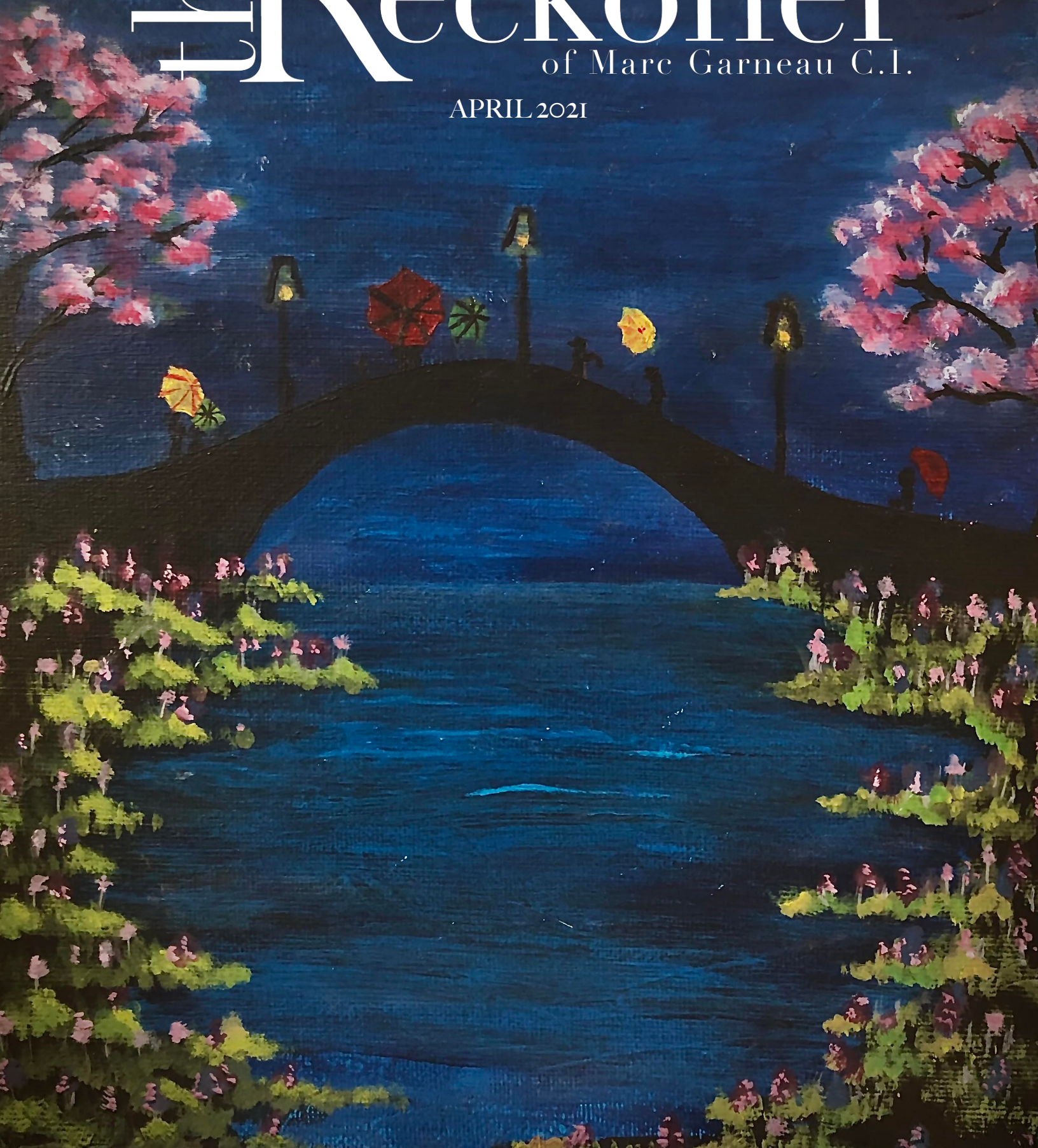


The Reckoner

of Marc Garneau C.I.

APRIL 2021



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An Opera of Death

by JEFFERSON CHEN

I could see her through the window. She had no clue what she was getting herself into. For when she left behind the safety of her Porsche and her friends that silently awaited her, to explore the dank, dark, boulevards under the veil of moonlight - I knew my next piece was set in motion.

I am a designer by day, but an artist at heart. Others have always told me that art doesn't make good money, and that is *especially* true for the art that I create. In fact, some may even call me *mad*, but let me tell you, all artists are *mad*. But one cannot have a passion without a steady income—and it is right here between the ash trees, dutiful soldiers who stood at attention along the sidewalks of *22 Robertson Boulevard* where I own a small property. Ah—the *Markovich Studio and Boutique*.

The velvet-red dress, basking in all the glory it didn't receive from its previous owner, took center stage at the front of my shop. It was worn by an obedient mannequin that guarded my store since the day of its opening. But I can tell you now—this dress was not your ordinary dress. Indeed, clothing, perhaps man's most important invention, exists to decorate the fashionable on special occasions, to keep those wearing it warm and safe from the elements, and I assure you that this dress is able to serve all such purposes. However, it could also do something more heinous, more vile, and far more destructive than any other piece of clothing—kill!

“Ha!”, you say. If an object is inanimate, how could it commit murder? Newton discovered inertia centuries ago; you know, that word no child could spell in their fifth grade science class? An object at rest stays at rest; so how could a dress, stiller than even the Northern Star, bring death and inflict suffering?

It began with the dress. Let me tell you, most of the items in my store are designed by me, tailored by me, and put up for sale by me—but this dress is a special exception. Before its dashing appearance at the very front window of my store, it collected dust and the smell of mothballs in my small garage at the back over a long period of five years. The beauty and craftsmanship of the item was stunning—a velvet-red promenade dress with black ornaments that circled the waist; a woven flower pattern that made the wearer resemble a flurry of petals when they moved. Outfitted by some long forgotten Parisian designer and bought from a fancy outlet nestled among the avenues downtown, it was fit only for the most perfect and exquisite of occasions. I do not recall *why* I made such a purchase; after all, most would probably indulge themselves in laughter, or *schadenfreude* if they saw a man, six foot tall with unclean stubble on his pointy chin, wearing a dress made for a proper lady. But I remember *how* I bought it; it must have been a snowy day downtown, and if not for the holiday season attracting customers near and far to the city centre to shop for their loved ones, all of the businesses would have closed. The horrible weather that day would make

any storeowner not want to attend work and just stay snuggled in their cozy bed at home. I walked into a small shop, and unlike the other stores on that street, it was not well lit. I could only see a small dim glow behind the black-stained windows. It is always the expensive stores that are small, for most people are too poor to afford their high class merchandise suitable for only the privileged and wealthy. The cashier, a man of average build and height, with beautiful, gleaming blonde hair and azure blue eyes greeted me. No other person was in the store, I figured he must have been both the guy behind the counter and the storeowner. He smiled at me with an irresistible charm, and the way he said "Hello!" gave me a feeling of such warmth and comfort that if I were a girl, I would submit to his charms and ask him on a date. Alas, our meeting was short lived, for I picked up the dress for reasons I could not recall before quickly returning to the front desk for my purchase. The owner, so kind in his ways, did not judge me for my selection nor did he laugh, as I expected him to - rather, he simply bid me "Have a good day!" before I pushed the two glass doors on the way out.

I do not recall what I *did* to the dress when I arrived home. Perhaps I wore it once or twice in the privacy of my own dwelling, just to satisfy my unending curiosity of what I might look like in such clothes. But the truth is, eventually, the dress ended up in my garage, somewhere in the back cupboard, collecting dust as it patiently waited for its owner to return and wear it again. It was this day, five years later, that I noticed it, still buried within the cupboard beneath stacks of old celebrity magazines while I was cleaning out my garage. They say the house of an artist is always messy, and to an extent, I'd agree. In fact, most of my works are in my garage—for some might consider me crazy if I were to present them to the public. When people say the life of a modern artist is hard, they really mean it. Therefore, to supplant my income, I create traditional oil-on-canvas art in addition to fashion design. It was friendly art that your grandmother would decorate the walls of her flat with. But it is at nighttime when I am able to create true art without facing the harsh judgment of the outside world. It is here that my dagger becomes my paintbrush and their tattered, broken bodies my canvas. It is under the cover of moonlight when my greatest masterpieces are crafted. Like others, you may think my work is cruel, but my talent justifies my actions—I am pure for my work is pure! Art requires a certain degree of cruelty; it is meant to dazzle an audience—to terrify!

I know you think me mad, but remember—*all* artists are mad. And in fact, I can retell you some of the tales of my greatest works to prove my sanity. Months ago, I recall a night when the moon slept under a blanket of clouds, where even in the suburbs, the lights from the city drowned out the light from the stars—a perfect night to be crafting perfection! Every piece begins with a canvas, a stage, a setting, and I found mine drunk, hunched over in an alleyway, vomiting out the mess of what was his dinner. Carefully, without a slightest sound to even possibly disturb the man, I inched closer to my soon-to-be creation. When I was perhaps

a few feet behind him, I unravelled my left fist to reveal a large, sharp, stone. I hesitated before striking the man, for only now I noticed that his black hair was balding in several spots like a lawn of grass deprived of water and nutrition. He also reeked of an odour so foul that the only proper way to describe it and do it justice is to call it a mixture of sweat, urine, and feces. "I suppose I shall do with such a tawdry setting," I thought to myself, and without further consideration, I hit the man with the stone on the back of his patchy head, and he slumped over to the ground, unconscious.

I dragged the man by his hands, carefully so as to not arouse attention, to the side of the alleyway where my pickup was. Luckily, the chilliness of that night served as deterrence for anyone who might have stumbled into my way. The drunkard was quite heavy, and whatever object he held in the pockets of his ripped blue jeans was not helping me carry his weight into the back seat. I closed the back door of the car gently, to avoid disturbing the man from his sleep, before quietly climbing in the front seat of the car, and driving the two blocks home.

The very first action I did upon arriving in my garage and rolling down the garage door was to prepare a bathtub, some spices, and a scented shampoo. Luckily, most of this preparation work was done well in advance—all I had to do was fill up the tub halfway with my garden hose at the back corner of the garage. Then, I dragged the man's body, still deep in sleep, out of the back seat of the car and onto the floor—"I'd have to clean out the insides of the car tomorrow," I thought to myself, as one by one, I gently removed the man's clothing and spread them aside on the floor. Death is certain, but it doesn't have to be ugly, for finally, I bathed the man in lavender scented waters and washed the dandruff-infested hair that looked as if it had not been washed in ten years. Afterwards, I laid the body on the floor to dry off before going off to prepare my equipment.

Death should never be quick; it should be a symphony. *The delightful agony I am about to inflict.* The stage had been set, and now the first movement must begin. With a butcher's cleaver, I made quick work of the body—quick and efficient like a seamstress sewing together clothing. Geysers of crimson-red blood came spurting out. How gauche—this would be a whole lot more enjoyable if blood came in more colours. Only perfection is acceptable, for I so carefully removed the skin that, inside the untouched layer of fat and muscle, I could still hear his beating heart. The man was unconscious from the concussion he endured, but still alive! But not for long—I finally plunged the knife into his chest—the ribcage *cracked* open. With the heart now in plain sight before my eyes, I severed the artery as precisely as possible. Despite my careful actions, the blood gushed out like the Yellow River floods. What a useless thing blood is, lacking in any meaning and artistry. Regardless, I walked over to the shelf in the back of my garage and took out a preservative-filled jar that I prepared two weeks prior and placed the freshly carved organ within. The intermezzo is now finished and recorded, and it will be preserved for all eternity.

The rest of the body was useless, for the tender fat and the grotesque organs used for digestion are imperfect, and therefore my genius is not enough to supplant its mediocrity. These waste products would be disposed of at a later date of my choosing. His hide should serve as the main motif of this piece! For the rest of the night, I gently rub a rough saline mixture over the skin to preserve it as best as possible. If the dead could still feel, I am certain he would have described it as a gentle massage. When all of this was over, he too would join the others in exhibition, and move from my studio in the garage to my basement for the *grand finale*—a stunning show of all my works, each one unique and special, mounted on stands displaying the action they last performed in life. Their eternity is molded by my hands; some stand with an expression of shock, their eyes almost bulging out of their sockets. Others, on their knees, two hands in the air, gasping for mercy. Art presents no opportunities for mercy; every masterpiece requires some degree of cruelty. Beethoven went fully deaf as he composed his ninth and Van Gogh removed his own ear to create his self-portrait—I am no different.

If you still think me crazy, I assure you I'm misunderstood, for beauty cannot be evil. As I unfold the dress, I am reminded of what potential it has to weave beauty into death. A dress itself only serves as a tool to amplify the beauty that already exists—a dress on an ugly person will only multiply ugliness. I need a canvas, a person so beautiful that the dress will make them transcendent! All that remains to do is to find such a person and create my finest piece yet. The dress must be able to subdue the person on its own, and I must be able to locate it and find the body. The stage is now set, and all that is left to do is to begin the opera.

I immediately get to work on finding some way to sell the dress. Dusting it off, I impatiently begin preparations for the next owner - it must be divine! I curl up the left sleeve of the dress to reveal the soft fabric underneath, and adhere a small needle, no longer than half a centimetre to graze the skin. The needle is laced with ricin, a toxin so deadly that when Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov was grazed by it in the seventies, he died an agonizing death within three days. Ha! What a perfect way to commence the finest project I have prepared for in my career. Careful not to prick myself with my own meticulous trap, I ran to the front of the store to give my mannequin a change of clothes. Just as I was about to close shop for the night, someone pushed open the door.

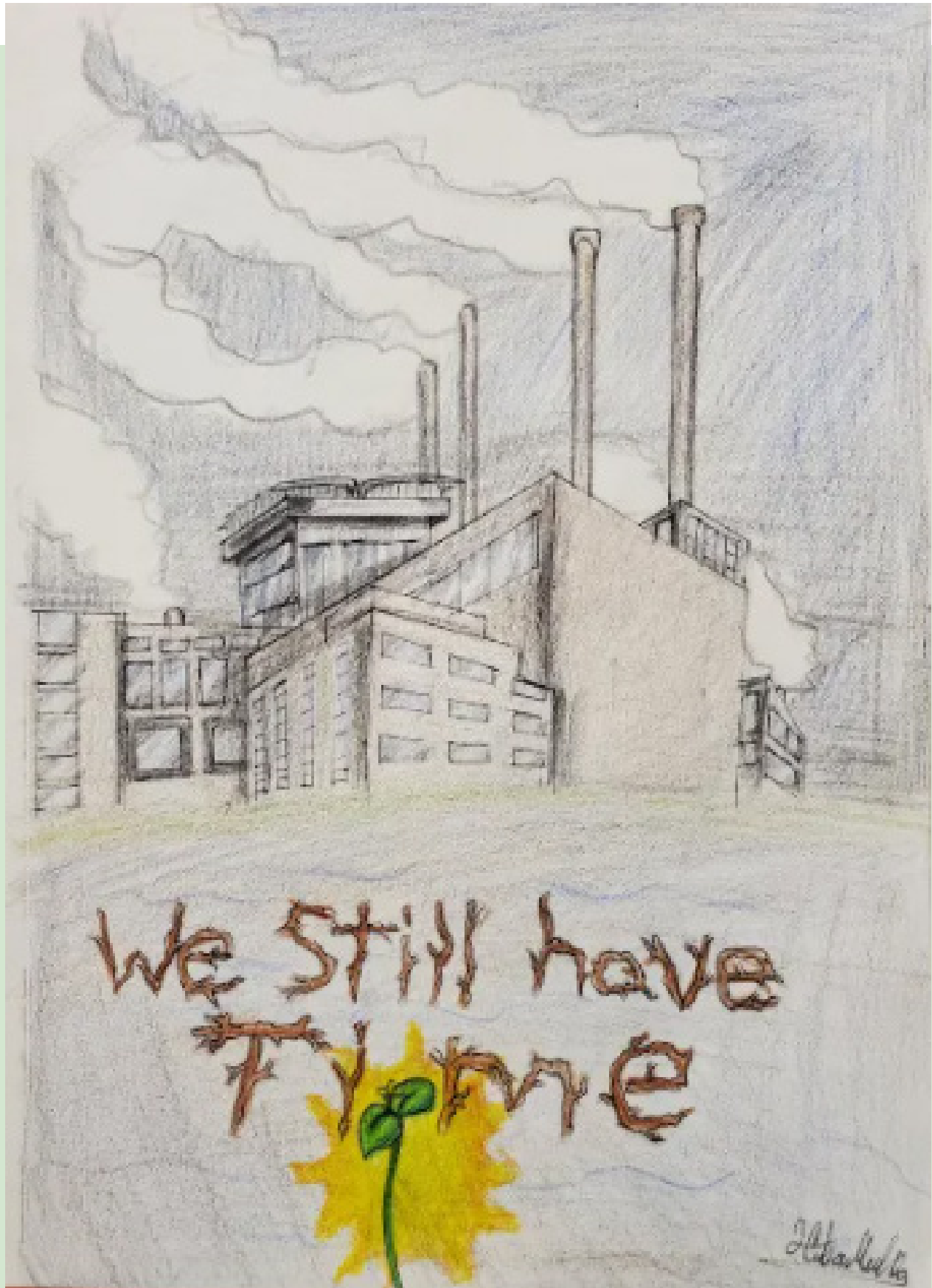
"Hello, welcome to the *Markovich Studio and Boutique*, how may I help you?"

"...uhhh...Hi, I'm interested in your dress," answered the girl, unconfidently. Her voice was sweet and tender. She had the air of a college student, and possessed an innate beauty that I could not explain. Perfect for my next grand work. She may already be beautiful, but I will make her transcendent!

And thus, the finale begins...

Green Canvas Project

The MGCI Eco-Club collaborated with The Reckoner and the MGCI Art Council to bring the students of MGCI their Green Canvas project. The participants were given a chance to showcase their artistic abilities by creating a 2D art piece relating to the competition's theme: Promoting environment-friendliness. The competition ran from March 1 to March 15 and the winner was decided through a school wide poll. Hiba Mulla, the winner, has won a \$10 e-gift card and a feature in The Reckoner's print edition to appreciate her work and contribution.



NEWS BOARD

A board to keep the student body informed about their school and local community.



Ms. Sawh's Persistent Path to Vice Principal

by ANNE LIU

In September of 2020, Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute welcomed a new Grade 10 Vice Principal, Ms. Sawh, into the school. For this edition, Anne Liu interviewed her.

Q: What was your path to becoming vice principal like? Were you faced with any obstacles or difficult decisions?

A: I started my journey getting my undergraduate degree in neuroscience, then my master's in laboratory medicine and pathobiology. Following this, I went into the classroom as a tutor where I was able to teach two hundred hours in a Grade 3 class. At this point, I fell in love with education, and so, I completed my teaching degree, and joined the Toronto District School Board's team, becoming a science teacher, Science Instructional Leader, Coordinator for Science & STEM Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12), and then vice principal. Working with the education system as a whole—administrators, educators, and students—I was able to foster a unique lens on K-12 education, understanding that while fundamental knowledge is important, students also need to learn how to think critically, collaborate, and innovate in the modern world. These are critical transferable skills across all disciplines.

Mentors in the TDSB encouraged me to go into administration, but I feared becoming a vice principal would hinder my creativity. I was wrong. I learned that I was able

to change my path's trajectory based on my passion and ability to listen to the students, the staff, and the community. I could incorporate my own creativity into this position. As a vice principal, I could make impactful change. So, I applied and became a vice principal at Westview Centennial Secondary School. I was able to see students and staff regularly, watching their growth over time, how different opportunities gave students and staff chances to grow.

I transferred from Westview Centennial SS to MGCI after two years to be closer to my home. Though I missed my former school community, I was still able to keep in contact with many staff, families, and students. I realized that I could still connect via social media platforms such as Twitter, so the MGCI Twitter account was created where updates from MGCI's students, events, and more are posted.

Q: What attracted you to the position of Grade 10 VP here at MGCI? What are your favourite parts about this role?

A: I still keep in contact with the staff, students, and families at Westview Centennial, but was ready to face this new opportunity, being Grade 10 VP here at MGCI. I've always loved

working with students; as the TDSB Coordinator for Science & STEM K-12, I had a unique opportunity to work with K-12 educators, post-secondary institutions and collectively we were able to implement STEM pedagogy across many grades and disciplines.

I'm excited to learn with the Grade 10s, moving with them as they enter Grade 11 and Grade 12, prepared to watch them grow and learn on their path. My favourite parts of this role include being able to ignite students' passion in various subjects, co-learning with both them and teachers, and getting excited about fun opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

Q: What are some of your hobbies and favourite pastimes?

A: I love to spend time with family, eat food, listen to and share stories, and meet new people. I enjoy trying to understand others' experiences and stories, to listen to all they have to say. I'm also passionate about equity and anti-oppression, eager to find creative ways to amplify the voices of those unheard in oppressed groups. Additionally, I enjoy making lesson ideas and activities, implementing more hands-on experiences for teachers and students to grow and improve.

Q: What message would you want to give to students during these challenging times?

A: I hope students are staying calm and collected. I understand that connections to the school might look a little different this year because relationships are now virtual. I urge students and families to focus on the things that make them happy, the things that they're grateful for. Whether that be family, friends, reading a book, or watching a television show, focusing on these things would ease the stress and anxiety during these difficult times.

I think the pandemic has proven as an opportunity for the possible exploration of career pathways. Typically, in a busy school life, students don't have the opportunity to research career paths with the school. Now though, you have the chance to perhaps interview someone in a profession you're interested in, and go further along this path to prepare for the future.

Lastly, I want to reassure students that their teachers and administrators are always there for them. Don't be afraid to reach out to any of us for questions you might have, whether that would be about academics or your well-being. We're always here to support all students and families in our community. ■



Clubs Feature

Catching Up With the Health and Wellness Club

by RENA LIU

This year, the MGCI Health and Wellness Committee was founded by Ms. Akler, the Assistant Curriculum Leader of Guidance, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and Community Partnerships. The committee aims to provide a safe space for students to discuss and learn about mental and physical health. Beginning on 9 March 2021, the new cohort of the club will run weekly meetings until the closing reflection session on 6 April 2021.

This committee has been meeting for several months and the current cohort consists of ten students. Applications for the committee have been open for a few weeks through the Guidance Google Classrooms for each grade. The committee meets in a virtual format on Zoom and has adapted well to pandemic restrictions, thanks to the teacher leads, school social workers, and Community Youth Workers (CYW) who organize discussions and support student-led initiatives.

"I finally had people to talk to about relevant issues and topics, and the club is full with listeners," said Grade 10 student Omar Memon. "Everyone listened to each other's ideas, and everyone contributed somehow. Everyone felt included and excited about the upcoming projects that we, as a club, have planned. In a more fifteen-year-old-teenage-term: the club was full of good vibes."

Groups of ten to twelve students meet at 3:30 pm on Tuesdays, where they explore various topics and strategies about managing and supporting their mental and physical health. Discussions are focused on many facets of student life, such as time management, grief, stress, anxiety, social isolation, COVID-19 concerns, and school communities. Participants analyze and examine

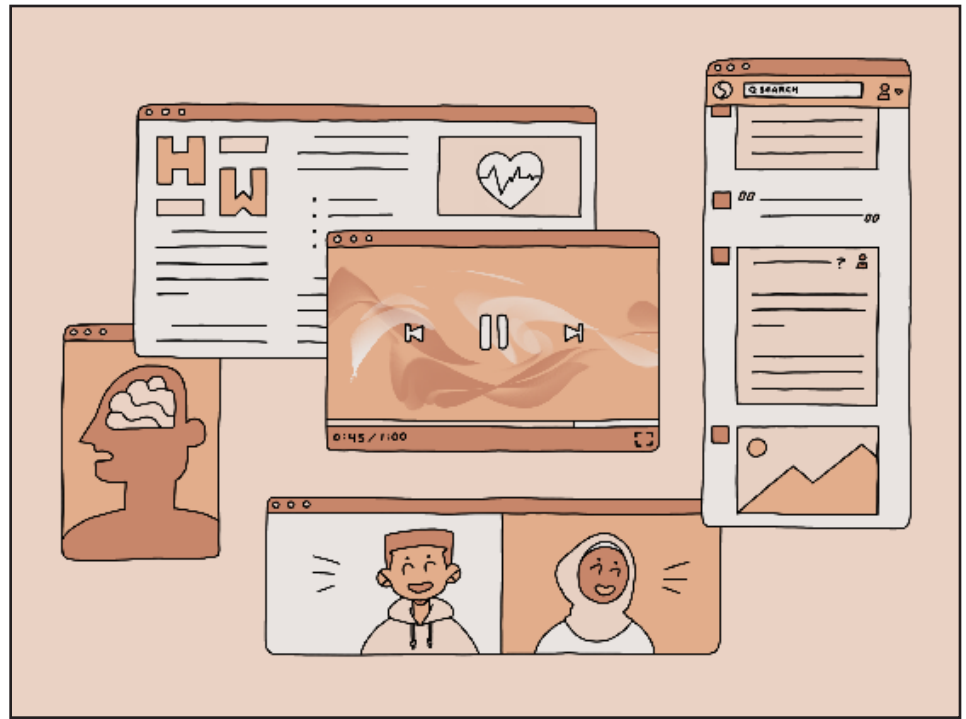


Illustration: Helen Sun

these concepts through strategies, scenarios, guiding questions, and active discussions.

"It's amazing to see everyone stepping up and bringing in new ideas to the table," said Zahra Ahmed, one of the student leaders. "It's also the closest feeling to a normal school year, because we're all engaged and ready to get started."

The club organized a school-wide initiative called the Mindful Minute videos, where students destress and focus on wellness for one to two minutes during the day. Students produced videos using a software called Adobe Spark Video—introduced to members by Ms. Legrow—and include encouraging words and phrases to motivate listeners during the start of their day. A Mindful Minute is played every morning on the announcements at MGCI, and the committee has distributed copies to teachers.

"Students have had an extremely rough road this year, obviously, due to COVID. Mindful Minute was made to pave the bumpy road, to forget everything, even if for only a minute, to take a deep breath and slow down," explained Omar Memon, who edited and produced the videos.

In addition to the Mindful Minute initiative, Zahra Ahmed is currently leading MGCI's Journal of Gratitude. The project's goal is to encourage students to take time out

of their day to practise gratitude and focus on wellbeing which encourages participants to think about and re-examine gratefulness. The initiative aims to produce a journal of responses collected from students and TDSB staff. Committee members have shared the link with their teachers. After completion, pages of the journal will be arranged to create a mural in the foyer of the school.

Overall, the club has been quite successful this year.

Applications have been open for a few weeks, and committee members are eager to accept new students into a safe and open environment. If school returns to in-person learning in September, the organization is planning in-person meetings, monthly initiatives, and school-wide events to promote and raise awareness about personal wellness while connecting students to their community.

"I am so proud of all the hard work and commitment of the student leaders," concluded Ms. Akler. "One of our goals is to keep this momentum going and try to reach more students!"

If you would like to submit a response for Journal of Gratitude, you are welcomed to do so through this form: <https://forms.gle/nMoxdC-9jCcv5brr8>. Please use your TDSB account when accessing the form. ■

The TNO Food Collaborative: Fighting Food Insecurity

by EVELYN JIANG

When thousands of residents of Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Park were put out of their jobs and struggled to put food on the table, community groups banded together and launched the Food Collaborative to help. The food bank project has since helped provide food for over eight hundred households [1].

The movement is spearheaded by The Neighborhood Organization (TNO), a non-profit charity that has provided a broad range of community services, such as counselling and women's support programs, since 1985 [2]. The organization has seven locations in four neighborhoods, including Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park.

In its first six months of operation alone, the Food Collaborative was able to distribute an impressive 2 700 food hampers [3]. As of March 2021, TNO reports to have supported over 750 families and 250 seniors through the Food Collaborative.

When the Food Collaborative first launched in March 2020, it operated solely through delivery, bringing food hampers—boxes containing basic necessities such as milk and sugar—straight to the doorsteps of hundreds of households in the local community. The delivery system helped seniors and families avoid large gatherings and reduced potential exposure to COVID-19.

Since September 2020, TNO has also been operating a physical food bank. After scheduling an appointment, individuals are now able to drop by and pick up groceries. Food hampers continue to be delivered to seniors once a month by a team of employees and volunteers.

In December 2020, the Food Collaborative began to collaborate with the Michael Garron Hospital. When the hospital staff noticed that many who were awaiting COVID-19 test results were going to crowded gro-

cery stores to stock up for a potential quarantine, TNO stepped up to address the issue and started providing deliveries for COVID-positive individuals. The deliveries consist of a two-week supply of fresh produce and other grocery goods.

The Food Collaborative has also gone beyond simply providing for food needs and offers deliveries of other necessities as well, such as over-the-counter medications. “We are just trying to help people out to make sure their needs are met,” said Darcy MacCallum, the Director of Family and Wellness at TNO.



Illustration: Emily Lai

The Food Collaborative is supported by donations from groups and individuals alike. Notably, United Way has contributed a large portion of their funding, having donated around \$185 000 [1]. In addition, the Islamic Society of Toronto has donated warehouse space to operate the food bank from. Other community groups, such as the Leaside Toy Drive, have chipped in with financial donations as well.

Several members of the MGCI staff and student body have pitched in to help with the Food Collaborative. Among them is Mr. Pearce. When asked about his experience, he said: “Overall, it was a great experience. I gained a better understanding of the physical layout of Thorncliffe and Flemingdon, and I got to know the buildings where many Garneau students live. On the more serious side, I learned about

the scale of the problem of food insecurity in Toronto.”

It is important to note that food banks provide only a short-term solution to a much larger issue. “There has been an urgency where people have had a fall-off of income because of job loss and a variety of other factors, creating a snowball effect where people needed help getting food. We need to consider the long term effects: how do we address the issues that are causing people to need a food bank in the first place?” said MacCallum.

Food insecurity has been a growing issue in Canada for years and has only been exacerbated by the pandemic [4]. It is tightly linked with income, but also reflects material circumstances such as housing tenure. To deal with food insecurity and the underlying issue of poverty would require policy action on the part of the government [5]. Nonetheless, TNO and its team of volunteers have accomplished amazing work through the Food Collaborative initiative to help local communities get through this hard time. ■

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- [2] <https://tno-toronto.org/>
- [3] <https://donate.tno-toronto.org/tno-food-collaborative/>
- [4] <https://www.foodsafety.ca/blog/food-insecurity-rise-canada#:~:text=Recent%20studies%20reveal%20that%20food%20insecurity%20is%20growing%20amidst%20the%20pandemic.&text=The%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20has,health%20and%20safety%20of%20Canadians.&text=The%20survey%20suggests%20that%2055,the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic%20began>
- [5] <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>

To learn more about the Food Collaborative or make a financial donation, visit <https://donate.tno-toronto.org/tno-food-collaborative/>.

LIFE BOARD

A board for imaginative self-expression through written and visual content.

Experiment

by AKSHAYA VARAKUNAN

Wake up.
Check the clock - it's 4:30 pm.
Wonder how time passed by so quickly. Remember.
Go to the washroom and wash your face a hundred times until you can see yourself again.
Your eyes hurt. You were staring too far back in time. Look around until your eyes adjust to reality.
Stare into the mirror. This is you. Time runs forward here.
Your name. Your age. Your eyes, your nose, your cheeks, your hair. It is yours.

Are you allowed to hold on to it?
Just for today, you remember. Tomorrow, you will have something new.
This is your life. The others are not.

You will forget how it all looks.
Start a new life.

Meet a new person, leave them behind.
Remember why you are here. Remember where you really belong.
It's the endless cycle.

On a good morning, you wake up to a warm house.
Your mom asks you why you didn't do the chores yesterday.
You don't remember.
You love your mom for a day. She is not your mom the next day.

On a bad morning, you wake up a soldier.
You are given orders to seize the city.
That won't be your war crime tomorrow.
You watch a bullet pierce the skull



Illustration: Lauren Liu

of mom from yesterday.
Oh, well.
That is not your mom. This is not your bullet. These are never your problems.

Sometimes, you wake up three years later than you did yesterday.
Sometimes, you wake up a century earlier.
You wonder what it would make it stop.

On an average morning, you end up in the only life you've lived multiple times. You are a woman. 23 years old. The year is always 2183. You have never woken up later than 2183. Every time you go

back, something changes. There is a lot you don't understand about that life, but you want to keep that life.

That is the life it is all for.

When you kill one day, it is keeping her future secure.
When you watch everything fall down one day, it is so she will survive.
When you die one day, it is keeping her city safe.
You wake up the next day, anyways.
All because she is alive.

It is a bit hypocritical, you sup-

pose.

You are doing this for her. She is you.

But she is only you some of the time. You wonder who she is without you. You wonder who you are without her.

You wonder if everything you have done to yourself is for you, or for her. How much of her is you? That thought disappears quickly. You wonder what you were thinking about.

One day, you wake up as her sister. It is an odd feeling to watch her body not be yourself. You have never talked to this other version of her—you?—before.

She says that she is losing her mind. She can't control herself some days. She hates it.

She doesn't understand.

It is better for her that way.

It is better for you that way.

It has always been for her. Everything you have done is for her. It's not fair.

You want to be her, too. It is your life, too. She is you, too.

She doesn't know what she is saying. And truth be told, you don't know what you are thinking.

She messed up the experiment, she continues to complain.

She didn't mean for this to happen.

But she doesn't remember anything before the experiment.

Then you remember what she is talking about. She doesn't remember. You do.

You realize it.

You have her memories. You are her. You know who you are.

She is not her. She is the experiment.

You tell her.

She hates you.

She says that you are the experiment she must end.

She doesn't remember anything, but she knows you are the cause of everything that went wrong.

She wrings your neck with her bare hands. She doesn't care if this is the body of her sister. She will do anything for it to end.

All the experiment wants to do is survive.

But you are different. You care for the people around you. You love and you cry and you fight and you murder for her. You just wanted to keep her alive. All you want to do is survive.

You understand now.

You are also the experiment.

You are a piece of her, and she is a piece of her.

You are both lost. You both exist for her, whether you are living as her or not.

You are both trying to piece together her life.

But right now, you've made it farther.

Her hands are still around your throat.

You have two choices.

The part of her that is in you doesn't want her sister to die.

The part of her that is in you makes a choice.

You kill her - you kill the body of your real self - instead.

It is the first thing you have done that is not for her survival.

But in some way, it is the first thing you have done that is for you - a part of her.

As you expected, you do not wake up.

Your sister wakes up with blood on her hands.

She turns herself in.

I must have lost my mind, she says. She falls asleep in a jail cell.

When she wakes up the next day, she is not herself.

She wakes up as a scientist in 2022.

She burns her lab down. It is her turn to change the future. It is her turn to keep you alive. ■

matches by KELLY WANG

shivering
stumbling down the bleak, blind tunnel
no welcoming blue eye at the mouth,
only endless desperation for an end.

my hand lost even its shadow
when i stare mindlessly
forward?
legs malleable,
whistling a hollow tune; there is no
end.

i sit down.

a ghost of a person—you,
lingering beside me,
rustling through your pockets,
lighting a match.

i look to see a soft dark,
wisps of golden strings dancing from
your hand,
the light almost stung my eyes.
the glow is weak, but forgiving.
it may not be a flashlight that could
show me the end,
but it is enough for me to stand back
up.

and so, you give me a box of matches,
guiding my hand with yours to show
me how to strike one,
teaching me warmth,
staying to hear my mundane stories of
the dark,
laughing because you are not afraid of
the dark.

but just like the flame of the match you
lit,
it was only temporary,
the match became nothing more than
flutters of black,
camouflaging in the front of me, like
my hand

like you.

i finally learned how to light a match
myself,
and when i turn to show you?
you blended in well with the dark.



Photograph: Jessica Xiong

Sadness in the Sky

by EMILY LAI

Movies had told him that the saddest days were stormy. It wasn't until the sky was grey, booming with thunder and pouring rain, that they'd show the most tragic scene. It rained during the funeral of the main character's best friend. It rained as heartbroken lovers split ways. It rained when a soldier died fighting nobly. It rained in the saddest, most dramatic times because falling rain carried the angst of a million angels' tears. But he soon realised it was all a lie.

On rainy days, everyone is sad. And that's just a fact. It's harder to be happy when the skies are dark, when your feet are trapped in stiff rubber boots and you have to pick a fight with the wind over who gets your umbrella. Misery loves company, and there's nothing like the company of dozens of raindrops falling from above.

But his saddest days are sunny. When the sky is clear, the air is crisp, the world is at peace. When he walks past the neighbourhood park on his way home and he hears the children's laughter bubbling about. When he passes by an adorable dog and it yaps at him playfully. When his best friends cook his favourite meal for lunch and plan a surprise party because it's his birthday.

Except he walks past the park with a frown on his face because he is jealous of the kids. Can you believe that, jealous of children? Because he wishes he was still six years old and didn't know that the world was going to toss its burdens on him. He wishes he could still laugh as freely as

they did, wishes he was still innocent and carefree.

And he shrinks away from the dog because that dog is so pure, its soul unbothered, and he fears that the darkness he carries around will spread, because dogs can sense everything.

And he had dreaded the days leading up to his birthday, because it was just a reminder that he'd been here one more year. 365 days that he'd spent doing what, exactly? He accomplished nothing this year, even though he'd promised himself this was the year he'd get his act together, this was the year that things would make sense and he'd become the person he wanted to be. But he failed. He was still the same old person that he was last year.

No, he's even worse.

And everyone crowds around him, singing "Happy Birthday" in voices that are entirely too angelic for his tainted ears. Their smiles are just as bright as the candles on the top of the cake. And he starts to cry. And he tries to pretend it's happy tears, that he's just so happy for the surprise, but on the inside, he's crumbling.

He doesn't know why everyone put in the effort to surprise him, because he's not worth it, he's not good enough for this. He's not good enough for them, and they of all people should know that the most.

And then they hug him and cheer and tell him to make a wish before he blows out the candles, and he stands there and thinks,

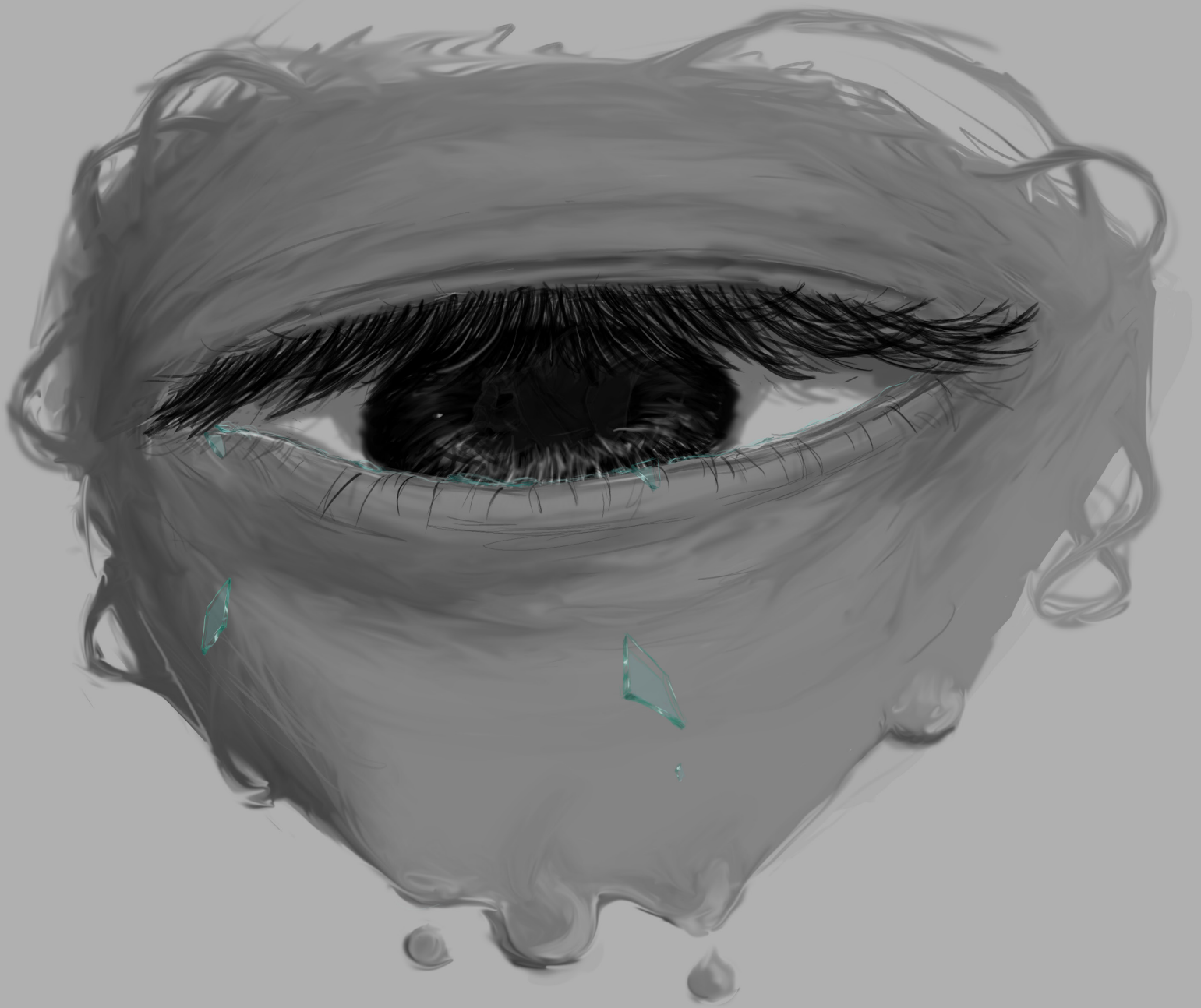
"I don't belong here," and then the candles are extinguished, and everyone's got their arms around him, and he realizes that every single person around him is happy.

And his heart aches, because he hasn't been happy in so, so long. The tears threaten to come back once more, but he pushes them back because this is supposed to be a happy day, and he isn't allowed to cry on happy days.

He wishes it was raining. He wishes he could run outside and get drenched in the downpour, until his tears mix with the raindrops and it didn't matter if he was crying or if it was just the rain. But it's a sunny day, with cake and music and friends, and he's standing there in the middle of it all, wondering if the numbness in his frozen heart has turned into pain. ■



Illustration: Sarah Li



crash RIVER WEI

your mouth tastes like scrap metal
bloody burns like tire tracks over my spine
hey babe, look out—
are those glass shards in your eyes or tears?
somewhere along the line i unbuckled my
seatbelt

i'm not sure why.
the car smells like fruit punch and
courage
the passenger side has crumpled like a
collapsed lung
i heard your wrist snap like
a pencil breaking?
a psyche shattering?
i leaned over to vomit out the fractured
window
for some reason, i think i love you more.



fireworks

ANNIE XIONG

I always loved fireworks
a comforting backdrop to a picturesque peace
noisy neighbours and nosy relatives
incessant chatter and hissing sausages on american grills
all seated on a weathered picnic table
moss forming between the cracks of the backsplash tiles
a view I would enjoy every summer
i always loved fireworks
deafening symphonies of ultramarine blue
bold streaks of tuscan sun
bewildering shades of vermillion
vibrance erupting across the stygian night, giving meaning to the nothingness
illuminating the fetid smog bellowing out of potbelly stoves
a view I would not enjoy ever again
faded burnt sienna ink against rough parchment
conscription papers shattering my holy stained glass
anguished shrieks of wronged mothers, silent weepings of guilty brothers
paralyzed fathers laying comatose in a mosaic of broken beer bottles
pitiful stares from bystanders, shifting accountability like cards of poker
a melancholy farewell
my father exchanging desperate murmurs with cloaked men
unnoticed, I perch on rigid clay stairs
curiosity overtaking
much of the conversation lost through mud walls
sol rises, hesitantly I awaken
our household soaked in disquietude and trepidation
i run across the schoolyard with unchanging vigor, blessed with ignorance
sweat mixed with mud and rain
incessant chatter replaced with incessant yelling
a foreboding grim clouding and hardening our hearts
stew in bags arrives, hungry soldiers crowd, their raw fingers reach for their meals
letters sent, never received
gunshots echo in the damp air, ringing off the trench walls

like fireworks
i was awoken not by the sun, but the familiar sound of fireworks
gleefully I hurry outside, unnoticed as always
i am met with soot and an ashen sky
my neighbourhood reduced to debris
soldiers have gained ground, we advance toward enemy territory
i'm scared
we have arrived on the rebel base
i'm scared
the fog has hazed our vision
we have made contact with the first rebel
alien men in green greet me
a metal ball slowly approaches
the explosion is not heard
the sounds of firing guns and exploding bombs drowned out rationality
and no one would ever mourn
ultramarine blue skies painted over with silvery bomb residue
no one would ever mourn
rays of tuscan sun blocked by raining shrapnel
no one would ever mourn
beautiful shades of vermillion darkened into a sickening sanguine
no one would ever mourn
the evaporated stygian night, now littered with souls like asphodels blooming in the underworld
no one would mourn one blossom amongst a field of millions
we returned
some lost legs
some lost arms
and some lost a piece of themselves that could not be mended by stitches and plastic
no amount of medals and politician speeches and embellishments
could bring back
the way I used to love fireworks
i always loved fireworks



2021 GRAMMYs

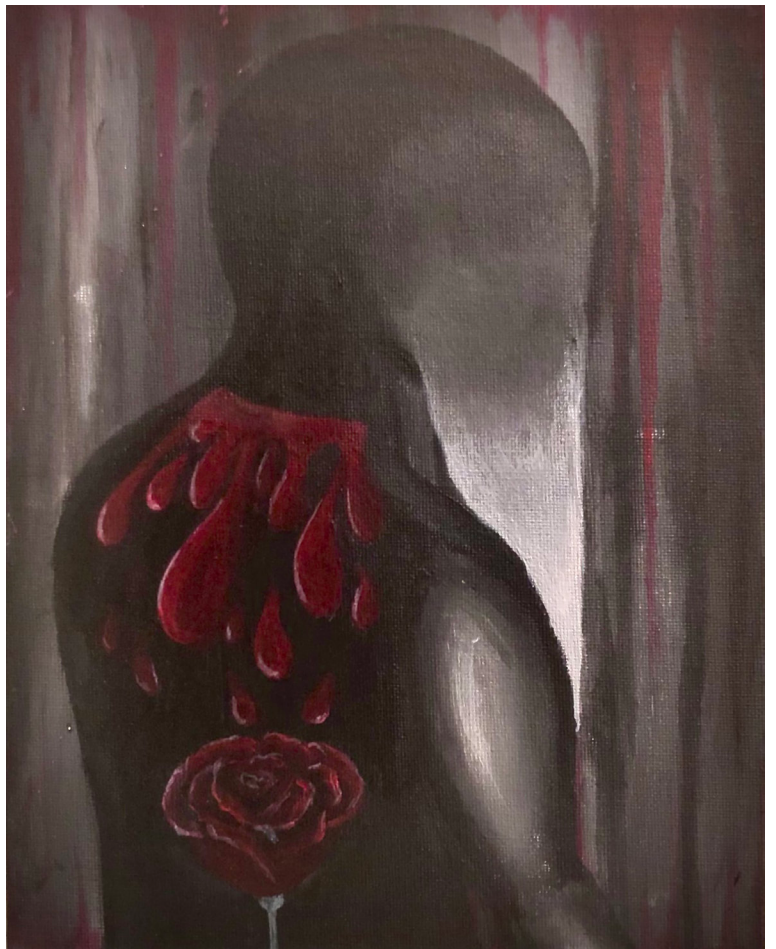
Sophie Yang

"The 2021 GRAMMYs not only served as a display of fresh talent and hit performances, but also statement pieces and designer fashion. From Gucci leather suits to Bulgari diamonds, check out these red carpet looks."

blood rose of anxiety

Fatima Gulab

"This piece signifies the confusion, anxiousness and uncertainty that occur as adulthood approaches."





birds

Donna Zhang

“In this illustration, Donna Zhang wanted to make something that looked like a painting. Unfortunately, she thought the stylus was a paintbrush and dropped it into a cup of water.”



Rebel, Rebel
Fatima Gulab



SPIKE

Lucy Qi

"Lucy Qi depicts the sweet adrenaline from spiking the ball over the net."

Conch

Sarah Li

"Sarah Li imagines a very big conch."



EDITORIAL BOARD

A board that amplifies student voices through supported opinions.

What They Aren't Telling You About: COVID-19 Vaccines

by JEFFERSON CHEN

Although many were initially optimistic that a quick end would wrap up the coronavirus pandemic, it is clear that the disease has stayed around for longer than anyone expected. First identified in late 2019, the disease is known for its flu-like symptoms and extremely high contagiousness. With over 100 million confirmed cases and millions dead [1], what's next in store for mankind?

Vaccine Development

Within weeks of the initial outbreak, scientists in China isolated a strain of the virus and published its DNA sequence, triggering an international response and providing the first stepping stone for a vaccine [2]. The World Health Organization stated in February 2020 that it did not expect a vaccine to be available in less than eighteen months, largely due to how quickly the virus evolves and mutates [3]. Various governments began working together to build a vaccine, with four prototypes entering clinical testing in March [4]. Currently, there are more than ten different vaccines developed by various institutions around the world with varying success rates. Canada has approved four different vaccines, the two most common being the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Understanding the Vaccine

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which are authorized for use in Canada, are RNA vaccines. Unlike traditional vaccines that inject dead or dying pathogens into the body, giving immune cells “practice” against a severely weakened foe, RNA vaccines teach body cells to make the same proteins found on the surface of COVID-19. Then, immune cells are “tricked” into believing there is a threat, and begin manufacturing antibodies, virus-killing proteins. A vaccinated person is now protected from COVID-19; any COVID-19 virus foolish enough to enter an antibody-protected human faces only one certainty—death [5].

Vaccine Distribution

Due to extreme logistical challenges, the Canadian government is considerably overwhelmed at this time with a mess of bureaucracy between federal, provincial, and local governments. This may be panic-inducing for you, dear citizen, but you can rest assured that the vaccine is coming.

The federal government has ordered a number of vaccines from different institutions around the world, which are busy manufacturing much-needed vaccines for many different countries. Thus, it is not possible to get vaccines delivered in such a short time. Currently, in Ontario, the government is vaccinating high-risk individuals that are most likely to get sick, including the elderly and front-line workers [16]. The Ontario government estimates

mass vaccinations will occur between April and July, although given the frequent delays many specialists believe it may take as long as September to get it done [17].

The best course of action for the majority of citizens right now is to continue respecting pandemic guidelines. Wear your masks, stay home, stop going to gatherings and stay away from other people. Every action (or lack thereof) you take that stops the spread could be a life saved in a senior care home or hospital room. Let's work together to keep as many people of the Earth alive and well as we await the arrival of the return to normalcy. ■

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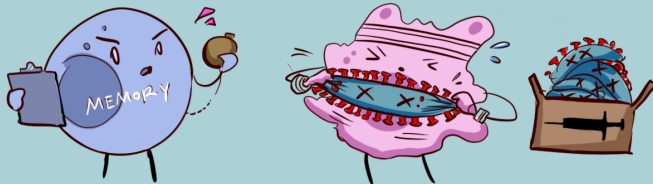
5 COVID VACCINE MYTHS [BUSTED]

Myth: There are animal products in the vaccine derived from pigs and cows, which can lead to “blood poisonings”.



MYTH BUSTED: There are no livestock products used in developing the two RNA vaccines in Canada [9]. This might change as more vaccines enter development, but rest assured that they will be well tested just like the current ones, and will not cause harm to your blood.

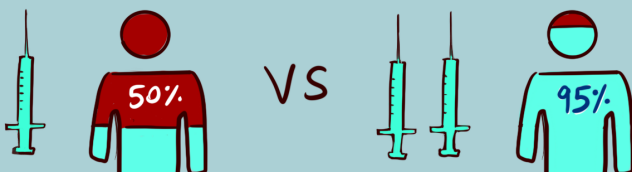
Myth: Additive substances in vaccines, known as adjuvants, can drastically increase the chances of actually getting sick from a vaccine. Additionally, adjuvants can cause brain damage.



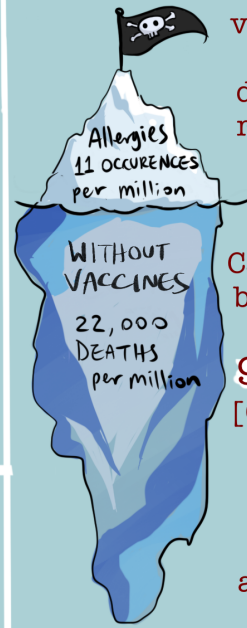
Myth Busted: Adjuvants are trace chemicals, usually aluminum based, that have been used in vaccine production for almost a century. They are known to improve the body’s immune response - adjuvant infused vaccines “train” your cells to fight infections more effectively [10]. Besides, the two common RNA vaccines do not contain any dead or dying viruses anyway - you cannot get COVID from the vaccine.

Myth: One dose of the COVID vaccine is enough, a second dose is unnecessary.

Myth Busted: False; the first dose of either RNA vaccine currently in use only observed an effectiveness of roughly 50%. To reach the 95% protection rate, you must take your second dose [12]!



Myth: The COVID vaccine is untested and therefore severely dangerous; side effects range from allergies to death.



Myth Busted: Both Canadian vaccines have been thoroughly tested for success rates of 95% in all age groups [6][7]. Severe allergies occurred in 11 out of every million people [8]. Without vaccinations, approximately 22,000 people will die per million instead [1].

Myth: Pneumonia vaccines will also protect you from COVID.

MYTH BUSTED: COVID was classified as a type of severe pneumonia at the very start of the pandemic back when it was unknown. We now know COVID and pneumonia are caused by two very different pathogens that both make you very sick [11].



Illustration: Zoe Cheng

Snooze or Lose?

by SARAH ALI and AKIL HUANG

It's no secret that teenagers tend to have very chaotic sleep schedules. Between staying up too late and waking up too early, many teens often resort to after school naps to make up for lost sleep and recharge after a tiring day at school. But are these naps really as good as they seem? Local nap enthusiast Akil and ex-napper Sarah discuss the science behind napping below!

Snooze (Akil)

When Sarah and I first got into an argument about napping, I had just woken up from one. Whether you nap frequently, or you don't, the health benefits of a nice nap session cannot be ignored.

Let's set the scene. You've awoken at 7:00 am, having slept at 12:30 am the night before. You're dreading the following eight hours, where you must dress, shower, eat, commute, take notes, write assessments, interact with others, and return home. The stress of school, peer-to-peer interaction, and sleep deficiency requires an outlet for you to channel your exhaustion into. That outlet is the 15-30 minute nap that you make a part of your daily routine.

The effects of napping can be cleaved into two types of benefits: immediate satisfaction and implicit health benefits.

The immediate effects of a nap are clear: lying in bed feels nice, and going to sleep also feels nice. By allowing your body time to rest, you avoid inducing further strain on your joints or wearing out your brain [1]. Napping provides an immediate relief, both mentally and physically.

Moreover, napping allows you to kill time. Kids and adolescents are social creatures, but not all of the time. Teenagers tend to be most active during the night, and thus they tend to talk most during the evening [2]. Napping kills two birds with one stone, both allowing your body and mind time to rest and heal, while also killing time before your friends are online or ready to talk.

Your brain and body work hard

in the background to make sure that you're constantly in a functioning state. Sleep allows them both to work more efficiently. As such, napping has been proven to boost memory retention and productivity during the day, as well as improve nighttime sleep [3].

Opponents of daytime napping will posit a couple arguments, each of them more flawed than the previous. The first and central idea suggests that napping past a certain length of time, usually past sixty minutes, can leave you groggy and disorganized—as well as introduce a variety of speculated health risks.

As much as we agree that the science behind the argument is relatively sound, the reasoning is not. By and large, many of the negative health consequences of long naps have to do with a lack of personal accountability. If you are unable to wake yourself up after a napping session, perhaps you simply cannot be trusted to nap in the first place.

Additionally, the health complications that might arise are not direct products of long naps, but one's inability to get satisfying nighttime sleep—of which can worsen your health and create a cycle of insomnia and reliance on napping [3]. Napping is an art, and not everyone can be a skilled artist.

The key here is balance; balancing the amount of time that you nap for is crucial, as well as balancing when you nap. If you find yourself unwilling to nap because you think that it makes it harder for you to sleep at night or that it distracts you from your day, cut down on how much time you spend napping. I guarantee that you'll start to feel better and it will make your days more manageable.

Don't Snooze (Sarah)

After school naps are like poisonous apples. They seem harmless and maybe even beneficial, but they will ruin the rest of your day. Like Snow White taking an apple from a random, ugly old lady in the woods, taking naps is for the weak and gullible.

The first trap a young, naive student

might fall into is thinking that their afternoon nap will make up for their 3:00 am bedtime. In fact, by taking naps frequently you are only dooming yourself to a never ending cycle of disjointed sleep. Your afternoon nap might be the very thing preventing you from getting a good night's sleep and delaying your bedtime.

But what if you have to stay up for schoolwork? Well at that point you could've used the time you did to take a nap to instead finish your work so you wouldn't have to stay up.

You might ask, what does it matter whether you move that sleeping time to the afternoon to stay up? You're getting the same amount of sleep and work time anyway, right?

In fact, studies show that teenagers who supplement their sleep with afternoon naps that are longer than sixty minutes are at a higher risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome due to higher blood glucose concentrations [4].

Our stubborn, nap-loving students might now argue that their backwards sleep and work schedules helps them stay productive since they may be too tired to concentrate after school. However, taking naps that are longer than twenty minutes will result in REM, the next stage of sleep. Naps that are longer than forty-five minutes enter into deep sleep. Both will leave you feeling groggy for a while after you wake up and will compromise your sleep at night [5]. Feeling groggy will, of course, compromise your productivity for the rest of the day. Meanwhile, fixing your sleep cycle (by not taking naps) so you get a good night's sleep will leave you feeling less tired after school.

You might think that if all of the above only applies to naps that are longer than twenty minutes, then simply limiting your naps to twenty minutes is an easy fix.

However, for many sleep-deprived teens, dragging yourself out of bed after just twenty minutes when you're already comfortable and sleepy is easier said than done. For some, no alarm,

However, for many sleep-deprived teens, dragging yourself out of bed after just twenty minutes when you're already comfortable and sleepy is easier said than done. For some, no alarm, parent, or natural disaster could get them out of bed once they fall asleep. The best solution in this case is to avoid taking a nap in the first place so you don't risk taking harmful long naps.

Additionally, isn't it better to finish all your work during the day so you can go to bed with a clear mind, as opposed to dozing off to your nap thinking about all the work you still have to do?

Knowing all of this, you might still think that quitting is hopeless when you've become so used to napping. But

from one former avid napper to another, I assure you it can be done.

One of the first things you can do is quit using your bed for anything other than sleep. We all know how easy it is to fall asleep while scrolling on your phone in bed. So stop laying in bed while on your phone, stop studying in bed, don't even sit on your bed. This will not only stop you from unwittingly taking naps, but will help your mind associate your bed only with sleep, thus making it easier to fall asleep at night.

Another tip is to make your bed every day, either in the morning or after you come back from school. Making your bed neat and tidy will make it less tempting to mess it up before bedtime.

It will take time, and you may end up taking a few naps before you get it right. But soon you will be on the way to a healthier sleep cycle and a more productive lifestyle. ■

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Illustration: Max Lu

Colourism: Shades of Acceptance

by MARYAM MOBASHIR and UROOBA SHAIKH

While racism and white supremacy are prominent social issues that exist between different communities, colourism burdens communities of colour by creating a distinct hierarchical structure based on skin tone. Colonialism and classism have played a significant role in defining this structure in which society favours lighter skin.

Colourism is an issue that has been gaining awareness recently due to the increased attention on racism; however, its roots go

back centuries. Upon claiming rule of the Indian subcontinent, the British conquerors declared themselves to be the superior and intelligent race, while they labeled the Indian population to be more savage than human [1]. This superiority soon became associated with skin tone, as employers hired lighter skinned Indians more frequently for jobs that their darker skinned counterparts were denied from [1]. Colourism is also rooted in classism, especially in the East Asian subcontinent. Many soci-

eties here associated darker skin tones with poverty, as lower wage workers often laboured in fields and had darker skin due to sun exposure [2]. Those of the upper class spent less time outdoors, and so their lighter skin became associated with wealth [2].

Today, colourism is prevalent in many communities in Asia, and is often used as a marketing strategy by cosmetics companies, further establishing the desirability of light skin. Oftentimes, companies do this through marketing



Illustration: Lucy Qi

products using light-skinned actors and models, as well as beauty products that promote skin lightening. One popular beauty brand, which used to be known as Fair and Lovely, has been selling skin lightening creams in parts of Asia, namely in the Indian subcontinent. After receiving backlash for promoting colourism, the brand was renamed and is now known as Glow and Lovely, but regardless of the change in the name, the product is still a lightening cream. In addition to the product itself being problematic, adverts for this product also sell light skin as the ideal by depicting women with darker skin becoming happier after applying the cream and lightening their skin. Many brands, including clothing companies, also use almost exclusively light-skinned models to promote their products. These practices have contributed to the normalcy of colourist attitudes and has promoted the idea that having a lighter complexion is the ideal standard, while those with darker skin are generally told that they are inadequate in their looks.

The marketing strategies of the K-pop industry, which has recently gained popularity, also tend to perpetuate colourist ideals. Agencies market idols with fair skin with a “pure” image, while promoting idols with darker skin with an “exotic” and “sexy” image [3]. These companies often pressure idols to adhere to societal beauty standards and have lighter skin, so many take measures to lighten their skin, or to give the impression of having light skin. As a result, many use makeup that is lighter than their actual skin tone and photos are often edited by companies and fans alike to portray fairness [3].

In addition to being used as

a marketing tool, colourism can become a societal norm that one must fit into in order to be accepted. In many South Asian communities, where arranged marriages are a common practice, many inquire about the skin tone of potential brides. As many people associate lighter skin with beauty, those who do not fit the standard are often rejected as a potential bride and end up being called “dusky” or “unclean” [4]. This causes many women to feel alienated in their communities and takes a huge toll on their self-esteem. Even love marriages and successful arranged marriages do not leave anyone free from discriminatory comments from family and community members. Oftentimes, those with the darkest skin tone amongst family members face ridicule and harsh comments while favouritism is usually given to the lighter skinned family members.

This is also present within Black communities. Women with darker skin are called “intimidating” and have noticed that people are often hesitant to approach them, simply due to their darker skin tone [5]. “There was a slight troubling when I would watch TV shows such as *Martin* or movies like *Coming to America*, and the love interest was always light and the girls my colour were shrews—too fast, too forward, too sarcastic to be loved,” said writer Kaitlyn Greenidge, a dark-skinned Black woman.

Colourism is not only problematic as a social construct, but also destructive to the mental health of those affected by it. Many studies have shown that long-term exposure to colourist attitudes can lead to numerous mental disorders, such as body dysmorphia, social anxiety, and depression [6]. Furthermore, being part of a so-

ciety where lighter skin is praised is highly damaging to the self-esteem of those with darker skin. After constantly being told that their skin tone makes them less capable or less beautiful, they internalize this concept, and use it as a governing factor of self-worth.

While colourism is deeply rooted in many cultures in various parts of the world, it is not impossible to change the outlook that people have on darker skin. Change is already beginning to happen through the use of social media outlets, which brings awareness to this issue. Campaigns like *Dark is Beautiful* and *#brownisbeautiful* have allowed darker skinned people to share their experiences and open up the conversation in order to “break the silence and alter the discourse on colourism” [4]. Alisia (Giac-Thao) Tran says, “These small conversations, these small interactions: they’re a big piece—and they amass to eventually helping us overcome generational prejudices that permeate our societies” [4]. It is necessary to keep these conversations going and attempt to change the attitudes people have on darker skin tones. It is past time that communities of colour progress past dividing themselves on the basis of skin tone and which shades are acceptable. Every shade is beautiful. ■

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Are Fangirls Really Fanatics?

by UROOBA SHAIKH

In a world where media plays a significant role in the forms of entertainment that we are exposed to, fandoms are a recently developed form of engagement that allow people to be part of a community that shares their interests. However, fan culture is plagued by a centuries-old issue: misogyny.

It may be astounding that such a problem exists in a very modern space, yet a simple glance at the portrayal of those in fandoms shows that it is still very present. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the “screaming teenage fangirl” narrative that seems to be present when a fandom is mostly comprised of young women. The notion seems to be that teenage girls are far too emotional for anything they appreciate to actually have value. In truth, there is little difference between a female fan who knows the birthdays of all the members in her favourite band, and a male fan who knows the scoring record of every member on his favourite sports team, yet only one is shamed for it.

The reason for this is that the crazy fangirl narrative is often grossly exaggerated. Young women in these spaces are portrayed to be aimless and unintelligent, chalking up their love for something to unruly, hormonal lust. In reality, these fandoms often serve as a space for self-expression, inspiration, comfort, and connection. Female fan bases are often made up of intelligent, talented, and dedicated people from many different backgrounds, which is seen in the content that is created, such as fanart and fanfiction. Furthermore, the cooperation of people who are able to connect through fandoms holds greater influence than many would like to admit. Take, for example,

the BTS ARMY, who have raised \$1 million in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and continuously supports charity projects and social causes [1]. Many would call this fandom another band of obsessive teenage girls, but their impact is undeniable.

What’s even more interesting is that fandoms that were once mocked while having mostly female members are suddenly given much more recognition when their male population increases. The Star Trek fandom, which is actually considered to be the spearhead of modern fan culture, was led by a largely female fan base who created fanzines—the 20th-century version of online fan spaces today [2]. However, the stereotypical image of a modern Star Trek fan is often thought to be “the male geek”. Similarly, some of the greatest musical acts, such as The Beatles and Frank Sinatra, actually rose to popularity due to female interest, yet were dismissed as attractions for screaming teenage girls. As Sarah Wilson writes for Varsity, “In spite of the band rocketing to fame in the 1960s precisely because of their female fans, the Beatles’ music seemed to fall into the hands of men as their style developed and moved away from the innocent riffs of ‘Love Me Do’ towards the trailblazing experiments of Sgt Pepper’s, and has remained this way since” [3]. It was only when they engaged a larger male audience that they were deemed “respectable” and are now considered to be “classic” musicians. In terms of a more recent phenomenon where the same response can be seen, K-pop as a form of music is often stigmatized due to the majority of listeners being young women.

A contrast can also be drawn be-

tween the different reactions based on fandom demographics. For instance, football fans, the majority of whom are males, are hardly mocked and discredited for their interest, despite their display of hysterical behaviours such as rioting, or even their emotional displays when their favorite team loses. Yet, a woman who declares herself a football fan draws skepticism as to what inspires her interest. As one female fan describes, “There were countless occasions where I had to ‘prove’ I’m actually interested in the sport and not in the jersey exchange after the game; countless occasions where I had to explain what offside is, to be taken seriously” [4]. Male fans are never held to the same standards, and there is a clear imbalance in how much females are invalidated as fans.

Much of the misogyny that exists in fan culture is a byproduct of toxic masculinity. Men are often expected to maintain stoicism and emotional displays are considered “unmanly”. Not only is this expectation harmful to men as it prevents them from expressing themselves, but it also portrays the idea that women are overly hysterical and are not capable of thinking rationally, making anything they are passionate about irrelevant. From a young age, girls who are subjected to these stereotypes are made to feel like their interests are invalid and something to be ashamed of, which can have negative effects on their confidence and self-esteem [5].

No matter the causes of it, misogyny is a very real problem that affects women while they simply try to enjoy themselves. Modern problems call for modern solutions, and if we truly strive for equality, female fans need to stop being shamed for



Illustration: Colleen Chang

their interests and be treated with just as much respect as their male counterparts, so that they can also enjoy the fandom experience. After all, that's what fandoms are supposed to be: a space to enjoy, connect, and express. ■

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Why the Pandemic Showed We Can Do More to Stop Climate Change

by THEODORE LAM



Illustration: Julia Shen

The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the news cycle lately. If you turn on the radio, flip through a newspaper, or even just listen to a conversation, you'll hear nothing but vaccines and variants, social distancing and school reopenings. The same single-mindedness pervades government policy, with much of Canada's 2020 spending going towards COVID-19 relief. But what both the media and the government seem to have forgotten is that we are in the midst of another crisis, a crisis that far eclipses

the COVID-19 pandemic in both danger and unprecedentedness, and one that has the potential to disrupt human society at an unimaginable scale. If we can sacrifice so much to stop the spread of a comparably short-lived pandemic, shouldn't we be willing to sacrifice much more to stop the complete disruption of global ecological and climate systems?

Over the past year, more than 2.5 million people have died from COVID-19. This is, of course, a staggeringly high death toll, but it pales in comparison with the death toll of fossil fuel burning.

It is estimated that up to 8.7 million deaths were caused by air pollution in 2018 alone [1], with another 150 000 annual deaths from global warming, and these numbers are swiftly increasing. In total, there have been more than 100 million fossil fuel-related deaths in the past fifty years [2], which is forty times the deaths from COVID-19, and many millions more have been displaced due to extreme weather and natural disasters. Researchers have projected that, without any COVID-19 restrictions, a maximum of 40 million

people would have died from the virus, whereas more than a billion people could die due to fossil fuels by 2100 if current trends continue.

You would think that a problem with so much more potential for death and destruction would receive that much more attention and funding. However, in 2020 the Canadian government spent \$240 billion on COVID-19 relief [4], while only setting aside \$15 billion for environmental spending [5]. If we want to respond to climate change as aggressively as we have the pandemic, we should be willing to invest trillions of dollars. The fossil fuel industry is often touted as an essential part of the Canadian economy, but in reality it only accounts for 6% of Canada's GDP (\$110 billion) [6] [7] and employs 200 000 people [8]. This is still a lot of money and people, but it is less than the 38% of GDP [9] and 3 million jobs [10] that have been lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, and much less than the amount of money and jobs that could be

lost due to climate change. Importantly, as with the pandemic, these jobs will not be lost forever, as the renewable energy sector can fill in the economic gaps left by fossil fuels. It is not fair to sacrifice thousands of lives just to prolong the demise of an industry that is profoundly unsustainable.

I'm not saying that governments are responding too aggressively to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the pandemic has shown us that governments (some of them, at least) are able to make the necessary economic sacrifices to stop a crisis, if they feel that the crisis is an immediate threat. What needs to happen is a shift in mentality. People, and governments, need to realize that the climate crisis is an immediate threat, not some hazy threat in the far-off future. The climate crisis is here, right now, and is already killing millions of people. Governments around the world have made a heroic effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, and to mitigate the impact of this once-in-a-century

crisis. Now they just need to do the same for the once-in-history crisis. ■

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