

in medias res

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



The "Of the Mind" Issue
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers:

Mental health is something that many people in our community live with. While times have improved and there are more options available to help those in need, sometimes the hardest part of our mental health is accepting that we need help. This allows us to live in our own world where we believe no one can truly understand our pain and struggles; however, this is not the case. We at *in medias res* are honoured to share this issue with our community. We welcome you to read our edition "Of The Mind" and share in the experiences of our community.

While this edition is filled with masterpieces of our minds, it discusses topics that may not be suitable for all ages and stories that may be triggering to some readers. We encourage all readers to immerse themselves in this issue and allow themselves to be carried away to the minds of another. Along with the beautifully painful pieces found within, you will also find available resources for our community and projects that alumni have undertaken to help those express their pains.

We hope our readers find these pieces as inspiring as we did.

Sincerely,

Toni Elliott

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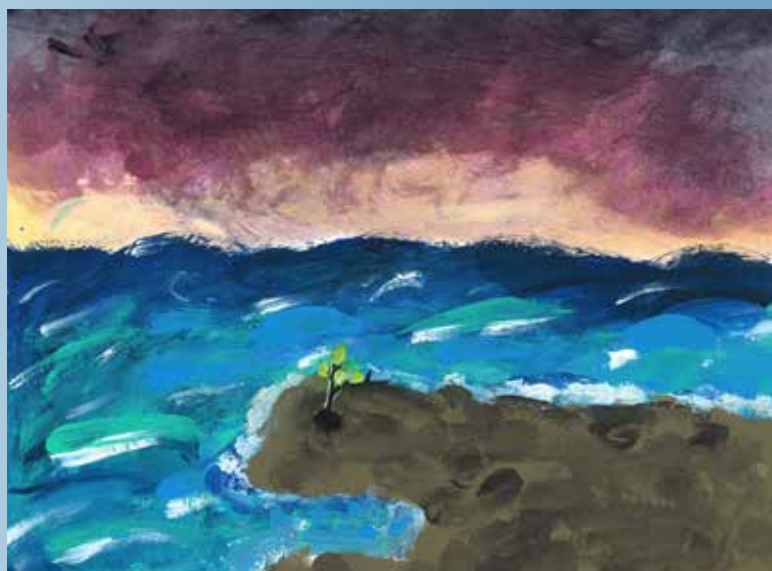
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On March 20, 2024, *in medias res* hosted “Paint Your Story” in the STM Student Lounge. Students expressed themselves through art and painted what was weighing on their minds. These are some of their pieces!

Memoir of the Mind

Chad D.

“Have we watched this?” my mother’s voice would ring out, elevating in volume and pitch as she spoke. Her voice sounded the same every time she asked.

My father would consider the tiny brown TV at the far end of our slightly less brown living-room and respond with a gruff, monosyllabic “yes” or “no.”

“I don’t remember it,” my mother replied, every time, as though they were rehearsing a play.

All of this agitated me very much as a child. Eventually I would land my verbal jab before my father could respond and yell out, “yes you did! Don’t you remember!?” That outburst became my line in the play, and I delivered it with passion.

Her question was so absurd to me. She must be lying. When I saw the first shot of the movie I recalled all of the plot points. Sometimes I remembered a good deal of the dialogue and started running through later scenes in my mind. These memories were so available and tangible to me that it seemed somehow negligent that anyone should forget.

Despite my keen memory, I did not thrive at school. I remember having a substitute teacher in kindergarten: she mistakenly believed I had spoken out of turn and put me in a corner storage closet with the light off. I remember looking down at the grey shadows that were my shoes thinking absolutely nothing.

I remember a girl in kindergarten taking my arm and declaring that we were married. We went everywhere together, arm in arm. She moved away. When she sent my class a colourful, oversized letter from BC and my teacher read it, I felt nothing.

I remember my war on math. It started early and raged for years. After a particular parent-teacher interview in first grade my mother returned home and informed me that my teacher had threatened to “fail me” if I did not complete my work.

“He can do all the work,” she told my mother. “He just doesn’t want to.”

I remember how this teacher asked me not to use the horizontal lines under my addition equations as the top segment of my 7s and 5s. This seemed highly

unjust to me because it required less labour. She timed us when completing our math sheets and it terrified me. I couldn’t spare the time for needless horizontal lines.

In fourth grade I pretended to lose my math workbook. I never completed a page of it. I can’t remember how I disposed of the huge, ominous thing. I lied beautifully, with consistency and detail. My teacher was defeated. He was unhinged and unfit to care for children, so I recall this maneuver with some small satisfaction.

In tenth grade I was exactly half of a math student. I completed the first term well. In the second term I did not submit a single assignment. My teacher did not discover that I had not handed in numerous assignments until I was sitting with her and my father at another parent-teacher interview. She opened her grade book, saying something about how well I’d done, and stopped mid-sentence to see that half the line of numbers next to my name was empty. “There’s nothing here,” I remember her saying to herself, quietly. Her tone sounded like it was her mistake. I watched her and felt nothing and wondered at how she did not discover my ruse sooner, entering all the numbers above and below my gap.

I finally won the war on math in grade eleven. I was aware of a controversy surrounding a provincial education policy of no longer preventing students from graduating from high school. Grade eleven math was the last math class which would be a graduation ‘requirement’ for me. The requirement part, I realized, was now quite sentimental. I resolved it would be less stressful for me to spend the term refusing to do any work and arguing with my teacher every day than it was for me to do the work.

I passed with a 50% grade after a full term of refusing to complete any work, which included me helpfully reminding him that he couldn’t fail me, and provided my teacher with an interesting anecdote.

I remember a particularly sweltering track-meet in elementary school. I skipped my events, scrounged together all the money I could, and bought the school

concession out of freezies. I sold them out of my backpack at a fantastic markup.

I remember the look of another boy's thick arms as he pinned me to a wall outside our school and kicked me between my legs. I remember noticing how slender my arms were compared to his as he struck me. I decided to eat as much as I could so that it would be more difficult to hurt me. I successfully put on a good deal of weight but, noticing I was as vulnerable as ever, concluded that fat had not made me stronger.

I remember organizing a small tribe of children around me in grade two. We resolved to go to the trees which marked the barrier of the schoolground and create our magnum opus of a stick hut. Despite our vision, we found that it was for naught, as towering 'grade sixers' would come by and destroy it every recess.

Determined, the lot of us returned after school one day and salvaged a picket fence from a nearby garbage dump. We nailed it to the trees to serve as a sturdy fortification. Providentially, we happened to find a grim hatchet in that garbage dump and hid it in the bushes next to our fortification to 'use' if it looked like the grade sixers were going to triumph. A friend volunteered that his father had a machete in his garage, and that the two weapons together may give the full impression.

I devised a plan. The next day the grade sixers were aware of our fortification and approached menacingly with a battering ram—some sort of branch, unfathomably large to us. We feigned dismay, and when they drew close, I gave the shout and two boys rushed out screaming from the bushes to catch them in a pincer attack—axe and machete in the air.

We were not nearly as quick as they were, so we did not strike down a single enemy, but the day was won, until we got home to our parents.

I collected memories like these until the first time it went bad. I was in grade eight and something changed. I was much the same but people had become more cruel and something changed. It changed into a darker thing and then still a darker thing. Every night I would try to sleep through the constant chattering of indistinct voices somewhere above my head. I would yell or pray or do something to try to make it go away, but it would not.

It is difficult to remember all those nights spent

trying to escape something which was only there because I was broken. As I broke down further, there was certainly no escaping it. It was difficult to live, let alone do math homework—less stressful for me to spend the term refusing to do any work and arguing with my teacher every day than it was for me to do the work.

After years of this my high school girlfriend urged me to seek help. I did and started medication two weeks before my first university class. My life improved. I remember how she left me on the first day of classes.

I completed four years here at the UofS and thrived and did not make any friends. I remember how I would do my homework in a then dingier Place Riel because I liked to be around people. I once tried talking to a girl I recognized from the bus.

I started my Masters degree elsewhere. This went even better. Everything had a narrow focus, which was more interesting to me and thus more productive than taking Geology 109 at Louis'. After spending my teenage years in an oppressive haze, my mind felt sharp again like it had been as a child. I wrote my first paper, 3000 words, the morning before I presented it to my class. I remember it going well, and that I was arrogant.

The second semester of my Masters was the second time it went bad. I had to come back to Saskatoon and see my doctor after explaining to all of my professors and the school administrators, individually, that I was losing my mind. I started a high dosage of antidepressants and antipsychotics which the pharmacist did not want to dispense for me. I tried to finish my courses that summer while finding it difficult to read. I was no longer arrogant. I started to forget many things: pride first.

I slowly stabilized and finished the degree and studied again overseas and came back here and got married. I asked my wife if she would remember for me. She has; I only did not intend that she would have to remember the painful memories for me as well.

The third time it went bad I had a desk in an office and a young family. I started seeing insects everywhere, and then people in doorways. I spent an evening walking around the block, muttering. I had an affair, lost my job, lashed out at my friends, and spent a short time apart from my family. I do not want to remember anything.

It's better now, but in August I couldn't read. I am back in school for a certificate and was worried about that particular complication. So far so good. I'm writing this.

Sometimes I find my writing from ten or twenty years ago. I never remember writing it. I've destroyed a great deal of my writing so I do not often find it. When I read it, I'm always impressed with the imagery and the ease at which I used to leap between figures and conceits. I admire the agility.

But the structure is lacking and impatient. The

imagery is too varied and frenetic. And he hasn't learned the beauty of the *inclusio*. He's not bad, though. Just young and arrogant.

There is a joy in watching my favorite movies for the first time again. I forget which scene comes next. I'm not sure how characters will respond to one another. It's always fresh. Delight in decay.

My oldest son started grade one this year, which made me very afraid. He is slender, analytical, eccentric, and corrects me with sharp frustration when I forget details.



Mind Growth
SHIMA HOZHABRIMABANI
Painting

During our lives, we face a bunch of difficulties, but if we focus on improving ourself every day, it is possible to cope within problems. This is individual mind growth.

A Mind so Careless

maanya

I will be quiet as I fade away into your colors
Her breath smells cold in the summers
There will be no finite that doesn't stay on my skin
Lost is her sanity running amidst her bloodshot eyes pumped adrenaline
Water rinses the impurities that have lingered for centuries
Years and years she has lived and risen from crematories
Here is the mind of a woman who has been through heavy seasons
More than what could've been imagined reasons
Polished shoes holding the rotten roots of her problem
A discombobulated heart warmed by the heat of her thoughts
Would there ever be a love so thoughtless for a woman like her?
Striped shirt with the scent of his color engulfing her impatience
More than what could've been said reasons
Play with her anatomy like a flute under his fingertips
Let the jostle be felt within your chest as the salt covers her cheeks
The undesired words unspoken sculpted in the sulci
Red nails trace the paper of confessions torn apart
Just for a day,
Just for a night,
Just for a breath,
She could've sworn the flesh was fresh
And her mind's scriptures were caressed
Love was painful for the maddest
A wave of shattered anger swallows the doings of a beast
There are days that don't deserve to be her lowest

Lost is the breath within the reach

The Will of Humankind

Melissa Cheetham

If I die “too young . . .”

It means I learned more than I gave.
If I’m stuffed into a plastic bag and thrown into the ocean,
Then I’ll float on as I did before:
My “taking on the world,” will be to give it more pollution;
My free-spirit chained to the first current that takes me,
Its wild-heart tamed by the first shore that breaks me.
As I crack against the rocks, tell them I caused the revolution.

If I die “before my time . . .”

It means I died before my fame.
If my haughty wings should wane, and melt in the light too soon,
Then blast my ashes into space.
Tell them I’ll “shine among the stars” when I crash into the moon.
Tell them I was “going places,” and “had so much to give.”
Don’t mention all the taking it required for me to live.
Say I’m “one small death for mankind,” to consecrate her lifeless dunes.

If I lived “a good life . . .”

It means my brain outlived my mind.
If I watched a billion children die, while I became old,
Then put my body in the ground;
Bury me with the ashes of the useless books I sold.
Buy me a big plot so I can always take up space;
As our graves inherit the earth, all the meek shall be displaced,
All the good dying young because we never changed the world.

If I find a way to never die. . .

Then find a way to kill me.

If I've made enough money to buy all the gods,

Then I've become the devil.

Don't flee from the dark for the pretty lights I've brought.

Don't believe the legends of my "genius innovations,"

Me and Midas mastered his gift by touching exploitation.

So, find me in the hells above, and tear down the facades.

If my spirit lives to the end of time. . .

Then ask mine why I chose to fail.

If I've found the holy grail, but I've poisoned all the wells,

Then go and runneth my cup over.

We dug up our past, calling it treasure, and putting it on our shelves;

We killed our future by tagging a price to how much life is worth,

As if the dinosaurs decided to summon the asteroid down to earth.

As we bury our species, let the gravestone read: "in the end they treasured themselves."



MILKO HR: HEALING THROUGH MINDSET MASTERY

Milko HR

*Excerpt from Dear Syork, You CAN! Break the Cycles of Procrastination, Worry, & Doubt
with a New Unbreakable Mindset*

SOMETIMES, IT MAY feel like the end of the world; perhaps it is, but it is not. Do not worry. Tripping over several rocks may seem like a series of unfortunate events, but it could save your life. As you are tripping, a single gunshot misses you and hits the tree behind you. Now, those rocks weren't so bad. You go to the doctor, and your eyesight is not as good as before because you didn't go outside for a long time. Natural light hadn't touched your eyes in years. But your worsening eyesight directs you to other things you may be neglecting. Your bad posture. Your bad ear-scratching habit. You realize you lack social interactions. One issue revealed multiple issues you may have overlooked. Your worsening eyesight was a warning to get out of 'The Dreamscape.'

**** Alive and well, besides a well. Lay hundreds below, perhaps tomorrow.*

You begin to see life in a new light. "I have been avoiding all these problems. I *have* all these problems." You catch the problems before they get worse. And because you have an unbreakable mindset, you realize it is not too late. An ant of a problem is not as bad as a beluga whale. If the moment you began slipping into The Comfort Zone, your problem was an ant, and it is now a gerbil, that's okay. At least it is not a beluga whale. Do not let The Dreamscape convince you otherwise. Your problem can become a beluga whale, but it's okay. With consistent action, you can make the beluga whale a hamster. It may stabilize as a

hamster and never be an ant again, but at least it is not a beluga whale. And if your problems stabilize with a beluga whale, then at least it is not a killer whale. It can always be worse. But it can also be better. Your life is complex, like *Earth* itself. If the land has one problem, the ocean is vast. Of course, it would be better if everything were perfect. But problems exist. Yet, we can minimize them and sometimes eliminate them. If you lose your eyesight, you still have hearing, a sense of smell, and a heartbeat. If you lose your arm, you still have your other faculties. If you lose your job, you still have your health. Of course, you can lose everything, but even then, you have not *truly* lost 'everything.' Whenever you feel hopeless and uninspired by your life and environment, reread the mindset chapters and look forward to the poems to get you out of a rut. Because with hope, no matter what you lose, it will always be okay. Your most powerful tool is your health. And stress can negatively impact your health.

The best way to reduce the impact of stress is to change your mindset. Your mindset can decide whether you let the problem go from an ant to a gerbil or from an ant to a beluga whale. Wherever you start from, know it is never too late. Sometimes your problems begin with a beluga whale, but at least they are not a killer whale. At least your problems are not a blue whale. No matter how bad it is, you are more capable than you think. Do not worry about what could have been; Look up, see where you could be, and soar! Because You CAN!

Distracted: A Warning to Mankind

A Poem by Syorkenson Sliventon

The digital space
 A place for you to stay
 Hours upon hours you spend **without delay**
 Eyes you hurt
 Ears you swell
 Your mind you clutter, dreams you shell

Slowly but surely, it takes over your life
 Slowly but surely, you live *a regretful life*
 Slowly but surely, you delve into *The Dreamscape*

Lies. Deceit. And preoccupation
 Mindless scrolling and artificial communication
 The outside world is “*dangerous*,” yet you see things that rot you
 Across platforms, screens and more
 They spoil you to your soul
 Your eyes hurt from hours of staring
 You nod your head *yes* **without realizing it**
Agreeing to mindless scrolling

What more do you need than the life you know you can lead?
It is never too late, so put down your screens
 Take it *one step at a time*; Escape that routine
Think about it—that dreadful scene
 You scroll, and you scroll, unable to be free
 Video after video, destroying your soul

Blink
 Move
Breathe

Stop living in *The Comfort Zone*
 ESCAPE IT
 Escape your toxic bubble
 Your back aches with pain

Hours of sitting, **rotting your brain**
 Forgetting to breathe and accepting the deceit
 Real life is out there, out of *The Dreamscape*
 Real life is beautiful, full of life, colours, and *more*
 There are beautiful trees with leaves as bright as you can imagine
 There are flowers sprouting up high, displaying their robust sightings



The mountains soar; They fill you with *more*

Can you see the birds lining up—*single file*?
 Can you see the herds of goats climbing mountains?
 Can you see the sun lighting up the earth?
 The grass is green, full of gorgeous scents
 Do you see the sky as blue as can be?
 Right there—there are thinwgs for you and me

There are places you can go to be
 Be free

Habits compound over time. Good or bad. Assess your life and see what you can improve. If you feel overwhelmed, choose one thing. What is one habit you can improve upon? Perhaps scrolling for hours on your phone keeps you in a cycle you feel you cannot escape. Yet, with one step each time, you can move towards a better mindset and future.

The Deceptions of The Dreamscape

And at the back of your mind, you might wonder what could have been. *How would my life look if I had left the problem alone in the first place? What if I had stopped at the first itch? My quality of life would have been better.* You may find the urge to pick at your ears again, the small ache reminding you of your mistakes. But making the problem worse is not the answer.

Accept that you make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. Some things are permanent and as they should be. We need scars to remind us that we are not invincible in the sense of self-sabotage. You can soar high and soar higher if you leave your sores alone.

Next time you scratch and scratch, the problem can stabilize at a mouse, then a gerbil, then a rabbit, then a lion, and suddenly, it is a beluga whale, and you break. *This is it! It is over! My life is over!* You retreat further and further into The Dreamscape. But the cycle continues.

Remember, a beluga is bad, but at least it is not a killer whale. That is the evil of The Dreamscape. It tricks you. Sucks the hope out of you. And when you realize it is not too late, it brings its sidekick, The Comfort Zone and tells you *it's okay. You deserve some rest. Come on a while. Work can wait. Focus and dedication can wait. Socializing can wait. Why leave this comfortable, convenient place?* Leave! Leave now!

These are evils set in place to distract you and rip the flesh off your bones. They feast on your flesh! Leave! Change your mindset. You CAN! No matter what these places tell you or how much they deceive and delude you, You CAN! Focus during the good times so you are strong enough to overcome the bad times.

When you do that, the bad times diminish to minor issues that do not affect your mindset. MINDSET IS EVERYTHING! Be calm and focused. Even if you feel like you are cruising and everything is fine, do something difficult. Each day is a new day to do something great. And something great can be as small as going outside and walking in nature.

This has been Syorkenson Sliventon, and I thank you for reading this far. The world is out there, waiting for you to take your spot and be great. You CAN!

P.S. *Dear Syork, You CAN!* is available in paperback and Kindle on Amazon. For purchase options, visit amazon.com/author/simplymilko.

What is holding you back?



Be Still

ABENA AMANKWAH-POKU

Digital imagery and Adobe Photoshop

“Be Still” is a reminder that worrying does nothing for the situation and distresses the worrier. Thus, one should just trust in God.

Seasons of Panic

Robyn Claypool



I am limping towards the end.
Inky night swallows me whole.
I've dreamt this moment,
where I fall between worlds.

A milky moon hangs heavy above,
I stare straight into the night sky.
Icy grass pricks my shriveling skin.

I am being pulled down,
devoured by the earth.
Suddenly, it's floating above me.
Is it laughing? I am not certain.

Dirt fills my throat, I suck
musky grit into my lungs.
I think that I might
be left with only a half-life.

My skin turns paper thin.
I see it again,
it wants something.

It's waiting for me.
I blink, soil covers my face.
I cannot take in any air.

My vision darkens,
the stars flicker out.

It's so close now.
It'll get what it wants.

Then, all at once,
it's gone and

I am still here.
I dig my way out,
fingers clench the dirt,
into the sunlight,
up from the earth.
The gentle breeze
softly kisses my cheeks.
I see it all now for what it was.
Clarity wisps itself around me.
I fill my lungs with sweet, cool air.
The morning holds me in its arms.
Finally, I'm laughing with the birds.

First Semester of College

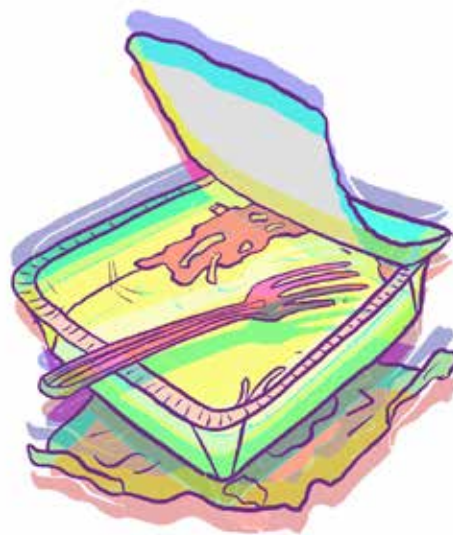
Eunice-Grace Domingo

i haven't eaten a full meal in days because
 cooking is time wasted, or at least that's what i
 tell myself when i stare at the refrigerator
 precipice and see all the unfinished food and
 empty containers with stale rice and
 ugly meatballs suckering in the cold.
 but when mom calls and asks what i've eaten,
 i look up the filipino menu online,
 wince at the price tag and regurgitate the name.
 i hear her sigh from the other end of the world,
 we drop the call since one of us deserves to sleep
 tonight.

i wring my fingers across a christmas tree sink
 with puddles of red and green and silver
 noodles dot the canyon and
 i have to grit my teeth just to
 touch a plate and scrape off the
 salad memories that i barely tasted. my
 roommates tell me i drink too much coffee,
 swallow too many pills, think too
 much. i have laundry i'll
 never fold properly, and
 in between dropping my bloody underwear on
 the floor and hanging both my neck and my sweaters,
 i see a hole in one of my childish shirts and—
 i don't want to sew it.

i wish i knew what i was doing with myself,
 lying to my mother about how i'm updated on
 studies, politics, and diet replaces
 jesus services that she insists i pray to. my
 body's made of microwavable meals and the taste of
 sugar on stomach acid never leaves my
 fingernails. and today, as i'm bowled over papers
 with words that swim in my eyes,
 my roommate saunters in, apple body,
 careless rhapsody in her wristwatch. she notices the
 eyestalk in my shirt, sensationalizing my
 blotchy skin. she smiles suddenly, says "you should buy
 a new shirt." and she is right. i

nod politely, write down her comment in
 the back of my cramped mind. she
 moves on because she
 lies to her parents differently, and
 she isn't scared to ask me if i
 can pay for the toilet paper next week and
 make it two-ply, no please and
 no thank you.





Doomed

CAROLYN BUCKLES

Acrylic paint on stretched canvas, 16"x20"

The RMS Titanic has always fascinated me either from old photographs, books, or films. It represents the idea of how an initial faulty judgment can have disastrous consequences culminating on April 14, 1912. The image creates an everlasting foreboding feeling of doom, sorrow, and loss of innocent lives whether we experience it firsthand or not. It is through our mind's interpretation either from stories passed down or other images, which stimulates our impressions of the fateful last hours of the Titanic's maiden voyage and all who perished. Perhaps one could associate the Titanic with our current threat of nuclear war.

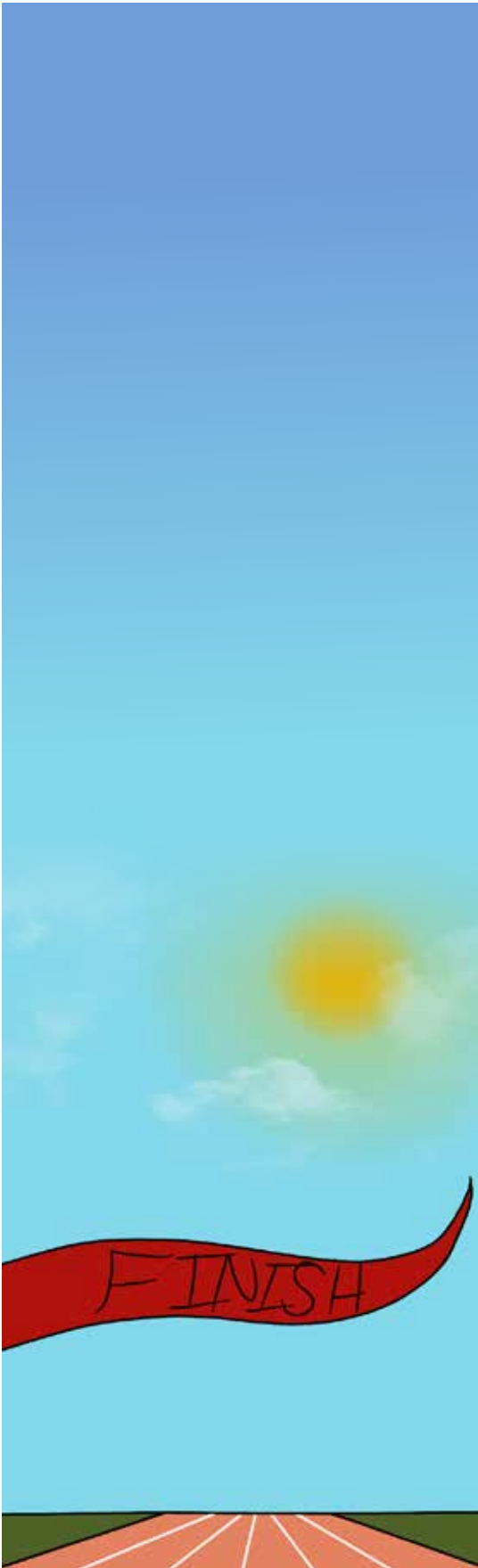


Stepping into the Unknown

CAROLYN BUCKLES

Acrylic paint

In considering “Of the Mind”, this painting relates to the theme in suggesting that we are all travelers, following our own path, taking steps into unknown territory, outside of our comfort zone. In many situations, our minds tend to overthink, creating obstacles that hinder our attempts to move forward. In this case, the woman is faced with an ominous forest that might have light at the end, but she must conquer her fears about taking the first step into the unknown.



Running on Empty

Isabel Atherton-Reimer

There is a perpetual race in my mind with no
end,
beginning,
purpose,
motivation

the runner's high has worn off,
leaving me fatigued, empty,
every inch a mile,
muscles straining to take another step
and I wonder what it's all for

or if I want this,
if it's truly for me,
or for those gathered on the sidelines,
cheering me on into that faceless nothingness,
but doubt is gaining on me and I wonder

if I will ever reach the finish line
or will I stumble before I make it
and what is the finish line
I am running and swimming
drowning and tripping and I

try to take a deep breath,
but instead of air, it's razors,
cleaving my lungs in half,
cutting my drive to ribbons
—ambition confetti I leave in my wake

and what awaits
and who am I
and what is the point
and will it ever
stop?

manic pixie doom scroll

Raimel Arao

My body is a sparrow;
the duvet, a snake's throat,
constricting until bone dust
and bed crumb are indistinguishable.

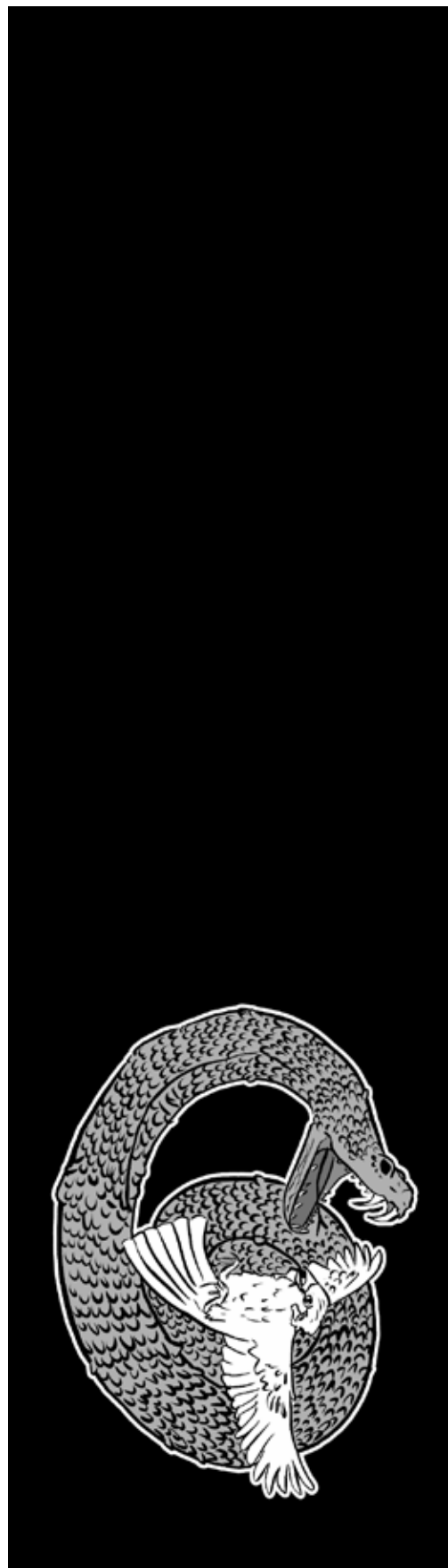
My thoughts turn pungent
like kimchi fermenting in a dark room,
starved of fresh air.

My mind is caught by the arched and furrowed;
soaked by pools of minutiae
that clot like a bloody nose.

—But like an angel's apparition, it appears,
glowing softly on my face.
My hands form an altar, and I kneel before it,
prostrating for good measure.

These idle hands are clasped in constant worship,
scrolling through its endless pilgrimage
until a pinch-zoom grants passage through the eye of the needle.

And in that moment,
when the snake's swallow feels like warm embrace,
and the pungency becomes palatable,
My crumbs align like constellations in the night sky,
forming the shape of a whole me.

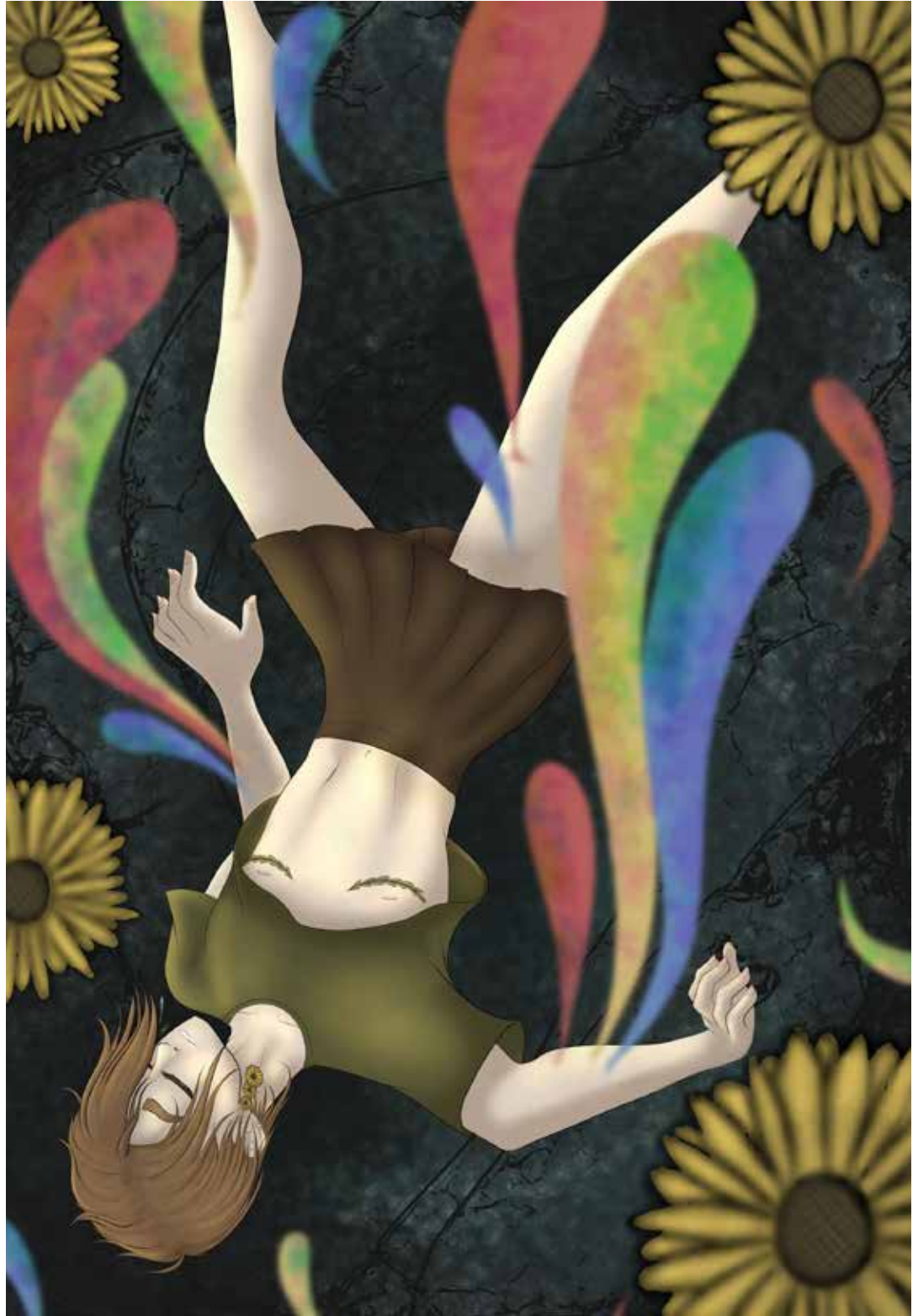


Colours of Sadness

LIAM TIMMERMAN

Digital Art

Colours of Sadness is meant to represent drifting off into a depression induced sleep. The background symbolizes all the negative feelings occupying your senses, the colours escaping the body are meant to represent the beautiful parts of you--your soul--taking up that space as you drift off to sleep. I myself find that a nap when I'm going through a depressive episode makes me feel better later, so I wanted to represent that through this piece.



Alone

Sara Unger

I couldn't see the geese, but I could hear them. The night air, crisp but with March's faint promise of spring, kissed my face through the open window of my minivan. I couldn't see the river the geese had landed on either. It wasn't that late, only a little past 7:30 but it was already as dark as midnight. I had shut the van off after parking on the outcrop of the riverbank. The long brown grass still flat from the memory of the crushing weight of snow. The same spot where we always stopped to eat meals during seeding and harvest when my husband worked from sunup to sundown in the field beside it. Relishing this rare moment alone, I closed my eyes and listened to the orchestra of clarinets announcing their return with great fanfare. The racket mimicked my inner turmoil while simultaneously mocking it. For just a moment, I allowed myself to wonder what it would be like to slip beneath the surface of the icy, black South Saskatchewan River, and let myself be carried away by its current.

There was a time in my life when I thought I would always be alone, and that scared me. Years of unreciprocated crushes and no prospects left me dissatisfied and unsettled. After all, I had been indoctrinated that my worth as a woman was tied solely to becoming a wife and mother. I was 24 when I finally met someone, and I dove into the relationship with all the finesse of a world class Olympian. Within months of our first meeting, I transferred jobs, packed my green Honda Civic fuller than a clown car, and migrated 3,000 kilometers west to be near my beau. There was never a question of who would move; he was a farmer with a herd of cows, and I was a single woman with a transferable bank job living back with my parents. A year later we got married.

I didn't just become a wife; I became a farmer's wife. The epitome of domesticated wifehood. I planted a garden ten times larger than we could possibly need, and spent the latter part of every summer canning and freezing its bounty like Ma Ingalls. I learned to drive tractors, and like every farmer's wife before me, to not take my husband's words personally when the cows got out and needed to be chased back in. There's a reason they sell t-shirts that say, "Sorry for what I said when we were working cattle."

My crowning achievement, or so I thought, came with the birth of our first child. I gladly gave up my job and settled into a life of complete domesticity. It was the paradoxical loneliness that accompanied the role that caught me off guard. I was seldom if ever alone, but the feeling of isolation suffocated me daily. My husband's commute to work was a jaunt down the well-worn path from house to shop, where the tractors rested between chores. He was always nearby, yet somehow never around. When he was around, his battle with depression kept him isolated in a world I couldn't break into.

The babies... first one, then two, and somehow eventually four, were always underfoot needing to be fed, bathed, or put to sleep. They were selfish little creatures. Like baby robins with their beaks wide open, they were always demanding, but never stopping to ask how I was doing or if I needed anything. I'd empathize with the prairie hen that I'd watch through my kitchen window. She would scurry about my backyard with her brood scurrying right behind her, so close it was like they were connected by some invisible string. I imagined if the hen ever stopped short, they'd all end up in a heap behind her. I was supposed to feel fulfilled, complete, but instead I felt hollow, used, and unappreciated. It was enough to drive a young mother to park on a half-frozen riverbank and contemplate climbing in. I craved both solitude and connection yet had neither.

The passage of time soon taught me that as seasons come, they also go. The children grew more independent, and the start of school brought relief from at least two of them for a few hours each day. My husband sought help for his depression and transformed into the man I always knew he could be. For two glorious years we were no longer fighting to keep our heads above water, but swimming with purpose, land in sight! My husband still spent far too many hours at work, both on the farm and the second job he had taken at a feed mill; but when he was with



us, he was truly present. We cherished those times of togetherness as a family. I found myself looking forward to our life together and watching it unfold with a hope and anticipation I hadn't known since we were newlyweds. We had survived the worst, and the best was yet to come.

The call came after 11:00 p.m., four days before Christmas. My husband, after tickling the children and saying goodnight, had gone back to the mill a few hours before. He needed to finish something he'd said, and now his boss was calling wondering if I knew where he was. By his tone, I knew something was wrong. The children were fast asleep by now, so I called my sister-in-law to come stay with them and didn't wait for her arrival before I left. I drove as fast as I dared on the ice-covered gravel roads, only careful enough to not end up in the ditch. I could see the red and blue lights flashing in the dark ahead, the helicopter had already landed by the time I got there.

He's alive! Oh, the relief that came with those words! I set myself to the task of answering the police and paramedic's questions. I'd had the presence of mind to grab his wallet and handed his health card over to the grateful first responder. They just needed to extract him and then he'd be airlifted to the hospital. They were doing everything they could. He was talking and coherent... good signs. I should wait out of the way and let them do their job.

I was so cold. I heard someone say the word shock and someone else draped a coat over my shoulders, rubbing my back with swift, firm strokes... people were coming in... My pastor, family, and friends... hugging... praying. One of the new arrivals was hugging me when someone in uniform, a paramedic or officer, came through the door to announce he was out and being stabilized for transport. We rushed to the hospital to meet the helicopter, unaware of the scene that was unfolding behind us. Maybe I should have known by the hushed phone call the nurse made when I told her why I was there, or by the way they silently led us to a private waiting room. But hope refused to die and in fact flared at the sight of two police officers opening the door, only to be doused by the words, "I'm so sorry, your husband didn't make it."

This is how I found myself alone at the age of 37. Alone to gather my children as a hen gathers her chicks, comforting them as they woke to the reality of their daddy never coming home again. Alone to pick out a casket and where it should be buried. Alone to decide what to do with a farm I didn't want and couldn't run by myself anyway. Alone to pick up the pieces of a shattered life and somehow put them back together.

Here in this place of aloneness, I found strength I never knew I possessed. I learned the longing and fulfillment I had craved my whole life wasn't from something or someone that was missing, but a God-given part of me that had always been there just waiting to be discovered. I was whole, complete, just as I was, alone.

They say geese mate for life, that some will lead a solitary life after the death of their mate. I don't know yet if this will be my fate, I only know that somehow being alone doesn't scare me anymore.

The Art of Imperfection

Emily Jung

Nobody is perfect, as we all know,
Perfect is impossible no matter how much you grow,
Perhaps more difficult for me is imperfection, though
Accepting my humanity just the way it is,
That's the real challenge.

When I was ten, my parents struggled with the bills
But every time my grades neared perfection,
Their furrowed brows and clenched jaws disappeared.
My ten-year old brain saw this,
And learned that she could save her parents
By neglecting my needs and striving for perfection,
Little me learned that being perfect meant losing sleep,
It meant abandoning friend groups,
Abandoning my interests,
Abandoning me.

Years went by and my burning passion for perfection
Spun out of control into an obsession.
Life no longer existed in me,
My reputation grew but my spirit faded,
Humanity and life left me,
My body convulsed as it reached its limits,
On the outside, I was thriving.
Inside, it was death by perfection.

When I turned 20, I woke up in a hospital bed.
I was battered and broken,
The farthest thing from perfect.
I couldn't save my parents
And I couldn't save me

I've had to create a "new me,"
An "imperfect me,"
And let me tell you,
It's so much harder than perfection.

Peer Health USask

WHO ARE WE?

Peer Health USask is a dynamic and student-centered initiative committed to promoting the well-being of the university community. This innovative program harnesses the power of peer-to-peer support to address the diverse health needs of students and create a campus culture that values holistic wellness.

At its core, Peer Health is driven by a team of dedicated and trained student volunteers and student staff. These individuals choose to join because of their passion, empathy, and commitment to fostering a healthy campus environment in areas such as mental health, sexual health, nutrition, and substance use. Peer Health volunteers organize a wide range of events, workshops, and campaigns throughout the academic year, addressing the diverse needs and interests of the student body. Whether it's mental health awareness sessions, safe sex workshops, or nutrition seminars, the program ensures that students have access to relevant, accurate and timely information that can positively impact their well-being.

Peer Health actively cultivates a sense of community and connection among students. Through peer-led discussions, support groups, and collaborative initiatives with other campus organizations, the program fosters an environment where students feel comfortable seeking help and sharing their experiences. In essence, Peer Health at U of S creates a supportive network that empowers students to prioritize their well-being and encourages a campus culture where everyone has the tools and knowledge to thrive.

CAMPUS HEALTH RESOURCES

Peer Health is one of many centers that are there to help support students, faculty and alumni. Listed below are other resources available on campus:

- Family physicians
- Nurse practitioners
- Registered nurses
- Community mental health nurses
- Psychiatrists
- Social workers and Counsellors
- Psychologists
- Obs-Gyne resident
- Dietitian
- Physiotherapists
- Chiropractor
- Massage therapist
- Peer health education
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For more urgent needs, the following are available:

- Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services (24 hour): (306) 933-6200
- Campus Protective Services: (306) 966-5555
- Royal University Hospital Emergency: 103 Hospital Drive
- Saskatoon Police Service: 911 or 9-911 on campus
- Saskatoon Sexual Assault Crisis Centre: (306) 244-2224

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITY

Roads to Wellness: Envision, Nourish and Empower What's Emerging for You this Spring

Join the Roads to Wellness team at our final session of the Winter Term for an opportunity to reflect on endings and new beginnings, an emergence into what might be ahead for you this Spring. Ken MacLeod, a counsellor with the Student Wellness Centre, will join the team to facilitate a process of reflection using the Cultural Emergence Empowerment & Design Deck along with poetry, art, and music to help envision ways to nourish and empower insights, possibilities, and initiatives for new beginnings beyond this term. Are you graduating, continuing with further studies, taking time off, uncertain what might lie ahead? Take this opportunity to slow down, reflect, nourish, and empower what might be emerging for you. *All USask students are welcome! Free. No signup is required.*

About Roads to Wellness:

This activity is part of the Roads to Wellness series developed by the Student Wellness Centre. Roads to Wellness is a series of creative activities that support your mental health. Each activity is facilitated by professional counselors and educators within the Student Wellness Centre. Find a complete list of Roads to Wellness activities on the wellness workshops page on students.usask.ca.

You Are More Project

Statistics show that 1 in 3 females and 1 in 6 males in Canada have or will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime (Stats Canada, 2020). These statistics are based on police-reported incidents, and research shows that most incidents of sexual violence go unreported.

After previously experiencing sexual violence and finding the effectiveness of movement in her own journey, Linzi Stoddard realized that our communities had a void in movement-based healing practices and created You Are More as a way to support others in their healing. During Linzi's own healing process, she found that talk therapy sessions did not seem to be working. Only after she joined community gyms/studios in Saskatoon, she noticed how her experience had impacted her. Movement gave her tools to become more comfortable in her body and be able to call it home again. Often, sexual violence survivors' bodies feel unsafe, and movement helps to turn inwards and reconnect with one's body and mind to feel a sense of safety again. Because of her own experience, Linzi founded The You Are More Project to help people

The You Are More Project is a non-profit organization based in Saskatoon, SK, founded with the purpose of raising awareness and providing free holistic healing programs for survivors of sexual violence; this includes movement and creative expression as outlets for healing trauma.

The You are More Project is running 2 main initiatives in 2024, thanks to the funds raised at The Gathering.

1. Break The Silence: integrates psychoeducation, movement, and nervous system regulation in a safer space and will encourage participants to connect deeply to themselves and others to feel a sense of community, alleviating isolation in the healing journey.
2. Threads of Strength: There are many times where survivors have clothing seized for investigative purposes when they attend the hospital to complete sexual assault kits. The You are More Project will offer clothing so that survivors can leave the hospital comfortably while knowing their community supports them. The clothing will have affirmations on different parts of the garments to remind survivors of their strength and capacity to heal.

To Contact The You Are More Project use the links below and follow them on Instagram:

Website: www.youaremoreproject.ca

Email: info@youaremoreproject.ca

Instagram: [@youaremore_project](https://www.instagram.com/youaremore_project)



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



This is one little change anybody can make that will have a huge impact on their mental health. Don't believe me? Try it out for a month. No notifications, no interruptions, more energy and a better headspace.

"But I'll over-sleep without my phone!" ——— Get an alarm clock.

"But I'll be bored without my phone!" ——— It's called rest. *Rest your brain.*

"But what if someone needs to contact me?" ——— *They don't.*

And if they do, they'll probably leave a message and you can get back to them when you wake up. We can always find ways to justify unhealthy habits. *Nobody can get sleep for you! Charge your phone in the kitchen.*

“Be Still”

Abena Amankwah-Poku is a second-year Regional and Urban Planning student who enjoys design. Her ambition in life is to be an architect.

“manic pixie doom scroll”

Raimel Arao (he/him) is a second-year biomedical science student. His poem “manic pixie doom scroll” examines the relationship between social isolation and self-preservation in a phone-dependent society. Raimel wrote this poem on his phone.

“Running on Empty”

Isabel Atherton-Reimer (she/her) is an English major at the U of S. She loves food, travelling, as well as exploring and creating the magic that is writing. At any given moment, Isabel is torn between stability and tossing herself into the wind to see where it takes her. Her poem “Running on Empty” attempts to articulate the experience of burnout.

“Stepping into the Unknown” & “Doomed”

Carolyn Buckles - I am a senior student at the University of Saskatchewan majoring in Psychology, having taken and continue to take art history classes at the U of S. I have been involved in art since high school. I have submitted my art to various Facebook pages including Usask Community Art Group as well as SWAA (Saskatchewan Wildlife Artists Association) and have participated in their shows in Prairieland Park, Reflections in Nature, and the fall Saskatoon Exhibition.

“The Will of Humankind”

Melissa Cheetham is a 5th year undergraduate student at the University of Saskatchewan, studied in French and Spanish, among other languages, as well as linguistics, language teaching, and classical studies. Her poem “The Will of Humankind” forefronts the fears of a generation which bears witness to increasing inequality and to a stagnating desire to solve the problems of the future. It

takes an imagined perspective of persons who ignored an end they saw coming, only expressing their regret for the end that finally came.

“Seasons of Panic”

Robyn Claypool is from Vancouver, B.C. She has been a poet and writer since she was 12 years old and would describe her work as story driven that is steeped in imagery. She enjoys writing about mental health, the passage of time and how things change.

“Memoir of the Mind”

Chad D. is a USask alumnus back for an undergraduate certificate. He is embarrassed by his structural decisions in “Memoir of the Mind” but acknowledges that a better structure would be dishonest.

“First Semester of College”

Eunice-Grace Domingo (any pronouns) is an English graduate student finishing up her last year in the University of Saskatchewan’s master’s program. She was born in Manila, Philippines and immigrated to Canada with her family in 2007. Her research focuses on media studies, adaptation theory, and 20th century Japanese literature.

“Mind Growth”

Shima Hozhabrimahani is a master student in school of public health who paints in her spare time.

“MILKO HR: HEALING THROUGH MINDSET MASTERY”

Milko HR is a recent Biomed undergraduate degree holder and a recently published debut author of *Dear Syork; You CAN!*, an adventure/mystery and self-help novel set in New York City. Milko likes writing poetry.

“The Art of Imperfection”

Emily Jung (she/her) is a third-year education student. She is very passionate about mental health awareness and advocacy, and enjoys using her personal experiences to help others. She has written poetry since she was young, one of which has been published in the anthology of Young Saskatchewan Writers in 2014.

“A Mind So Careless”

maanya is a second-year student, majoring in psychology who has always written unspoken, misunderstood emotions down in her notepad since she was 7 years old. Her poem “A Mind So Careless” is titled quite the opposite of what the poem expresses which tells the story of frustrations and lack of love. She has always been fascinated by any form of art and also loves painting in her spare time. She has always felt scared to put a piece of her mind out in the world through poetry yet here she takes a big step to overcome that.

“Immersion”

A.E. Matheson writer and artist, has been both student and staff at USask. Matheson currently juggles her art and work at the library with caring for her parents. They keep her aware that the mind’s health is not always in one’s own hands. Her father was thirteen years undiagnosed with adult onset hydrocephalus.

“Colours of Sadness”

Liam Timmerman (he/they) is a Metis trans man pursuing a Certificate of Business and a Bachelor of Arts. In his spare time, he likes to pursue fashion, art, and exploring topics of interest to himself. His work “Colours of Sadness” reflects the beauty of melancholy moments--specifically reflecting the feelings of slipping into a sadness induce sleep (which often helps Liam feel better after dealing with a depressive episode).

“Alone”

Sara Unger is a second-year dual student in the BSW program at the University of Regina, taking some additional classes at the University of Saskatchewan. As a single mum to four kids, she does not have a lot of spare time but what little she does is spent reading, writing and baking scrumptious treats for her friends and family.

in medias res



Immersion

A.E. MATHESON

Pencil, digital art

I am primarily an illustrator and writer of children's stories. The majority of my serious art, of which *Immersion* is one, is an expression of personal emotion. I have witnessed my father's descent into oblivion as the waters of his brain drown his mind. I have seen him surface thanks to a shunt, to have him back in part and watched him slowly submerge again. The undulating lines of the water levels combine with the different depths of colour to express the increasing rise of the liquid in his brain, the washing away of his mind, and the occasional surfacing of his personality.

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."

* * *

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.

stmcollege.ca/imr

[@inmediasresstm](https://www.instagram.com/inmediasresstm)