

Too Much

Talha Ilyas

My layers disintegrate, as I scour myself down into nothingness. It feels like I'm woodturning myself in a gouge. It doesn't go away, doesn't wash away. I don't see it but it remains eating away in silence. Eating away at billions of us. Water is not enough, my faucets spit out alcohol that makes me feel wet yet so dry. I draw on my skin with my nails chipping away, embedding doodles into the dryness. We don't see it, but yet it had all hell get broken lose. It exists kills and multiplies, it is a contagion that has smothered the earth like dark clouds on a rainy day.

Don't touch, don't breathe, don't come close. You're too close and you're too dead to never come back. The virus has had us all shut down in captivity, feeling like ragged and fettered prisoners. Are we guilty? I ask myself. Is this nature's system of The Great Purge? Is the land engaging in a perpetual process of detoxification until all that is left, is where we started? A virgin land free of sin, hate and filth. I wonder if just like the dinosaurs, we will be another species; annihilated, dissipated. Except this time, the end will not be mercifully sudden, it will be mercilessly everlasting.

Death has become the norm, like ripped jeans on a youth-stricken street. The melancholic sillage has numbed all emotion, done too much and done it all, said it all. Nothing shocks me anymore. Nothing is new, too much death, what's new? While we look out for ourselves, empathies dissolve. Interactions, conversations and love, it is all just confined to a dead screen and some noisy keys that are only too expressive to expressive it all. My jaw feels stuck, its like it was never meant to move. Speaking is a slow process, like rekindling a rusted old sewing machine, oiling it up and making it continuous.

It will only last so long, the water, the food the light. As the industries grow cold and old and the funds end, it will have to end. All of it. If the virus didn't kill you, deprivation of essential resources will. I never thought I will live long enough to see an un-seeable monster eat away at life. In the movies, in the news, I felt it happens only seldom, in hundreds of thousands of years. But I saw it, and I wish you don't.

We're losing it all, eventually all we'll have left is our own skins to pick on. I keep 3 things to leave behind to be found, maybe remembered or considered a memoir. To keep my beloved with me, I keep a suit jacket. Its checkered black, my dad sent me this when I graduated for he knew my forever love for formal wear and suits. And how I would dress up like I've invited Marie Antoinette for the 6 pm dinner every day. He made fun of me for wearing suits in the scorching heat of the summer but I'd indifferently pretend like I'm not roasting into a cooked chicken on the inside. This is not only a jacket, but the embodiment of my father and his love. That I keep with me as long as I remain.

I keep a gold ring that I wear around my finger always. It has a custom date along its thin band in roman numerals, and it's the date when I lost my grandmother. Along with some more things, I keep this as a forever tribute to her, I see it every day and remember her and that she's still alive.

I keep a red felt checkered scarf, this is my mothers. This was her favourite and she'd wear it all through winters, tied around her neck, sometimes over her ears. I remember her saying it was a little itchy but

she'd wear it regardless. My uncle had brought it for her when he came back from Europe 20 years ago. After he passed away, this is what she kept of his.

While I go back to scraping my skin, I pay my apologies that my time originated downfall of social life and interaction. It feels like the world of today has evolved into a dystopian dream. Depression is now fashionable, if you don't have it, are you okay? I hope your world is not like mine. If its worse, it still won't be like mine though. But I hope its better.

I hope I make a debut on page 6 in your child; Barbara's history book. So I, in my grave, know I at least made history.

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Images of mask design attached on the following page.

