Yale Daily News

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026

WEEKEND



snowed in

how being forced to stay inside made me appreciate winter all the more

// BY INEZ CHUIDIAN

Growing up in the tropics of southeast Asia, winter snowstorms were a childhood fantasy of mine. From snow-dusted roofs straight out of a Hallmark movie to the feeling of clicking your ski boots into place, I dreamed of leaving the humid heat of Hong Kong and Manila behind. Each year, I counted down the days to our Christmas holidays, enchanted by the promise of snow, skiing and hot chocolate. Yet two years into college in New England, this winter novelty has worn off.

The howl of blizzarding gusts makes me crave the warm sticky air back home, and the heaps of snow lining the sidewalks fill me with dread instead of delight. Somewhere along the line, I lost this gusto for the freezing outdoors and retreated inside. While my freshman winter began with an undying thirst for snowball fights, it ended with days spent hiding in the warmth of my princess suite. My sophomore year has seen more of the latter.

Of course, that's not the whole story. Maybe I hate this particular winter because, a month ago, I had knee surgery.

It is only the second month of 2026, and we are three huge storms into the snow season. Each storm has aligned uncannily with my recovery: one during my ACL surgery day, another during my first week in the infirmary, and now a third as I remain confined to my medical suite —all leaving me stranded in one place during an especially immobile time in my life. Perfect timing.

Yet, against my childlike nature, I've embraced this new insulation from the outside world.

Despite the videos of friends sledding down ice-frosted roads on mattresses and the posts of snowmen I once would have gladly trampled, this winter's depth has nudged me to appreciate the snow once again, but differently — in a manner focused less on movement and more on stillness.

As I've navigated the past four weeks on crutches, winter has taken on a different shape than in semesters before. Time outdoors is no longer an activity, but rather a transition — from my room to an Uber, from the library to an accessibility van. The few moments I do spend outside feel more deliberate. I breathe in the crisp, frozen air a little deeper, aware of it in a way that I wasn't before.

I was told by a teammate before surgery that the healing process would teach me to appreciate my body in ways that didn't involve movement. I didn't think much of it at the time, but now, as I sit on my yoga mat tirelessly trying to bend my operated knee, I look at the heaps of snow outside — that I would fail to traverse — and understand.

As much as I miss the spontaneity I had in freely gallivanting around New Haven with my peers, or diving into mounds of snow, winter almost feels like the perfect season for this imposed slowness. In early evenings and on treacherous pavements, our campus hums softly, and the world, too, seems to move with a little more caution. Though not for medical reasons like mine, most of us now think twice about trekking across campus for a meal or a function — something we would do without hesitation in the summer.

So instead of wallowing in the grief of being bound to my medical suite, I've embraced this winter with grace. The strange American tradition of Punxsutawney Phil remaining in his hole — which I will never understand — has only excited me with the promise of more cozy evenings and candlelit study sessions. I am enamoured with the idea of watching snowfall from my bedside, with blankets and friends nearby.

Too often at Yale we get swept away in the hustle culture, living from meal to meal and class to class, always having something we're moving toward and something we're missing out on. Having been forced to stay still this winter, I've developed a newfound appreciation for taking things slowly and being appreciative of the present. Because I quite literally cannot run from class to meal to party while juggling three other commitments, I choose one of the six, make my way there on crutches, and sit fully present — letting it be enough.

As eager as I was to breeze through physical therapy and run around campus once again, I think all of us, injured or not, deserve the wintertime to be still. Only in stillness can we begin to appreciate the smaller things, and only in the pause of a cold, long winter do we learn to truly be present in the moment — whether inside or not.

Contact **INEZ CHUIDIAN** *at inez.chuidian@yale.edu.*

COVER ART BY DANI KLEIN AND LUCY BLAND