, he is ecstatic about campus life so far. As for his decision to come play for Harvard, MacDonald hasn't looked back. "I was really excited. I grew up coming to a lot of Harvard hockey games, going to the Beanpot. So when I made the decision to commit here, I was just ready to start—super excited. When it finally came, it almost felt a little surreal. I was just excited to get going."

When asked about how his season has been going, MacDonald was pretty unequivocal that "It's been great. Definitely exceeded my expectations, even though I had pretty high expectations. Like, the boys are unbelievable. We're such a tight, tight group."

If the goal of coach Ted Donato '91 was for the freshman skaters to develop both on and off the ice, MacDonald would be a sign of a mission accomplished. Assuming everyone shares his level of love for the team and drive to see each other succeed, it's hard not to be excited about the future of MacDonald, and the entirety of Harvard Men's Varsity Hockey.

JORDAN WASSERBERGER '27  
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# Indy Sportsbook: Petting The Beautiful Game

*No cash for a fancy date? Look no further.*

BY VINCENT HONRUBIA '27

**A**n average date in the state of Massachusetts costs over \$200! Since I know that every one of us could use some extra cash around Valentine's Day, the Indy Sportsbook is looking to help you finance the Valentine's Day date of your dreams, whether you are taking your lover to Jefe's or Tuscano.

But before we free you from a lifelong career in investment banking, we'll recap our picks from arguably the biggest sporting event of the year: The Super Bowl.

While many fans may argue over whether or not the Super Bowl was scripted for Taylor Swift, it appears that we at the Indy Sportsbook received the correct script, getting five out of our six picks correct this Sunday.

Even before the game had started, we enjoyed our first victory of the night, with the national anthem going comfortably over 90.5 seconds. It did not take long for our second bet to hit either, as we accurately predicted the first play of the game to be a rush to the left for fewer than 9 yards. We didn't slow down from there, with a first-half Christian McCaffrey touchdown and Travis Kelce comfortably getting over 6.5 receptions—the clean sweep of in-game bets were a resounding success.

Our only loss of the day was a difficult one to take, as we incorrectly predicted the Gatorade color to be orange. In our defense, what kind of psychopath drinks purple Gatorade?

The NFL will be sorely missed for the next few months. For those of you who can't wait until September, you're in luck! The end of the season brings forth the beginning of an even better tournament: the UEFA Champions League.

If you're one of the many Americans who find soccer boring, I guarantee you that, while we can't promise you a winning bet, we can promise you the most anxiety-filled two hours of your life. We don't condone impossibly long parlays, but there will always be multiple Champions League games on any given gameday. To make the viewing experience even more enjoyable, consider betting on a couple of games at the same time and realize just how high-scoring soccer can be.

The first round features a couple of tantalizing games. Our two must-watch games will be Real Madrid vs RB Leipzig and PSV Eindhoven vs Borussia Dortmund. These two games will feature fast-paced, high-tempo, attacking soccer from all sides, exactly what you need during your 3 P.M.

lectures.

If you were rejected by your crush and in need of a no-sweat win, look no further than Manchester City to advance against FC Copenhagen (-1600). Manchester City will look to repeat after their historic treble-winning season last year and look likely to do just that. With the return of Kevin DeBruyne and Erling Haaland from injury, a monumental effort from any team will be required to stop the champions and favorites from winning it all at (+210).

Real Madrid go into their game against RB Leipzig as heavy favorites to advance at (-310). We can see Leipzig winning a game and will be anxiously watching this matchup, but we would never bet against Real Madrid in the Champions League. They have won the tournament the most out of any team (twice as many as second place) and are led by Jude Bellingham, who has the most total goal contributions in the tournament thus far. RB Leipzig has a young and exciting attacking core with Xavi Simons, Lois Openda, and Benjamin Sesko leading the way. However, we predict the overwhelming dominance of the Madrid midfield to be too much to handle for the German side.

Elsewhere in the competition are some closely contested matches where predicting a winner becomes more complicated.

Atletico Madrid faces Inter Milan in what will be a tactical battle between Atletico's Diego Simeone and Milan's Simone Inzaghi. Both teams are high-flying this season and have come into the round in good form. Inter sits first in Serie A, while Atletico has two of the best strikers in the world: Alvaro Morata and Antoine Griezmann. Both teams stand out for their resilient defense-first approach—Inter, for one, have conceded the fewest goals in the top five leagues and will be reliant on their defense to stop the in-form Atletico offense. These games will be extremely hard-fought, and with Atletico Madrid having the reverse fixture at home, I predict they will be able to hold Inter in the first leg and get the job done in the second leg to advance at (+110).

Napoli takes on Barcelona in a game that we would have loved to watch last year, but both teams have struggled this season and have underperformed up until this point. Barcelona have already chosen to fire their coach at the end of the season, and Napoli have struggled tactically ever since the firing of Luciano Spalletti and the sale of their best defender, Kim Min Jae. Winning this round of 16 fixture will be vital for both teams

moving forward. We predict a tight match—Victor Osimhen of Napoli will be the deciding factor, and hesitantly, Napoli will pull out the win (+140) to advance.

PSV hopes to continue their historic dominant season against Borussia Dortmund in what should be a very fun, high-scoring affair. PSV's vertical wing play might prove to be overwhelming for Dortmund. The Dutch side is unbeaten in the league and hopes to capitalize on their good form against the German giants, which could very well bring a nice paycheck at (+104).

If you are a fan of the underdog story, here are a couple of long shots that might not be that much of a risk after all.

Paris Saint-Germain undeniably have one of the best players in world football, Kylian Mbappe. Despite this, they only narrowly qualified for the round of 16 and have not passed into the quarter-finals since 2020. They have an uninspiring team and look to be losing out on Mbappe to Real Madrid at the end of the season. They face a Real Sociedad side that has looked very competent in the Champions League this season, out-qualifying Inter Milan with an impressive 3-1 win against Benfica. Sociedad are considered underdogs at (+164), and we would advise betting on them to get the job done.

The final matchup of the round sees Arsenal taking on Porto. Arsenal is one of the favorites to win the entire competition, and Porto is a heavy underdog at (+330), but if there is ever a team to struggle in the Champions League, it is Arsenal. They have not passed the round of 16 since 2009, an astonishing statistic from one of the better teams in world football. We don't think this streak will continue, but if there's one thing we are, it is haters—and with little evidence to back us up, we will be backing Porto to beat Arsenal.

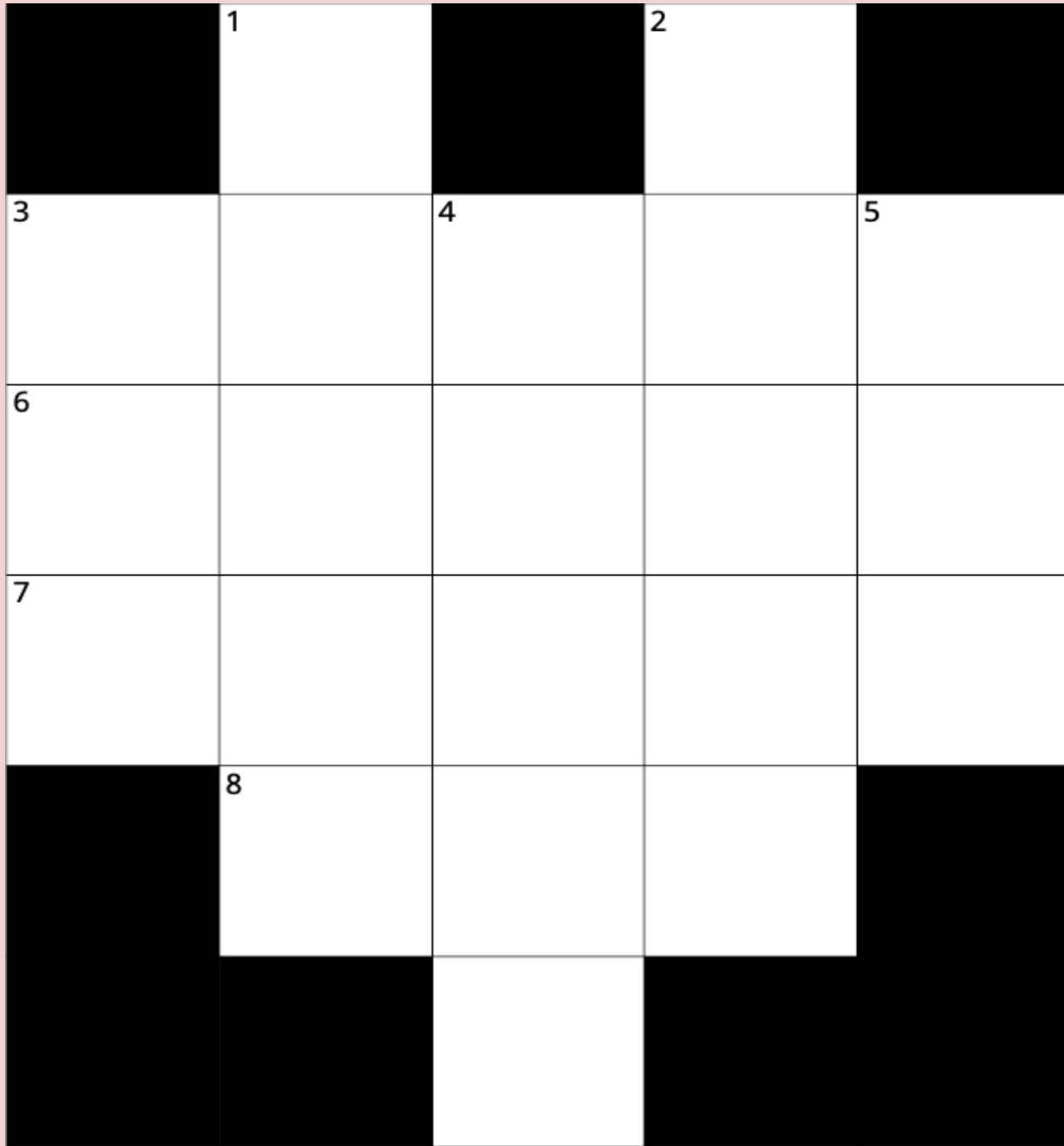
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WATCHING SOCCER ON VALENTINE'S  
DAY.**

GRAPHIC BY NATALIE MENDEZ '26



# Love

BY REBECCA ACKERMAN '25



## ACROSS

- 3 Shape of this puzzle
- 6 Looped handles
- 7 British guns
- 8 Airline to Stockholm

## DOWN

- 1 Ladies' men
- 2 Some cereals
- 3 Possesses
- 4 Words after take or save
- 5 Your, to Yves

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