

From Busking to Stardom:

Zoe Kwan's Journey to Musical Fame

Sophie Leung (4C)

In a lively music studio in the heart of Hong Kong, Zoe Kwan sits among various instruments and sound gear. Her eyes are sparkling with excitement. Reflecting on her recent win as the “Best New Artist”, she exclaims, “I still can’t believe it!”

Just a few months ago, Zoe was busking on the streets, and now she’s being recognised on this scale! For her, it feels like stepping right into a movie.

The Spark that Ignited Her Career

Zoe’s rise to fame is a modern fairy tale. Growing up in Hong Kong, she was inspired by the vibrant sounds of the city, with her musician parents nurturing her passion for music at an early age.

“I spent countless hours listening to their songs,” she recalls with a nostalgic smile. “I always thought one day I’d create music that resonates with people.”

Zoe’s journey began with busking on the streets of Hong Kong. Every week, she would set up her guitar and

perform for people passing by, singing her favourite Cantopop songs such as “Promise” and “Light in Your Heart.”

“Busking has taught me so much about connecting with an audience,” she shares. She vividly remembers a night when one of her audience joined her with a bass guitar, creating a memorable jam session together.

To Zoe, every smile or donation felt like a validation of her passion.

Everything changed for Zoe five months ago, when she got her big break – getting signed to an agency and releasing her debut album, Echoes of the Heart. One of the songs, “Finding My Way” rose to No.1 on Billboard, and quickly garnered 10 million views on YouTube within a month. The song explores themes of feeling lost and self-discovery, which resonates deeply with her audience. “I wrote this song during a time I felt completely lost. I had no idea that others felt the same way,” she says.

Looking back, Zoe’s journey is a remarkable transformation. She transitioned from performing on street corners with just a few curious onlookers to standing on prestigious stages. “It’s so surreal!” she laughs. “One minute you are singing to a handful of people, and the next, you are sharing the stage with artists that you’ve admired your whole life!”

The Inspiration Behind her Lyrics

Each of Zoe’s songs is inspired by her personal experiences. This makes her music resonate so deeply with others. “I find inspiration everywhere,” she explains how she sometimes has deep conversations with her friends or how she spends time with nature on her own.

Working closely with producer Hiro Tan inspired Zoe a lot. “He encouraged me to try new things while staying true to the message I wanted to deliver,” she says.

“There was a time when Zoe doubted herself,” recalls Hiro. “So I suggested she write a

song out of it, diving into the theme of self-acceptance.” This led to the creation of “In My Own Light,” a song that offers comfort to many.

Building a Real Connection with Fans

Zoe builds a special bond with her audience through her authenticity. During her emotional speech at the HKTV Music Awards, she thanked her fans, saying, “Thank you for supporting me all the way! Without it, I wouldn’t be able to stand on this special stage!”

On social media, her fans comment, “Zoe’s music truly offers me comfort and hope. It’s a total vibe!” This connection means the world to Zoe.

Looking Ahead to Big Dreams

Zoe has exciting plans for the future. She dreams of touring internationally and collaborating with different artists such as Billie Eilish and The Weeknd. “I want to explore new cultures and connect with people around the world,” she says enthusiastically.



Song Title: Sophie Choi (2B)

Dreams yet to fulfil

Waking up on a quiet morning, and the light feels so far
The echoes of laughter fade like a distant star
Each step of mine feels so heavy, lost in the silent night

I don't want to cry once more
I just want to experience the joy like I had before
I don't want to be trapped in this darkness surrounding me
And I just wish I could break free

Feeling like a burden to my family
Feeling like an outsider among my friends
I feel like a failure
Watching everyone other than me progressing on with their lives
And I'm just stuck here
Where hope barely survives

There's so much I want to say and express

But I just don't know where to start
And just then I thought, would anyone really care?

Voices in my head screaming
Telling me I'm not enough
Every thought feels like a thunder
getting really tough
I envy those who let their true selves shine
while I stand here
stitching together the frayed edges of this heart of mine

I don't want to cry once more
And I just want to experience the joy like I had before
I don't want to be trapped in this darkness surrounding me
And I just wish I could break free

But deep down inside there's a fire still
I'll hold on right with dreams yet to fulfil

Battle Scars

Hayley Pang (3B)

The world isn't fair. It never has been and never will be. I stand alone beside the pavilion in the middle of the park, my hand on the railings, eyes darting back and forth.

“Come on, Mandy. We have to go home for dinner,” says a man in a grey shirt. I follow his gaze. His kid, Mandy, is on the swings. The man looks around thirty. He looks kind. He looks like the person I’ll never have: a father.

My father left when I was five. I barely remember him. He used to come home late. Something about meetings and work gatherings. It didn’t take long before my mom found out about his lies. She handed him the divorce papers and that was it. The next thing I knew, my father was speeding down the streets in that blue, worn down Toyota of his.

It changes you. Not having a proper family. It gives you trust issues, makes you sceptical, lonely. And while my mom was able to drown her misery with whiskey, I wasn’t old enough. And so, I did the only thing I could: retreat.

I retreated into the shadows, into a hole that no one could see. I built barriers, walls, metal fences, cement walls, so that I would be protected. Protected from people like my father. People who desert the ones who love them. My mom calls those people dirtbags. She says that the world is filled with dirtbags.

As one would imagine, I had no friends. I would talk to myself before I went to bed every night. Sometimes let

loose a tear or two. I was lonely, but I wasn’t determined to admit it. I was alone, not lonely. I was strong, not weak. And definitely not fragile.

Then came secondary school. My class teacher was some 24-year-old named Miss Julia. She always wore gloves. The long, silky type that reaches your arms. I wondered why.

Miss Julia wasn’t the type of person you would pay much attention to. Sure, she was pretty. But she lacked charisma. She lacked stage presence. In a way, she reminded me of myself.

I don’t remember the exact day this happened. Mid-January perhaps. I got called to the staff room. A few moments later, I was in an empty classroom, with Miss Julia seated opposite me. She gave me a small smile and said, “How are you, Kate?”

I frowned at the gesture. “Fine. How are you?” I replied, just wanting to get this over with.

“Are you lonely, Kate?” Miss Julia asked.

The question echoed in my head. It felt so familiar. It was the same question I would ask myself every night. It burned.

“No.”

“I checked your files. Your father left when you were young, am I right?”

I froze. Time stopped at that second. Miss Julia was one of them. “Who’s them?” you ask. “Friends.” “Friends” who think

that they can help. “Friends” who think that they can solve every single problem, untie every knot when they’ve only made the knot tighter, harder to undo. I didn’t like “friends”. My mom didn’t either. Miss Julia looked at me. “Have you ever wondered why I have gloves on every day?” she asked.

I had. I didn’t reply.

Miss Julia tugged at the sleeve. “You want to know why?”

Curiosity kills the cat. “Yes,” I said, “Yes.”

She slipped it off. On her arm was a long scar, around 10 cm long. It wasn’t red or raw, just a shade of reddish maroon. It felt old. It looked old.

“My father,” Miss Julia continued, “He was an alcoholic. He didn’t leave, not exactly. He was there. Present. Just not a good father. I’m sure you can relate to that.” I did.

“He used to beat me with this cane. Didn’t take long before it drew blood. It left a mark. I’ve been covering it ever since.”

I nod, lips pursed. My condolences. But what does that have to do with me?

“You see, Kate. Things, or rather, experiences, they leave scars. I have mine. And so do you. Perhaps it’s not physical. But it’s always etched on the soul. I hide my mark, not because I hate it, but because I don’t want to explain things over and over again. You hide yours because it changed you and you’re embarrassed about

it. You build barriers, walls to protect yourself, when in truth, all you’re providing yourself with is a cage.”

Miss Julia paused, contemplating her words. “I’m sure that a lot of people have tried to heal you. I’m also sure that none of them have made a difference, because the only one who can is you. Make peace with your experience, Kate. Your scar is not something to be embarrassed about. It is a medal. A medal that celebrates your survival, your victory, one that you should be proud of.”

“Hey Kate! What are you doing?” A voice pulls me back into the present. It’s my friend, Mack. He’s in my geography class.

I smile. Happy someone found me. Today’s 14th June, 2024. Ten years since my father left me. I’m happier. I have friends.

Miss Julia’s words didn’t change me immediately. I would be lying if I said they did. Change doesn’t happen immediately. It happens slowly. But Julia did help me. And I owe my recovery to her.

I don’t know where she is right now. But I do hope that she is happy. Just like me. “You wanna get ice-cream?” Mack asks.

“Sure.”

And with that, I leave with Mack. The sun is setting behind us.

PEOPLE UNDER 18, PLEASE LEAVE

Hiiiiii everyone! Guess who just experienced death and survived to live another day? Me! I just hopped back from Pamplona, Spain, a few days ago, and I can’t wait to share with you how I almost died while celebrating the infamous Running of the Bulls.

After spending the whole first day resting and taking pictures with my friends, it was time when the real fun began. I wore my best clothes and went full-on party mode. We were having a great time and eating bull stew (called ajoarriero)– which was surprisingly good– to our heart’s content when suddenly, the party stopped as a sea of people wearing white clothes with red bandanas around their heads crowded around a wide street. Curious, I sent questioning glances towards my friends. They explained that it was a festival called the Running of the Bulls, which is celebrated from 7 July to 14 July every year.

I know that my readers are lazy (like me), and won’t bother with pressing the link below, so I’ll explain briefly what exactly this festival is. Every year, six fighting bulls and nine steers are released at 8am for seven days. Then people participate in running with the bulls or as I would say, running FROM the bulls. I know, people are crazy.

And now, a brief history lesson. This festival was originally celebrated as saint Fermin’s feast day. However, now, it’s about the whole nation following every twist and turn of participants running from the bulls on live television. Exciting, right?

That night, maybe it was the excitement of the fiesta, or the stupid pride after two friends took their chances– and survived, that pushed me to join the race.

I still vividly remember the adrenaline pumping through my veins, the thrill coursing through my whole entire being as people cheered us on. Seconds before the start of the race, I suddenly heard the words a possibly American traveller who was also visiting Spain had said, “Just remember to stay down if you fall over, and you’ll be alright. Better to be trampled on than gored.” Gee, thanks random traveller, that totally helps with my nerves.

While I was still lost in thought, a firecracker popped and everyone started running. Thankfully, I chose the easiest and shortest path to run. A bull appeared right behind me and I ran for my life. I hadn’t run this fast since my brother stole my doll when I was seven and I had to chase him. Even though only ten seconds had passed, it felt like I had been running for hours. I



Po Yat Hei Hailey (2B)

regretted eating that juicy chorizo before this. My stomach growled angrily as the huge charging bull closed the distance I had so happily put between us. I used every ounce of my energy left and pelted down the narrow street.

Still gasping for life, I realised that I had finished running my part. Was the ground always this beautiful? I had thought. I mentally ticked the last box on my bucket list: to do a dangerous stunt. The party was still going when I returned after washing up. I reunited with my friends as they bombarded me with questions about running with the bulls. And honestly, it was awesome and thrilling. The thought that I even stepped out of bed and did something physical makes me shocked.

This thrilling yet dangerous festival is GREAT for people who like the thrill of doing dangerous things. To all the party animals out there! You MUST visit Spain!! All in all, this experience told me that I should really hit the gym. LOL. Hope you had fun reading this, please like! (I’m desperate) Bye!

Down in the Dumps: Depression, and what you can do to fight it

I'm sure you've heard someone joke, "I'm gonna kill myself", or "Ugh, I'm so depressed right now", or maybe you've made that kind of joke yourself. It's not hard to see why. Over-the-top, hyperbolic statements have always been an intrinsic part of our humour. But how many of you are actually well-acquainted with depression?

Well, in the article below, you'll read a sharing from a friend of mine who had depression. Let's call them Em for now.

Depression, as most of us may know, is a mental disorder, estimated to affect 5% of adults worldwide and 3% of children and adolescents, that involves a loss of pleasure and interest in activities for long periods of time, and feelings of sadness or emptiness. This might not sound severe, and might actually sound somewhat similar to experiences you've had before, but what makes depression different from everyday mood fluctuations is its prolonged state. Feeling down for a day or two might not be too big of a deal, but being sad for months on end can seriously impact someone's life.

"I remember just... feeling so tired," says Em. "And it wasn't the kind that I could fix by just getting some extra shuteye. Sleep was a reprieve

from the tiredness, sure, but then I'd wake up and there'd be this bone-deep exhaustion. Doing anything at all felt impossible. I would just lay there on my bed."

"Eventually, I would manage to force myself to get up, but everything after that was just my body going on autopilot. I'd go through the same motions every day, all while thinking 'God, I can't keep going anymore. Please don't make me do this.' Then before I realised, I'd already subconsciously made it all the way to the bus station. That's what life with depression was like. A million blanked-out spaces in my memories."

And you might be thinking, how does one even begin to combat this awful illness? Well, one thing's for sure — you can't do it on your own.

"I think what helped the most was just being around other people," Em shares. "I couldn't open up to them yet — I wasn't ready for that. But they were there. I felt so empty, so helpless, and they were there. And that made all the difference."

Em also suggests making sure you don't withdraw from life. "It's easy to shut out other people when you have depression — you don't think they'd understand, you just don't have the energy to keep up with them, but all it does is

make yourself feel worse. Ask yourself. When was the last time you hung out with someone? Did you talk at all during family dinner? Staying in touch with others can really do wonders for your mental health."

Of course, the ideal way to fight depression is to seek professional help. What I've mentioned already is far from useless when it comes to coping with depression, but at the end of the day, therapists are people who've been trained to handle this for you. They'll know the best ways to tackle your problems and be able to spot any unhealthy coping mechanisms you might have. I'd highly recommend any readers struggling with mental health to go seek help — therapy isn't the be-all and end-all of dealing with mental issues, but it's a pretty good choice.

This article isn't just relevant to people who might be struggling with depression either. Even if you're feeling peachy, it's more than likely that your friend might not be doing so hot!

A survey conducted in 2023 found that 33.6% of secondary school students in Hong Kong showed symptoms of depression. That's more than a third! This means that statistically, if you have two friends or more, one of you is likely to be depressed. Anyways, the point is, it's

Magdelene Yu (4C)

fairly probable that you know someone who has depression. In that case, what can you do to help?

For starters, you'd have to recognise that your friend has depression. A few common signs include someone losing interest in doing things they usually enjoy, seeming tired or not talking much, and having trouble concentrating on things. Em thinks it's important to bear in mind that depression isn't often as obvious as you'd think.

"Back when I was depressed, I would still smile all the time, and laugh until my stomach hurt. Depression usually makes people think of someone who's gloomy and quiet all the time, but that couldn't be further from the truth."

We can help our friends by being a shoulder to lean on and a listening ear. As mentioned before, being there for a depressed person can help them immensely, and letting them know you're there to listen can really be a comfort.

Depression is an illness that affects more people than you'd think, and can seriously impact someone's life. So take care of yourself, look out for other people, and let's all try to fight depression together.

Kirsten Choi (2A)

his irritation seeping through the pauses between each word he said.

"John, Alex, Shane, principal's office, NOW!" the principal yelled furiously.

The three predators glared at their prey one last time before having to walk away.

Alvin tried to eavesdrop in the conversation going on in the office. Most of the words were inaudible mumbles or growls. He felt a sense of relief from the noises, they reassured him that this was all going to finally come to an end.

"You three, expelled!" the principal yelled.

Then came a forceful slam on the door, it flung open and revealed the now expelled predators looking all red and ashamed. Alvin felt a newfound sense of satisfaction and decided to tease them before he missed his chance.

He chuckled, "Cry about it losers, womp womp!"

Poem to the disgusting children

Molly Xu (1A)

Based on The Witches by Roald Dahl

Squeak, squeak, little brats, how rotten repulsive you are,
your tiny hands, your laughs, make me want to throw you in a jar.
Crunch, munch, on chocolates filled with spite,
a magic potion to end your light.

Oh, how I laugh, seeing you change,
from kids to mice, in a magic range.
Your tails now twitch, your whiskers grow,
a perfect end for brats if they become so.

I cackle, the sound of my delight,
as you run away, out of sight.
No more stink waves, no more cheers,
just 'lovely' little mice, filled with fear.

Sizzle, pop, the potion sings,
a song of happiness it brings.
Children gone, my rule supreme,
a world now free of every scream.

Oh, what a wonderful revenge, how sweet it feels,
to see you scurry on tiny heels.
For I, the Grand High Witch, decree,
no disgusting child will stand in front of me!

Hahahahaaaaaaahaaaaaaahaaaaaa ! ! !

All is well that ends well

Sienna Rai (3D)

I let out a sigh of relief after seeing my report card, woohoo! I hadn't failed any subjects! Yet, the look my mother gave me didn't seem quite as relieved.

"Eve, you're already a Form 3 student," she said, shaking her head in disapproval as she held my report card, analysing it as if she were a police officer inspecting a suspect's bag. "You should take your studies more seriously! It must be that mobile phone."

"Mom, stop it! I know all of this already!" I snapped at her, feeling annoyed even before she properly started scolding me.

"So you know already? Then give me your phone and go to your room!" her eyebrows furrowed as her tone got harsher, her anger evident in her demeanour.

I clenched my fists and handed her my phone through gritted teeth, so what if I'm not getting the highest marks? I'm still passing, right? Huffing out an 'okay', I started walking to my room, the familiar cold and smooth floor tiles doing little to soothe my irritation.

As I entered my room, I heard a noise coming from the kitchen, I groaned as I assumed that it was my mother cooking me dinner. Didn't I say I wasn't hungry earlier? But as I got up to remind my mother to not

bother making me dinner, I noticed that the sounds from the kitchen weren't the familiar sounds of clattering and the sounds of the gas stove, they were rather like a muffled voice.

This confused me, we couldn't possibly have guests and my dad didn't come back until 12pm or 1am due to work. So, who could she be talking to? Slowly, I carefully crept out of my room, making sure that my door didn't creak while I opened it or bump into anything. As I snuck closer to the kitchen, the louder the muffled sound was getting. At first, I thought it was my mother talking, but the closer I got, the stranger it sounded.

Right before I was about to enter the kitchen, I decided to peak out from behind the wall to see what she was doing. I expected to see her on her phone, I expected to see her talking to herself as she ate, I expected to see her angrily mumbling about something; what I didn't expect to see was her holding her face in her hands, trying to muffle the sound of her sobbing. Her back was facing me as I could see her shaking slightly.

I was at a loss for words, I just stood there watching her as my breathe hitched. All my life, she had never cried. Even if I misbehaved or if I had disregarded what she said, she didn't cry. She instead told me what I should do and helped me make sure I became better. My eyes were

starting to get watery and my gut told me I had just done something terribly wrong and yet, I couldn't do anything. All I could do was watch her cry as I was frozen in place.

Eventually, the shock slightly subsided as I regained the ability to move. Yet, it felt as though I was never meant to see this, so silently, I turned around and went back to my room. Closing the door gently, I dropped down onto the soft carpet of my room, the words of my mother ringing through my ears like an alarm. Was I the reason she was so distraught?

I looked at my hands and then at my school bag, mid-year exams were over, but maybe I could make it up to her during the finals?

Shakily, I got up and picked up my school bag. Taking out a maths book, I sat down and started revising the chapters of the subject I was worst at. A wave of determination gushed through me, I would never make my mother cry like that again.

Eventually, the final exams came. As I hesitantly showed my mother my report card, any of my doubts from my previous fanatic studying washed away when I saw the expressions on her face. Even if she didn't know it, her actions that day had changed me for the better.



Alvin's grandfather had steam coming out of his ears, he didn't know where to look. His thoughts spiralled around what those bullies had done to Alvin. He knew that Alvin's actions and behaviour were affected by them, he felt like he was slowly losing his grandchild.

Grandfather sighed. He picked up his mobile phone and stormed out of his room. Reaching the kitchen, he asked, "How do I search for Alvin's school?"

Alvin's mom turned around to show him.

"Here, click this icon and type his school name," she explained.

He followed her instructions and eventually found the

name of the principal and the school address. He thanked her and walked back to his room, his steps lighter than they were before.

Grandfather got out of the taxi, gripping his cane with all his might. His hair was combed and styled, his button-up shirt was nothing like what he would usually wear. He checked his appearance one last time before entering the campus, making sure that he didn't look disheveled. He stomped into the gates, reaching the front desk.

"Hello, how may I help you?" the kind receptionist asked with a smile on her face.

"I... I need to look for the principal," he exclaimed.

Right at that moment, the principal, Mr. Smith walked by. Grandfather, immediately recognising that distinctive face, patted his shoulder and asked, "Are you the principal? I have something I would like to discuss with you."

The principal nodded, and told Grandfather to enter his

office. They took their seats, Grandfather put down his cane and cleared his throat.

"I am Alvin's grandfather, I came here today to inform you that Alvin has been bullied by these three boys. Their names were... um... John, Alex and Shane..."

The principal's eyes widened while listening to the whole story. He was mentally cursing himself for not noticing the situation despite sensing that something was wrong.

"Oh gosh," he mumbled. "This is absolutely unacceptable in our school. I will investigate what's going on and give the bullies the punishment they deserve. Thank you for telling me, we're so very sorry for what has happened." The principal bowed his head to express how sorry he felt as Grandfather left his office. "Oh no, a bullying situation in our school..."

The bullies walked up to Alvin, their intentions clear.

"Where is it, monkey face? Hand it over!" John growled,

