



IT'S  
WEDNESDAY  
IN DECEMBER

## *Preface*

Dedicated to all the people who are the inspiration for this book of poetry.

This book of poetry was created by 12th grade students at High Tech High Media Arts in San Diego, California. Throughout the course of their semester in English, students were asked to think critically about what it means to be active, ethical, responsible, and educated global citizens. As a response to this question, students investigated a contemporary social problem somewhere outside of the U.S.A., in which they were challenged to think critically about the social, political, and historical factors contributing to that problem. After compiling a body of research, students were asked to put a human face on their findings in order to represent a bit about daily life in their researched area, and the parameters of the problem in question.

Inspired by the poem "It's Sunday Morning in Early November" by Philip Schultz, students created poems that work to reflect an average day for a person living in the area of their research. As a compelling juxtaposition, students also created a poem for an average day in the life of their counterpart in San Diego. This book of poetry is a compilation of these poems.

It is our hope that this poetry makes you pause and wonder about our world and remember that each average day in this world is, in fact, quite extraordinary.



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## *It's Wednesday in December...*

And my clothes are already coated with sweat from the  
heat.

It's an early day but everything must be done  
Before I can leave for my studies.

The sun still has yet to rise.

I help make breakfast, clean the dirty clothes  
In hopes that my father will let me go to school today.  
I've been coped up in this house and wish to leave.

I have been keeping up on my work.

As the light becomes brighter outside,  
I dress and cover myself from head to toe.

I am overcome by the heat

But I am doing this for myself.

Father says I can go to school today

So I grab the homework I had done  
Over the course of the previous nights.

I arrive an hour early

And catch up on the readings from the books in the  
classroom.

I want to learn all that I can

So that I can continue my education after high school.

Class starts and my undivided attention goes to her.  
As the sun reaches the highest point in the sky, every-  
one leaves

But I stay until sundown to read.

The walk home is lit by the shining of the moon.

I kiss my father hello

And fall asleep in the anticipation

That I might be allowed to go to school the next day.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

And I wish to sleep in longer

Although the alarm has gone off 3 times.

The frost on the roof tells me to expect another chilly  
day

So a sweatshirt will do.

The traffic in the morning is horrendous

And I arrive to school five minutes before class starts.

Welcoming hugs are given as I enter the classroom

And I sit next to my best friends.

I long to be home and for this day to end

And signs of not enough sleep

Appear on my drowsy eyes.

Lunch rolls around

And the break refreshes my mind for the next class.

Class starts and the count down for the end of the day  
begins.

Being assigned homework brings a sigh throughout the  
class

And being released for the day

Comes joyous celebration.

Being in the company of friends lasts for an hour after  
school

And time comes to go home.

As evening comes,

Texts and calls come in faster and faster.

Favorite television shows are watched

And homework is started.

As midnight approaches,

I decide it is time to sleep

And I set my alarm for another day to begin in the next  
couple hours.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I have never used one,  
But I own millions.  
They are my playground,  
My towers,  
My kingdom of the sleeping machines.  
As I sit upon my poisonous fortress,  
I gaze upon the ashy shores,  
Wondering when my time shall come,  
That I too one day,  
Will be deemed outdated.  
As I turn away from the clouds,  
Filled with their memories of years past,  
I wish I too could float away,  
Far from my kingdom of the unwanted.  
As my dreams fade away with the passing of the  
clouds,  
I return reality, back to my tower of plastic and lead.  
If this is too where I will die,  
I wish to be buried underneath my kingdom.  
So that when the tides shall rise,  
And the Earth shall drink,  
The ash of my towers,  
Will flow to through me,  
Just as I flowed through the clouds.  
When I wake again, I wish to be new.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I have so many its hard to keep track of.  
Electronics of all sorts fill my house;  
My playground.  
They have served as my entertainment,  
My recreational items to seal the cracks in my day.  
As I sit upon my couch,  
My mind wanders,  
Thinking of what I could do  
To waste this Wednesday.  
Christmas is around the corner,  
And I foresee only the best to come down my chimney.  
The newer,  
The better.  
My old ones are useless,  
Idle heaps of plastic just waiting to be thrown away.  
I could care less where they go,  
I just want them gone,  
Far from here.  
As I pack them up,  
And place them in the bins out front,  
My mind begins to wander into the future,  
Where it is me with my new stuff.  
A new man.  
A better man.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

He wakes up to screeching light  
He just goes straight to breakfast  
He gets tired getting nowhere  
He walks through smoke  
He waves at those who bike by  
He smiles with the sound of bells  
He is disgusted with that nuclear reactor  
He spots that asphyxiating cloud, not so distant  
He wishes for more trees  
He glooms at the residential like his  
He uses his memory to get lost  
He drags in that rusty wooden stove  
He despises the same rubbish  
He remembered that landslide  
He ran away and screamed  
He knew his parents valued his life over theirs  
He kneels next their arms  
He keeps his parents under a tombstone  
He is lucky to survive that disaster  
He thinks on top of hay  
He writes a story just for me  
He spends weeks waiting for my letter  
He lives his life being hopeful.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I wake up to the screeching noise  
I take the time to clean myself  
I relax while heading somewhere  
I travel through the clear air  
I stare at the many cars passing by  
I block out the noise by listening to music  
I am amazed with that electric grid  
I smell that pine essence from the hills  
I don't notice the tree's gifts  
I ignore houses like mine  
I use the streetlights to navigate home  
I switch on that trusty electric stove  
I enjoy those fresh new meals  
I remembered that rainstorm  
I ran into it and laughed  
I knew my parents were concerned for my health  
I jumped into their arms  
I keep my parents in a photo album  
I don't worry about natural disasters  
I dream on top of my bed  
I write a letter to my friend  
I forget about the story I was supposed to get  
I live my life being thankful.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

The sirens shriek the morning alarm, followed by the  
national anthem  
I get out of the bed, careful not to wake my brothers  
and sisters  
My bones creak and snap as I get up  
And my ribs are protruding more with each day  
There's not much for breakfast  
So I scrounge for some grass outside  
I shuffle to school with my other classmates  
No one says a word  
In class the teacher is like us; tired, silent  
The speakers shout out praises for the Dear Leader  
But I find it hard to listen  
My eyelids are so heavy  
It's recess, and my friend is sleeping underneath the  
tree  
I don't think he's waking up  
There's no food at lunch, so we eat some bark on the  
tree  
I shuffle back home to find my younger siblings outside  
They don't look at me as I walk inside  
Their eyes are fixed on the ground  
My parents still aren't home  
They might be at work, they might be begging  
I make a plate of what little rice we have and some  
roots  
Then leave it for my siblings as I get into bed  
"I hope I wake up tomorrow" is my final thought  
As I drift off to sleep...

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I wake up at 7 AM, throw my blankets off, and stand out  
of bed  
A moment to examine my athletic physique  
A quick but nutritious breakfast and a couple of clothes  
later  
I dash out the front door  
I listen to the radio as I drive to school  
The teacher hands me a late slip while I take my seat  
It's a pop quiz, but I don't worry about it  
The lunch bell rings and I push my classmates out of  
the way  
Today is taco day, and I have to beat the rush  
I get my friends together for a speedy game of football  
On the way back to class, we have guy talk  
Women, sports, those sorts of things  
I get by in math, but it's not my best subject  
The final bell rings, and kids mob out of the school  
I rush to my car, hoping to beat the traffic  
I get home and grab a snack  
Peanut butter sandwich, my favorite  
I relax for awhile and think  
"The new girl in AP World History was really cute"  
I stop daydreaming and get to work  
Homework is drag, but I gotta get in to college  
I get the dinner call; it's potato leek soup for dinner  
I sit down, belly full and watch an hour of TV or so, then  
take a shower and get into bed  
I stare at my ceiling, and drift off to sleep...

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Poor and desperate people  
Find themselves in a modern world  
Their grandparents worshipped spirits  
Their new leaders came in on ships

To scrape a living from the land  
They slash and burn away  
The wonders of their world  
And sell their remains to the west

The ancients revered the forest  
And the spirits that inhabited them  
But these spirits were living creatures  
Their flames snuffed out by man

A terrible thing it is to force a people  
To choose desecration or starvation  
A truly cruel thing it is  
When both lead down the same road

The poor comply and then destroy  
The only thing they have  
In a futile attempt to gain more  
Because it's their only chance

Poor and desperate people  
Find themselves in a losing game  
Their grandparents lived and danced  
They themselves have no chance.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Outside a shack just north of nowhere  
The beauties of nature lay  
Untainted by the hand of man  
Lush forests are a sea of green

The trees stand stoic as they always have  
The guardians of life give  
Their bodies as shelter, their fruits as food  
For the other wonders who live

But from that shack another wonder emerges  
It too needs shelter and food  
From their fruit of their branches  
The trees gave all that they could

That creature sated, another one stood  
Again and again, the guardians fell  
Victims of their charity  
Martyrs to the greed of others

Their demands only grew and always will  
Till the forest lays barren at their feet  
Untold amounts of time the guardians stood  
Till they were hacked and slashed for their wood.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Broken families, broken houses,  
Walk the Palestinian streets  
To find a lost doll, with one eye  
Taste the blandness  
Hear the emptiness  
The only light found  
Comes from a candle.  
The child in tattered clothes  
Struggles to keep his eyes dry  
Struggles to keep his tears from shedding  
He shares none but a serving  
Of grinded wheat  
With his younger siblings.  
They share a flat sheet  
One for a bed  
One for a blanket  
Akh forces himself to smile  
To all his siblings.  
Mother, father,  
Strength, hope, stability  
All shielding his despair.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Broken cellphone, broken transmission,  
Walk the coastline streets  
To find cigarette butts  
Taste the saltwater  
Hear the carefree voices  
The technicolor lights from Seaport Village  
Set the holiday spirit  
The teenagers in Vans and Converse  
Struggle to keep warm in scarves and coats  
Struggle to get the best Christmas present  
Green and red  
Is all about and fills the paths  
They share desserts of gingerbread and peppermint  
Three for him, three for her  
With plenty of extras left over  
The teenage girl forces herself to smile  
For all of her friends  
All shielding  
Her sadness of no cell phone.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Torn from my lands and living in exile.  
My house no longer stands.  
Cherished memories are now a pile of rubble.  
All my life belongings must fit in a knapsack.  
Mother says that today we move to the refugee camps,  
Near the wall that separates people.  
As we walk I touch the earth of my dear Palestine,  
I feel its fright in the tremors of the Israeli bombs.  
As I look to the sky birds flutter their wings,  
Care free, oh do I wish to be one of them,  
With no borders to inhabit their life.  
Robbed of my earth, I strike the wall and follow my  
mother, to our new home.  
As I walk far behind, I hear the sky bellow and the  
ground beneath me shake.  
In the blink of an eye, she's gone.  
I'm left to pick up the mutilated remains of my mother.  
Blood stains the golden brown sand near the olive  
trees  
Who await the bulldozers  
I sit at the trunk of the tree in sorrow,  
Wishing to be invisible or numb from my pain.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I leave a place I once called home,  
Packing all my belongings in boxes.  
Mom says that things will be better moving in with her  
significant other  
What she doesn't understand is he's building a wall  
between us.  
Watching the scenery blur through my tears, I think  
about what I left behind  
I look up to the sky at the birds,  
Fluttering their wings, Care free.  
Oh do I wish to be one of them.  
With no one to tell them what to do.  
Taken from my home,  
Angrily I strike the seat, and follow my mother to our  
new house.  
I look to the door and see them share an embrace.  
From that moment on I knew she was gone.  
The wall finally stands, separating us.  
I sit in the grass, in sorrow,  
Wishing to feel the gentle caress of a loving mother.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Only 300 of us have returned  
To the place we once called home  
Nothing is the same, there now resides a sea of grey  
The air whipping caps of tins roofs almost white from  
snow  
Decaying leaves scrap across overrun streets  
Streets begging for cars to run once more  
Yanukovych enticed us with empty promises  
Of small homes and jobs and of raising a family  
Leaving bags of food and a shack to start  
Little did we know the harms hidden within  
Towering walls buckling inward  
Toward radiation seeping through gaping cracked walls  
A solution not meant to last  
Families say,  
"Why do we care, trees are growing everywhere"  
But radiation permeates the air  
We have come home to try and start anew  
With heavy feet we travel toward the grey  
Hoping but not knowing what we have returned home  
to.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Only 300 of us live here  
In this place we call home  
Everything is the same, just a sea of blandness  
Houses identical twins capped with matching red roofs  
Turning leaves flutter across manicured lawns  
Lawns spread wide inviting children to play  
Home owner associations entice us with a heartfelt  
mirage  
Of a big houses and perfect children and high society  
Leaving us house warming gifts and a free dinner to  
start  
Little do we know that we have trapped ourselves within  
Gated walls keeping the world out  
Of sight and mind  
A solution not meant to last  
Families say,  
"It's safe and better for our future"  
But exclusion permeates the air  
We are home to make a better tomorrow  
With skips and hops we travel toward the blandness  
Hoping but not knowing what tomorrow will actually  
bring.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

My body never rests  
My brain sleeps all the time  
Always in a trance, a cycle, a blur  
Wake up from the night's clients  
"Get up, you whore"  
Cake black makeup on  
"Make yourself look exotic"  
Do they even look at our faces?  
We wait outside  
Call the men, again and again and again  
We look for lice in each other's hair  
Sometimes pull men in  
We lean against the brick walls  
Call the men, again and again  
Clients come in  
We take them to rooms  
Dirty, cold, dark cement rooms  
They take their time; we take their money, money,  
money  
We wait outside  
Call the men, again  
Sometimes they don't pay, sometimes they beat us  
Sometimes they promise to take us away from this  
place  
Still in a cycle, still in a trance  
We wait.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

Sleepy, slow moving, half awake, half asleep  
"It's time to get up, honey"  
I pick my favorite lipstick to match my new dress  
Eat breakfast, grab my keys, drive away to school  
English class is my favorite  
Math is my least  
Mom packed my lunch  
I begin to eat  
Day dreaming about the weekend  
I wait until school ends  
Art comes next, the period lasts forever  
The clock ticks  
And ticks  
Ticks  
I wait until school ends  
Worrying about nothing, or just the occasional drama  
I slip into a trance  
Just thinking of home  
My comfort zone  
I wait until school ends  
Ticking ticking  
I daydream of the future  
But the future is just five minutes away  
I wait.



## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I sit in class. Silent.  
Sometimes people stare when I speak  
English is not a language I grew up with  
It's the language of people who judge me  
Who suspect me  
Who wish to deport me  
I am always hiding  
Not physically  
Mentally  
Keeping myself from saying Hola  
Instead of hello  
For someone may question  
Question my legality  
When I see authority  
My body tenses  
As if a python is strangling my inner organs  
At any moment  
My life could change  
My home taken  
My education gone  
My hope for the future, stolen from me  
I'm helpless in this country  
That's how they want it  
My education is my only hope  
Hope to change my life  
To make something of myself.  
Yet, I must sit in silence  
For fear I will be sent back  
Back to a place where I will not survive.

## *It's Wednesday in December...*

I sit in class. Bored.  
My friends and I,  
We do not need school  
We can succeed without it  
Our lives are supported  
Our futures planned  
By our country  
Our families  
Our fate  
I am always trying to be noticed  
To stand out  
To be unique, special  
Distinguished  
Never am I questioned  
Things are simple  
I have normal fears  
Spiders  
Bears  
The dark  
The truth is, I am like everyone else  
A girl.  
Here.  
Living.  
That's it.  
No secrets  
No danger  
No worry about my life  
I know where I'm going  
I know my home will always be mine.