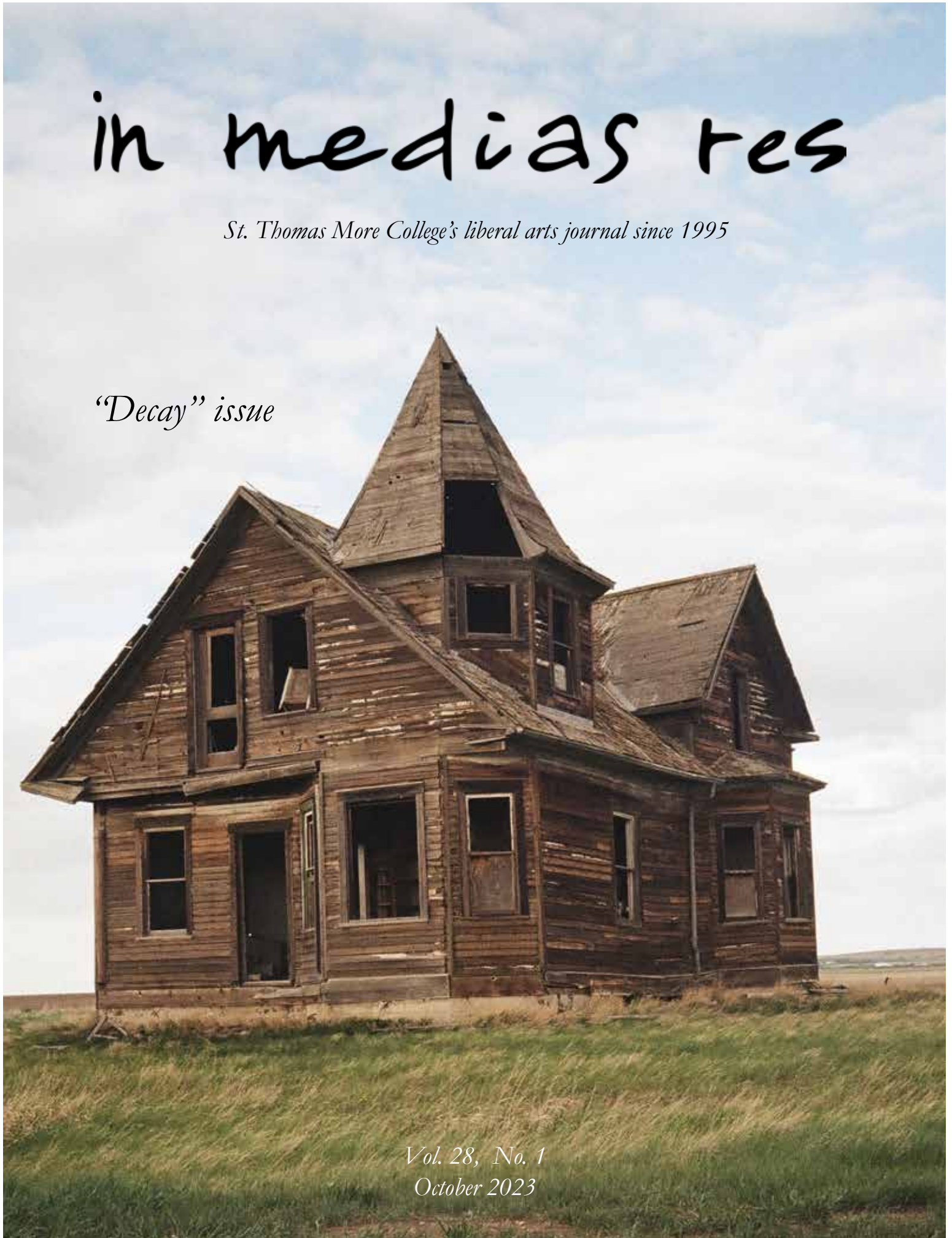


in medias res

St. Thomas More College's liberal arts journal since 1995

“Decay” issue

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers:

It is with great pleasure that we present the latest issue of *In Medias Res*, featuring an array of thought-provoking and evocative works that explore the elusive theme of decay. This issue showcases a diverse selection of mediums, including poetry, visual art, fiction, and nonfiction, from our Usask campus community. Featuring works from undergraduates, graduates, staff, and alumni, this magazine dives into the theme of decay, exploring the depth of our minds.

Death and decay have long been a source of inspiration, whether for the mystery of the ever-after or the history that can be learned from what remains. While death explores the border of what lies behind, in front, or ahead of us, decay explores the process of death. The process between life and death, between the present and the past. The complexity of this concept invites us to consider our limits between our lives on this mortal coil and the universe that lies beyond our reach.

Contributors have taken up the challenge of defining decay, deciding whether it marks an end or a beginning, and discussing the inevitability of it. Although the theme might seem overwhelmingly morose to some, our contributors explore both the sadness of decay and the beauty found within the darkness. Through their works, they invite us to join them on their journeys and reflect on what is left after the end. Their works push the border between time and space, discussing the inevitable realities of life and how the inevitability connects us to each other. They challenge us to push beyond the border of life and death, by exploring a concept that is common yet never normal in our lives,

We are thrilled to share this thought-provoking and profoundly emotional concept of decay. To our readers, we advise you to read carefully and be ready to confront one of life's greatest fears: the end.

Sincerely,

Toni Elliott.

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I love the way the leaves...

Bailey Schaan

line the gutters,
like yellow butterflies they fall,
fragile and frail,
turning into papery
pollen dust,
waterlogged and fanned out
curling in on themselves
like baby mice.



A Small Harvest

Bailey Schaan

The carrots are the sweetest
after the first frost, they say.
But ours are thin, tapering,
into spindly little strings
and they snap audibly
between my fingers like
sticks breaking underfoot.

The earth is damp and rough,
alive, but not for long.
The last bursts of colour,
leached from its veins, like
blood being drawn up
through a needle.

The shocking steam of the tap
water burns tomato-red hands.
Washing thin lines of dirt out
of carrot crevices and
the cracks of my own chapped skin.

A Case for the Plum

Jocelyn May

The forbidden fruit has never been named,
So in my head, Eve's scene is rearranged.

It's as enticing as it can be,
A black pearl hanging low on a tree.

But in my bowl, it sits cold.
The underside has grown mold.

Flies already had their feast,
Leaving larvae to grow beast.

Which is something I don't see.
Therefore, it doesn't matter to me.

My teeth tear into thin skin.
Juice comes quickly down my chin.

In the flesh, I see veins,
And my delight then wanes.

As my eyes have now caught
Troubling signs of rot.

Yet, I bite down once again,
For sweetness is hard to abstain.

"Heartwood"

by James Dobson

This piece was turned from a tree that was rotting away from the center. One push was all it took to fell the tree. Generally, when turning a hollow form like this, the shape of the exterior is the guiding principle of its form but with this piece the defining characteristic is the hollowness itself. The shape is defined by the natural process of the rot.



Tomatoes and Death

Azee Amoo

When I was younger, I'd carefully maneuver my hands to pick out tomatoes from the boxes my parents bought in bulk, avoiding the fruit tainted by mould. I had it in my head that if I were to come in contact with the decay, it would grow and fester on my skin. I wouldn't be able to simply wash the mould off because, despite being associated with death, it was far from it. Like every living entity, it would fight to taste the light of day that was sure to follow. It would fight to live. It would seep into every crevice of my skin, suck every cell dry, and create colonies on my corpse body that would become a pile of goo.

My fear of mould only grew worse when I learned one could inhale spores that would attach to their lungs and consume them from the inside out.

It turns out the human body defrosts in a way similar to tomatoes. The challenge with cryogenics isn't the freezing part but what comes after. The human body, similar to tomatoes, has a high water content and when that water freezes, it expands – beyond the extent of what our delicate little cell membranes can handle. So, when brought back to room temperature, we become all squishy and pretty much unusable (unless you were going to be blended up anyway).

Those who choose to be put on ice can usually feel the cool fingertips of Death grazing over their skin. They go into voluntary hibernation, with the hope of future advancements being able to allow them to remain a safe distance from Death's hold.

Every time I think about immortality, I get stuck. I'm apprehensive about death, and yet I feel the same way about living forever. Every time I think about immortality, I can't help but also think about the words of Peter Pan – , the boy who would ever famous storybook character who never wishes to grow up, the boy who would live to live every experience but one: "To die will be an awfully big adventure."

I don't know what comes next – or if there's anything at all. Like those who came before me, I try to find refuge from existential uncertainty in stories. I ponder endlessly about what could be waiting on the

other side, but most fears come from the unknown, so and my attempts at rationalization – though feeble – are my only defence.

I don't know what comes next – if there's anything at all, so I live as much of my life as I can. I want to make sure that I create enough stories, enough memories to keep me warm as I grow cold and hope that it will be enough to keep me company.

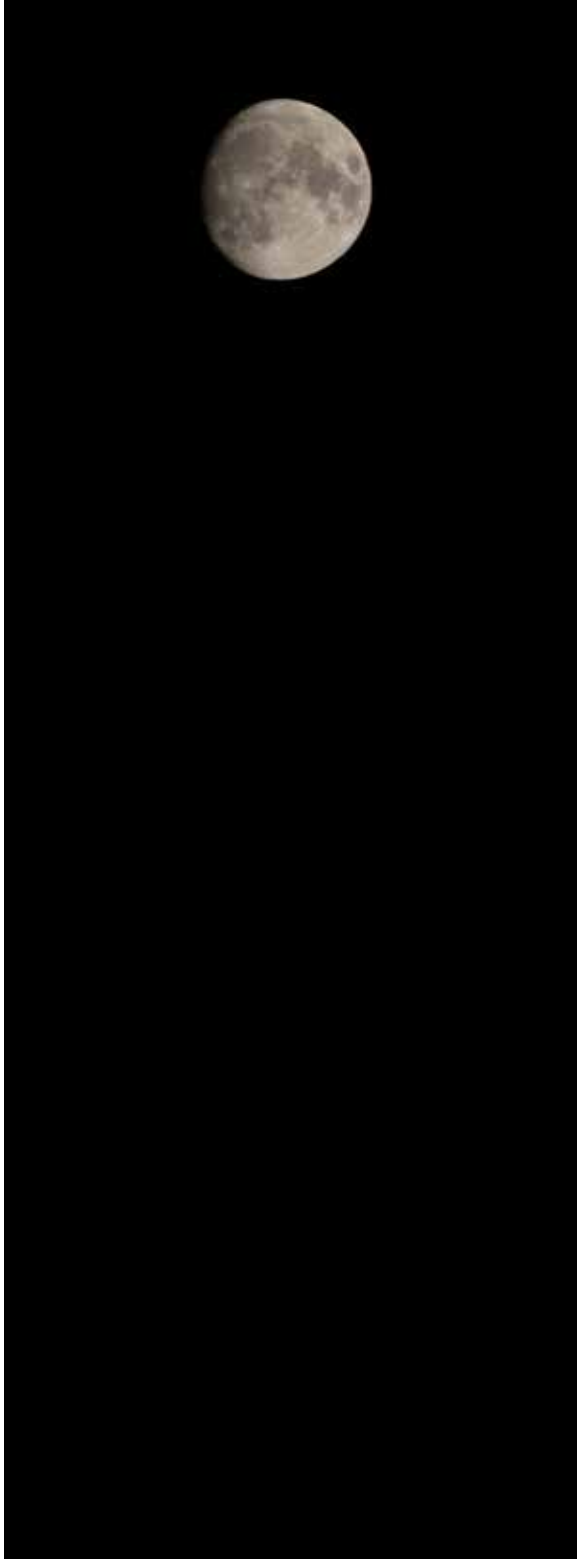
If I do have another chance at life, maybe I'll choose to be a tomato. Suddenly, I'd find myself budding from the branches; I'd start off hard and green, I'd dance along with the whims of the wind, and I'd say hello to the sun every day.

Then, when I'm red, ripe, and ready, and just about to fall — , I'll be plucked by a human. Even though I would be a tomato, I would still bask in the succulent comfort of being held. I wouldn't think about how I'm probably touch-starved but take in all the new sensations around me, such as the juxtaposing feeling of fear and excitement that comes with embarking on a new journey or the peculiar feeling of comfort that can only be found in strangers that yet, hold a sense of familiarity.

It wouldn't be long before the basket I'm traveling in with my newfound tomato companions comes to a stop before being tipped into a basin. I'd hear the white noise of water running from a tap. This time, when I'm picked up, I'm gently caressed under the artificial stream. I wouldn't think about how I'm moments away from death, or the absurdity of my existence being the result of stars exploding somewhere near the start of time. I would not think about all the things that had to happen for me to exist, to come into being, to go on the wildest adventure of my life, for all of it to suddenly end with me being sliced into a salad that will be tossed into the trash after the Insta pics have been taken.

No, I would simply think about how this water feels, just like the rain that comes from the sky in the form of tiny droplets.

i fall asleep and dream i am a noctambulant zombie



Greg Orrē

lying in nature,
arms wide, legs bound.
back bitten by acid rain,
bleeding, i slink spine first,
becoming the bog,
i am pulled to understand.

a bog is defined as ground too soft
to support a heavy body,
a curious quality, a troubling thought.

i should have known better than to crawl
near such waters. i close my eyes to escape
the tempest, killing fire, the torrential broadside.
you sacrifice me, nail me to the cross.
face your jesus complex, you say you see
my face is the complexion of your jesus
complex. i curse you as i die,
study my mnemonic meanderings.

i fall asleep and dream i am a noctambulant zombie
tired and mad as hell. still, my face holds
a shine like wax. you reach to feel
memories peachy keen.
the fog lifts as i decompose,
my face burns.

you butter your toast,
you bite down with dead eyes,
you miss seeing this miracle.

Between Life and Loss

Gillian Skjei

And maybe I'll meet you
at the line between love and living
at the space between life and loss
the feeling of driving home
of quiet music
and the glow of traffic lights

And maybe I'll see you
in camera flashes
and half developed photos
the blank pages
and at the end of a book

And maybe you'll come back to me
or I'll come back to myself
in the time it takes the leaves
to fall from these trees
for candle wicks to burn down
for the sun to set
and night to fall
the time it takes grief to become
happy tears and soft smiles

And maybe I'll remember you
as all the best parts of a movie
the chorus of your favourite song
forever my favourite chapter
in a life well lived
or at the very least
well loved



Wight

Jerhico

It will take some courage
To walk among the living
With your damp clothes
And skin eaten by mites.

It will take some courage
To crawl from your grave
And kick over your headstone.

It will take some courage
To pull air into your lung
And spit up blood and sputum.

It will take some courage
To speak again
With dirt teeth
And a sallow broken jaw.

It will take some courage
As a spirit of undeath
To feel touch
And possess a unique fortitude
Of one already reconciled
With the lonesome truth of unliving.



"Mushroom Apocalypse"
by Taylor Kennedy

"Mushroom Apocalypse"
by Taylor Kennedy



"The piece I've drawn relates to the Apocalypse of unknown species in our environment. The Last of Us was a huge part of redoing my mushbums into an Apocalypse, we as humans can create a world like that if we are not careful."

Decay's Resilience

Victoria Main

Withering away, one by one, by one,
Hey, hold on, I don't think I'm done
With you, aren't you supposed to be with me?
Ever and forever, making me feel hopeful, encouraging me to never flee?

Sighed the dreams! A heavy sigh, it was,
What will you do? What have you done? Alas!
Just another baggage I am to you which you spun
Around the empty corners of your heavy heart, hope seems on the run.

I sit here, waiting for you to see
Me reaching out, longing to be free
From the cage of your relentless doubt,
Self-effacement, a never-ending bout.

I don't regret being cherished by you,
But that was once, and now nothing is new.
I'm here, waiting for you to rise,
To acknowledge your strengths, and dispel the lies.

I failed you maybe, but I'm tired too,
Seeking a new home, a fresh start, it's true.

My heart sank deep in the ocean of worry,
Yet I held on tight, not in a hurry.

Yeah, I've felt neglected, even invisible,
But if I'm doing the same to you, that's terrible.
I won't let go of you; that's not my call,
For you are me—hopeful, standing tall.

So, I stretch my hands toward you, once again,
Wishing the decay is over, the sorrow, the pain.
Let's walk toward the future, with hopeful eyes,
I'll be a friend to you, dispelling your cries.

For now, I won't lose sight of you, ever,
Through the darkest times, we'll endeavor,
To rise above, to conquer and strive,
In this journey of decay, we'll survive.

The Garbage Groom

Kyle Jansen

It is not every day that you are asked to save humanity, and who was Gil to decline? Humans, and most other life on the planet, had been on the brink of extinction for the past century-and-a-half with their carelessness and wastefulness spelling doom for all. Vibrant greens and hopeful blues were colours of the past, which have now been replaced with the colours of polluted rot. This is why Gil loved his Superhero outfit so much: the healthy greens it adorned brought a foreign colour to his life, a colour and existence he thought lost to nature.

A month ago, a stranger drove up in an old vehicle, one of the few Gil had seen in his entire life. Its engine rattled like gravel dragged across a wooden floor, but the rust on it looked almost intentional with how smooth the entire car appeared. It looked like the acid rains had burned away the possibility of any paint that could guard its exterior, yet it was in remarkable shape from Gil's extremely limited knowledge. Either way, he knew that such effort to maintain the vehicle meant either money, influence, or power; Gil had none of those to fend this stranger off, and instead chose to let the visitor decide their fate. He would never forget the clean, well-dressed figure stepping out of the door and standing tall.

Gil posed yet again in the stained mirror in aim of capturing every angle of himself in the clothing. The suit, as he understood it, had the design of popular wedding rituals in the late 1900s with a deep green jacket and pants that filled out his emaciated form. The shirt beneath the jacket was soft green with the neck wrapped in a neutral blue weaving of cloth, making him feel gentle and loved. He let these feelings wash through and cleanse him; emotions he associated with his mother with assurances that she would be proud of his future role. Lifting his arms above his head and gently waving them, he imagined as if his hands were leaves breaking from a tree in the wind and dancing to that imaginary blue sky. Kneeling low from the dizzying stretch, he imagined the piles of harvested corn stalks, pretending he would one day be the progenitor of

those who brought life back to the Earth. The truth of the matter was that he had never seen these wonders of nature himself; they existed solely in the memories of archaic films and deteriorating photos. As a child, Gil had seen a movie short of a man who could glide through the air; Gil wondered if it was happiness that made that man soar. Flashing a wide smile into the mirror, Gil aimed to replicate the majesty of that caped individual. He admired that the teeth he had left were at least the ones in the front. Still, Gil did not believe that the flying man's grin could be that white, especially compared to his own stained and damaged set. Nothing could be so pure anymore.

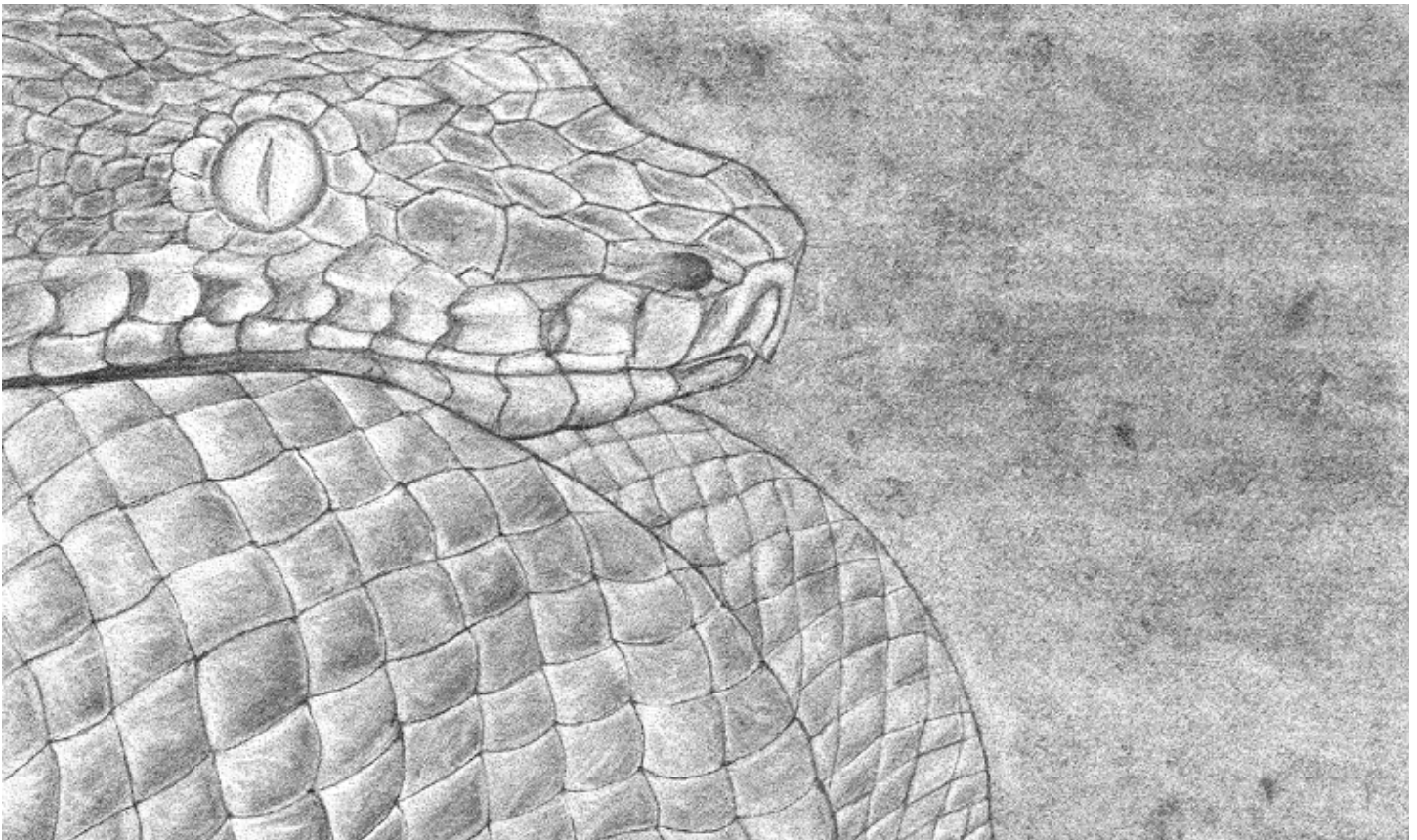
The thought made his mood droop again as he pondered about what short a life he lived when bringing his mind back to Earth. He was only eighteen and the last living member of his family. He could barely remember his grandparents, only knowing that their funeral involved burying them in excrement to help edible fungus flourish. His mom died a year ago and she looked just like her husband the year before that, their jaundiced skin and eyes reflecting how the Earth and their minds were withering away. His parents had almost made thirty-five. His older siblings did not make it far either, their parents saying they both died of fatal deformities before he could properly meet them and nothing more. The rotting piles of refuse that the land struggled to consume, along with his isolated life, were his alone or at least what remained of them both. If there were other family members, he did not know about them and did not care. Nobody else prevailed, and that is part of what made him the perfect candidate to be humanity's future.

Spinning around and walking to the window that faced the mirror, Gil looked out to observe and memorize his legacy: a farm that had been in the family for centuries. It was all he knew, as travelling away from a semi-reliable food and water source was often fatal. Two nearly leafless trees stood as tall as one could expect in this blighted land, with the centrepiece of the farm being maybe three times Gil's height and

equally struggling to live. Hemp and fungus were the only reliable sources of food, as they thrived despite the taint in the wells and sloughs. Impurities in the soil ran deeper than the wells, the same impurities that flowed in the living's blood. If Gil was lucky, he might find a wild pig carcass, but trying to catch or capture one alive was far too dangerous so any edible meat was rare. The green from his suit reflecting in the dirty window interrupted his thoughts and reincarnated his smile. He was going to help save the world. He was going to get married.

A sudden cough at the door to his room made Gil shriek in surprise. "Sorry, Gil, am I interrupting?" it was the man who originally exited the car to meet Gil, and he had not even heard the man's footsteps on the

worn, uneven, laminated floor. His name was Steven, and he was the one who offered Gil the chance to save their race from extinction, but his presence still felt alien. Steven's voice was deep and charismatic, his full head of black hair masterfully groomed, and his posture reminded him of the flying man: regal and self-assured. The evenness of his elegance carried like he practiced talking to heads of authority every day. Steven wore a suit styled similarly to Gil's, except it was black and grey with gloves to match. He looked at Gil in admiration but also with a typical minor criticism. "I am glad to see that you used the soap to clean up a bit, but..." He paused as he bit his lip like he was looking for diplomatic words, "you have never actually brushed your hair, have you?"



"Snake"

Pencil on paper

Gil's chin fell to his chest, any pride thoroughly deflated. The only brush he had was his mom's, and he had been afraid to use it lest he disturbs the last physical memory of her: strands of long blonde hair. "Well, no...I don't have one, and I thought that maybe nobody would care?"

Steven sighed, empty of any condescension despite the mismatched worlds the two were from. He walked over to Gil, producing a plastic comb from his jacket pocket and began to work out the knots of hair. The guest stood over a whole head taller than Gil, making Gil feel a little small while Steven combed and addressed the ratty mop. Steven looked about carefully at the near desolate room as he groomed Gil, containing a dilapidated bed and the tall mirror Steven had lent Gil. Steven looked over Gil's shoulder and out the window with patience and kindness, then inquired, "the chances of you coming back here are extremely slim, Gil. Do you have everything packed up in those boxes that you would like to bring with you?"

Gil nodded while pursing his lips, "What little I have is ready. You said this place will be all right, right?"

Steven placed his hands on Gil's shoulders and gently guided him to face the exhausted tree in the field. He pulled Gil in close so they could both look out the window, "as promised, we will take care of the land, and your new family will secure any current possessions. Descendants of yours will get to lay claim to it before any others."

Tears welled up on Gil as the thought of how his parents would not be a part of this. He sniffled but was able to refrain from weeping openly at the thought of this hopeful future. Breathing in deeply caused him to cough harshly, then he righted himself and nodded with acknowledgement to the lonely tree. "I'm ready, Steven."

"There you go!" Steven playfully shook Gil's shoulders, "I have movers waiting outside, but we will be going ahead of them to get you to the wedding." He slapped Gil gently on the back and guided him towards the front door of the house, "you are our future, Gil. Be proud of that."

As Gil walked towards the rusty-looking car, he stopped and turned around to mourn the only home he had known. The hostile elements had stripped any paint from the one-floor, three-bedroom house, with hemp

and mud bricks replacing the once prevalent wood that withered from acid rains. Bleak brown was all it consisted of now and slightly sagging walls with a weak roof. The rains also made the land onerous to work, so Gil was relieved to know that such struggles were soon to be in his past. The yellowed sky, now marred by hostile clouds that the sun struggled to penetrate, suggested an even angrier downpour in the immediate future. He looked to the proud, resilient tree one last time, seeing the telltale mushrooms growing proudly near the roots. Silently saying goodbye to his parents, Gil turned back to the car and carefully examined the soft seating before him.

Gil curiously noticed that there were long seats facing each other in the back of the car and became overwhelmed by the smell the moment he stepped in. It was opposite of the often stale and windless air, which caused him to breathe in deeply to commit it to genetic memory. The damp putrescence that surrounded his existence was all he had known, but here was something entirely alien, and it stung at his nostrils. It was an unrecognizable funk forcing a series of sneezes.

Steven chuckled at Gil's response, "It is a rare perfume that we develop at our outpost, something to help impress your new bride and mask the country's smell." Gil breathed in deep, admiring what he felt was instead a drowning stench. "It also serves as a currency to the outside world with where you will be living."

Seating himself on the smooth leather, Gil bounced on the springy seat, experiencing the cushioning then blushing at his childish actions. Every chair he had sat in previously was rigid plastic, stone, or dirt, with his uncomfortable bed cushioned by firm, unused hemp strands. The majority of what he owned was a hemp cloth as it was the cheapest and easiest fibres one could acquire and work with. Gil had once heard of an animal with soft, fluffy hair that could make gentle warm clothing and blankets, but he was quite sure that the traveler was pulling his leg. "What is this all made of?" Gil ran his hand along the smooth and meticulously stitched seats and interior. He had never witnessed anything like this.

Steven smiled gently, "To be honest, even I am not sure as I oversee the more personable aspects of the outpost." He ran his gloved hand along the seat facing Gil at the back, which created a squeaking sound as he

stepped into the car. "Where we are going is often the height of luxury in this area." His voice sounded a little nervous, explaining, "it does not come without its risks, but the local authorities know better than to let trouble reside near us." He knocked on the tinted glass pane behind him, signalling the driver to proceed to their destination.

Gil had ridden in a vehicle only twice in his life before this. Once to help his dad get supplies that they could not make on the farm. The other time was a treat from his parents which was when he saw the film with the flying man; it was the first time he had heard the word Superhero, and it was a term that stuck in his head ever since. Gil never learned how to read so he could not remember the name of the small theatre film, he only recalled the shining black hair, red and blue outfit, and gleaming teeth. "Could you explain to me again why I got chosen?" the soon-to-be-groom continued to be slightly uncomfortable despite his excitement.

Steven gave his signature acknowledging head bob. "Well, as you know, the majority of the world cannot tolerate what little diet options we have left, but it seems those like me evolved a..." he made an unusual pause to search for the right word, "tolerance? Either way, the family I am a part of can find exceptional nutrition in the refuse and taint that is prevalent." He smiled, showing the second healthiest teeth Gil had ever witnessed, and matter-of-factly stating, "Our bodies can tolerate such foods quite well, evidenced by our resistance to cancers, disease, deformations, and overall health and extended lifespans, compared to the majority of the populace."

Gil looked out the dusty window of the car, watching the scenery go by and wondering if he would miss it. The endless yellows and browns of the flat plains were lifeless, but still his home. Even the hills felt saggy as they zoomed by a land that had finally conceded to the casual waste of past societies. "So, will I live longer too?" Gil was trying to be hopeful. He wanted to experience something beyond innate depression and a quick, painful death.

Steven's face subtly drooped, but he righted it quickly to its more natural, confident form. "That, we do not know, but not an exceptional amount. Our food supplies are still effectively garbage, and while cleaner water might help you, even that seems

irreversibly tainted." He tried to sound as positive as possible. "What you will experience is a luxury beyond comparison to your old life. The most important thing, and I hate to sound like it is me pressuring you, but it is the truth, that you and your wife have as many children as possible."

Gil was still confused about the whole idea. "You'd once said that you guys can't have kids together?"

"Well, we can." Steven seemed to concede that point. "However, due to our understanding of genetics and such, inbreeding is a huge risk, so we need outside blood. And since our...tolerance is passed down consistently, we need people like you to keep the bloodlines fresh." Steven grimaced a little at his last line. "With you, humanity can live on, thrive, and hopefully help heal the planet from our past mistakes. We are, effectively, a protected species, and pockets of us exist in various places of the world." He smiled with pride, "you are the hero of this story, Gil! Without people like you and your bride, we are all doomed."

Gil still felt confused about the entire scenario, facing words and terms he did not understand, but also avoided asking what they meant to not sound stupid. "But...why me?"

Steven looked at Gil mournfully. "Because you have nothing left, as awful as that sounds." Steven shifted in his seat a little as if still trying to get comfortable with a practiced conversation. "We want to bring a little hope to people and not have them die alone. Mercy, in a sense, in this suffering world." Steven reached down and under the seat, grabbing a glass bottle with a plastic stopper, "here, this is the water you will have access to. I hope it relaxes you for our journey as it is a few hours away."

Gil gently received the glass bottle filled with an unfathomably clear liquid. He could not help but stare at it, the reflection in the glass clearer than the mirror at his old home. He gingerly opened the bottle and smelled not a single scent beyond the perfume in the car and, bewilderedly, put the bottle to his lips and sipped carefully. The water within stung and hurt his teeth, but it was also the most beautiful thing he had ever experienced. As the ride continued without a single word while Gil sat enamoured at what he held in his hand.

Gil did not even realize the car had stopped until he

felt a tapping on his knee.

"I am glad you were able to take a bit of a nap," Steven nodded to the bottle, "amazing, is it not?"

Gil grinned in agreement as he looked up, then noticed dried dusty mud caking the windows which meant he slept through the rainstorm along with the rest of the drive. His neck was a little sore, but when the door opened, the verdant scene stunned him. Before him was something he had never seen before in his life: small plants with brown and green stems holding outstretched blooms that existed in colours that held nothing of his old world. Immortal blues, reds, and bright yellows dotted brown tilled dirt before him with a soft black dirt path leading up to a white-painted arch. Above him, a massive encompassing tent sheltered the entire space with mirrored fire lamp lighting and chairs spread out to the left and right of the path. Dozens of people patiently sat in simple wooden chairs while dressed in clean black and grey outfits, which mirrored Steven's. Every one of them calmly saw the groom exiting the car, smiling brightly despite Gil's awkwardness. He was speechless and he could feel his hands shaking from anxiety. Sweat ran down his forehead, and it was not until now that he realized Steven must have groomed his hair again while he was sleeping for it was neat and sorted.

Steven laughed heartily at Gil's amazement, "Now, remember, I will guide you up the walkway. Your bride's name is Patricia, and all you must do is listen to the man before the altar following his instructions and Patricia's lead." Steven leaned forward and put a hand on Gil's knee reassuringly, "do not worry. Everyone knows your situation, and nobody will judge you."

Steven stepped out of the car and Gil swallowed hard as everyone stood up from their chairs in unison. A gloved hand reached towards Gil, offering him a hand to help him forward. Gil grabbed it firmly with fear, afraid he would embarrass himself by falling over. He stumbled self-consciously with awareness at how filthy and grubby he must look compared to everyone else, even in his grand uniform. He closed his eyes and imagined his mother smiling at him, her blonde hair flowing in the wind as she reassured him from the front porch. It was his last happy memory of her outside before he buried her. Tears ran down his cheeks at the shame he felt, knowing his family had never

experienced such beauty in their short lives. Anger filled him, thinking of so many denied such an opportunity. But then he remembered that man drifting above the world and all the people cheering him on as that Superhero who saved the day.

This is Gil's day. This is his chance to save the day. To save the world. He stepped away from the car, stood proudly, and held onto Steven's hand for reassurance. Highlighting the end of the dark dirt path, Steven saw a woman dressed in the most stunning, nameless blues he could never dream of. A veil covered her face as if it was protecting her like clouds below the sky and crystal water falling from the stars. He is going to be with her, his Earthly green to her blue Heavens. He will be her hero, and he will fly to her.

Koagulation

Herman Aamir

Antonio left the D-Floor Clinical Research Lab the instant he saw the first drop of blood trickle down the notepad he was holding. Actually, scratch that - though he spontaneously knew where the drop had come from, he paused and watched it. The blood drop made a show of slowly meandering down the starch, crisp sheet of paper.

He was rather perplexed by the sudden intruder. Although the blood's oxidized, crimson color seemed shockingly blatant under the heavy fluorescence of the well-kept, organized laboratory, he was not alarmed. He knew blood, the vital fluid matrix of the body, composed of red blood cells, the carriers of O₂, suspended in the aqueous component of plasma along with ions, nutrients, and proteins. Blood, with its agile circulation preserved by a varied network of vasculature, transporting goods and excreted waste from individual cells, all while maintaining overall temperature and pressure of the body. Its role in immune response, deploying mature neutrophils and lymphocytes to wage war against infectious agents, whether that be directly or through the formation of antibodies. And having a private militia of platelets that aggregate upon a ruptured vessel, scaffolding themselves to form a clot to prevent further bleeding.

This was his blood though. And he had not endured a nosebleed

in years. This encounter was as if he had caught the eye of an old acquaintance – one that he knew very well, but they knew him too. No courteous smiles or nods of acknowledgement were exchanged. Instead, the fluid gleamed back at him, uttering out a bewitched giggle as if it were taunting Antonio and the mandatory antiseptic protocols of the world-class institute he worked in. As the drop proceeded down the page, it ravenously meshed with the fresh blue inked cursive of the young research intern that Antonio had been signing off on.

It was only Stephanie's slight, almost inaudible gasp that warped Antonio out of his momentary stillness. He glanced sideways to see her widened eyes and gaping mouth. She took a step backwards, her hands in raised fists as if she was taking a defensive position, but instead of squaring off at him, she crossed her arms, cocooned her torso inward and withered in disgust. Just as quickly, however, she straightened herself, shoving her hands into her bunned, curly hair, as if to keep them occupied. Her wild eyes scanned the room and suddenly, she sprinted toward the office quarter.

"I'll get some tissues," She called back.

Tissues were not going to do the job - Antonio knew that. They were scathed by his mere dry nose pickings. On cue to his

dire concerns, another heavy drop splattered the page and with a brilliant, red flicker, soiled it completely. Without a second thought, Antonio clenched at the corner of the page and in a slight haphazard motion, ripped it from the notepad. An utterly pathetic rip, really; the parchment was jagged instead of a clean, straight cut along the indented seam, a first for Antonio. He then crumbled the parchment in his fist before jabbing a folded corner up his nostril – temporary relief against the dry season of the mighty Monsoon.

He would have to be quick now. No one could see him like this. Not his fellow graduate colleagues, not his wondrously illustrious superiors, and definitely not more of those reckless, juvenile interns. Not while he was tip-toeing the fault lines of a natural disaster zone. In a hushed manner, nonetheless.

Firmly holding the balled parchment against his nose, Antonio slid Stephanie's notepad into the waste paper basket and swiftly exited the lab. He could have started toward the nearest washroom – down the stairwell and through the long windowless corridor. He then could have taken a detour through the cafeteria – after all, it was late evening and Stephanie was always the last person Antonio had to sign off on (she was more meticulous to details than even he, in an aggravatingly annoying way). However, he knew

better than to step into the rather boisterous cafeteria, even at this hour. He had to be cautious about where he tread and decided it was best to avoid small-talk with the over-friendly maintenance guy or listen to the seemingly deranged, euphoric singsong of dish boy. Antonio was also wary of the lurking stragglers camouflaged by the night – coffee fiend students with hallucinating, drowsy eyes, who were always ready to pounce and pry for aid on their clinical examinations.

He could have done that – and he had started to. But then he began going up the flights of stairs instead of down them. By the fourth flight up, he opted to take the elevator from then on, mostly because he was out of breath and also because he knew that to see anyone in the upper floors at closing time was unlikely. Antonio was smart, thinking one step ahead as usual, heading toward the secluded washroom on the top floor office suite.

Antonio stepped in and locked the door behind him, activating the automatic lights. His shoulders dropped as he drew out a breath of relief (from his mouth, of course). He went straight to the sink and relieved himself of the once insignia stamped, heavy duty note paper, now weak and soft from being half screwed up his nose and soaked in blood. He sniffed. He felt nothing at first and stood staring at himself in the mirror, slightly confused at the lack of immediate eruption. However, mere seconds later, he felt the sudden widening of the ruptured vessel, as if its

dormant daze had worn off, and sensed a rush of blood making its way down his nasal cavity. He hunched over the sink, face down, staring at the drain – a familiar position, and one that he knew he would be in for a long time. He watched the blood burst forth in deciliters, knowing full well that this was just the initial stage. The sink basin pitied his afflictions, taking on the burden of becoming a never-ending red whirlpool as the fluids swiveled down its tiny dark hole.

Despite being in a rather concerning set of circumstances, Antonio was grateful to be alone, as this washroom had been built to occupy only one individual at a time. Had he been in any other washroom in the building, the ones with several stalls, anyone could have walked in on him. Oh poor kid's got a nosebleed, they would think, no worries, it'll wear off soon. And then they would go do their business and come back, minutes later, to wash their hands and see that Antonio's nose was still trickling heavily. Concern would arise, eyebrows would be raised. Are you alright? No response. Antonio would have gargled up bloody snot had he opened his mouth. They would probably think he had hemophilia. Or maybe even a hemorrhage. They would either walk away at this point (best case scenario), or attempt to confer if he needed medical aid, when it was just a nosebleed – a somewhat lengthy endeavor for him.

Antonio shuddered.

But what Antonio did not know was that this secluded, top floor washroom was the building's best

unkept secret. This was a prime site, a place of utmost convenience – to take a dump. However, it was also where there was running water to cleanse the handsome green-eyed chief operating officer before performing his daily prayer, or to muffle the cries of the vibrant, youthful secretary for her sick, ailing mother. It was where the cleaning woman came to watch her K-Dramas in peace over her unscheduled lunch break. Or where the Wi-Fi was good enough to make free international calls to send greetings back home or to conceive pleasure from the dirtiest shit on the internet.

This washroom was an oasis – a mirage of sorts, in which both the heights of its fantasy and unreliability spur from man's own consciousness. Of course, Antonio would not know that, he was no philosopher, nor an artiste of implicit truths. He could barely interpret real people, let alone metaphors.

Yet, it was people that Antonio thought of as he was head-down over the sink, tightly pinching the bridge of his nose as if to mechanically contract the leaky pipe and terminate its wasteful expenditure. He thought of the horrific contortion of Stephanie's face, how her freckled nose had pursed upward in utter disgust. It was the same face his high-school history teacher had made upon hearing that Antonio's two hour-long nosebleed was the reason for his tardy final project. The kids in grade school also had similar reservations when wondering how ketchup got up Antonio's nose

while he was eating fries. Despite this, such instances in his life condensed as a murky fog that coated the outer periphery of his mind as they were not pertinent enough to dwell over. Or, at least, not now. Not between research rotations and thesis markups and Postdoc applications.

And definitely not while he was confined by the institute – stagnant, poverty-line funding and all.

Antonio felt a slight tickling sensation. A sudden breach by a particle of dust or dander caught up his oral cavity, and he bellowed out a sneeze, echoing within the empty walls of the washroom. He opened his eyes to tiny flicks of blood everywhere – the counter, the backsplash, the mirror – they were all now seemingly front-row witnesses to the brutalities of decapitation via guillotine.

It was only when he caught his own dilated black eyes in the mirror that he became aware of what extent of grisly madness he was in. His lower face was daubed in blood – the fluid glistened in streams as it ran down his nostrils, eroding over and around his mouth, and trickling down his chin. Some of it sunk in his pores or stuck to his facial hair, while other drops looked like mutilated, crusted scabs adhered to patches of his dry skin. He looked as if he was part of an animal documentary, where he, the vicious carnivore, had just taken a fresh bite of a gazelle...

Immediately, Antonio attempted to gain control. He ran his hands over his face to wipe away as much fluid as he could, but just sharpened the feeling of

the tainted residuous film, which now covered his fingers as well. Water. He needed water. But try as he might waving his hands in front of the faucet sensor, the atrocious thing gleefully chose not to spur. He had no avail with the soap dispenser either, though he could see from the plastic slit of the cover that it had been replenished recently. Antonio feverishly tapped the side of the dispenser. He then went back to the faucet, desperately pushing his thumb digits against the sensor, though fully aware that this was a counterintuitive notion. For a split second, the faucet obeyed and rained on Antonio's hands, but before he could relish in victory, it turned off, and once again, he was left in limbo trying to stimulate it.

Three minutes later, upon hearing the loud, wailing flush of the automatic toilet, Antonio jumped and hit his elbow against the sink basin, and let out a damned "Fuck!" at the sudden shocks of pain transcending up his arm. He began to vigorously rub the pulsing, injured spot.

At this point, he realized he was still wearing his lab coat, the one item of clothing he had made an oath with himself to keep within the vicinity of the secure laboratory: the one place equipped with fume extraction capacity of four-hundred degree heat tampered chemicals. Most of them corrosive. All of them toxic.

Another first. Antonio crouched down on the floor of the washroom, pinching his temple. How dumb am I? To be fair, this was a rather slow-witted and dim way to perish. To be found in a

blood-stained lab coat in the daze of the morning by the over-friendly maintenance guy was one thing, but for forensics to find no extraneous fingerprints or strands of hair, or the coroner to find no internal abnormalities or even evidence of ailing health (or vampirish tendencies) during the autopsy was another. The investigation would be deterred right after the test results came in and confirmed the one underlying factor: that the blood was his own, and he knew that. But the blood knew him too.

What a preposterously lackluster and over dramatic ending.

It was not as if he had some significant advancement under his name that people would remember him by – he had not created some revolutionary drug or wondrous treatment to heal the chronically sick and injured. Sure, he did some small, promising work in vaccinology. But the prototypes, backed by tireless late-night research, were far from getting standardized for the market. Funding to perform more research or clinical trials was frustratingly difficult to bargain. And the legalities surrounding patents and their licensing? A seemingly endless, tantalizing process – marred by invisible red tape. And pharmaceutical companies did not want anything they could not sell, especially not a more refined vaccine which would be costly to produce, a product that would only be used maybe once per lifetime. Not much capital there. And especially not if there was already a better-known, better-marketed alternative available.

However, these systematic limitations could be overturned with the right motive and grit and talk. The real disparity within science was its relation to the public. To the people. Science catered for the needs of the people but could not connect to them. And Antonio knew that – but mainly as a topic of intellectual dispute.

Antonio's nosebleed had stopped, but there was a violent, unrelenting thud in his temple. He took off his lab coat, turned it inside out and abrasively rubbed the thick, canvas-like material against his face and hands, scratching off all the dried blood as best he could. He looked around the rest of the washroom despairingly. He was going against all his training to not wipe it all down and wash away the evidential bodily humour validating his trace.

Antonio turned to the door, lab coat folded up under his arm. But the door was locked. Overhead, the lights flickered only once, and then they too went out.

Ah, what angst.

Note: Antonio should have got that medical attention for his nosebleed. For this fictional case, the author has hinted toward the supposed cause of Antonio's nosebleed within the text. Do ask that one friend of yours studying sciences if you need assistance or an explanation – the answer may be right under your nose.

Deficiency in _____



EBB AND FLOW

Nolan Long

A man goes out to the ocean,
looks out over the great expanse of sea,
lapping waves, and the ebb and flow
of that great tide.
One moment, it covers all the sand
on the beach,
covers his feet.

The next moment, the water
has receded, but only slightly.
He knows the tide has only left
for a few seconds, and that
soon everything will return to normal.

The man watches the Sun strike
the great horizon, kissing the
endless stretch of water.
He thinks about how he only appreciates
that great star right before nightfall.
Only when the Sun is at its most magnificent
do we know its fleeting nature,
he thought.

But as those marvelous colours paint the fading sky,
and as his feet are bathed again with the salty water,
he remembers that the Sun will always
rise behind him, and clutch him
with safety, security,
and the warm and soft force of love.

He feels adrift, ambivalent, while
the Sun goes for the night.
But up comes the Moon,
a glimmering reminder of all
the Sun's brilliance, here in the night.

Even while the tide ebbs,
and while the Sun retreats,
the man knows these things will come back.

It is the temporary deprivation from life's wonders,
that makes them so sweet.

In the eye of imperfection,
we find ourselves again turned young,
craving our lover's touch.
And in that temporary night of solitude,
Dawn shall soon bring us back together.

She Asks Me to Pray

Casey Shah

When she asks me to pray
I don't tell her
my deity is the earth,
the rivers, seas, sky, and trees,
a mother who wrote the seasons
for us to sing.

When she asks me to pray
she is how I imagine
my mother was,
begging on a street corner
wanting change,
with the grit of ashes,
the grey soft space of clouds
shifting in the sky.
Her face is a gate hiding her soul.
And still, her smile holds me,
let me in a little.

When she asks me to pray
I don't tell her
how my heart sways,
yellows, crinkles, and frays
as it falls.

When she asks me to pray
I sit with the earth.
Ask the sky to hold us both.
I sit still and silent,
the way I do
through every storm.

Petrichor pinches my senses
awake. The sky and earth meet.
Their dance transforms
them into dirt.
They thunder, sing
and sink into
each other, pooling
one over the other,
a mess of mud.

And yet

they become
a new creation,
a beautiful destruction,
a wonder to the imagination.

When she asks me to pray
I pray we are brave enough
to decay into dirt,
mud sloshing from the gutters
until our hearts soften into
the sweet scent of petrichor.

tears of saint anthony

mike sluchinski

and when they
 they dug him
 they found him
 all there most likely
 dust and such
 and packed neatly
 like they would do done
 like thy will be

back then a stitch

time and all that
 they said he had a tree house
 door and
 all leaves they fall

in this day and age
 crowds came and couldn't say no one
 can't say no one knew
 the people flowed to see

what was left the saint
 anthony

old stone walls stayed so
 and what was left

was left and
 for those seeing and

believing hands
 in wounds and gray days
 fortune tellers

shipwrecked in tuscany
 moving on

dust and bone
 and tongue and jaw
 voices from there alone

not the miracles
 just a good ol
 whodunnit who plummet
 wind chimed so

and hope they got him
 him who held and
 took your book



The Space of You

Nuur Anwar

Slipping soundlessly under the warmth of the summer sky,
You left in the golden morning, a silent swan ready to fly.
Never had the breeze been sweetened with such sadness,
Never had the robins lamented in such a mournful goodbye.

Six weeks turned to six summers of unbridled happiness,
What I wouldn't forego for six more years of your mischievousness.
Playful like the spring of your floppy ears,
With honey brown fur, against your snow-white mane.
My darling, you were always the king of your evergreen domain.

Now I grasp for any trace of you,
Any infinitesimal stretch of you.
Whisper and wail at this absent space of you...

You created a home at the center of my grieving soul,
Nuzzling through my melancholic streams, you flourished a fountain of tenderness to mend me whole.
My sun, you warmed this hungry heart in your constancy and comedy,
But now life has slipped from your sleeping soul, leaving me to shiver at the wake of your floral grove.

I try to hear a whisper in this empty shape of you,
I rearrange my world order to make sense of this sorrowful life without you,
My arms lay limp, and my chest grows tight because these were the places that were home to you.

When will I become an empty space for the bereaved to fill too?
The melancholy tempts me to jump into the soundless space of the after with you,
But I know under this sullen summer sky and the robin's desperate cry, it is not time to write my own goodbye,
For I must fill my wounded heart with elegies and memories only of you.

www

So I sit in this empty space for you,
And tend to its hollowness, as soil and soul entangle anew,
Rearrange these blurry letters to prose in my state of overwhelming blue,
Smile through this unbearable, un-breathable sadness because I know one truth to be true:
Before there was this empty space, there was *you*.

To decay is to exist.

Jessie Warkentine

Crab apples fall in piles upon the dirt,
Heavy, hole-ridden, bruising upon impact.
Rot persists as an overwhelming sweetness,
Heady on the tongue,
Pungent on the nostrils,
Fruit baking in the last rays of summer sun.

Stacks of bowls in a dry sink,
Remnants of the last supper still caked onto the porcelain.
Plastic takeout containers, shoved to the back of the fridge,
Bright white light illuminating the mold speckled noodles within.
Waste shoved aside to make room for the newer, fresher fruits
Just purchased this morning at Wal-Mart.

Half empty cans by the bedside,
Spilling over from the nightstand into piles on the floor,
Half-hidden in the space between the wall and the bed,
Collecting dust. Buzzing flies.
They share their shame with the clear plastic bottles,
[Half-filled with clear salvation, shoved onto the sole shelf in the closet]
And with the bottles of amber that're not quite out-of-reach enough in the cupboard by the fridge.
The pen is not mightier than the bottle,
Crumpled pieces of mumblings peppering the bedroom,
Only outnumbered by shining silver empties,
Like stars to blades of grass.

Rot, rot, rot,
Waste, an inherently human sentiment
Waste of resources, waste of talent, waste of time
Unused, festering, clinging
witness. To the last warm days, the last moments of contentment,
The last touch between parting lovers, hanging in memory.
The last potato from the garden, forgotten in the tub.
The last shallow breath a woman takes, Morpheus as sole witness.

Winter settles in a white serenity, a stillness and absence both.
Snow blind, numbed by cold.
Decay does not exist, in turn, neither does growth.
A white light followed by a nothingness,
Only being is left, yet there is no self.
Only the pause between the start, the end, and the renewal.
Only the split second between inhalation and exhalation.
Existence in perpetuum.

To decay is to exist.

three salutes to death

Greg Orrē

hello pink,
hibiscus, a happy chance,
blooming on a day of hope and
need,
lanky branches hold maui memories,
reminding me i am alive, living and
dying today.
you stretch wide for the rising sun,
haleakalā,
then shrivel at sunset, petals
touching palms,
now resting, dry and delicate, on the
cool grey floor.

hello red,
wiggler feasting on my waste,
composting creativity's trimmings,
becoming black gold,
my debris breathes life into you.
a discarded tomato seed sprouts,
and I snicker at the odds.

hello brown,
excrement, falling faeces,
frozen all winter, nature's gift,
spring's sweet smell, hidden beneath
snow, mountains of sloth.
scents so profound,
linger in your playground of filth,
life stretches to the sun,
puppies tiptoe around.

hello pink,
hello red,
hello brown,
a small spectrum, a sliver
awe-full beauty of life and death.

Rebirth

Jerhico

Everywhere is the sight of grey.
And Cracked and broken bones.
A zoo for men and women.
The weight of concrete suffused into the soul.
Diesel odour.
Red lights glow with sick,
Taunting me with foul colour,
Like meat cut from a dog.
Our cancer slips
From it back into us,
And the stress seeps through.

If only I could rest.
If only green adorned me.
Perhaps one day this grey will turn over.
Return us to the roots.
Bind our hands and club our feet.
Burn us underground and allow the escaping steam to form clouds;
Hanging,
Upward.
Looking down over the remnants of us
And laughing at our remission.
Finally free to breathe once more;
Where concrete can't be found.

O' the mothers of Utoyahas

Paris

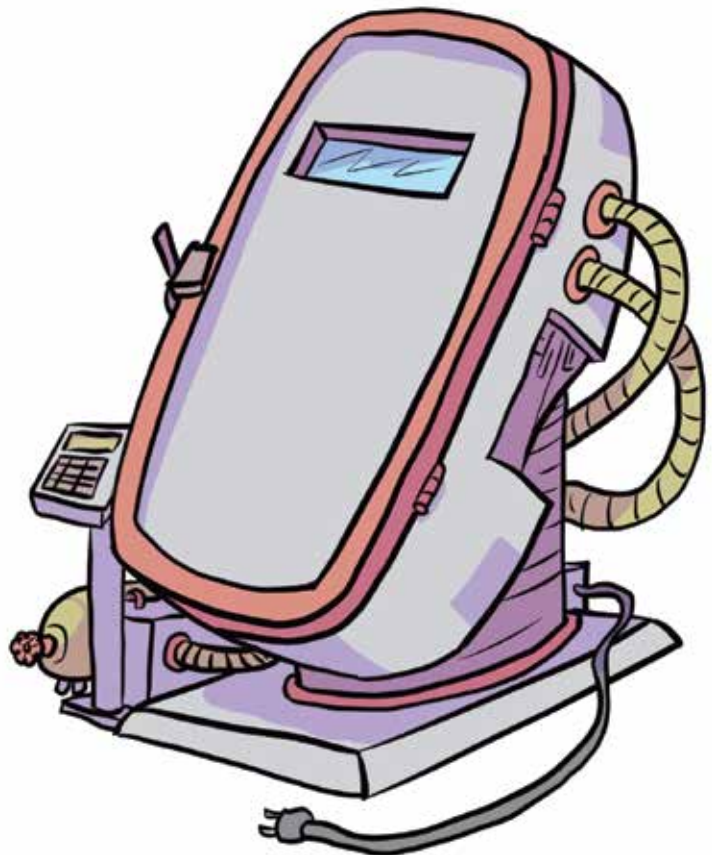
One day, nations will be united.
In pain, sorrow, and lust for home,
When the crops had dried
And when there would be no Rome.

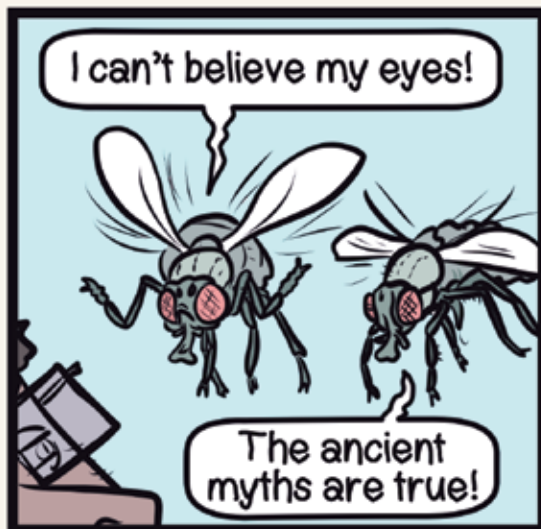
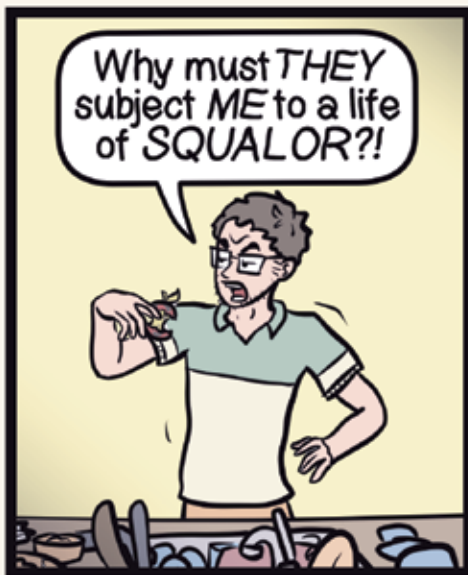
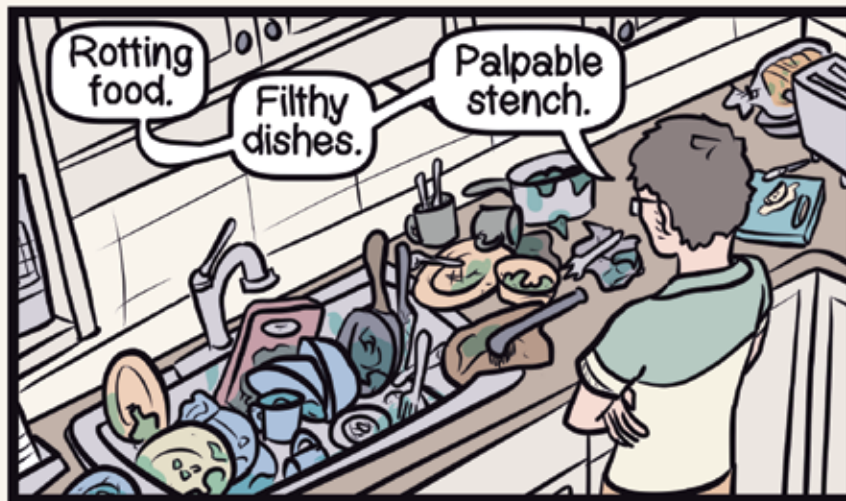
When the rivers knock on our doors,
Creatures hid in the silhouettes of the crown.
And the weeping mothers of Utoya roar
As the graves of the fallen, drown.

We saw the stolen secrets fray
As the world decays

The night dawned on us, and the air was seeded
with terror.
Survivors hugged the remaining shades.
And the dwindling moonlight had casted its
horror
On the town. We had lost few more comrades
The following day

We sat on the rubble (glorious throne)
and remains (Son of man)
The kids did not know, how could they?
It was not their fault.
That the world would halt
None of them knew
Not even the angels in heaven, nor the son
But only the father. (Mathew 24:36)





Rob Shauf Oct 2023

“Tomatoes and Death”

Azee Amoo (she/her) is a fourth-year student studying business economics at the University of Saskatchewan. She enjoys stories, learning new things, and picking up too many hobbies. You can find her on Instagram @azeeamoo.

“Koagulation”

Herman Aamir (she/her) is a Pakistani-Canadian emerging writer. She is currently a student at the University of Saskatchewan in the fourth year of her BSc program. Her work was recently longlisted for the 2023 CBC Nonfiction Prize. Her short story, *Koagulation*, propagates the disconnect between the scientific discipline and the public. The story is framed with a rather intrusive plotline, subjecting the main character, a drug and vaccine researcher, to his lowest point due to a trickling nosebleed.

“The Space of You”

Nuur Anwar (she/her) is in her sixth year at the University of Saskatchewan, pursuing the pre-pharmacy track. This past spring, she successfully completed her undergraduate degree in the College of Arts & Science, with a major in biology and a minor in English. Her passion for art extends to various forms, including film, literature, painting, and music. Literature, in particular, has held a special place in her heart since her early years. Authors like Donna Tartt, Emily St. John Mandel, Leigh Bardugo, and Jane Austen have greatly influenced her love for literature. Writing and reading have been her solace, helping her navigate the unpredictable twists in her life.

“Heartwood”

James Dobson (he/him) is an alumnus of the history department at USask and a current staff member in the Office of the Vice-President Research. Primarily self-taught, he has been working

with wood for 10 years. He has displayed his work locally with the Saskatchewan Woodworkers' Guild and has had multiple pieces featured in national publications. You can see more of his work on Instagram @grailwoodworks.

“Rebirth” & “Wight”

Jerhico (he/him) is a Métis man born in rural Saskatchewan who started writing prose in his youth as an exploration of emotion and self-understanding. He was raised by a teen mother in a large fragmented family unit in many places throughout the prairies. His writing tends to serve as a means of questioning and confronting his thoughts; often oriented around themes of abandonment, loneliness, addiction, and struggle.

“Garbage Groom”

Kyle Jansen (he/him) is a 4th year English Honours student at the University of Saskatchewan. Growing up, he was all too curious as a child, leading to all kinds of adventure, a trait that has hounded him well into his adult years. While he used to write a great deal in his youth, Kyle stopped writing for years as his mental health waned until this passion was rediscovered in a university creative writing class. An advocate for mental health issues, in particular schizophrenia, bipolar, and schizoaffective disorder, much of his writing surrounds, exploring the topics of mental illness, sadness, grief, fear, and death. These topics are dear to his heart and meant to give voice to those who struggle with communicating these subjects. “Garbage Groom” is a mixture of his preferred non-fiction topics with that of a science-fiction premise and meant to broach the importance of finding meaning in a decaying world.

“Mushroom Apocalypse”

Taylor Kennedy. She would describe herself as a redhead raised in south Saskatchewan, who has taken the term of someone “without a soul” and combined it with the aesthetic of Wednesday Addams to describe her creative style. She views her words as madder than a hatter with a mind like Jekyll and Hyde, someone who, creates art to challenge social norms.

“Ebb and Flow”

Nolan Long (he/him) is a third-year political studies undergraduate student, minoring in religion and culture. He has recently been published in *Canadian Dimension*, *Spring Magazine*, and *The Hampton Institute*. His piece in this volume describes the dialectic of long-distance relationships, wherein difficulties give rise to new hopes, hence the title.

“Case of The Plum”

Jocelyn May (they/them) is a Studio art major. They are an artist and hobby writer who was born and raised on the Canadian prairies. Lately they have taken inspiration from what they call ‘disturbed girl literature’ (think Eileen by Ottessa Moshfegh, and Paradise Rot by Jenny Hval). They are interested in religious themes and have been using parallels and motifs as way to explore ideas of the human condition. Their free time is spent with their beloved dog and playing the Sims 3.

“tears of saint anthony”

mike sluchinski is a part-time University of Saskatchewan student and does construction and demolition work. He often listens to his Thai astrologer and his wife, although rarely in that order. Blessed and favoured by faith, he prays every day, regardless if there's hammers and nails involved by keeping them short and under his breath.

“Decay’s Resilience”

Victoria Main (she/her) is an arts and science student who loves to dabble in poetry every now and then. Because this theme was a bit dark, she thought of the moments that are difficult for us at some point in our lives. This poem is a dialogue between the speaker and their dreams. It talks about the difficult waters we sometimes need to tread and how we may neglect our dreams, but resilience and self-reflection help rekindle the connection with our dreams.

“Three Salutes to Death” & “i fall asleep and dream i am a noctambulant zombie”

Greg Orrē [he/him] (pronounced “greg-ory”) is a musician, poet, and painter using vivid sensory details and imagery to convey his emotions and ideas. His work explores themes of memory, nature, the relationship between humans & the environment, and the ways in which we are shaped by our surroundings. In 2020, the Saskatoon-based multidisciplinary queer artist began sharing his project, *I Am In It*, with an album and a handmade poetry collection. Published by *Labyrinth Anthologies* and in *medias res*, Greg Orrē is working on two new poetry books, and will release his sophomore album, *I Am In It*, Vol. 2, in early 2024. Greg completed a BA (2011) and a BEd (2013) at the U of S.

“O’ the mothers of Utoya”

Paris (He/him) is a second-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts and Science. He is actively involved in youth-led climate organizations and has a deep passion for writing poetry and short fiction. Inspired by writers like Frank O’Hara, Tomasz Jedrowski, and Annie Proulx, Paris uses their writing to explore human emotions, relationships, and environmental issues.

“Back To The Old House”

Siena Rose (she/her) is a film photographer from Treaty Six Territory. Siena’s fascination with abandoned houses began after visiting a ghost town on a family road trip. Originally a digital photographer, Siena picked up a disposable camera and has been hooked ever since! Siena’s work focuses on finding the beauty in decay, from ghost towns to old churches and forgotten cemeteries

“Between Life and Loss”

Gillian Skjei (she/her) is a third year English major. She has always held a keen interest in studying literature and the modes through which we tell our stories and share our innermost experiences. Pursuing this interest, she began writing poetry several years ago as a means of processing and understanding her life. Since then, she has incorporated writing poetry, as well as other fiction and non-fiction pieces, as a central aspect of her self care routine and believes that writing has taught her more about herself than imagined. Her “Between Life and Loss” will be the first published work from her collection of poetry and she is incredibly honored to share it with the *in medias res* community

“She Asks Me to Pray”

Casey Shah (she/her) is a poet and an alumni of the University of Saskatchewan. She graduated with a bachelors in English. She navigates and processes the world through writing. Casey uses poetry as a creative outlet to connect and communicate with the community. She finds language powerful and magical, and aspires to publish a poetry book.

“A small Harvest” & “I love The Way The Leaves...”

Bailey Schaan (she/her) is a creative booklover, and fourth-year honours English student at USask,

with a minor in history. Bailey’s work seeks to bear witness to the moments of in-betweenness, tension, and mundanity inherent to life and reflected within nature. Besides writing, Bailey adores autumn, tea, rearranging her bookshelves, and spending time outdoors with the ones she loves.

“To Rot Away”

Jessie Warkentine (she/her) is a third year English Honours student from Kinistino, Saskatchewan. This is her second year attending school in Saskatoon after a brief hiatus and her first time submitting a piece to *in medias res*. Inspired by the rotting stench of her garbage can next to the radiator, “To Rot Away” explores the concept of societal and environmental decay with a focus on man’s passive waste. While critical, the poem ends on the hanging moment of decision between the chance for change or continued destruction.

in medias res



“Back To The Old House”
by Siena Rose

“I chose this photo because it is the epitome of decay. A house once filled with the laughter and memories of friends and family now slowly returns to nature, just like we all will one day.”

in medias res is a student-led liberal arts journal at St. Thomas More College that aims to publish content to reflect the identities of the campus community, its complexities and diversities. Our mission is to be a forum for community expression that showcases the high-quality work of artists in the University of Saskatchewan community.

Our title describes the experience of university life, in which we are always caught “in the middle of things.”

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What are you thinking about? What worries you? What moves you? We want to hear the artistic voices that make up our community and help put their work out into the world. Our office is located in room 158 of St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

As part of their mission statement, St. Thomas More College says that “the work of our college is not an end in itself, but must find application for the good of humanity.” We ask all readers to consider how they benefit from settler institutions such as the university and how they can apply their learning not towards maintaining the status quo but instead towards change and meaningful reconciliation.