



ABC CLARION

High school students are welcome to send articles or comics to clarionabc@gmail.com

Dust

by Paschal Park

The moss green mold flowered on my Aunt Catherine's walls. The house was pungent. Rich in intoxicating aromas. The omnipresent dust seemed to wander around the house, the putrid amalgamation of perfumes and colognes of middle-aged dreams left to rot, and oh the horrifyingly acidic cloud that was born in the kitchen made from God knows what combination of meats.

My family noisily bickered in the background. Always complaining, relentlessly whining about how much they hated their friends or how much they hated their lives. They talked about how he cheated on her or how she cheated on him or maybe how he cheated on him. Scandalous, I

know.

But what was a boy to do at 7:30 pm as the crickets chirped their monotonous symphonies and the house ventilation creaked as if it were to collapse under the pressure of the dust? I did what every boy would do in that situation. Tired of their constant complaining, I explored every corner of that forbidden house. The closets of decades old clothes, the bedrooms which reeked of whiskey, and even the bathrooms where the wallpaper wilted and the mirrors began to wither. I took it upon myself to observe the ecosystem of that house. I dissected it from the top down as the beaten carpet floor futilely clawed at my feet hoping that I may

provide passage to a new horizon where the Lord of Dust has no jurisdiction.

Then I came upon the study, barred by an aging brass doorknob whose rusty key happened, fortunately, to have been left in the aperture. I knew that above all the rules my Aunt Catherine had told me was the strict reprimand to never go through that door. "Only bad things can come from that wretched room," she'd tell me.

In a moment of blissful rebellion, I burst through the door only to be left rather disappointed. It was very small and the furniture was as boring as you get in old suburbia. The ceiling fan lacked one of its blades, and I swore I could

hear the echo of the sound of some animal scurrying to safety for a good second. Yet, right in the center of the floor was a mark.

It entranced me as I looked closer to see what it was. I couldn't make out the shape but it left the carpet brittle and distorted it to a yeasty tan that somehow looked more off than the rest of the carpet caked with dust and residue. When I tried to get closer, I lost focus and was shaken by something, something I couldn't identify. I eventually lost balance and fell on the oak rocking chair, releasing a plague of dust into the air.

Everything was moving the wrong direction and smelt of burnt meat. Some bad food poisoning? Maybe there were some old fumes in this room? Any sort of rationalizing began to disappear as my thinking deteriorated into an in-

stinctive fight-or-flight response.

RUN. RUN. RUN. Soon, the room began to collapse or implode in on itself so I had to run towards the haven of anywhere but the study. I managed somehow to escape and nearly fell down the stairs. By now, the dust was everywhere. I was blinded and I needed to leave. I pushed as hard as I could; I beat relentlessly into the darkness as I heard them heartily laughing away. They wouldn't stop until I managed to hit one of them. The impact of my fist resonated through my body. But the dust wouldn't stop encroaching closer. So I BEAT and BEAT and beat and beat.

I eventually woke up in the middle of the dining room floor with a buzzing migraine. My muscles cried, my tongue was coated with the taste of metal, and my clothes were drenched in sweat.

Nature Writing

by Siyu Hou

I slide open the door to my backyard and step outside, carrying my lounging chair. My seven-month poodle squeezes between my legs and the legs of my chair, leaping down the three steps that lead to the patio.

On the other side of the fence lies a subtle slope, which leads to a small creek running south. In the summer it usually churns with water with as much power as a little creek can manage, but now it is obscured by beds of fallen leaves that make it conspicuous only if one is willing to go all the way down the slope and stand next to it.

I decide that I am not audacious enough to risk a slip going down the slope and land myself in a bad situation, so I walk back to the patio and set my chair down, cocooning myself in a blanket, and start taking in the whole scene.

The colors in winter are very monotonous and vary only in the shade of brown. There are five deciduous trees in my backyard; one stands closer to my house so its summer canopy partially covers my roof and the other four stand farther back close to the sloping hill. All are currently stripped of any hues of green and left with a darker shade of brown. Their naked branches are espe-

cially prominent against the gray sky.

Loosely attached patches of clouds, taking a darker shade of gray than the sky, are shifted west by a zephyr. In the distance directly ahead, intertwining branches form in their own chaotic ways an infinite mass of brown. The whole scene is overwhelmingly desaturated and dull.

Winter has also depleted green from the ground. Grass is indiscernible, camouflaging itself under the mask of leaves that display, again, a wide spectrum of different shades of brown. The crunchier ones are darker while the more recently fallen ones are lighter and softer in texture.

As I pick one up, I notice that it is no longer the original, symmetrical composition of a healthy leaf, but a distorted one that has withstood the ravages of time. There are weird, twisted bulges and concavities on it. Its veins and midrib protrude out of its surface with jarring lines and discolorations. Yet despite its disfigured ugliness it seems more rigid than the healthy leaves.

Led by curiosity, I pause my deep engagement with Nature and return into my house to retrieve a healthy leaf from one of my potted plants in order to compare the two. I snap it off of its stipules

unapologetically and go back outside to resume my scrutiny of the leaves. Though I feel somewhat regretful for separating the leaf from its life source and thus accelerating its aging process, I choose to ignore that for the moment.

As I feel the two leaves with my hands, the younger leaf was supple to the touch whereas the wilted one was extremely robust. It, however, began to crack once I applied some pressure on it. So despite its seemingly stronger nature, it lacks the malleability of the younger leaf and thus easily breaks down when exposed to changes.

Trying to draw more distinctions between the two, I hold them, one in each hand, up to the setting sun. While sunlight is able to permeate the green leaf unhindered, it cannot penetrate the older leaf's surface.

The nature of the two leaves can apply to human nature as well. The green leaf has not been devastated by time, so it seems softer than the wilted one, but remains adaptable to outside influences and changes. The brown leaf has been through ravages of time, and thus is seemingly more rigid, but is actually more vulnerable when new changes are imposed upon it.

Superficiality

by Audrey Zhou

Faces caked with makeup
Clothes from designer brands.
Talking about eyeshadow shades and Michael Kors.
Girls who have never worked a day in their lives and live off of their daddy's money.
Million dollar houses with rooms that are never sat in.
"At least I'm prettier than her."
"Did you see what she was wearing?"
"I lost my Tiffany necklace!"
Superficiality
Shallow and Egotistical.
My head starts spinning from the smells of Brand name perfume.
I try to pretend I don't dress the same way
walk the same way
smell the same way
and act the same way.
I wish I didn't.
But I am no different.

This phenomenon can apply to the human nature on two levels. Physically, people who are younger tend to have more flexible bodies, allowing them to achieve a faster healing process and less damaging injuries, which correlate to the malleable nature of the green leaf.

On the other hand, people who are older, although usually considered stronger than younger people, are in fact less adaptable to injuries, with their skins less elastic and muscles less flexible,

which corresponds to the brown leaf that has a robust appearance but a vulnerable structure.

On a deeper level, young people mentally are more open to outside influences and thus are often less likely to experience disturbances as a result of misalignment between personal perceptions and new changes in the world. Older people, instead, are often obdurate and unyielding when new changes come, making it harder for them to accept and adapt to these changes.

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