

THE CANNON

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CONNECTIONS

THE CANNON

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A Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone, and welcome (back) to Skule™!

Whether this is your first time on campus, or you're just a few months away from securing your iron ring, I'm glad you decided to pick up this issue of *The Cannon*, and I hope you'll find a little bit of your own story reflected in these pages.

For those of you who don't know us, *The Cannon* is EngSoc's official (and most popular!) magazine—bringing you hot takes, deep dives, worldly knowledge, and more since 1978. From our very first issue, *The Cannon* has been packed with contributions from engineers across all years and disciplines at Skule™. And to me, that is part of what makes it so important: it captures a small slice of the engineering culture and community as it exists in this very moment, something we'll be able to look back on with a tinge

of happy nostalgia (or future engineers will be able to look at in awe about the way things were way back in the 2020s).



celebratory timbits post
ECE297

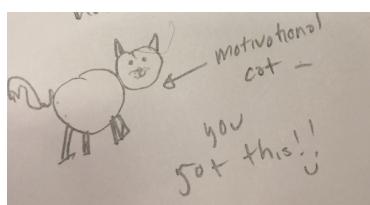
Each issue of *The Cannon* has a unique theme, often left open to creative interpretation (if you're an incoming first year, you'll quickly realize how much we LOVE themes here at UofT, and how excited we get about coming up with new ones). The theme for this issue is "connections"—chosen not only because I have an unhealthy obsession with both public transit and the NYT's "connections" (I've spent way too many lectures trying to solve them instead of locking in)—but also because of how important the connections I've made here are. I won't name names but you know who you are, and I'm eternally grateful to all of you for being a part of what has made the crazy adventure that is "Engineering at UofT" so special.

If you're new here, I hope this issue gives you a glimpse into the creativity and absolutely fantastic writing abilities that many students share, and a reminder that your time here shouldn't just be about academics. There are so many ways to get involved and feel just a little more at home. Whether it's through design teams, student publications or even athletics, Skule™ has a way of bringing a lot of people from all walks of life together. If I could offer you only one tip for the future, it would be to take that leap of faith and try something new. Trust me, you won't regret it.

And if you are curious about writing, editing or design—and want to work with some of the coolest and nicest people on campus (s/o to the entire exec team for being absolutely wonderful and for helping me put together spreads at the eleventh hour)—there will always be a place for you at *The Cannon*.

Christina Pizzonia
Editor-In-Chief, 2T5-2T6

P.S. If you're ever feeling stressed or overwhelmed, remember that there are lots of 'motivational cat' doodles cheering you on (the 'motivational cat' tradition originated in my first year, and since then there have been many more 'motivational cats' drawn to boost morale). You got this!



The OG motivational cat, drawn in 2023 before our MIE100 final



first year me (on the left) @ Frosh with Amsal



study abroad in Italy (best HSS course ever)

Trying, Failing, and the Lie of Perfect Connection

Juneeta Vangala

Seventy. That was the movie goal for 2024. It, however, was made before I got into engineering at UoT. Before the workload hit me like a truck. When I believed anything was possible. Unfortunately for my social life, I wasn't in the business of giving up. This meant locking in grinding during winter break. I was averaging five movies a day, with only six hours of sleep, yet I had never been happier. I was away from my friends, and I craved connection. Something that I found in movies.

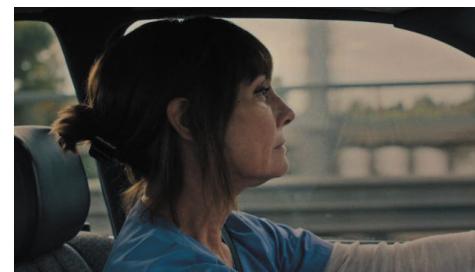
So when I realized that I could write for *The Cannon*, I realized that I finally had a platform where I could share my thoughts about my favourite genre of movies—human connections.

Lady Bird (2017) — Dir. Greta Gerwig

I believe it is impossible to discuss human connections without including the oldest and most complicated one—the mother-daughter relationship. I watched *Lady Bird* during my 19th birthday party at the Carlton Cinema, and all I could think about was everything I loved and hated about living at home. The question “*you love me, but do you like me?*” lingers throughout the movie, forcing us to ask if it is love or the weight of obligation that binds us to the people around us.

Lady Bird is a quintessential coming-of-age film. The movie follows Christine McPherson (Saoirse Ronan)—or ‘Lady Bird,’ as she requests to be called—and her struggle to find her place in suburban Sacramento. Despite revolving around this, the charm and emotional depth the movie is known for comes from the complex and heartfelt side characters.

My favourite is her father—the easygoing and supportive parent—who is forced to act as the mediator between the headstrong mother and daughter. He is caught between providing peace at home and dealing with the depression that comes with aging out of the job market and financial instability.



the first time that you drove in Sacramento?”



Greta Gerwig's authentically awkward yet engaging dialogue perfectly captures the fear of growing out of adolescence while wanting to cling to it. Yet the movie's most memorable moment is nearly silent. The scene follows Lady Bird's mother, Marion McPherson, as she drives around the airport after she drops off Lady Bird for college. She doesn't say goodbye—too proud to break the silent treatment. Instead, she mentions expensive parking and drives off, still angry. As she circles around the terminal, Marion's face crumples with regret. She rushes back in the hopes of catching her daughter before she leaves, only to realize she is too late. Lady Bird will never know her mom's change of heart.

There is no grand reconciliation scene. There is no closure. Instead, you are left in a darkened theatre, trying to come to terms with what you just watched, as Saoirse Ronan delivers the heartbreak line, “*Hey, Mom, did you feel emotional*



Celeste and Jesse Forever (2012) — Dir. Lee Toland Krieger

I watched a lot of movies during my winter break binge-watching, but *Celeste and Jesse Forever* is one of the only ones that stayed with me. Relationships start and end but *Celeste and Jesse Forever* explores what happens in the uncomfortable in-between. It is built on the ache of “almost”—almost maturing, almost staying friends, almost working out.

The movie tells the story of a relationship that has ended but refuses to die. Celeste (Rashida Jones) and Jesse (Andy Samberg) are long-term best friends who are in the process of getting a divorce, yet they “want to stay friends,” as they still

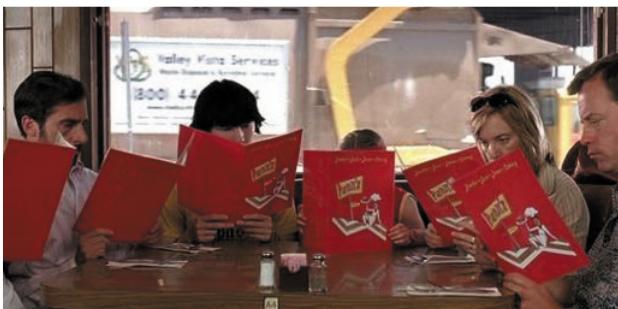
care for each other. They don't want to be together, but they want to stay together. They're bonded through their immature sense of humour and the comfort that comes with having known someone for so long. They refuse to let go, much to their mutual friends' frustration.

This "non-romance" romance movie shows real, flawed people living in an unglamorous depiction of Los Angeles. It asks what happens after the end credits roll in a friends-to-lovers rom-com. The filming and cinematography itself are very raw, unpolished and sometimes seem amateur. But I believe this allows the viewers a chance to glimpse into these real moments—moments often unseen in Hollywood. You start to believe that the relationship can work, as it did before. But, as one review by Stephanie Zacharek

Little Miss Sunshine (2006) — Dir. Jonathan Dayton

Family is a concoction of every relationship dynamic—caring, tense, dysfunctional, loving—and *Little Miss Sunshine* showcases all of that in a humorous yet heartbreak way.

Little Miss Sunshine follows the Hoover family on a road trip to California to take



their youngest, Olive, to the 'Little Miss Sunshine' pageant. A simple premise, yet the movie is so much more than just a wholesome family story. With an amazing soundtrack and the beautiful American Southwest as a backdrop, *Little Miss Sunshine* depicts a dysfunctional yet loving family trying to survive in a fast-paced, chasing-the-American-dream life. It handles sensitive subjects such as suicide and body image with care and wit. My favourite example of this is one where the entire family is crammed into a diner booth. In this scene, Olive mentions she wants to have ice cream, but her father's misguided

concern about her health prompts him to comment. He says, "Ice cream is made from cream, which comes from cow's milk, and cream has a lot of fat in it," much to her mother's horror. This comment makes her regret her decision. She pushes her ice cream away. Her dad means well; he wants the easiest life for his daughter, and easier, here, meant skinnier. But what made this moment special was the family banding together and successfully convincing Olive to eat her ice cream again. They take spoonfuls of the ice cream while loudly proclaiming how good it tastes. They don't try to reassure her with a speech but show her love. It is a moment that is filled with a certain kind of softness that only comes with family.

Steve Carell, Toni Collette, Alan Arkin, and Paul Dano bring genuine performances to this amazing slice-of-life movie. Their characters are

all flawed in their own ways, but they still love each other unconditionally. It is heartwarming, sweet, and makes you grin from the beginning to the end. It shows people who support you, both silently and loudly, who show up shamelessly, and who keep choosing to return to the van—over and over and over again.

These movies are about various relationships but the common thread is that connection isn't about perfection. It is about trying. It is about trying and failing and being too late and losing but trying nevertheless. All to get that one diner-booth-ice-cream moment. ♦



Images: Film stills & promotional material, used for explanatory purposes



says, "no one can really know the truth of a marriage except the two people in it." The movie defies the traditional rom-com formula, yet retains the sweetness that defines the genre. You might not be rooting for the relationship, but you're always rooting for the characters.

The lingering sadness in every interaction between Celeste and Jesse forces you to ask yourself, "is it better to be right or to be happy?" They challenged the idea that a happy ending always means being together. It is just two people trying to navigate between love and letting go, trying their best.

happiness
Taylor Swift

No one teaches you
what to do
When a good man
hurts you
And you know you
hurt him, too

The Space Between Us

An Analysis on *Chungking Express* directed by Wong Kar-Wai

Priyanka Madu

They sell us the city as a form of connection. A place where lives intersect; where cultures layer; where every street corner is dense with possibility.

But the truth is more fragmented. Sure, the city compresses—packs us into subway cars, elevators, overpasses. But it doesn't truly bring us closer. We pass each other in stairwells and concourses,



overhear conversations we'll never enter, feel someone's shoulder brush ours on an escalator, and just keep walking. Alone. In motion. Seemingly always.

That contradiction, this “closeness without contact”, is what *Chungking Express* understands. It's not a film about love in the traditional sense. It's about what love looks like when the conditions for it barely exist. It's about what remains when the connection has to fight to be noticed in a city too fast, too crowded, and too anonymous for real intimacy.

Wong Kar Wai doesn't tell stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. His characters drift. Time bends. Narratives collapse into moments. This isn't a rejection of pacing and cohesion, but rather it's a formal expression of urban life itself, which is discontinuous and unpredictable. In Wong's world, people are driven by unspoken desires and shaped by time that moves too quickly for lasting interaction. Their lives barely align, not because they lack feeling, but because the city keeps pushing them forward before anything can fully form.

Chungking Express tells two stories. In the first, a policeman, He Qiwu, Cop 223, is recently left by his girlfriend. He marks time by collecting cans of pineapple that expire on May 1st, the day he decides he'll stop hoping she'll come back. He

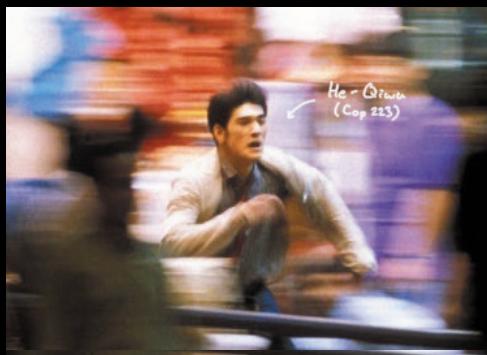
narrates his heartbreak with detachment and indifference, as if grief is just another passing condition.

Then, by accident, he encounters a woman in a blonde wig. A drug runner. They never learn each other's names. Still, Qiwu is swept off his feet:

“This was the closest we ever got. Just 0.01 of a centimeter between us. But 57 hours later... I fell in love with this woman.”

It's absurd, on the surface. But that's the point. In a world where routine is numbing and time is measured in silence, even a brush of intimacy feels significant. Not because it's built on knowledge or trust, but because it interrupts the blur.

And Wong presents this blur to us deliberately, filming his characters



through shots involving speed ramping, blurred frames, and time-lapsing as they navigate the city. It all mimics a locale too fast to inhabit. Characters are pulled forward by forces they can't resist: work, memory, loneliness, and desire. There's no clear path forward. No stable sense of self. Only a series of moments.

And moments, Wong tells us, are all that love gets.

The second story revolves around another policeman—Cop 663. His girlfriend, a flight attendant, has also left him. He talks to inanimate objects in his apartment: a bar of soap, a towel. It's as if he's asking them to confirm his loneliness.

Meanwhile, Faye, a worker at the snack bar he visits, starts sneaking into his home. She doesn't announce her feelings. She cleans. Moves things. Adjusts his

world in increments. This is how she expresses care: not with words, but through invisible labor.

This inability to speak plainly—to declare emotion—is woven throughout the film. Wong's characters don't talk directly. They write notes. Leave voicemails. Rearrange rooms. In this city, language isn't lost, but displaced. Everything is said through something else.

The result is that love becomes asynchronous. Misaligned. Qiwu attaches meaning to a woman who barely knows him. Faye falls for a man who doesn't notice until she's gone. These aren't relationships. They're attachments. Half-formed and unreturned.

But that doesn't make them meaningless.

Even the visual language echoes this fragmentation. Wong often shoots through glass, reflections, and window grates. The city is always there—but refracted. People are visible, but unreachable. A hand on the other side of the glass is still a world away.

Yet Wong never slides into cynicism. The tenderness is real. So is the ache. *Chungking Express* isn't about how people fail to connect. It's about how miraculous it is that they try at all. When Faye finally returns, she doesn't openly



confess her love. She offers Cop 663 a boarding pass, with the movie ending on one final exchange.

She asks: *“Where do you want to go?”*

To which he answers: *“Wherever you take me.”*

That's as close as they get to clarity.

It's quiet. Unresolved.

But maybe that's the point.

In a world where connection is always mistimed, even the willingness to try becomes radical.

If you're reading this as a post-secondary student, you probably already know what this feels like. The city is big, as is the campus. You pass by hundreds of people a day. You sit in crowded lecture halls. You navigate a place where everyone seems to be going somewhere, fast.

And somehow, you still feel... apart.

It's easy to disappear here. To move through this place with your head down, to keep yourself hidden. No one will stop you. The institution won't ask for more.

But *Chungking Express* reminds us that even in a space built for anonymity, there are still openings. Connection doesn't need to be dramatic. It doesn't need to last. Sometimes it's just a quick joke. A shared look. An invitation. A small kindness.

You don't need to know where it's going. You just need to reach across the distance—however small.

Because even if it doesn't last. Even if it's just a moment. Sometimes that's all it takes to feel a little more human.

Though it may seem like it, you're not alone. Not quite.

You're just 0.01 of a centimeter away.

And someone else is too. ♦

Everything in its Right Place

Annika Lam

Predeterminism is the idea that all events have been already decided in advance, either by a higher being(s) or just by the nature of the universe as it came into conception. This idea is prevalent in the theistic side of things, where a deity or deities predetermine the events of our history and future, as is reflected in some interpretations of Christianity, Jainism, Judaism, and Islam. On a more secular angle, it is the natural laws that rule over and determine outcomes, where, by knowing the rules of the game, you can predict what can happen next. It is akin to a giant equation, with numberless factors at hand, where the course of history is the product.

Looking at it in a more poetic sense, you can call it fate, or destiny. With this lens, you can see it as 'everything is connected' as the world is a story already written, where everything has a purpose and is destined to fulfill it. Every single event, no matter its significance, is part of the bigger story, a singular fibre in a woven tapestry held singular by numberless predecessors. You cannot pull on a thread without tugging on another. You are exactly when, where and what you need to be right now.

This philosophy is present in mythology, notable examples being the Fates of Greek origin or the Norns of Norse mythos. Similar sentiments are mirrored in other philosophies such as Taoism or

Fatalism, which are equally interesting to dive into (if you want to see how deep that rabbit hole can get).

Stoics also believed in predeterminism, where they were the ones who first recorded the idea along with their other ideas. They thought that every event is a result of cause and effect traced to the very beginning, where the natural laws of the universe (*logos*) dictate everything that comes after.

You most likely know this concept through instances in storytelling, as the notion of fate, destiny and prophecies span media to create meaningful narratives. *The Alchemist* is what comes to mind for me. It's a story that includes fate or '*maktab*' that encapsulates the more spiritual and comforting aspect that comes with believing and trusting God's plan. Another story I love that deals with destiny is *Star Wars*, though it presents that you have a choice in what path you choose, which is different from knowing and following a predetermined path. Romances also explore predeterminism with the 'Red Thread of Fate' – the invisible red thread that binds you with your true love,

and eventually you shall meet. Fate in general is a cornerstone in romance, with 'meet-cutes' or in cheesy lines.

Though I don't fully believe in predeterminism myself, I do understand how it can bring comfort and sparks a feeling of connection to something greater than yourself.

Thinking about it empirically, predeterminism can be a very limiting way to live, as it implies that we have no control over our past, present, and future. This could be why many may choose to adopt the sentiment of free will. Free will, being the opposite of predeterminism, is the attitude where the future is not absolute and you are the master of your fate, captain of your soul, so to speak. In the end, both ideas are just modes of thought that aren't 'right' or 'wrong' (whatever that means).

In the end, predeterminism is a powerful idea, and one that is shared across cultures and time. It can inspire a feeling of connectedness, where everything leaves fingerprints on everything else to set it on its course. Perhaps I was meant to write this, the editors were meant to improve it, *The Cannon* is meant to publish this, and you are meant to read this at this exact moment. You have your own place in this universe. ♦



The Norns



The Alchemist

Connections: Jenn's Anime Yap!

Jenn Xu

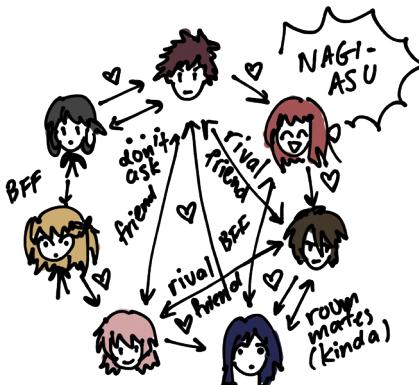
As an ex-avid anime watcher, manga reader, and webcomic enjoyer (nerd!), I love ranting about good (and bad) series to share recommendations and warnings alike. In honour of the theme “connections”, I will be reviewing and providing commentary on some of my favourite anime, some that underwhelmed me, and some that have it straight up wrong. Ranging from engaging relationships to intriguing mysteries with intertwining plotlines, let’s explore some “connections” in digital media.

Nagi no Asu kara (A Lull in the Sea)

Genre: Drama, Fantasy, Romance

Rating: ★★★★☆

In the interesting world of *Nagi-Asu*, where there is a civilization of people living beneath the sea from a fantastical phenomenon, now forced to integrate with the surface people in a small



village. From exploring the depths of discrimination and the gaps between the two ways of life, we also get to know our main cast of kids, who eventually have a love... polygon? Seriously, the relationships and connections are complicated. This slow series with beautiful art, characters, and music is a good watch if you’re looking for something unique that explores the interfaces of dualities: ocean and earth, one civilization to another, past and future, the mythological and the real, and regret and hope.

Nisekoi (False Love)

Genre: Romance, Comedy, Harem

Rating: ★★☆

Nisekoi follows Raku, a guy who must enter a fake relationship with Chitoge, the daughter of a rival yakuza gang,



during his high school years in order to keep “peace”. As with harems, Chitoge is not the only girl. No no no, there are at least 3 other main female leads in this harem. At least. And, Raku has a secret: he has a lock that has a key that belongs to his “promised girl” from childhood, and continues to search for her to this day. In any case, all girls in the series somehow fall in love with this basic man.

While the romantic connections aren’t all that interesting, the underlying mystery of who might be Raku’s “promised” continues to drive the plot forward. Spoiler alert: four (yes, four) girls end up holding keys to the same locket, or something like that. This is revealed slowly, telling us that the connections between Raku and the girls, and even the girls themselves, extend far beyond what they and the readers actually know. While this is just a gimmicky romcom, it does a reasonable job with its humour and storytelling. While I didn’t particularly enjoy the anime, it gives us an interesting look into how connections are developed in this widespread harem.

Kimi no Na wa. (Your Name)

Genre: Drama, Mystery, Romance

Rating: ★★★★★

When you think of “connection”, human connections immediately come to mind.. In *Kimi no Na wa.*, they take it one step further—body swapping. Two souls so intertwined that they literally end up living each others’ lives. *Kimi no Na wa.* is a story about Mitsuha, a girl living out in the boons who dreams of a life in the big city, and Taki, a teenage boy who is tired of his own life in Tokyo. With



drop-dead gorgeous art and animation, an incredible score from Radwimps, and a mystery that transcends space and the fabric of this world, this is a movie to die for and deservedly was once ranked #1 on MyAnimeList. If you want to watch something that will leave you in awe at its beauty, in shock at its storytelling and compelling mystery, and stunned by its ability to create meaningful characters and relationships between two people who never meet or speak to one another, look no further than *Kimi no Na wa.*

Osananajimi ga Zettai ni Makenai Love Comedy (Osamake: Romcom Where The Childhood Friend Won't Lose)

Genre: Romance, Harem, Complete Dogshit

Rating: ★

Like *Nisekoi*, *Osamake* is a romance about a guy with a bunch of girls he once knew as a kid (as the title suggests), except minus all the few things in *Nisekoi*

that made it good. This review will not be spoiler-free because I hate it so much, so read at your own risk. I am fully willing

to admit that this is my least favourite anime (out of the ones I watched through fully). So the main character has no personality as with harems, and is surrounded by ~3 main girls who all love him for his nothingness charms. While *Nisekoi* had some mystery and intrigue to the main guy’s connections to the girls in his life with interesting backstories at times, this one attempts the same by having the audience try to guess who this childhood friend is. We’re convinced it’s his neighbour at first. But then it’s revealed that the hot girl he’s crushing on... was someone who secretly knew him in his childhood. Wait, what? And then a third girl is introduced... again, from his childhood. Huh. Yeah. So all of the girls are childhood friends, thus making the whole series fall flat on its face. There goes all the intrigue you could have built up. His douchebag best friend is the cherry on top for me. In any case, the connections were done really poorly and makes the title truly clickbait to the highest degree of disappointment. Boo. ♦

Cool Places to get to by Public Transit

Alex Klaus

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and Government of Ontario Transit (GO Transit) unlock a lot of locations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). For those of you new to Toronto, here are some of the coolest places you can get to with public transit!

Events

The exhibition grounds have concerts and soccer (football) games quite often. To get there, take the TTC to Dufferin station and take the 29 or 929 Dufferin southbound. Or take the 504B King streetcar to Dufferin loop. The Exhibition GO station also provides a fast connection if coming from outside the city.

The newly constructed Rogers Stadium (in Downsview Park) is well connected to transit as well; it's walking distance from Sheppard West station on line 1.

Nature

If you are looking for more nature, you can go to High Park using the 506 Carlton streetcar west from campus, with a stop conveniently located right next to the Wallberg building and the Mining building. Alternatively, if you would like to get there within a reasonable delay, take line 2, the green line, to High Park station, then walk into the forest. High park also has cherry blossoms in the spring, a small zoo (with capybaras!) and many other great places to just rest and relax!

If the High Park zoo is too small, you can try taking the subway to the Toronto Zoo instead! It's a bit farther out, but if you go to Kennedy station, the end of the green line in the East, and take the 86B or go to Rouge hill GO on the Lakeshore East line and take the 200 bus in summer, you can get there no problem.

If you'd like to leave the mainland, the Toronto Islands are a great place to cycle, canoe or just relax. Take line 1 to Union station, or the 510 Spadina streetcar to Queen's Quay to catch the ferry at the Jack Layton terminal.

Museums

If looking for cool museums, the Aga Khan Museum, which features Islamic arts and objects, can be accessed by

Toronto Rapid Transit Map



Map: Blaixx, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

taking the 100 bus from Broadview station on line 2.

Closer to campus, the Art Gallery of Ontario (free for anyone under 25!) is right at St. Patrick station on line 1. The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is also accessible on line 1 by getting off at Museum station (one stop before Queen's Park).

Bonus: Tips & Tricks!

For all of you who are commuting for the first time or new to Toronto, please note that the schedules of GO trains are accurate and doors will close 1-2 minutes before departure. On the other hand, the TTC is completely inconsistent on schedules. I recommend downloading an app with real time tracking or using the texting service the TTC operates to check bus timings. The schedule is substituted with frequency, with trains every 2-3 minutes during rush hours and 5-10 minutes during off-peak times. Buses

tend to be every 10 minutes or every 30 depending on how busy the route is.

Hopefully you can enjoy some of these destinations during the year! Welcome to Skule™! ♦



A common TTC sign post
(very helpful for identifying station entrances!)

THE ETHICS OF BEING BAREFOOT IN A CUBICLE

Charlie Therence

Sitting at my desk, at my first ‘big girl’ corporate job, I think about how absurd it would be if I were sitting exactly where I am at the moment, just without the cubicle partitions around me. I imagine 6 adults sitting at their desks, in close proximity, in the middle of an open office space. I imagine how different we would act. In this situation, it would probably be rude to take both my shoes AND socks off, right? Not that I would, even in the comfort of my own cubicle. I know someone out there would, though. Would people care? Would I care?

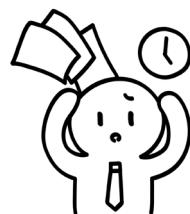
I’m sure most people reading this have watched *Severance*. Let’s say that you—reader—and I—Charlie—are coworkers at a generic corporate office space. If our desks were arranged MDR style, and we were separated by only a partition in front of us that still allows us to see each other, would you take your socks off? Our desks the same direction and we were side by side? What if there was a partition between us that completely blocks our view of each other unless we reclined our chairs? If I took my shoes and socks off, how weird would that be? I don’t mean to ramble on and on about being barefoot. It’s just that going barefoot in public is one of those things that I like to call “low-level evil”. Another example I can think of is showering with clothes on. It’s wrong—absurdly wrong, even—but it’s a victimless crime. Unless your feet really stink, maybe. I don’t want to get into olfactory ethics; I’m not Dr. Ally Louks.

My month in the corporate environment has exposed me to the absolute absurdity of corporate culture. Today, my director invited me to breakfast via a Microsoft Teams meeting request—no message attached. I’ve only spoken to her once. A few weeks ago, she used the word ‘family’ to describe our

department during a town hall. I only know 5 names in the crowd. Every two weeks, I receive a survey questioning my satisfaction level as an employee, and every single time it asks me, “On a scale of 1 to 10, do you feel as if [INSERT COMPANY NAME] cares about your mental health?” Obviously, no! Why would they? Why would the person writing this survey

think anyone would score this question anything higher than a 2? What would the company caring about my mental health even look like?

All day long, every employee is performing a professionalism ballet. Everyone is aware that others are also humans who experience emotions, yet no one dares to swivel their chair too much during a meeting. But at the same time, people in leadership positions constantly choose to use words that imply closeness. Frankly, the stress of keeping up appearances and the anxiety of not knowing what other people are thinking about me is maddening. Would anyone tell me if my fly was down? If I had a little bit of lipstick on my teeth? If there’s dry skin around my nostril—that is definitely NOT a booger?



The thought of this kind of relationship being my entire reality in a few short years is giving me a lot of anxiety. I’m not sure how to navigate friendships in a corporate workplace. Wouldn’t it be weird to be friends with your boss? Imagine asking for a pay

raise from your best friend and having them reject it due to corporate politics. I think it would suck, probably. Imagine being told by one of your only friends that your work is subpar. Imagine having to deal with your friend’s subpar work, making your life so much harder! Ugh. I’m getting nauseous just thinking about it.

I’m tired of being surrounded by petty and catty people who refuse to say what’s on their minds. Maybe

I’m juvenile for thinking this, but I appreciate friends who don’t mind a bit of bare dogs and stinky feet in public. I appreciate friends who wouldn’t talk about me behind my back if they found out I regularly do something absurd.

I mean, what if I like showering with clothes on or enjoy the feeling of wet socks? Above all, I especially appreciate my friends who wouldn’t mind me harassing them about their massively oversized derriere.

What alternative do I have to this kind of future? Every workplace has its own fucked up hierarchy and politics. Do I just try to make new friends as an adult, outside of my workplace? I’ve already tried Bumble BFF, and I ended up with 5 invites to raves and 0 new friends. Should I try raving? ♦



Science & Research

The Best Time for Ontario High-Speed Rail was 40 years Ago. The Second Best Time is Now.

The Economic Case for **ALTO**

Avi Gell

In February of 2025, the federal Liberal Party announced “Alto”, a plan to build a high-speed rail line across the Ontario corridor from Toronto to Quebec. The proposed project would develop a train capable of 300 km/h, nearly double the speed of VIA rail, and cover an area where nearly half of Canada’s population lives. Such a project would connect millions of Canadians and open up new possibilities for economic exchange throughout the region.

Alto is slated to open in... 2043. From the province that gave us 15 years of Eglinton Crosstown construction and a Gardiner falling apart at the seams—are we really ready to take on the challenge that countless countries in Asia and Europe have seemed to figure out long ago? How hard could it possibly be to build a train?

Anyone who routinely faces medium-distance travel (what I would call a trip longer than the next city over, but shorter than crossing the continent) knows that the choice of transportation is not an easy one. To give an example: I am from New York City. Current Amtrak service from Toronto to NYC takes about 12-14 hours to cover a distance that can be driven in just eight. At the speeds proposed for Alto, that could be cut down to only three hours. But why not just fly?

I do frequently fly between Toronto and NY to see family: a trip that, in theory, takes less than an hour and a half. In reality, the journey is closer to six hours. Nobody enjoys queueing for security and customs, or the

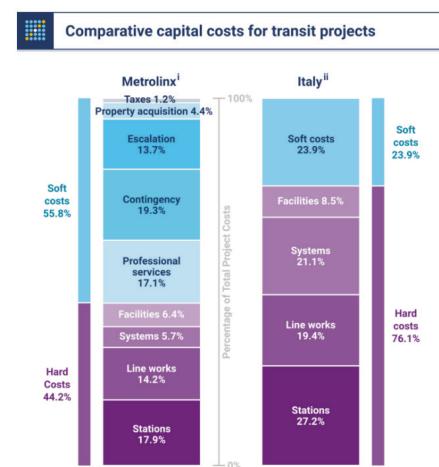
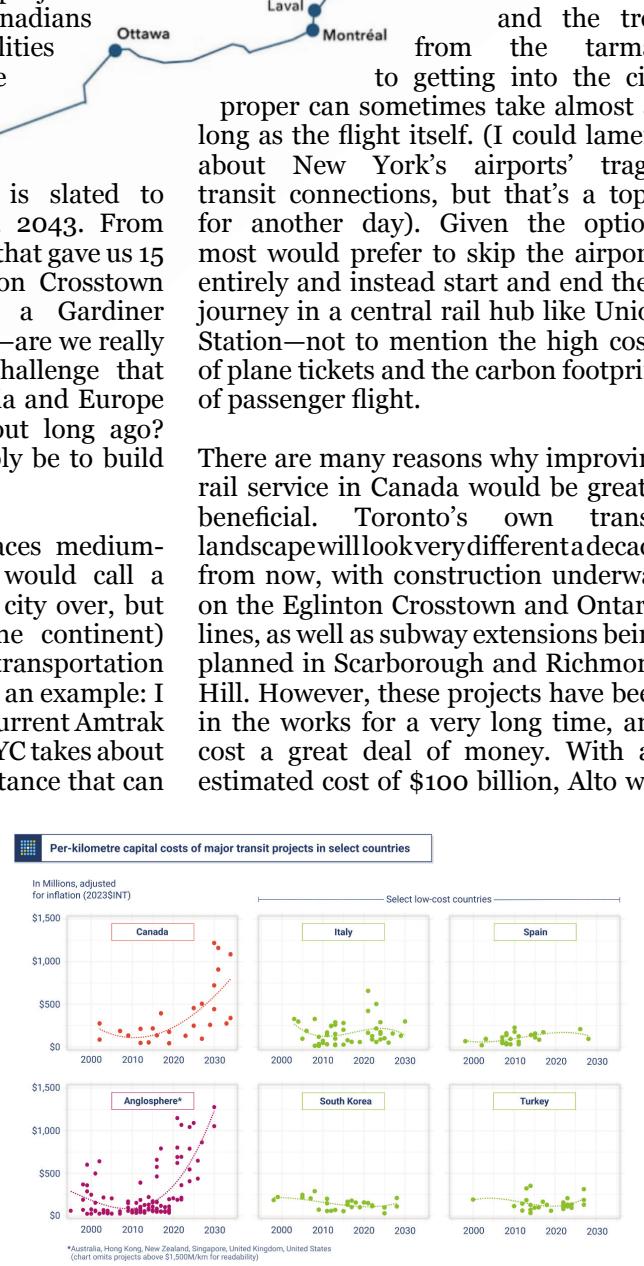
tradition we have all heard from our parents that one must arrive at the gate at least an hour early “just in case”. With the exception of Billy Bishop, airports are often very

inaccessible and the trek from the tarmac to getting into the city proper can sometimes take almost as long as the flight itself. (I could lament about New York’s airports’ tragic transit connections, but that’s a topic for another day). Given the option, most would prefer to skip the airports entirely and instead start and end their journey in a central rail hub like Union Station—not to mention the high costs of plane tickets and the carbon footprint of passenger flight.

There are many reasons why improving rail service in Canada would be greatly beneficial. Toronto’s own transit landscape will look very different a decade from now, with construction underway on the Eglinton Crosstown and Ontario lines, as well as subway extensions being planned in Scarborough and Richmond Hill. However, these projects have been in the works for a very long time, and cost a great deal of money. With an estimated cost of \$100 billion, Alto will

be no exception—for reference, this is about double the cost-per-kilometer as current comparable projects in Europe. In a paper published earlier this year by UofT Civil Engineering professor Amer Shalaby (and others), the authors examine the uniquely high cost of building transit infrastructure in Canada.

One of the biggest pain points in terms of cost is the privatisation of design. While many other countries rely on robust teams of “in-house” engineers and designers (that is, working for the state itself), Metrolinx contracts much of that work out to external sources. These companies have higher rates, slow the expertise and efficiency of the public sector, and do not have a vested interest in lowering costs. While the “hard costs” that go into the actual building of the train and stations are comparable across countries, Shalaby’s paper estimates these “soft costs” of Metrolinx projects to be 55.8% of the overall budget, compared to only 23.9% in Italy. While Alto will not be run by Metrolinx, this pattern is very common across government agencies in North America—I witnessed it myself at an internship for the City of New York.



ⁱBased on aggregate of Eglinton Crosstown West, Ontario Line, Scarborough Subway, and Yonge North Extension business-case-level estimates

ⁱⁱBased on aggregate of Milan M5 and Turin M1

Now, as someone who currently has a PEY job at a private sector company working on transportation projects, it's hard to argue against the system that literally pays my salary. But as a person who cares about building infrastructure that improves the lives of the public, it does matter to me that such projects are possible to build at all without breaking the bank.

As a side note, opinions about the extent of government funds to use on massive infrastructure projects vary greatly across the political spectrum. But I sincerely believe that there is a difference between austerity, which discourages investments into the public good, and economic responsibility, which aims to ensure that promises can be kept. This is by no means a DOGE-esque excuse to slash budgets indiscriminately and sabotage the endeavors of a government that is trying to do something about a problem. No budget is infinite, and

overspending in one department can result in cuts to another. What's the point of taxing the rich if the extra money doesn't go anywhere?

That being said, if you can allow yourself to be optimistic, there is a lot to be excited about for the future of Alto. No matter what the costs or timeline will look like, the possible benefits are massive. Intermediate cities served by Alto such as Peterborough and Trois-Rivières are expected to see an immediate skyrocketing of business, as they become just a short train ride away from the major population centres. First Nation communities will be part of the planning process from the start to ensure that land rights and treaties are respected, and the scale of construction will create tens of thousands of jobs. One of the solutions Shalaby (et al.) proposed for the financial concerns of transit was to learn from foreign expertise to build up domestic capabilities: the

consortium responsible for Alto's design notably includes SNCF, the state-owned operator of many of France's railways. (Incidentally: SNCF pulled out of California's own high-speed rail project in 2011 due to "political dysfunction", instead opting to help a line get built in Morocco in 7 years. The fact that they are getting involved in Ontario must mean something is going right, right?)

Long story short, modern rail technology in this country is long overdue. While concerns remain about the government's ability to deliver on promises where it has failed before, Alto is the closest we have ever gotten to a real plan to catch Canada up to our peers in other parts of the world. ♦

Figures & statistics: J. Mok, M. Chitti and A. Shalaby, "UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF TRANSIT CONSTRUCTION COSTS IN CANADA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY," University of Toronto, School of Cities, Jan. 2025. https://schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Understanding-the-Drivers-of-Transit-Construction-Costs-in-Canada_Feb-2025_FINAL.pdf

HOW ARPANET BUILT THE INTERNET

Andy Derevyanko

With the internet and computers being commonplace far before I was born, it's hard to imagine a world without them. Just like the other marvels of today—GPS, Wifi, and Cloud computing—they've played a crucial role in shaping our everyday experiences. However, while nowadays the internet appears to be a vast, incomprehensibly complex system, we must recognize that it did not simply appear out of thin air—it's development was gradual and took decades of research and iteration. The internet is not black magic—it's a product born from military innovation, academic collaboration, and pure chance.

The Birth of ARPANET

In 1957, amidst the Cold War, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union were at their peak. The Soviets had just delivered a massive blow with the launch of Sputnik: the first-ever artificial satellite put into orbit. This achievement gave them an early lead in the space race and left the US trembling with fear that they had fallen behind. The States responded in February of the following year by creating ARPA, the Advanced Research Projects Agency, an organization whose sole

purpose was to prevent technological surprises like Sputnik from occurring—while creating some surprises of its own. ARPA would fund research for various radical technologies that could put the US ahead of the game while monitoring Soviet activities through multiple forms of surveillance. They would become responsible for the creation of countless technologies such as GPS, stealth aircraft, drones, and—of course—the internet.

In 1962, a psychologist named J.C.R. Licklider was hired by ARPA as the director of its Information Processing Techniques Office. He believed computers could help "tie the world together" by enhancing communication between researchers around the world. Licklider envisioned a global network through which anyone could quickly access data and programs regardless of their location. Having delivered numerous lectures and published

influential papers on the topic from 1950 to 1957, Licklider brought this enthusiasm with him to ARPA, where he continued to serve as director until 1964.



J.C.R. Licklider

Despite his departure, his vision stuck around, capturing the interest of Charles Herzfield, director of ARPA's Ballistic Missile Defense Program. Herzfield saw Licklider's ideas as a way to improve national defense through faster and more reliable communication. After becoming the director of ARPA in 1965, Herzfield would put Licklider's dream into motion by approving funding for what would become the backbone of the digital era: ARPANET.

In 1968, ARPANET's development began as a small network containing just four universities: UCLA, Stanford, UC Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah. Researchers began testing the system a year later, and on October 29, 1969, around 10:30pm, a programmer

by the name of Charley Kline attempted to make a login to Stanford's computer from UCLA. He typed in the word "login"; however, the system crashed

9:05 AM 2100	LOADED	OP. PROGRAM ISK
	10:12	BEN BARKER
		B&B
22:30	Talked to SRF	CSL
	Host to Host	
	Left up program CSL	
	running after sending	
	a last dead message	
	to usp.	

Log of the first message ever sent over ARPANET

after just two letters. Despite the unsuccessful attempt, this went down in history as the first message ever sent over the ARPANET, and a proper connection was successfully made later that day.

So, how did this primitive skeleton of ARPANET work? Each university had their own host computer and an IMP (Interface Message Processor, essentially an early version of a router). These IMPs were connected to one another via phone lines, using a method known as dial-up. Yes, actual copper telephone cables that transmitted data at a painful 56 kilobits per second. Today, a household consisting of more than two people would riot over anything slower than 50 megabits per second (~1000x faster). Messages traveled over the phone line as electrical signals, with voltage variations encoding the data. The sender's computer broke down the message—file, text, or instructions—into binary code (1s and 0s) and sent it in these pulses to the receiver, where it was reassembled into its original form. But wait—where do the IMPs come in?

ARPANET had one revolutionary twist over traditional telephone networks: this binary code was not sent directly to the receiving device. Instead, it was broken into individual chunks of data called “packets” by the IMP. Rather

than allowing these packets to travel down one path, the IMP routed these messages through multiple channels on the network: a process called packet switching. Each packet was automatically assigned a destination and a number, the former of which was used to send the data to the right place, and the latter to allow these packets to be reassembled into a single file at the receiving IMP.

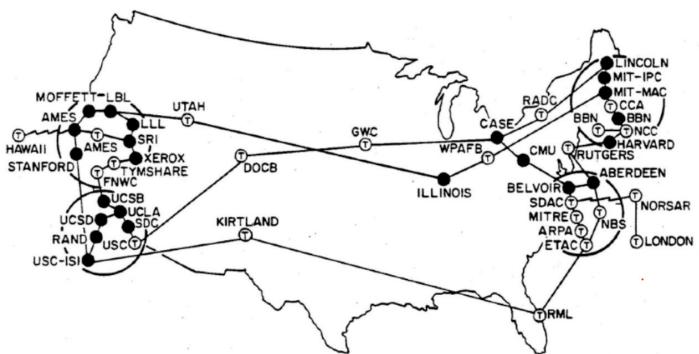
Packet switching had a few advantages over sending data through a single channel. It was mainly more reliable: if errors occurred in some channels, parts of the message would still be sent, and missing sections could then be resent. Conversely, if errors were to occur when sending a message over one channel, the whole operation would fail, and the supposed-to-be receiver would have no idea that you even intended to send them anything.

In the beginning, ARPANET served as a solution to a somewhat glaring problem within ARPA. The agency had countless

different labs and institutions, each with their own systems, hardware, and protocols. To make matters worse, computers at the time were incredibly slow compared to today's standards—about 10 to 100 thousand times slower—and came in the form

of living-room-sized behemoths. Simply put, coordination between researchers was tough. ARPANET's creation brought about standardization in protocols and architecture within ARPA, and allowed these groups to communicate with one another far more efficiently. Before ARPANET, researchers had to mail tapes and cards from one office to another. With ARPANET, information could be sent across the country within seconds or minutes.

ARPANET took off at the turn of 1970 as many government institutions began linking their systems to the network. In July of 1973, ARPANET went international, making its first transatlantic connection to NORSAR (NORway Seismic Array) via satellite link. However, during this expansion, many of its problems became clear. ARPANET lacked standardized protocols, had poor scalability, offered zero security whatsoever, and was plagued with issues that could cause crashes. By this time, ARPANET had grown beyond being a niche exclusive



ARPANET map in the 1970s

to tightly knit research groups, and something had to be done to accommodate its growth.

In 1977, the development of a new protocol called TCP/IP began. TCP/IP introduced a variety of new features, such as improved error detection, automatic retransmission, and easy expandability. However, two features stood out: IP addresses (yes, the ones we know today) and the implementation of a universal standard that allowed different kinds of networks to communicate with one another. This was a significant change, as by the 1970s, networks such as SATNET (a satellite-based network), PRNET (a packet radio network), and various local academic or defense-related systems existed but could not connect with each other. This was, of course, until TCP/IP came along and blew NCP, ARPANET's original network technology, out of the water.

In 1983, alongside the full adoption of TCP/IP, another revolutionary invention was introduced: the Domain Name System (DNS). Created by American computer scientist Paul Mockapetris, DNS solved a logistical nightmare. Before its creation, networks had to maintain a manual ‘phonebook’ of IP



The Interface Message Processor (IMP)
ARPANET's first router

addresses and their corresponding host names. This file was known as “HOSTS.txt,” and ARPANET’s was managed by an organization called the Network Information Centre (NIC) led by Elizabeth J. Feinler. Feinler joined ARPA in 1972 and was originally responsible for developing documentation surrounding the evolution of ARPANET before becoming the head of NIC in 1974. Each time a new server was registered with the internet, the NIC had to manually add its address to the directory—a process that quickly became tedious and unsustainable as the network expanded.

DNS was a game-changer—it took care of this problem automatically and at scale. It allowed simple names to be assigned to IP addresses, thus removing the need for a directory of hosts. These names came in the form of “example.com” or “example.org,” and as you might have noticed, we still use this exact system today. It also introduced a variety of neat features like subdomains (e.g., example.com/subdomain1) and mail exchangers (used to route mail). DNS was slowly adopted throughout the mid-1980s and had effectively replaced the need for a HOSTS.txt by 1987.

TCP, DNS, and IP addresses are still in use today and inspired the development of many other modern protocols such as HTTP/3. ARPANET fully switched to TCP/IP in 1983, and this transition opened the floodgates for a surge of new networks: academic, military, and commercial. With this new protocol in place, these networks could easily connect to one another. Thus the internet was born—a vast array of various networks interconnected: an internet(work).

By this time, ARPANET was just one fish in a vast sea of networks. It was no longer a center of innovation but an outdated legacy system. By 1989, ARPANET was shut down before being fully decommissioned in 1990. It was later replaced by NSFNET (the National Science Foundation Network), developed to provide a network for scientists across the United States. At the end of the day, ARPANET was

functionally a prototype for a global network. Because it was built with limited scale and specific users in mind, the need for its continued operation diminished as the government began shifting its attention to a broader and more ambitious goal: developing the internet.

Today, the internet is 20,000 times faster than ARPANET was. This is due to insane hardware advancements in the last 30+ years and the shift from dial-up to high-speed broadband, fiber optics, and wireless technologies. Not only that, today’s networks are far more secure, featuring firewalls, authentication, HTTPS, VPNs, and more. None of these features existed in ARPANET—especially in its earlier stages, as hacking wasn’t yet a concern. Computers were primitive, and nearly everyone with the hardware to even attempt to connect to the network was either a researcher or government employee. Beyond being basic in its infrastructure, ARPANET was also entirely text-based. It existed in a time long before images, videos, or interactive interfaces became part of the internet experience.

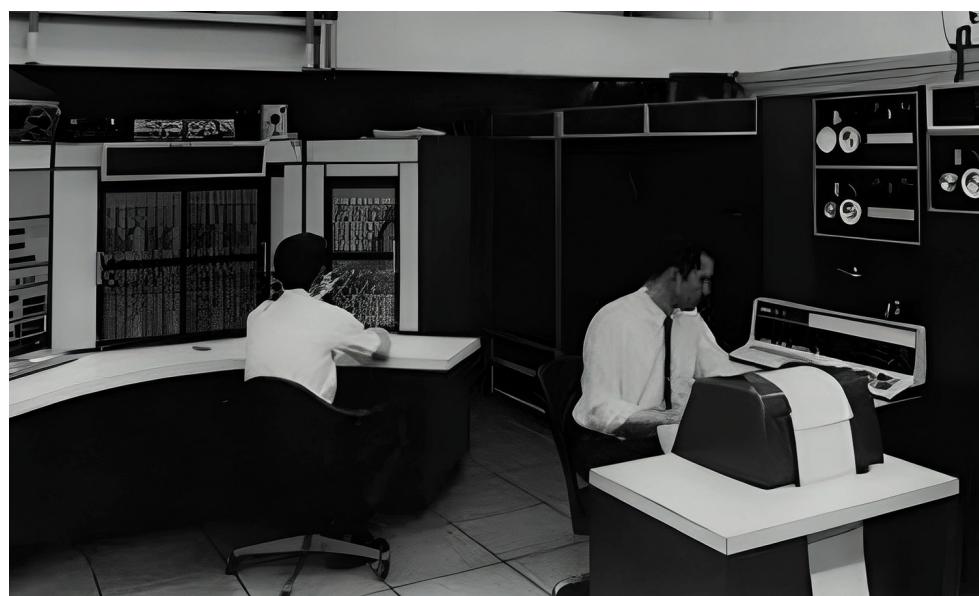


Elizabeth J. Feinler

ARPANET's Legacy

The expansion of ARPANET ignited the development of the modern internet and countless other networks. By the 1990s, the internet had expanded beyond academic and military use, finding its way into the commercial market. Home and office users joined as PCs became more affordable, user-friendly, and increasingly equipped with dial-up modems, bringing the online world into everyday life.

However primitive ARPANET was, much of today’s digital world owes its existence to it. While it began as a Cold War-era military research project, it evolved into one of the most transformative inventions in history. Its creation laid the groundwork for the global internet, fundamentally changing how we communicate, collaborate, and access information. ♦



A DEC PDP-10 computer, manufactured in 1968, in use

A Poisonous Affair

Rauha Ahmed

For as long as humans have gathered in cities, fought over thrones, or hosted awkward dinner parties, someone has been quietly stirring something into someone else's drink. Poisons are history's original passive-aggressive weapon. They're subtle, sophisticated, and often found in a teacup near you.

Unlike swords or war elephants, poison doesn't require strength or status, just a plan, a plant, and maybe a little patience. It has been the tool of desperate spouses, scheming courtiers, insecure emperors, amateur chemists, and one very bored Roman senator who probably asked, "So what happens if we put this in his wine?"

This article will investigate the long, strange history of poison as a social tool. We'll explore how it was concocted, who used it, and why it always seemed to work best in the hands of someone smiling politely across the table.

So put the kettle on (but maybe don't drink just yet). We're about to take a stroll through the toxic timeline of human history, one dose at a time.

1. Cleopatra: Queen of the Nile and Casual Human Trials

Cleopatra VII wasn't just the last pharaoh of Egypt; she was also the ancient world's unofficial director of clinical toxicology. Best known for her legendary romances with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, Cleopatra also had a passion for pharmacology. Specifically, the lethal kind.

She became queen upon the death of her father, Ptolemy XII, in 51 BCE and ruled successively with her two brothers, Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV, and then later her son, Ptolemy XV Caesar.

She had a disturbingly hands-on approach to poison research, and while other monarchs collected art or commissioned statues, Cleopatra collected toxins.

According to historical accounts, she carried out experiments on condemned

prisoners, evaluating everything from dosage and timing to symptom progression and death styles. Was this all in the name of curiosity? Probably not. The queen had good reason to anticipate a grim ending, given the ever-looming threat of Roman conquest, so she was essentially beta-testing her own potential exit strategies.

plus a mouthful of mildly neutralized calcium carbonate (and indigestion, probably). The pearl was priceless. Marc Antony was speechless, and Lucius Plancus, a Roman senator officiating the party, declared her the winner.

Additionally, the ancient painkiller is also attributed to the chemist queen. This was not a cure-all, but a very specific invention, designed, possibly, for her own eventual exit. Cleopatra knew the Romans were closing in, and the worst fate wasn't death, it was humiliation. Being paraded through Rome in chains wasn't her style, so she may have developed a compound to dull the pain before taking a fatal dose of poison. Something fast, subtle, and merciful. A chemical curtain call.

So yes, Cleopatra was a queen, a strategist, a linguist, and very likely, the only head of state in history to combine

spa day, pharmaceutical research, and petty flexes into one seamless political platform. Not bad for a woman who seems to only be remembered for dating two guys and dying dramatically, when really, she was running a chemistry lab before most of Europe figured out what soap was.

2. Aqua Tofana: For When "Til Death Do Us Part" Needs a Little Nudge

Seventeenth-century Italy was a beautiful place, if you liked lace, plagues, and being legally bound to your husband until one of you died (spoiler: it was usually the woman). Divorce? Illegal. Leaving an abusive marriage? Not an option. Couples therapy? Didn't exist yet. But for women who found themselves married to violent, controlling, or just insufferable men, there was another option, whispered from ear to ear like a particularly juicy recipe.

It was called Aqua Tofana, and it came in a lovely little bottle.

Crafted by Giulia Tofana, a woman



Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners

The commonly accepted story is that Cleopatra died by asp bite, but some scholars think she opted instead for a carefully brewed cocktail of opium and hemlock. Whatever the case, the queen knew how to pick her poisons. She was also known to present her excruciating experiments as dinner entertainment to her husband, Marc Antony, and guests.

When Cleopatra wasn't busy ruling Egypt, seducing Roman generals, or performing light homicide via toxicology, she liked to dabble in chemistry. One of the most fascinating stories about her scientific experiments involved a bet with Marc Antony. She claimed she could stage a banquet for 10 million sesterces, which was a massive sum at the time. Antony took her up on the offer, assured the splurge was impossible, but the next evening, he was proved quite wrong.

During the second course, Cleopatra ordered a glass of vinegar, dropped one of her pearl earrings into it (the equivalent of dissolving a Ferrari in lemon juice), and waited as the acetic acid did its thing. Once the pearl disintegrated, she drank the liquid. Voila: one drink, ten million sesterces,

who clearly understood both chemistry and customer service, Aqua Tofana was the Sephora of silent revenge. A blend of arsenic, lead, and belladonna, it promised to solve life's most persistent problem: your husband. If dosed correctly, it mimicked a long illness, giving the widow plenty of time to look properly distraught and plan her funeral outfit.

The product was packaged as a cosmetic, sitting innocently among the powders and perfumes that littered a woman's dressing table, and it was so convincing that it was said no well-appointed woman in Italy was without one.

The operation wasn't some back-alley snake oil hustle, either. Giulia ran a full-blown network, a referral-only business model long before LinkedIn existed. No random walk-ins, no desperate husbands posing as customers. If you wanted a bottle, you had to know someone. Discretion was key. So was intent.

This was poison as liberation, carefully tailored for a society that gave women zero agency and expected eternal loyalty in return. When the law didn't protect you, and the church wanted you to pray your bruises away, a drop of poison in the soup started to sound reasonable.

Unfortunately, after one customer reportedly lost her nerve and confessed to her husband mid-murder attempt, it all came crumbling down. Giulia and her crew were arrested, tortured, and executed, because poisoning an abusive husband was a crime, but *being* one certainly wasn't.

Nonetheless, Giulia Tofana's story wasn't just about mass murder. It was about survival in a system that gave women no better tools than a vial of arsenic and a steady hand. Was it morally ambiguous? Perhaps. Was it effective? Most definitely.

In the end, Aqua Tofana was a product of its time, equal parts chemistry, desperation, and patriarchy. In a world that gave women no choices, Giulia gave them one.



The Love Potion

3. Glow Like the Grave: The Victorian Beauty Collection

If you've ever joked that your skincare routine is "killing you," congratulations, you'd fit right in with the Victorian beauty scene, where that statement wasn't hyperbole; it was a typical Tuesday.

Victorian beauty culture was, quite literally, to die for. In an era obsessed with pallor, passivity, and the general appearance of dying slowly from heartbreak (or tuberculosis), women across Europe were ladling poison onto their faces in the name of elegance. Their motto? If it doesn't burn, blind you, or induce organ failure, it's probably not working.

Most women started their mornings with a splash of ammonia to the face, followed by a generous application of lead-based white face paint. Add a dash of belladonna eye drops to get that "ethereal, watery stare" that screams either "upper class" or "severe brain swelling."

The key here was to look like you had never seen the sun, a vegetable, or a feeling. Pale skin was a status symbol, and women were willing to die for the privilege of appearing as if they had never done a day's work in their lives. Consuming arsenic wafers or bathing in arsenic hot springs was also just part of the glow-up. Side effects included hair loss, kidney failure, and death, but hey, beauty is pain, right?

One of the most popular beauty guides of the time was titled *The Ugly Girl Papers*, which sounds like a self-help zine for ghouls and reads like a chemical weapons manual disguised as a fashion column. It offered helpful DIYs like how to stimulate hair growth with ammonia... or remove it with ammonia... or just slowly melt your entire face, depending on how the wind was blowing that day.

Need longer lashes? Cocaine and a sewing needle. Yes, really. First, numb

the eyelid with cocaine. Then, sew actual hairs into the lash line. If that sounds horrifying, just imagine explaining it to your 19th-century mother while she's reapplying her radioactive highlighter.

And no Victorian vanity was complete without Tho-Radia, the French face cream that promised radiant skin via actual radium. It did brighten the complexion (it also brightened your bones from the inside). Nothing says luxury quite like a radioactive jawline.

The horror didn't end at the dressing table. Even clothing was out to kill you. That stunning emerald green ball gown? It was dyed with arsenic trioxide, and some dresses contained so much of it, they could be classified as biochemical weapons that also happened to have ruffles. A ball gown with 900 grains of arsenic could shed up to 60 grains in one evening. For context, 4 to 5 grains is enough to kill an adult. So if your dance card was full, chances were your lungs were too.

The interior design wasn't safe either. Victorian homes were practically terrariums of toxic wallpaper, arsenic-dyed upholstery, and fake plants that could kill a man if he stood too close.

In Victorian times, beauty was less about wellness and more about slowly embalming yourself in layers of high society's most fashionable toxins. So the next time your toner stings a little, just be glad it doesn't glow in the dark or burn your corneas off.

Final Remarks

Looking back, the throughline isn't just poison. It's the confidence with which people wield it. Whether you are a queen, a housewife, a chemist, or a government with too much funding and not enough conscience, the assumption is the same: this won't backfire on me. Poison is a declaration that the rules don't apply, and that suffering (whether your own or someone else's) is worth the experiment, the aesthetic, or the empire.

So here's to human connection: toxic, secretive, and historically fatal. Cheers. ♦



The Arsenic Waltz

Humour & Comics

An ECE's Guide to Healthy Relationships

8 steps to help you find your optimal match and sustain your connection indefinitely

Christina Pizzonia

Ever wonder why all your ‘high-potential’ relationships decay into a tangled mess faster than the probes in GB341? If so, don’t worry. I’m here to reassure you that 1) you’re not alone, and 2) it’s no surprise you were left wondering.

99.9% of the relationship advice on the internet was written by people who have never pulled an all-nighter trying to finish a project in BA3135, and probably never thought an engineer would be able to find a date anyway. Which honestly sucks. I personally love having someone to share the void of astronomical rent and chronic underemployment with. The 2 LinkedIn connections I got from the Career Fair were definitely not going to cut it.

So, to patch this bug in the dating advice column space, I’d like to share this easy to read guide on relationships, written for all the ECEs out there looking for a stable connection.

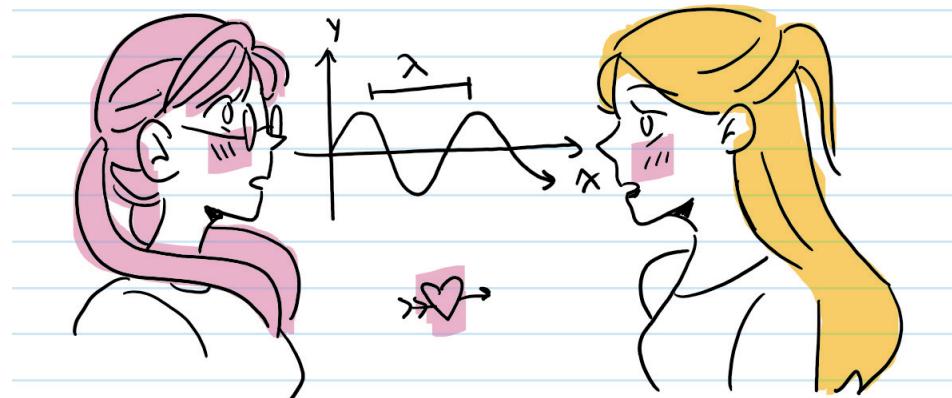
1. Don't ignore the warnings

If you’ve survived 2nd year ECE, you already know the deal with Quartus: you upload a single Verilog file, hit ‘synthesis,’ and 10 minutes later you’re staring at hundreds of warning messages. While it’s tempting to ignore them, that seemingly innocent “port driven by constant” warning might be exactly why your design hasn’t worked for the past 48 hours.

Relationships are no different. If your friends, family, or even your own gut instinct are telling you something isn’t quite right, don’t be so quick to ignore them. Although not all ‘warnings’ are a cause for concern, true red flags can look yellow when you’re experiencing peak NRE (new relationship energy). Ignoring the early warning signs is how you end up stuck in a relationship that’s just as dysfunctional as your friend’s ECE241 project.

2. Test things out in real life

It’s no secret that designs that run like



magic in ModelSim and Simulink can—and often do—fail in real life.

The same principle applies when you’re in the dating pool. Someone who *technically* checks all your boxes and looks perfect on paper isn’t necessarily a good match in real life. Instead of relying on online horoscopes and compatibility quizzes, go on a few dates and see how you actually feel. If it’s not an enthusiastic yes, it’s a “no,” and time to move on.

3. Define clear ‘functions’, ‘objectives’ and ‘constraints’

Just like in ESP, you should always start a relationship with a clear idea of your needs (functions), wants (objectives), and boundaries (constraints).

Beginning a relationship is a bit like entering into a joint contract, with no expiry date in mind. While adjustments can be made as new information comes to light, it’s still best practice to define all terms and conditions at the start. Articulate your values early on and make sure your partner knows where you stand on important issues.

4. Establish a shared communication protocol

Ever tried connecting a microcontroller to a serial monitor, only to receive completely garbage values? Absolute chaos. And the reason why? Usually because of mismatched protocols. Both the transmitting and receiving ends must be configured to use the exact same

communication method. If not, they’ll interpret the same sequence of bits very differently.

From my experience, humans behave identically—there’s a reason those IG relationship gurus always say “*communication is key!*” Two people speaking in the exact same language can still face miscommunications. Figure out how you communicate, how your partner communicates, and how to communicate together. Otherwise, every conversation will feel like trying to make sense of an encrypted message without a key.

5. Give your partner the benefit of the doubt

Broken jumpers, a misplaced connection, a power supply that’s not plugged in... your 1st and 2nd year ECE labs can fail for a variety of reasons, ranging from inexperience in the lab to downright faulty equipment. But in high-stress situations (e.g. getting your lab done before the 3 hours are over), it’s all too easy to become irritable and start blaming your partner for everything failing.

Don’t do this. Instead, try to remain cool, calm and collected. And try to give your real-life partner the same grace: never assume ill-intent from the get-go. Like you, they’re just trying their best.

6. Prioritize critical tasks first

This one is pretty straightforward. If you accidentally overload a capacitor

and it explodes, don't stop to check your DMs (they're empty anyways). Prioritize what's important—getting out of there so no one knows you did it (just kidding, please tell your TA).

This holds true for relationships, too. Engineering can be brutally busy, but if you find yourself consistently putting your relationship to the bottom of your 'to-do' list, it might be time to re-evaluate your time-management strategies. You don't need to schedule in daily 8 hour standups, but small check-ins and 'progress updates' can make all the difference.

7. Try your best to prevent memory leaks

If you've ever programmed in C or C++, you'll know just how annoying memory leaks can be to find, especially when all you have to go on is a crashed program and a list of "segmentation fault" errors.

Like computers, our brains store so much random junk it's easy to run out of space to store the things that actually

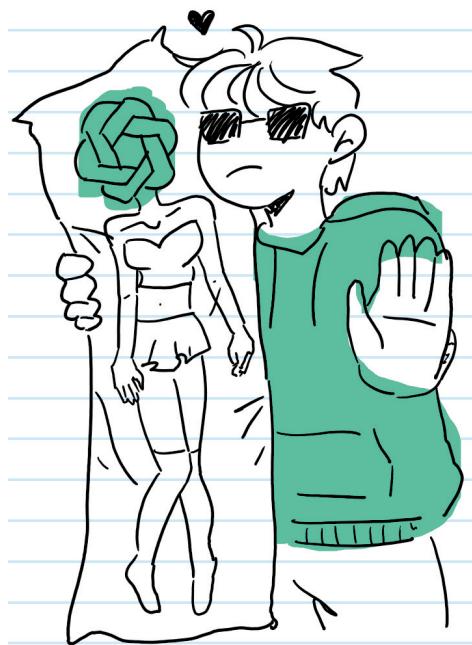
matter. My advice? Stop storing the mental equivalent of those unused but allocated memory blocks, so that you can comfortably remember what *actually*

matters to your partner. Whether it's their favourite flavour of ice cream, an important date night you have coming up, or their weird work drama that you're somehow now involved in, remembering shows you care. Forgetting can be a fatal error.

8. Don't cheat with ChatGPT

I'm serious. It's no secret that since it first came out, students have been using it to generate 'original' ideas for all kinds of assignments. I'm not here to judge. But when it comes to actual relationships—and I'm saying this because I have no idea if the podcasters are telling the truth about the actual feasibility of AI partners—*please* don't try to replace genuine human connection with an AI girlfriend or boyfriend.

There are billions of humans in this world. Odds are you'll be able to find someone who's just right for you. ♦



My 10 Step Plan to Reach 10k Connections on LinkedIn

Charlie Therence

I am sitting in a library, a few months into my first year. I distinctly remember a rush coming over me. Suddenly, I came to the realization that I need to step up my LinkedIn game. I don't remember if I already had a LinkedIn profile or if I made one right then and there, but I proceeded to request to connect with all my first year friends. 4 years later, I have only made 5 new connections since then – to my great embarrassment.

What you have to understand is that I'm not a computer science or business major. I was not born with the skills of networking and building LinkedIn connections; a plebeian like me has to work on developing these skills. To make things worse, I do not have a token CS or Rotman friend that can spare me some insider knowledge. I have to go through unimaginable hardships while building my networking portfolio.



Through my trial and errors, rejections and "*We regret to inform you*"s, I have perfected a 10 step plan that can turn any regular person into a LinkedIn chad – which I am sharing here to spare my fellow engineering friends from the pain I went through.

1. Prioritize connecting on LinkedIn when meeting new people

When I came to the realization that I do not have the amount of LinkedIn connections I was expecting to have by my 5th year, I proceeded to analyze the real life and online connections I have made that did not reach 3rd base (see *Appendix: The Networking Bases*). Disturbingly, I found that I am wasting far too many words on niceties. "*What about this crazy weather, huh?*" "*Shame about the Oilers, huh?*" I don't understand why I say these things instead of immediately getting straight to business, literally. I mean, who cares about the Oilers?

I can imagine that this is a sentiment held by many. For this reason, the first step of this plan aims to cut down your words to LinkedIn connections ratio. Instead of wasting time and energy on asking someone how their family is doing, consider asking if they have LinkedIn!



I do realize that this brings up another issue though. Before working on this plan, I've never asked strangers to connect on LinkedIn before. To all my fellow LinkedIn noobs, I recommend practicing the following step regularly.

2. Practice saying "Hi, I'm Charlie! Do you have LinkedIn? How do I spell your name?" in the mirror

Note: Do not say Charlie unless your name is also Charlie. Replace Charlie with your name.

3. Immerse yourself in corporate speech

To become a LinkedIn user, you must first understand LinkedIn lingo. The only way to become a successful LinkedIn user is to understand and participate in LinkedIn culture. Turn your Auto Caps back on and use proper punctuation! Imagine you are writing an email to your manager at all times. Now take this one step further and incorporate this to your daily speech. Consider peppering in ‘FYI’, ‘stakeholder value’, ‘meeting your KPIs’, and ‘never go for the low hanging fruit’, into your daily speech to get started.

4. Interact with self help and professional development posts



It's important to be a valuable connection on LinkedIn. Show others why you're worth connecting with and why you're better than their other connections! Interacting with self help posts is a very simple act that can make you a better connection. Always give these posts a thumbs up when you come across them, at the very least. More advanced LinkedIn users may leave a comment under these posts. If you are interested in leaving a comment, here are some good comments to try out: ‘Inspiring!’, ‘Many need to read this.’, ‘Thanks for this post, [poster name]’, ‘Well said, [poster name]’.

5. Stay behind after your classes and ask to connect with your professors and TAs

First class of the semester? Asking professors and TAs to connect on LinkedIn is the perfect way to introduce yourself, make conversation, and leave a lasting impression! Make sure to stare at them silently until they take out their phones and accept your request. Don't hesitate to look over their shoulders and make sure they actually accepted it.

6. Follow various companies and public figures and interact with their posts

This is another step that aims to improve your LinkedIn activity portfolio. Many strive for their ‘Connect’ button to turn into a ‘Follow’ button, but little

achieve this. Imagine someone having to verify that they know you to even



request a connection; It brings tears to my eyes! It is important to remember what we are working for and what we can learn from ones that have already

achieved LinkedIn royalty status. For this reason, consider following public figures, give their posts a thumbs up, and leave a short comment.

7. Do not shy away from posting your achievements on LinkedIn, no matter how small.

Did you reach Masters on League of Legends? Radiant on Valorant? Post it on LinkedIn! Many argue that non-professional achievements need to stay out of LinkedIn, but I argue otherwise. Any achievement, no matter how small, reflects qualities that can be translated into the workplace. For example, Masters on League of Legends or Radiant on Valorant shows perseverance, the ability to be quick on your feet, and a complete lack of self worth – something very valuable on the job.

8. Flaunt your work ethic. Show your dedication!

If you are ready to take step 7 to the next level, post about your character achievements! Not just physical ones. If you missed your brother's wedding to log some overtime hours, write a short piece about it. Let everyone know how you met your KPIs and exceeded expectations. Let people know what you learned about work-life balance. Not work and life, work-life. Because if work isn't your life, you're not ready to join LinkedIn.



9. Link your LinkedIn profile on all social media platforms

It's important to make your profile easily accessible to maximize the amount of possible connections. Don't hesitate to let people know that they can find your LinkedIn through “the link in bio” on any of your lesser social media sites. Consider adding ‘Connect with me on LinkedIn below ’ to your TikTok and/or Instagram bio. Advanced users may also attempt to attach this to their X (formerly known as Twitter) bio.

10. Advertise your LinkedIn everywhere!

This step is not for the faint of heart. If you are ready to take step 9 to the next level, print out flyers with a QR code linked to your LinkedIn profile to invite connections from all around the city! Maybe carry this QR code with you everywhere. I bet



that many tend to be apprehensive to connect with people on LinkedIn due to the process being too extensive. With this QR code, people will have no reason to not access your profile immediately and hit the connect button! Perhaps you could also consider paying to advertise your LinkedIn on various social media platforms. There are many ways to go about this. Any method is acceptable as long as it reaches a wide audience – especially those who would not have interacted with your LinkedIn through conventional means.

Bonus Step: Find me on LinkedIn as Caroline Tejowinoto!

Bonus Bonus Step: Don't ask why my LinkedIn is called that



Appendix: The Networking Bases

1st Base: A firm handshake

1.5th(?) Base: A firm handshake including a gentle hold of the elbow/upper arm with the other hand

2nd Base: Exchanging roles and places of employment

3rd Base: LinkedIn connection

Homerun: Endorsement of Skills



Bonus 5th Base: LinkedIn shoutout

Poetry and Fiction

SKULE™ Rules

'Confucius'

First, it's us
the SKULE™ in this school

We accept all
the engineer's hours
the engineer's classes
the engineer's lifestyle
We engineer it

Second, it's you
your hymns of past
offering naked sacrifices
of You and Lady Godiva
to the world

Third, it's me
my learned journey
gave me an engineer's challenge
and to me
journey's end
closer in 4 years + pey to closing

maybe
but discovery waited
for the

Fourth, it's connections
somewhere in us
serendipity found you and me
this time
at Engineering U of T



Harnessing You

Anonymous

Electrical harnessing

[ɪ'lek.t्रɪ.kəl 'ha:s.nəs]

n. The process of bundling and organizing wires and cables within an electrical system to transmit signals or power.

The wires sprawled before me like branches of a fig tree. My fingers worked steadily yet firmly as I tried to shove all three wires into the heat shrink tubing. Some were twisted, some braided. There was no way I could get all of them to fit. I tried to follow his instructions, but it felt harder than fitting an elephant into a pint.



I paused, taking a deep breath to ground myself. My heart was racing now. The task turned out to be a bigger challenge than I'd expected. I glanced up at him again. We made eye contact and I laughed out of frustration.

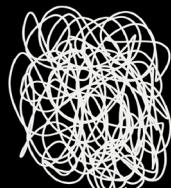
A little later, he leaned in. His voice was warm and confident as he checked in on how I was doing.

"*I see what you mean now,*" he said, handling the wires I'd just wrapped.

I nodded. I trusted him, but it turns out he made a mistake.

Still, I couldn't help but joke, "*I might resent you a little bit after this.*"

He started unwrapping the wires to fix his mistake and asked, "How much more would you resent me if I made you do this again?"



I knew one of us would have to do it again regardless, there is a task to be completed after all. However, there was something else in his voice—nervousness, maybe anxiety—something that had nothing to do with the harness.

At the time, I didn't pick up on it and jokingly replied, "*Just a little more. It'll only increase by a little bit.*"

Looking back, I wish I had said something different. I wish I'd told him I was joking and that I could never resent him.

He continued unbraiding the wires, and I said I could do it. He insisted on doing it, saying it was a tedious process and that he deserved it after the suffering he put me through.

I took the wires from his hands, telling him it was okay, that he should focus on something more important.

He said this is important also but handed off the task to me anyways. And then he spoke again. It was exaggerated but somehow also sincere.

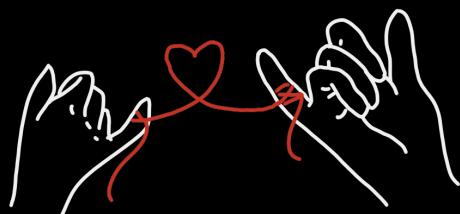
"*You're literally an angel,*" he said, his words soft yet warm in a way that made me stop in my tracks.

I nervously laughed and said, "*It's okay.*"

Again. Like an idiot.

My hand was still gripping the wire. For a moment everything around me blurred; my cheeks flushed, a wave of warmth rushing to my face. My heart skipped a beat.

The way he said it so effortlessly made me feel seen in a way I hadn't expected. My



pulse quickened. An electric spark ignited inside me. In that moment, I realized I wasn't just flustered by the harness or the task at hand. I was flustered by him.

I tried to focus again but my thoughts were tangled like the wires. A smile tugged at my lips. His words kept ringing in my ears, and I couldn't deny it any longer. I was falling for him—deeply, unexpectedly—and it hurt knowing it can never be.



Salutations

Anonymous

*Nothing is so beautiful,
as the sun shining out
towards a flower.*

*And the flower seeking,
with all its might,
to grasp this forever
binding light.*



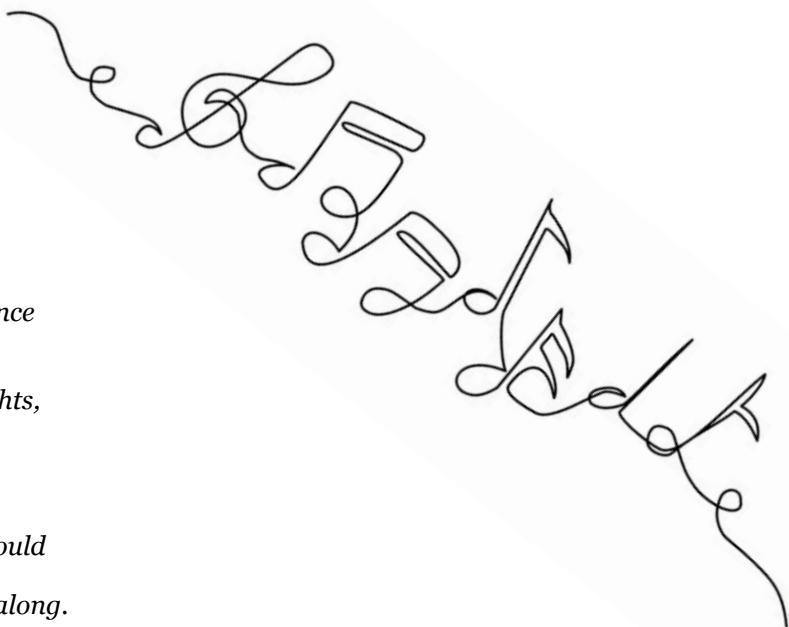
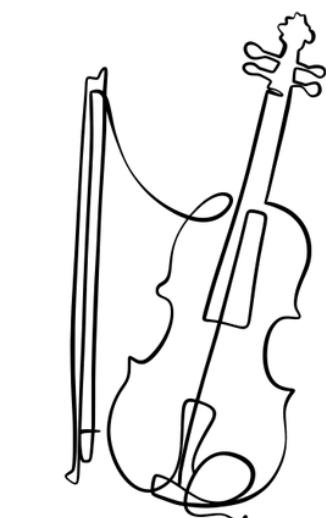
The Orchestra

Miracle Effiong

I have always been a soloist
Flouncing about with my lone concert violin
That played only notes that made the audience
Eager to exit the theatre with scowls
Placed neatly on their heavily made-up faces.

You were the only one to ever sit through my performance
And applaud when my bow struck the last note
And I gave my finest bow.
In the empty theatre, dimly illuminated by the stage lights,
You sat by me in silence
As I shared how my past lovers got me into music
And how they made me love it and hate it as dearly.
As if reading my innermost thoughts, you asked if
I was in search of an orchestra with instruments that could
string melody after melody in perfect harmony and an
audience that will wow and bow in tears as we played along.

I clung to your promise of harmony
A sonata not plagued with my familiar clashing of notes.
First, it was as gentle as the strike of the triangle
Light and quiet but strong enough to reverberate through the packed theatre.
Then it came as the peaceful whisper of the flutes
Airy and pure but intense enough to lead to realms of bliss foreign to my wandering
bow.
The audience never felt more alive
Their faces twinkled, and their eyes glistened like freshly polished strings
And I never felt more in love with the stage lights and applause
I never felt more in love with you.



My transition was so liberating and exhilarating
It was like a musical arrangement crafted by Mozart himself
One I could never get enough of
And so, I plunged neck deep into your tunes.
I held onto your chords for dear life
And you clung to me like the tenuto in Mozart's Violin Concerto
Our hearts pulsed together in symphony
Perfectly aligned with the intensity of the wind instruments
Until it wasn't.
My violin strings gave out
My bow snapped in two
And our beautiful melodies morphed into ear-screeching noises
Something ominous, something sinister
A dissonance like one I have never lived in.

I pushed, but you pulled harder
Like the back and forth of the violin bow on its strings.
My fingers bled, and my arms grew weary
I cried and begged
But you made me play on.
With an indifference so shocking
You kept me playing broken notes with rests
Filled with the sound of my quiet sobs and pleas.
You kept the audience entertained
Till the music came to an abrupt end
Like a crescendo laid to an untimely rest
And my violin was no more
And my music was no more
And I was no more.

Puzzles & Games

Welcome to the puzzles & games section of *The Cannon*! Newly added this year, this section is a place for you to try your hand at some Skule™-themed versions of 2025's most popular puzzles!

Here's the deal: the first 30 students to crack any one of our puzzles will score a special prize, because who says using your brain shouldn't come with perks?

How to Win:

- Solve at least ONE puzzle from this issue's collection.
- Stop by *The Cannon* table at the Clubs Fair with your completed puzzle in hand.
- Redeem your prize and bask in the glory of your superior problem-solving skills!

And if there's a puzzle you just can't crack? After clubs fair, we'll post the solutions on Instagram @cannon.mag. Happy puzzling!

Connections

Charlie Therence

Group words that share a common thread. The goal is to create 4 sets with 4 words each. Write your groups in the coloured boxes below, along with the thread linking all 4 words.

ECE	BUGS	PEDIATRICIAN	CORDIAL	
CLASSICAL	RESPECTFUL	CHEM	MODERN	
NANNY	CIVIL	INDUSTRIAL	WARS	
HEAD	DOULA	BAROQUE	POLITE	

Sudoku

Avi Gell

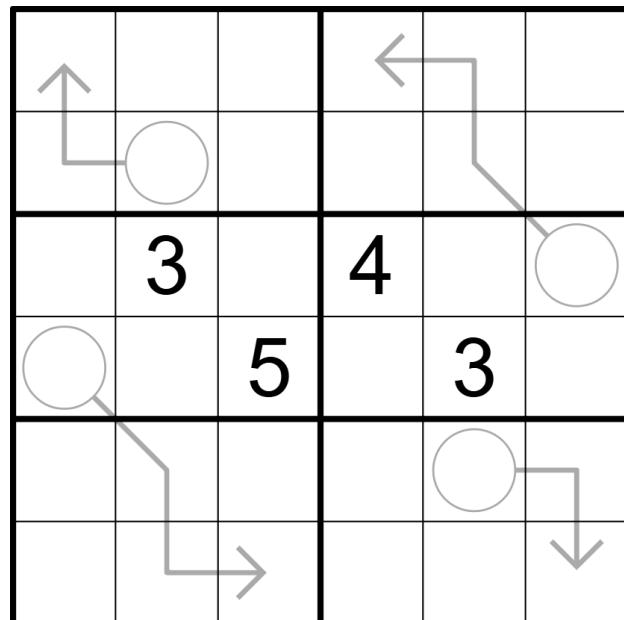
Normal sudoku rules apply: Place the digits 1-6 into the grid such that no digit repeats in any row, column, or 2x3 box.

Arrows: The digits along an arrow must sum to the digit contained within that arrow's circle. For example:



Notice how the "4" is placed in the centre of the circle, since along the arrow we have $1 + 3 = 4$.

Best of luck!



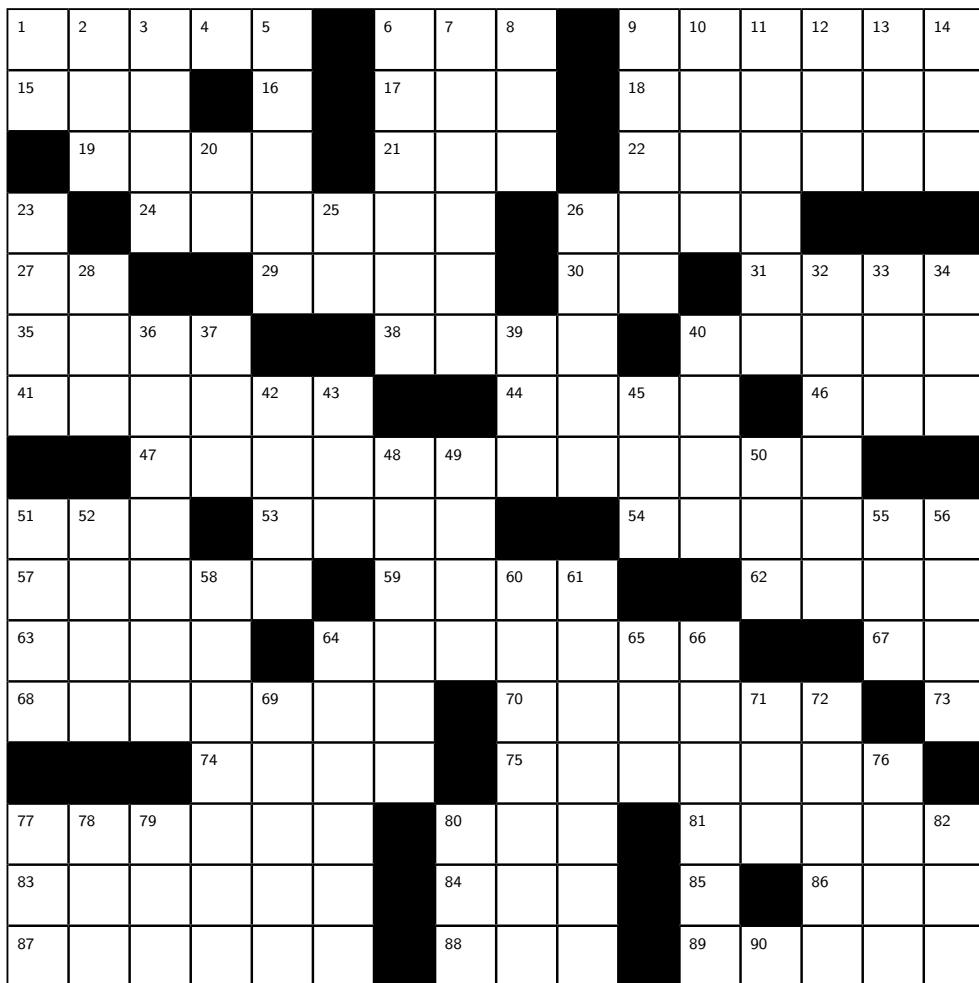
Connections Hint: Straightforward: NANNY // Medium: BAROQUE // Hard: RESPECTFUL // Insanely difficult: BUGS

The Crossword

Christina Pizzonia

ACROSS

1. Toronto NHL team (5)
6. Highway vehicle (3)
9. Blaise ___: mathematician and pressure unit namesake (6)
15. October, for short (3)
16. “__-time”, Skule™ slang for 10 min. past the hour (1)
17. “In a coming of ___ movie!” (3)
18. 8 carbon straight-chain alkane (6)
19. What's written in ESC180 (4)
21. To annoy or irritate (3)
22. Fixed in place by thin strips of metal, as stained glass often is (6)
23. Hydrogen symbol (1)
24. Skule™'s 2 smallest disciplines, abbr. (both start with “M”) (3,3)
26. Skule™ Nite venue, ___ House (4)
27. Canadian tag at sentence end (2)
29. Pb's common name (4)
30. Basic logic gate (2)
31. Greek letter “i” (4)
35. Casual singer Chappell ___ (4)
38. Inflatable plastic boat (4)
40. ‘Righty tight-y, lefty loose-y’ threaded object (5)
41. Circuit connection where current is equal across all components (6)
44. UofT Student Union abbr. (4)
46. VSCode or Eclipse, e.g. (3)
47. The publication you're currently reading (3,6,3)
51. German car company (3)
53. Cosmic gravitational wave detector in WA and LA, abbr. (4)
54. Element Os (6)
57. The underground plant parts (5)
59. Actresses Mendes & Longoria (4)
62. ___ of Green Gables, universally loved PEI protagonist (4)
63. Unit of area on farms (4)
64. Lookalikes or equivalents; (in electronics) “digitals” opposite (7)
67. Integrated circuit abbr. (2)
68. Teen activity for when parents aren't home (7)
70. Focused light beams in physics experiments (6)
73. Same as 23. across (1)
74. Network intrusion detection system, abbr. (4)
75. ___ Bus! — Skule™ Stageband's favourite song; also a TTC station on lines 1 & 2 (7)
77. Chef Mario ___, a memorable Charles Boyle (of *B99*) costume (6)
80. UofT accommodated testing organization (3)



81. Nimble; ___ development (5)

83. ___ional ___graphic (6)

84. Greek letter “t” (3)

85. Most abundant atmospheric element (1)

86. Direct memory access abbr. (3)

87. UTFR or UTCV drivers on race day (6)

88. Skule™ research day: Un___ (3)

89. The ultimate online game platform for PC/Mac (5)

11. Opposite of ‘dynamic’ (6)

12. Auto___, a mech's best friend (3)

13. Alkane suffix (3)

14. Light emitting diode abbr. (3)

20. Nintendo handheld console (2)

23. Female possessive pronoun (4)

25. Opposite of ‘you’ (2)

26. Chappel Roan hit ___ go! (3,2)

28. Gardening tool (3)

32. Start or beginning (6)

33. HIMYM's Architect Mosby (3)

34. Shock, or surprise (3)

36. Painting, sculpture, etc. (3, 4)

37. American healthcare institute (3)

39. We Are Young band (3)

40. Adders compute these (4)

42. Slimy water snakes (4)

43. Eng___; not Core-8 (3)

45. An icy treat: ___-cone (3)

48. Individuals on covert missions (6)

49. ___ Scotia; maritime province (4)

50. Reddit's interactive Q&A (3)

DOWN

1. “___ and behold!” (2)

2. UofT PEY help centre abbr. (3)

3. ‘Smallest’ unit of matter (4)

4. WT_?! (expletive) (1)

5. Strong metallic alloy (5)

6. Expensive fish egg (6)

7. Weekly planner (6)

8. The ___, Toronto jazz hotel (3)

9. Coordinates given by (r, theta) (5)

10. Small Taiwanese laptop brand (4)

51. Block RAM, abbr. (4)

52. Toronto modern art museum (4)

55. ‘University,’ for short (3)

56. Gears loving discipline (4)

58. “I'm just a ___ dirtbag, baby!” (7)

60. “Hey now, you're an ___” (3, 4)

61. Bubble made from soap use (4, 3)

64. Recorded sounds (6)

65. Gay-Straight Alliance, abbr. (3)

66. Common family car type (pl) (6)

69. Edmonton NHL team fan (5)

71. Offshore oil drilling structure (3)

72. Snippy, rude, curt (5)

76. ___ matter — what UofT will become to all of us! (4)

77. Now defunct company from Bell and Northern Electric merge (3)

78. Standard dry cell battery type (3)

79. Toronto transit system (3)

80. Eat, but in the past (3)

82. “Her” in Latin (3)

90. Uof___: Skule™'s home (1)



I spy ten little hearts, three kittens in all,
A sparkling moon, two happy snowballs;

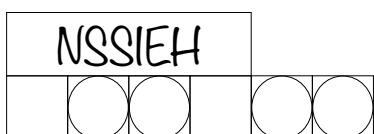
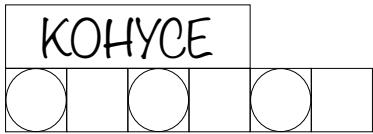
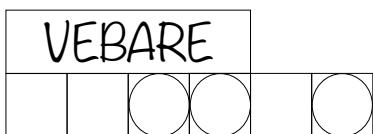


A dainty red bow, an old pipette pen,
Two watches, a crown and the number 10.

Jumble

Christina Pizzonia

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

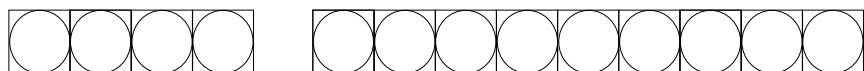


Now, arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the cartoon on the right:



THE ENGINEERS WHO DESIGNED THE CN TOWER CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE ---

Answer:



CRYPTIC CLUES

Avi Gell

How it works: The end of the clue is the definition or synonym of the answer you are trying to find, similar to a crossword clue. The start of the clue instructs you to use wordplay to construct the answer—through techniques like anagramming letters or combining new words together. For example:

S C A L E D

EXAMPLE: REASSEMBLED CD SALE MOUNTED (6)

If the words “CD sale” are reassembled, they might be anagrammed to SCALED, which matches the definition of “mounted.”

Give these next 3 clues a try!

CLUE 1: LUKE'S SCRAMBLING IN THE UOFT ENGINEERING COMMUNITY (5)

CLUE 2: ASTRONOMY HALLWAY CONTAINS LARGE LECTURE ROOM LOCATION ON CAMPUS (5)

CLUE 3 (HARD): SOUTH ASIAN RIVER EXPERIMENT SHOWS DISCIPLINE (10)

Jumble Hint: The CN tower is tall—only certain people can reach those heights!
Cryptic Clues Hint: (Clue 3): South Asian River + Experiment Sympathy = Discipline

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Each semester, The Cannon publishes a themed issue like this one. Email us at cannon@skule.ca if you're interested in contributing or if you have any questions!



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- Have rewarding, stimulating and motivating work.
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IN THIS ISSUE

- 04 Trying, Failing, and the Lie of Perfect Connection
Juneeta Vangala
- 06 The Space Between Us
Priyanka Madu
- 07 Everything in its Right Place
Annika Lam
- 08 Connections: Jenn's Anime Yap
Jenn Xu
- 09 Cool Places to get to by Public Transit
Alex Klaus
- 10 The Ethics of Being Barefoot in a Cubicle
Charlie Therence
- 11 The Best Time for Ontario High Speed Rail was 40 Years Ago.
The Second Best Time is Now.
Avi Gell
- 12 How ARPANET Built the Internet
Andy Derevyanko
- 15 A Poisonous Affair
Rauha Ahmed
- 17 An ECE's Guide to Healthy Relationships
Christina Pizzonia
- 18 My 10 Step Plan to Reach 10k Connections on LinkedIn
Charlie Therence