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ABSYNTHÉ

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POETRY

04 // MY FAVOURITE TEACHER

14 // SCRIPT 10011001

STORIES

09 // A SUMMER NIGHT

30 // OBITUARY: PLANET EARTH

CENTER FOLD

17 // INdeCISION: PART II



CONTENTS

04 // MY FAVOURITE TEACHER
EVAN NELSON

06 // WALKS IN NATURE - PART II
KEIRA PURDON

09 // A SUMMER NIGHT
MELCHIOR DUDLEY

12 // MUSINGS OF YOUR FAVOURITE CASH COW
MIRZA USHRA

14 // SCRIPT 10011001
TYLER MAJER

17 // INdeCISION - PART II
WARREN OLIVER

25 // A CREATIVE COLLABORATION
RON DURD & MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

30 // OBITUARY: PLANET EARTH
ZACHARY BARMANIA

31 // OUR TEAM

MY FAVOURITE TEACHER

Evan Nelson

Author's Note:

This poem alludes to childhood sexual assault, and may be upsetting for some.

*You were my favourite teacher.
You, whose name filled my mouth for
years,
You, who inspired me,
Encouraged me,
Who smiled largely and wholly when I
told you I wanted to teach.
That I wanted to teach teens.
That I wanted to teach kids.
That I wanted to teach.
Just like you.*

*You, my inspiration, my muse, my guide,
my teacher.
You, my love, my kindred spirit, my
respite from mockery.
You. My favourite teacher.
My favourite fucking teacher.
My favourite teacher.*

*I had not seen your name in eight years.
Eight years, two degrees, and a diploma
later.
More education, more education, more
school, more teaching, more learning.
Not enough, not for those kids.
Not good enough.
Not educated enough.
Not strong enough.
Not a good teacher.
Not yet. Not like you.
Not yet.*

*I looked for you in my mirror,
And until I saw you,
I knew I had to keep working,
Keep reading,*

*Dewey, Rousseau, Derrida, Foucault.
More theory, more practice, more
growing.
To match you. To see you. To surpass
you.*

*Eight years, then I saw your name.
Saw what you'd done.
Saw the divide among all of us.
Did she do it?
No, she couldn't have-
It's too horrible-
She was so kind-
She was so-
So-*

*I felt a great and heavy loss,
Your name no longer an inspiration,
But a blight,
A misstep,
A mistake.
My favourite **fucking** teacher.*

*When people ask me who inspired me,
I cannot speak your name.
I cannot give credence to your crimes.
I cannot cry when I read a second
teacher,
The second teacher,
The other one,
The only other one,
The only other favourite fucking teacher,
Has done the same as you.*

*Who has inspired me?
I do not know.
I have no answers anymore.*

My Favourite Teacher

*I have only the names of two teachers,
Two kindred spirits,
Two guides,
Two muses,
Who are unforgivable.*

*My heart breaks for the loss,
But I know that now when I look in my
mirror,
I see only my own face.*



WALKS IN NATURE

Keira Purdon

Part II: Robert Johnston Eco Forest

SUMMARY

Cost: Free!

Location: 15 - 20 minutes outside of Peterborough

Naturality: 4 out of 5

Gear: Sensible shoes & drinking water.

Watch out for: Roots, rocks.



Continuing my quest to find nature areas in and around Peterborough, a misadventure brought myself and my roommate to the Robert Johnston Eco Forest. Had we approached directly from Peterborough, and not taken a very long detour, we would have driven out Parkhill Road East for 15 minutes. It's not on Google Maps, but there is some information on the trails online.

The area is surrounded by rolling farmland, which is scenic enough by itself. We initially drove past the parking lot, since it is pretty nondescript and not very well signed. The free entry made it worth it!

I have to say, it was a perfect day to go. The sun was shining but it wasn't too hot, and the fall colours were just starting to make their appearance. The trails were very well-marked and all of them looped so it was impossible to get lost. The trails also sported very rustic, comfortable, and frequent benches.

The main trail was mulched, but it was very short. We then joined a boardwalk and wandered around the trails. Each was well-labeled with a certain plant or animal. A porta-potty stood just a few feet in from the entrance. I can't attest to the cleanliness or lack thereof, but it was good to know it was there.

Walks in Nature



The trees transitioned between grouped pine, cedar, and birch. While they were obviously planted, which may ruin the natural aesthetic for some avid naturalists, it was incredibly enjoyable. For the most part the walking was flat and easy going. Only a few tree roots and rocks threatened our toes and ankles. One or two trees were down across the path, but they were easy to climb over. The deer trail, however, was a little more of an incline. It is best for those with injuries or canes to avoid this section, but for us young folk with sound bodies it was a small challenge. Bear in mind as winter comes that particular trail will get slippery, especially if we get as much freezing rain as last year!



Also on the deer trail, we encountered a shockingly well-constructed shelter. It didn't look like anyone was living there, more like someone had fun building an emergency shelter. We also encountered a few large piles of rock. There is a similar pile in the Drumlin behind Lady Eaton College, which my T.A. said was from farmers trying to make the field suitable for plowing and planting. If that's the case for the rock piles in Robert Johnston, it's a cool piece of history to see.



There was a fair bit of garbage and abandoned appliances and farm equipment on the edge of the forest. The refuse was on the neighboring farmer's land, which was easy to tell since the trails are surrounded by a wooden fence. It wasn't completely immersion-breaking, but it did look like some critter was living in the old camper with the broken door. Beyond that, the trails were clean. A bonus was that there was no road noise!

There was a little wildlife. We heard and saw some very vocal Blue-Jays, which I regrettably did not capture a photo of before they flew away. Signs of other small

Walks in Nature

animals like tracks and bent grass were present as well. Just off the main, mulched, path there is a little pond with dozens of frogs and toads. Be warned, it did get mucky by the pond. My hiking boots were quite muddy, and I banged them off before getting into the car. It's worth the dirt to hear the frogs croaking and the wind rustling the dry reeds.

We encountered very few people, which may have been because we went before the height of the afternoon. On our way out we met two families, both with off-leash dogs. They were entirely friendly (both the canines and humans), but best to be aware if dogs aren't your thing.

We did all the trails and it took us about 30-40 minutes. While not long enough to be an afternoon walk nor a run, it was a nice little escapade and welcomed

break from studying. If the weather isn't hot, you don't really need water. And there is something to be said for walks that only require a pair of shoes. It is the perfect trail for new hikers and nature lovers, or for those who haven't been hiking in a while.

Although not as unique as the Warsaw Caves (part one to this series) the Eco Forest offered a welcome taste of the bush and wilderness. Besides, it does not do to compare wilderness. I crave the outdoors and to feel like I have left civilization behind. The Eco Trails weren't quite that, but it's relative shortness, easy walking, and naturalness makes it perfect for students. The only strike is that it is only accessible to those with access to a vehicle. I have a feeling I'll be a frequent visitor in the months to come. Perhaps I'll meet you on the trails!



A SUMMER NIGHT

Melchior Dudley

CORY is laying in a cotton sleeping bag, feeling the rough skin of the Earth on his back while looking at the night's constellations through an opening at the top of the tent.

DAD: Hey Cory, how's your breathing?

CORY: It's okay.

CORY inhales deeply, drawing in cool, fresh air. He involuntarily coughs -- a phlegmy, watery cough. DAD sighs sleepily.

CORY (Quietly): Dad?

DAD: Yeah, Cory?

CORY: Are you afraid of dying?

DAD: No. (Pause) Are you?

CORY: Kind of. Yeah. I think about it a lot.

DAD: Why, son?

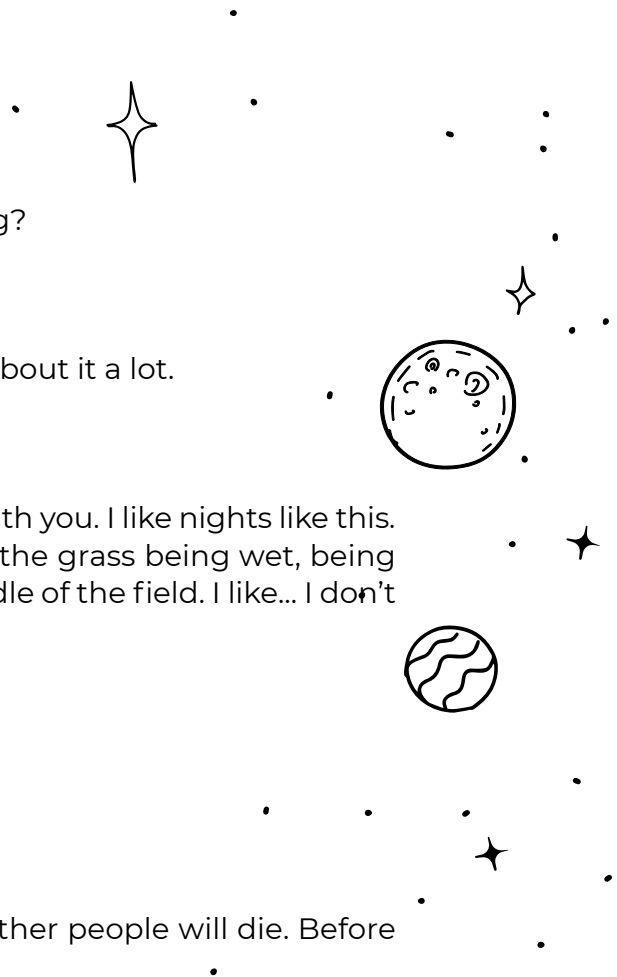
CORY: I like life. I like being with you. I like nights like this. I really like the air, the stars, the grass being wet, being all alone out here in the middle of the field. I like... I don't want to say it."

DAD: It's okay.

CORY: Aw. Dad?

DAD: Yeah?

CORY: I'm also scared that other people will die. Before me. That would be worse.



A Summer Night

DAD: You mean like me?

CORY: Yeah.

DAD: It's okay. I'm okay with it.

CORY (*Struggling to breathe*): I'm not.

DAD: Hey son?

CORY: Yeah?

DAD: I'm not going anywhere for a -- for a while.

CORY starts to cry and turns away from DAD. Silence.

DAD: I love you.

Silence. CORY is still crying quietly.

DAD: Cory?

CORY: I'm gonna miss you, Dad.

DAD: Aw. It's okay. I'm not going anywhere. Here.

The sound of synthetic material swishing as DAD pulls himself over in his sleeping bag to hug CORY. CORY turns and buries his wet face in DAD's shoulder.

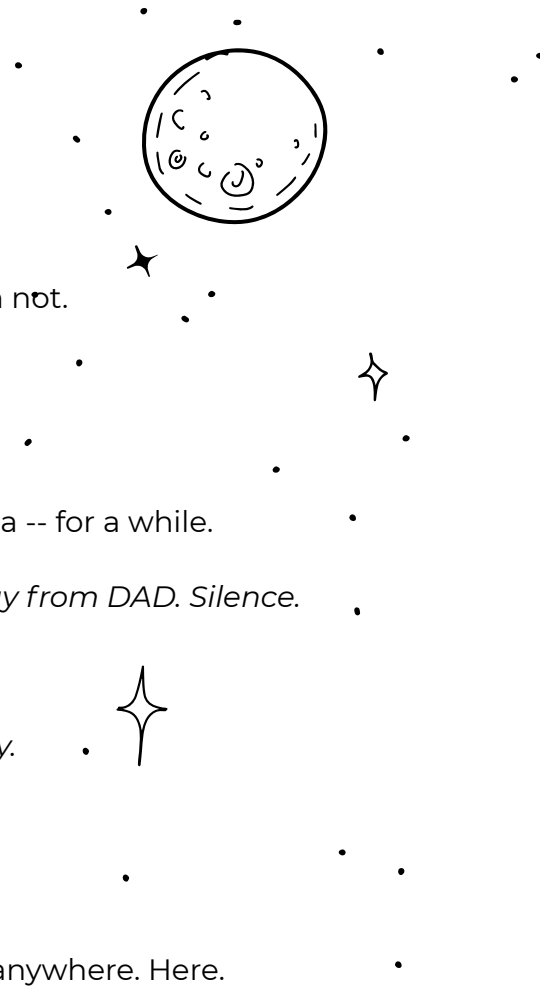
DAD: I'll always be right here. (*Pause*). Even after I'm gone, I'll always be with you.

CORY has his head on DAD's chest, listening to DAD's heartbeat and the words buzzing in his lungs.

DAD: You'll always have our memories, and you can keep me in your heart. (*Pause*). I love you, son.

CORY: I love you too, Dad. (*Pause*). Can you stay like this until I fall asleep?

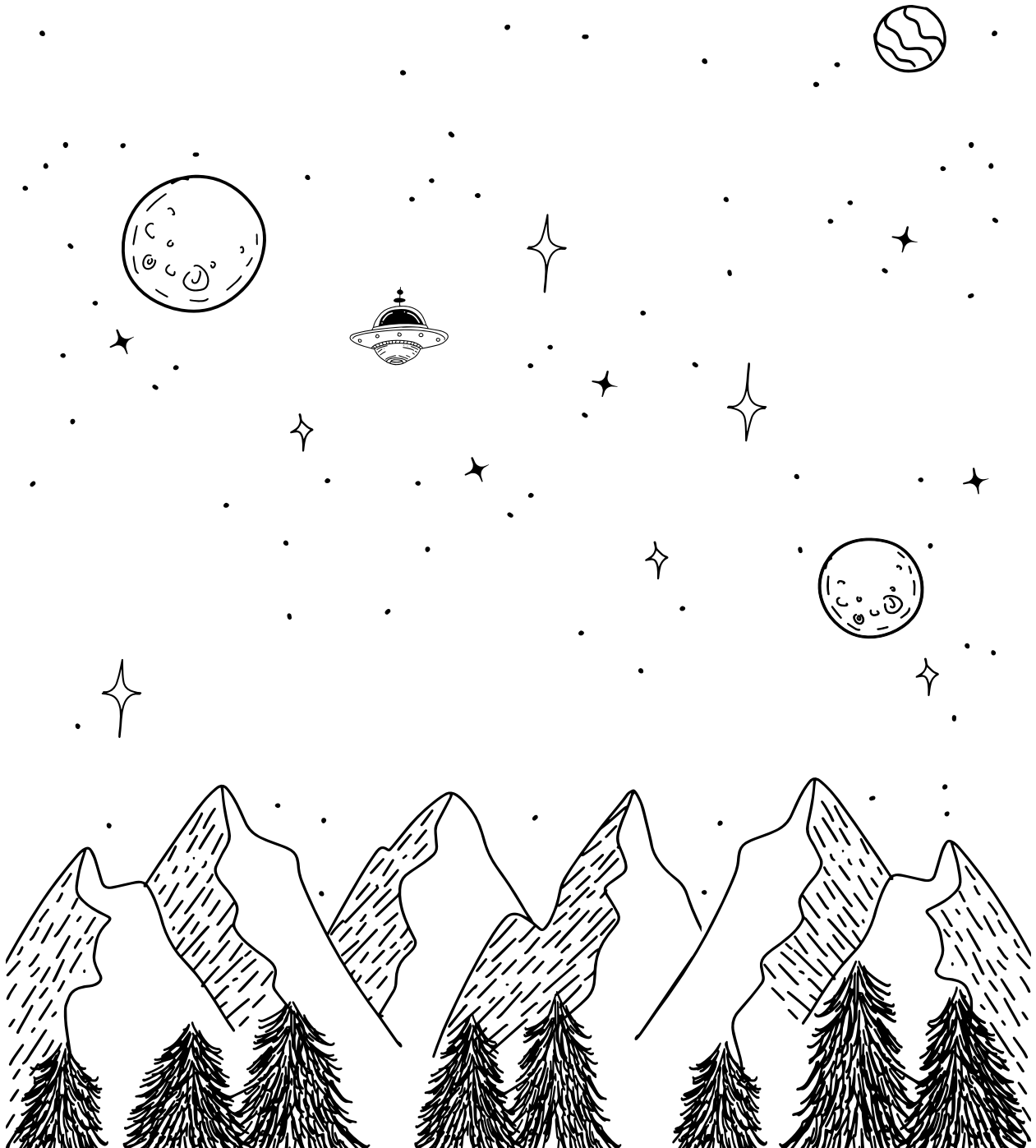
DAD: Yup. Goodnight, son.



A Summer Night

CORY: Goodnight, Dad.

CORY turns his head on DAD's chest to look up at the stars again, and then closes his eyes. His head rocks up and down with the slow waves of DAD's breath. It doesn't take him long before he goes to sleep.



MUSINGS OF YOUR FAVORITE CASH COW

Mirza Ushra



International
How is your English so
good? You like have
totally no accent.

International
So like, do you guys shit
on streets? And like live in
tents?

International
So do you guys like break
into songs? Like I loove
Bollywood.

International
You're not like the others,
you're not so... y'know,
hood.

Siiiiiiir. Let me stop you
right there.
With your 'meninist' cap
covering your Ellen
Degeneres hair.

International
I sing in English, dream in
Bengali.
1952, February my

brothers did bleed.
Shot through the
forehead, on their knees,
for my right to speak.

International
Colonialism - look it up
Five syllables - we're still
not enough
Too black too brown, past
colors they don't see
I mean what doctors or
engineers, brown people
only smell of curry?

Musings Of Your Favorite Cash Cow

International
My land is green my sky is
blue

My people are stepped on
but still happily serve you

My music one with the
Ganges, she flows so pure
From flutes to drums
Our melodies, they cure

They cure you and others
Suffering from disease
Hidden under your white
pointed covers
Your gun power you still
refuse to cease

International
I'm not racist but...

International
I don't fetishize brown
girls, y'all just make it easy
to nut.

International
Your sister wears a hijab?
Is she like, okay?

International
I mean I looove your
culture, only if the accent
went away

Maaaa'am let me stop
you right there,
With your organic coffee
and 'Kylie Jenner' braided
hair.

Appropriation isn't real,
I mean after all it's only
Halloween.

Who cares about how the
colonized feel
Not like we pillaged,
robbed and brutalized
communities to stop
what they could've been.

Your Instagram aesthetic
'woke'
Sharing hashtags on
twitter
In the comfort of your
bedroom though
You still preach "all lives
matter"

Smoking weed is legal
now

Haha 4/20, lets blaze in
front of Capitol Hill
Men in suits tax us till we
bleed green
While I fight for my
incarcerated brother
who's in jail still.

Capitalize on my
insecurities
Hashtag love the skin
you're in
When it comes to all the
money being made,
Even the Kardashians
start repping team
melanin

International
Internalized racism
You shame me for

making friends
With others who look like
me

With comments like 'this
separation has got to end'

How can we make this
school more inclusive?
Acknowledge my fragility
in English, I'm not
naturally this reclusive
How do we make these
kids mix?
Start by breaking the
divides in your minds,
destroy it, to begin the fix.

International
Home away from home
Looking for comfort
In places to my parents
unknown

International
I flew 8000 long miles
Looking for a brand new
life

Not brown enough
Not white either

But Frank ocean did say
Choose mind over matter

International
We still don't belong
But cut open our skin
We bleed all the same
So why do we stop at
different sounding
names?

SCRIPT 10011001

Tyler Majer



This is what we get

Sighs split
Like the lips of a toddler
In the wintertime

It feels like I've been drinking this beer for the past four
years
You've got your addictions, and I've got mine.

I've been reading a lot of Raymond Carver
Douglas Coupland and Bukowski
Angry(?) Disgruntled White Men

I admit it's not a very diverse reading list, but
It's a list nonetheless
At least I'm reading again

I get Nosebleeds in the shower
An image I've struggled to adapt
An image of rubble,
Nothing concrete

Those incomplete stories
That hit so well in your mind,
But have something lost in person

Fragments of something
Worth putting out there,
Bricks crashing onto pavement
That's all I've got

My eyes feel blurry,
Maybe they've always been
20/20, my ass

I don't wanna see anything anyways
There's too much truth revealed
Through the eyes
I think I'll start with some audiobooks

Script 10011001

Will I keep writing this shit?
This vague, hazy, I don't really know what I want to say
SHIT

Seems like it

There's a house at the end of this street,
But no home around here
And there's a coin in my drink
With no explanation,

I reflect upon
The lifespan of my words
They barely survive being put unto the page
Before they crumble into nothing
Worthless script

Don't need a magnifying glass
To decipher my ass
Just squint until your eyes water

Nubile insecurities masked by wet dreams
A 14 year old's death is never as it seems

That rhyme was unintentional
I hate rhyming poems
They feel hack-y
And that's coming from a hack, so...

.put the period before the sentence
Maybe that will spark the absurdism
I crave
Maybe it'll just drive the editor crazy

There's never a perfect conclusion to these things
When you ramble,
When do you stop?

Here?

Evidently.
So.







INdeCISION

Warren Oliver

Part II

EMMA

Ten year old girl.

PETER

Late thirties.

KELLY

Late thirties.

DOCTOR ITO

Early forties.

DOCTOR KERN

Mid fifties.

1. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL OFFICE ROOM - NIGHTTIME

DR. KERN and DR. ITO are in KERN's office. ITO is sitting down, while KERN stands, occasionally pacing around the room.

KERN: That stupid girl.

ITO: That doesn't help anyone.

KERN: Stupid, stupid parents.

ITO: What choice do we have?

KERN: Talk to them. Convince them. Maybe educate them.

ITO: We've filled them in on everything.

KERN: Apparently not, because more than a billion people are about to lose their lives.

ITO: What are we going to do with them?

KERN: Keep them here.

ITO: Is that the best idea?

KERN: Why wouldn't it be?

ITO: This place is open to the public.

KERN: Does the public have to know?

ITO: Yeah. They do.

KERN: I meant right at this very second.

ITO: The more we hold onto this the worse it'll be.

KERN: For us, or for that family?

ITO: For all of us.

KERN: Who else would know?

ITO: Adams. All the staff that saw Emma being wheeled out of quarantine. I think that's it.

KERN: And whoever they tell.

ITO: And whoever they tell.

KERN: Give it a day.

ITO: A day?

KERN: I'll contact everyone I need to tomorrow. But I want you to keep working on the family. Working on her.

ITO: I'll just be running in circles with the parents.

KERN: It's not the parents we have to convince.

ITO: I know.

KERN: Be blunt with her.

ITO: Scare her?

KERN: Whatever works.

2. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

PETER and KELLY sit on chairs beside EMMA's bed. EMMA lies in bed, reading a book.

PETER: Emma, have you given any more thought to your decision?

EMMA: No.

KELLY: Is this what you really want?

EMMA: Is this about college?

PETER looks down at the ground. After a while, he raises his head.

PETER: Kelly, let's go grab something to eat.

KELLY: Okay. Emma we'll be right back.

EMMA: Ok.

PETER and KELLY step out into the hallway, making sure no else one is around.

PETER: I think we have to slow things down a little.

KELLY: I don't wanna do that.

PETER: I'm not at all hinting that we... You know. But...

KELLY: But what?

PETER: Are we sure she understands the significance of her choice?

KELLY: The doctors have spelled it out for her. So have we. There are not a lot of other ways you can say "one billion."

PETER goes silent.

KELLY: What else?

PETER: Who do we talk to about this?

KELLY: Doctor Ito and Doctor Kern. They've both been helpful.

PETER sighs.

KELLY: Who do we tell this to?

PETER: Yes.

KELLY: My parents. Your dad.

PETER: Should we do that? I just mean, in general. Should we tell anybody about this?

KELLY: It'll be bad, won't it?

PETER: People won't be happy.

KELLY: I'm sure the doctors will hold some press conference.

PETER: What do you think?

KELLY: Given the possibility her death could be in vain, I'm starting to think it's not worth it.

PETER: Yeah?

KELLY: But that doesn't matter, Peter. I'm here to support my daughter.

PETER nods.

KELLY: If we're going to make it through, we have to be on the same side. Or at least know what the other thinks. You've heard from me.

INDeCISION

PETER: I don't know. I'm stuck between the rights and the wrongs of both. I can't find comfort in any conclusion either, so I'm just stuck.

KELLY: Fair enough.

PETER begins to walk away.

KELLY: Where are you going?

PETER: I'm actually going to get food. What do you want?

KELLY smiles.

KELLY: An everything bagel. I'll text you what Emma wants.

PETER: Sounds good.

3. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

PETER and KELLY sit in the same chairs they previously were. EMMA still reads her book. DR. ITO enters the room.

ITO: Hi, everyone.

PETER: Hi.

ITO: Emma, how are you?

EMMA: Fine.

ITO: Good. Would mind if we have a little chat?

EMMA: Sure.

ITO: If it works with you two, I'd like to talk privately.

KELLY: Okay. Is that alright with you, Emma?

EMMA: Mmm-hmm.

PETER: We'll just be outside.

PETER and KELLY leave, but not before exchanging a confused look with one another. ITO sits down in the chair beside EMMA's bed.

ITO: How's your book?

EMMA: Good.

ITO: I'm glad to hear that. I have to ask you: are you still absolutely sure about your decision?

EMMA: About the blood thing? Or college?

ITO: I suppose in a way, both.

EMMA: Both?

ITO: Sorry, I'm muddling things up. About the blood thing.

EMMA: Yes, I'm sure.

ITO: Okay.

EMMA: Is everything alright?

ITO: Emma, let me be perfectly blunt with you. The disease, that you have the potential to cure, will most likely result in the deaths of a lot of people. So many people that there is no degree of separation that will keep you from being affected by this sickness. So, even if you survive, you may have a cousin, or a

INDeCISION

family friend who won't. Are you able to understand that?

EMMA: Yes.

ITO: Has your decision changed at all?

EMMA takes a moment to think.

EMMA: No.

ITO: Can I ask why you are saying, "No."?

EMMA: I don't wanna die.

ITO: Don't you think a lot of people are going to say that exact thing?

EMMA: Yeah.

ITO: So don't you think the right thing to do would be to sacrifice yourself?

EMMA: Maybe.

ITO: Maybe?

EMMA: It might be the right thing to do, but I don't wanna do it.

ITO: Why not?

EMMA: I don't wanna die.

ITO: We all have a time to go, Emma.

EMMA: You mean to die?

ITO: Yes.

EMMA: Then what's the big deal?

ITO: A lot of people are going to die before their time.

EMMA: So why do I have to?

ITO: Emma, you're being selfish.

EMMA: Am I? I just don't wanna die.

ITO: You have the power to save lives.

EMMA: Hmm.

ITO: What is it?

EMMA: How can I have power if I'm dead?

ITO: Power was the wrong word. Emma, if you say, "Yes" to this, you will be remembered throughout history as the bravest girl who ever lived.

EMMA: But I'll be dead.

ITO: Have you ever had a pet?

EMMA: We had a cat. Leo.

ITO: Leo died?

EMMA: Yes.

ITO: But you still remember him, though. Even after he's gone. You still think about Leo every once in a while.

EMMA: Mmm-hmm.

ITO: That can be you in the back of everyone's mind. When they look at their family, or their friend, they'll think of you. Just like the times you think of your cat.

EMMA: I don't want that.

ITO: Why not?

EMMA: I feel sad every time I think about Leo. He's not here anymore and I don't want that. I want him to be right here with me now.

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ITO: Emma, if you could, would you give your life up for Leo?

EMMA: No.

ITO: Can I ask why?

EMMA: Because we'd still be apart. He wouldn't have me anymore and he'd be sad.

ITO: I want you to really hear me. If you say no, and people find out, then there's going to be a lot of individuals mad at you. Okay?

EMMA: Okay.

ITO: The answer's still the same then.

EMMA: Yes.

ITO stands up, looking disappointed.

EMMA: Are you mad at me?

ITO smiles at her.

ITO: A little.

ITO shrugs, then exits the room.

4. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

ITO is lying on the couch, asleep. KERN enters the room.

KERN: You have your own office, you know.

ITO wakes up. He slowly sits up.

ITO: Yeah.

KERN: Did you talk to her?

ITO: Yeah.

KERN: Still said no?

ITO: Yeah.

KERN: This fucking little—

ITO: Go easy on her.

KERN: Why? How can you not be mad as hell at this selfish creature?

ITO: I am. I wanna grab by the shoulders and shake her till she cries. But I can't hate her.

KERN: You've got a good heart.

ITO: It's not that. I don't hate her for the same reasons I don't hate you.

KERN: What? Undeniable charm?

ITO: Your convictions. I don't think this girl is going to budge. She wants what she wants.

KERN: What would you do in her place?

ITO: Give it all.

KERN: Without hesitation?

ITO: Not even the slightest.

KERN nods approvingly.

ITO: What about you?

KERN: Do you have to ask? I may be on a few shit lists, but I am no hypocrite.

ITO: What now?

INDeCISION

KERN: Keep at it. Go for the parents. The father seems to be a bit of a pushover. We should talk to him. Alone.

ITO: Possibly. Did you talk to who you needed to?

KERN: I was on the phone with the minister for God knows how long. Told her everything, about the disease, about Emma, about Emma's answer. The minister wanted to hold something right away, but I told her to give us a little more time to try and change a few minds. Give her the opportunity to be the bearer of great news. She agreed to that.

ITO: When is it?

KERN: The day after tomorrow.

ITO: What are they going to disclose?

KERN: Aside from the family's name, everything.

ITO: What?

KERN: Yep.

ITO: Do they know the risk involved with that?

KERN: I assumed not, so I told them, and they were still adamant about releasing the information.

ITO: Why?

KERN: They want to give credit where credit is due.

ITO: At the sake of a family's safety?

KERN just looks at ITO and shrugs.

ITO: They can't leave.

KERN: We'll see about that.

ITO: They can't. There are records; staff have seen them. They've seen Emma. Any recognition at all and their lives could be over.

KERN: The minister promised me that the family's safety is first. If we want to keep them here, we can. The security measures, the armed guards will all be paid for by the ministry.

ITO: Armed guards?

KERN: Yes.

ITO: Are they not worried about the armed guards being compromised?

KERN: I told her all of this. Elliot, they are dealing with an epidemic. They've just learned about a potential cure, but the only roadblock is a stubborn little girl who, without violating a variety of human rights laws, they cannot do anything about. If their decision making seems a little brash, it's probably because no one really knows what to do.

ITO: The Lemuers need to know.

KERN: That is what this grace period is for. I will talk to them.

ITO: I can do it.

KERN: I don't question your ability to articulate your thoughts, Elliot. I don't want you to do it. You've invested enough into these people.

ITO: I'm fine.

KERN: You have done an outstanding job, Elliot. Really, you have. Who in their right mind wants to try and convince a ten year

INDeCISION

old to die? But you did, and I can't thank you enough for trying.

KERN offers his hand to ITO. ITO shakes it.

KERN: Go home. Get some rest. You still have a job, you know.

ITO: Right.

5. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

KERN enters the room. PETER is sitting in a chair beside EMMA's bed. KELLY is sleeping on a cot. EMMA is in her bed reading a book. KELLY wakes up.

KERN: Hello.

PETER: Hi.

KELLY tiredly waves.

KERN: Can I speak with you two, please?

PETER: Sure. What's going on?

KERN: Better if we go out into the hall.

KERN leaves the room. PETER and KELLY follow.

KERN: I have spoken with the Minister of Health. She wants to hold a press conference two days from now.

PETER: About what, exactly?

KERN: Everything involving this whole situation.

KELLY: Everything?

KERN: I can't tell you the exact details about what she plans to reveal because I simply don't know. I guarantee you your identities will not be exposed though.

PETER: Okay. When can we leave?

KERN: About that: we feel it's in your best interest if we resist from discharging you as long as possible. We can keep a closer eye on Emma, this facility contains labs

and everything else we need to run blood tests. And frankly, your daughter is still infected, so we'd rather not let her loose onto the world without knowing what kind of risk are involved with that.

PETER: Will she be safe?

KERN: You have my word that everyone under my supervision will perform their duties as professionally as possible. If that is not enough, the ministry will also send security forces over here.

KELLY: Won't that paint a target?

KERN: Perhaps. It's the best anyone can do for now.

KELLY: Is that really the best?

KERN: There's always the other option.

KELLY: Excuse me?

KERN: I can appreciate you respecting your daughter's choice, but for God's sake, people, and a lot of people, are going to die. I have no right to tell you what to do, but I can tell you that this is only going to get harder for everyone. Any questions?

KERN: There is a large possibility that tomorrow may be the last normal day of your lives. I urge the two of you to enjoy it.

PETER: Thank you.

KERN nods, then walks away.

END OF PART 2

A CREATIVE COLLABORATION

Ron Durd & Melchior Bodnar-Dudley

This composition is a creative collaboration between two students at Boston College--Melchior Bodnar-Dudley and Ron Durd. After agreeing on a basic plot -- a porta-potty goes rogue and takes a homeless, compulsive liar through parallel universes -- the two authors of this peculiar tale decided to take turns writing paragraphs of the story in a shared online document (including the title, byline, and this explanatory paragraph). Eventually, this document became their final submission for the 2018 Amateur Science Fiction Anthology of Massachusetts -- the collection of stories from which you are reading now.

11:59PM WED. RON DURD

I wept endlessly over the loss of my dear porta-potty in this strange parallel universe, since i was now stranded on a planet so malicious that the people who walked the pale ground lacked the muscles needed to smile. I was the only one who could...

For this all to make sense, though, I must begin... at the beginning.

10:03AM SAT. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

My story actually begins on the outskirts of a small town near the perimeter of Hamilton. I had recently emigrated from Hamilton as a conscious choice to better my health -- if you could call it a "move." I am homeless, so there really isn't much for me to move besides myself. I decided to leave the city a year ago because I was sick of the air and the noise and the chaos. Day in and day out, I trudged to work through honking traffic and blinding billboards. The only thing that made my daily pilgrimage bearable was having a home at the end of it all -- a small oasis at the end of the day where everything made sense. When I was finally evicted (after failing to pay my taxes for 17 years) the city became a dirty and depressing thing; a rock and a hard place wherein one morning I woke up on the street to discover a parking ticket stapled to my back. And so I left. Over the mountains of concrete and yellow paint I went, across the car parks of glittering

A Creative Collaboration

dystopia, and beyond the dusty bridges under which sewage trickled. It was a long journey, but it was important to me.

11:59PM WED. RON DURD

Soon I was in a forest. Soon I was hungry. And soon I was eating a salad out of a garbage can that was in the middle of the woods. That's when I was struck with food poisoning. In that moment my guts felt as if a lightning bolt had shot through them, leaving just one quivering little muscle to hold back the Hoover dam. I was in agony and anxiously I looked around for the nearest toilet. This was a difficult task, because 1. I had to use 90% of my willpower to stop myself from shitting my pants, and 2. I was in the middle of the woods with no sign of civilization anywhere. I glanced around in a fever and -- behold! I saw a sacred blue porta-potty only a stone's throw away. I've never believed in god, but Jesus Murphy Christ, that was the Holy Grail from the Lord Himself.

10:48AM FRI. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

I ran towards the washroom while yanking down my threadbare jeans. When my pants suddenly dropped to my ankles I nearly tripped, and frantically I lunged the final few metres until I slammed against the washroom. I took a breath (and held it, because portable toilets have a notorious stench), and yanked open the door. Immediately the washroom revealed itself as more pristine than any that I had ever been in before. No cobwebs, no faint odour of previous human defecation, not even a thin layer of dust to add depth to a strobe of sunlight drifting in through a small ventilation opening at the top of the toilet. It was a dream for a man in a predicament like mine, and it was with substantial pleasure that my gluteus maximus graced the white, squeaky-clean toilet seat. And later, after nature had taken its course (my body had served only as a vessel for the power of nature's physics), I washed my grimy hands in the sink. It was the first sink I had ever seen in a porta-potty, and it was the same ceramic white as the toilet. Together with the blue of the porta-potty, I observed that they formed a nautical colour scheme.

11:53PM WED. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

I relished this strange and detailed little observation as though I was the author of Moby Dick. For those unaware, Hemmingway took great joy in filling his prose with long rambling inventories of unimportant marine equipment. I had just now done the same in my reflections of a goddamn toilet. Wondering where I got my weirdness, I laughed, shook my head, and opened the porta-potty door to the shining world outside.

11:00AM THURS. RON DURD

The world outside the porta-potty was vastly different. The first thing I noticed was that my thought composition was altered. In this strange new world, my diction became sharper, my vocabulary broadened, and my grammar improved noticeably. The second thing I noticed was that I was on the side of a road in swarming, honking, grey metropolis. I shut the door. Certainly this was not happening. Just a moment ago I had entered the porta-potty on Earth, in the deep

A Creative Collaboration

of a black woods. There was a green canopy over the sky and dark oaks surrounding my squatting figure. But then, just now, I had opened the door to traffic on a busy city road, and this was puzzling. A chill tickled my spine and I was suddenly afraid to open the door again. What if it was true that I had seen a city? What would that implicate? But then the more logical side of my brain snapped back that such an idea was preposterous. It was impossible that I went from a rural to urban environment in the blink of an eye. I sighed relief for the logic of my internal voice, and even let out a little giggle at my stupidity. How silly it was to think such a thing. The sweat on my hands already drying, I opened the door again, expecting to breathe clean forest air once more.

11:56PM WED. RON DURD

Because the last paragraph was awkwardly long, this one is shorter in order to better keep the attention span of the reader. Interestingly, shocked attention was exactly what I felt in the moment I opened the bathroom door for the second time, because when I opened that swinging hunk of blue plastic, the scene had changed again. I was on a construction site in the middle of a foreign rainforest. Around me, about 50 tanned workers hustled about lugging lumber, whacking wood, or chopping trees, all of these efforts were towards the ends of renovating one open giant wooden building which shadowed even the tall green jungle trees behind it.

9:56AM THURS. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

Sometimes, the author's quest for minimalism in the economy of words works counterintuitively: a lack of description, for example, blurs the reader's vision of what is happening in the story. Imagery disappears and the mind's eye develops cataracts. Thinking of this back in the jungle, I slammed shut the bathroom door in fright and questioned with deep horror as to whether my own eyes had developed problems, or perhaps my mind's eye had become deranged and I was developing visual hallucinations. The even worse alternative, of course, was that I wasn't seeing things, although this conclusion was paled by the most ominous possibility by far: that my eyes and mind were perfectly sound, but the world around me was not. I considered these possibilities and then revoked all of them for a more sound principle: I had breathed in a lot of the methane that I had passed in the washroom, and it had caused me to become lightheaded and confused. Thus, I concluded, I must go into the strange new world and embrace the oxygen it provided; soon my head would clear and my vision would once again perceive the rich mossy woods of my realistic home.

11:50PM WED. RON DURD

alright, you whack. this is gonna stop. "the author's quest for minimalism in the economy of blah blah blah..." This back and forth bs is taking away from the story. stop it, mel, or your gonna ruin the project. okay? now let's move on.

9:48AM THURS. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

First, you are the one who started this. I quote, three weeks ago this Wednesday, you described my writing of the main character's observation as "strange," and

A Creative Collaboration

compared my writing to the (compositionally effective) “rambling” of Melville (not Hemingway, which is actually spelled with *one* m) as if it were a simple aside between you and the reader and I could not see (which is an obvious fallacy). You were the one who wrote the first paragraph and I followed your lead in the direction you took; I also followed your lead in the disgusting subplot with the washroom you created, and again I followed your lead when you created this “back-and-forth” game through the text. You are the one who detracted from the story. I followed your direction. You are to blame. And don’t call me “Mel,” or I will start to call you “Ron Turd.” Call me by my full name, you ignorant clod.

7:38PM THURS. RON DURD

what are you even talking about? you think you write so clearly but I can’t understand a word your saying. you think you wield prose with the grace of Lancelot but really your writing is boring. and you do ramble. your only good paragraph was the first one you wrote, because it was the shortest. you’ve got verbal diarrhea and there’s nothing I can do for you. your doomed.

11:59PM FRI. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

First of all, you can’t even name a concrete noun without forgetting to capitalize, or throw in a comma without making a splice error, and second, I don’t have *verbal* diarrhea, because this is a *written* work, you moron (same also applies to your comment of “not understanding a word you’re *saying*,” blah, blah, blah). I rest your case.

11:59PM SAT. RON DURD

you think your so amazing... “oh, look at me, i can use a fucking semicolon, i know what a dangling participle is, oh my god, my mom loves me -- but knowing these rules don’t make me write good, duh!...look at me, mom, i can write blocks and blocks of emotionless prose like i’m a goddamn machine. Boop, boop, boop, i write at the same time every day, every week, and i use a planner to make sure i poop on time, too, cuz you gotta stay consistent! i live my life like a robot, and what i write might as well be written by a robot too, cuz there definitely isn’t any spark to my life, that all died years ago when the terminators invaded and dropped a chip in my head.” man, you’re sad.

11:33PM SUN. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

Alright, you wanker, how are you any better? You write at the last minute every week. We set your deadline for 12am on Wednesday, and -- like a goddamn machine yourself -- you submit your paragraph at 11:59pm *every time*, written with as little detail or effort as possible. Your prose is weak and sucks booty. I rest your case.

11:43PM SUN. RON DURD

fuck off, i submit on time, don’t i? better than sitting down at the same time each week like it’s a chore and barfing up garbage. i’m done with this, your an idiot. *and piss off with your italics.*

A Creative Collaboration

11:57PM SUN. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

Alright, see you later Mr. Irony. Good luck entering anything in the competition on time. You know what? I knew this would happen, and I had a backup story that I wrote *by myself* that I just submitted. The deadline is in two minutes, by the way. Who's the idiot now?

12:00AM MON. RON DURD

you apparently! thanks for reminding me about the deadline! Ha! I just submitted a story, too! I knew this would happen because you are a rigid asshole and i figured you would ruin our story. talk about karma, man oh man...

12:04AM MON. RON DURD

oh shit

12:04AM MON. RON DURD

I submitted the wrong story

1:03PM MON. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

What????????? What story did you submit?????????

1:08PM MON. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

Answer me now!!!!

11:22AM THURS. RON DURD

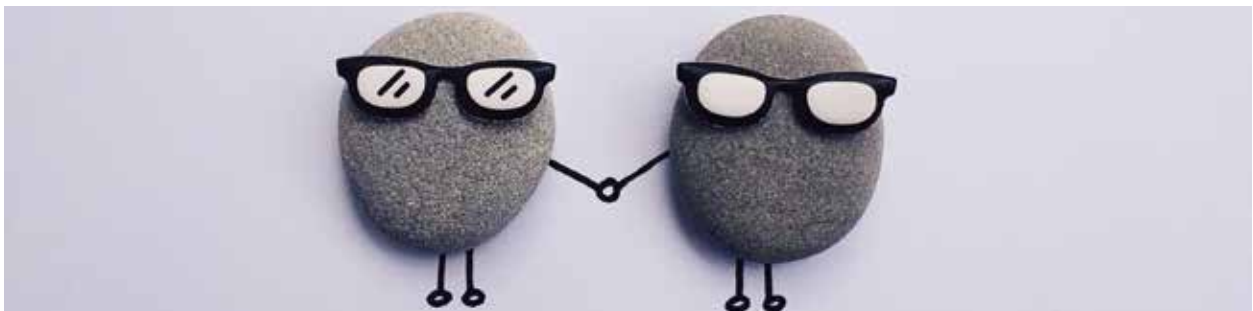
this one

11:45AM THURS. MELCHIOR BODNAR-DUDLEY

FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK YOU IDIOT MY NAME IS ON IT

12:02PM THURS. RON DURD

oh well



OBITUARY: PLANET EARTH

Zachary Barmania

Of all the pollutants in our atmosphere today, none was so overwhelming as grief. Today, after a courageous battle, the planet Earth has finally passed away after over 4.5 billion years. The planet was third from the sun, and esteemed inventor of countless things: Mount Everest, weed, and life in the universe.

“It’s almost definitely our fault.” Earth’s doctor stated, but old age has not been ruled out as a cause of death. The doctor continued: “I only say ‘almost’ because I don’t know if there’s a God or not. If there is, maybe it’s her fault.”

Earth was a survivor of almost every historical event: the rise and fall of the dinosaurs; the ice ages; and the invention of the plastic straw. This final catastrophic event is responsible, according to leading experts, for the planet’s demise. Our one hope for humanity, *#Strawgate*, was too little, too late.

In her final blog post, Planet “Gaia” Earth wrote: “To the Blue Macaw, I leave my sincere apologies. You live on forever in the beloved film RIO. Stay strong; ‘extinct’ is just a label. To ants, I leave a world without humans. For the love of God, do better than they did. Stick to building small mounds of dirt, please. To the moon, my love, what could I give to you? You gave me the tides, and a light in heaven to guide me by night. Winter seemed less cold with you, the universe seemed brighter because of you. To the human race, I leave the harsh vacuum of space, and whatever space debris you find to replace me. Alpha Centauri? LMAO, good luck.”

Now we, as Earthlings, are left to say goodbye to the only place we all call home. I hope you remember what the beach was like; you’re gonna need a lot of mileage from that memory. It is this reporter’s opinion that this is the *#Lowpoint* of 2021.



YEET! IT'S A TWEET!

🐦 *@RealElonMusk: Mourning the loss of my second favourite planet. Tickets for MarsX now on deep sale, only \$35,000,000! #EarthRIP #ShouldaBoughtaTesla*

🐦 *@Dolphins: And we thought the garbage continents were bad, now this? #Humans=Stupids. In the words of a rare, good human: “So long, and thanks for all the fish.”*

🐦 *@DamnDirtyApes: Does this mean it's our planet now?*

🐦 *@realDonaldTrump: ‘Girthy’ Earth is finally dead, what a worthless planet! Died because of climate change? HOAX! Unrelated, I’m excited to join @RealElonMusk on his spaceship, SO LONG DEMS! #RedPlanet #MakeMarsGreatAgain.*

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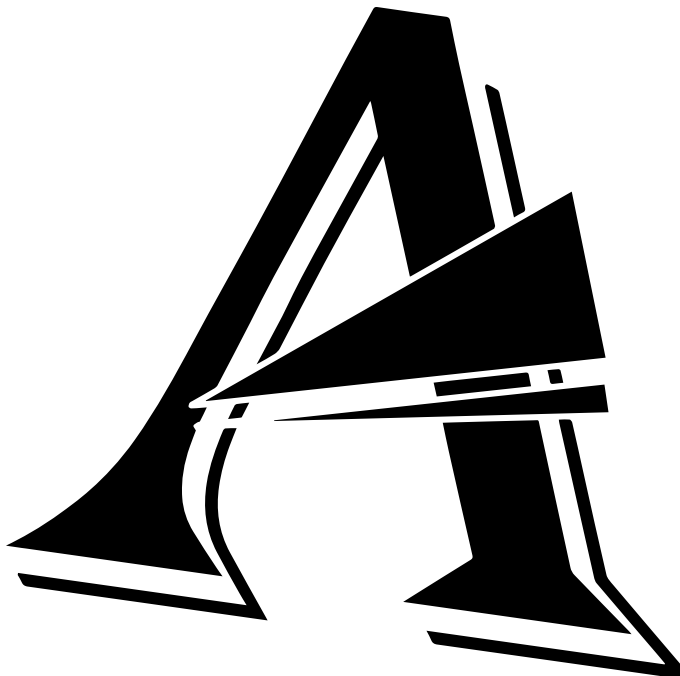
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