Hilltopics



We're back, baby..

Letter from the Editor: Robots are Coming for our jobs. Thank God. DESTINY ROSE MURPHY



I'm a Junior in Dedman College, so people are already asking me those pesky, stereotypical end-of-college questions like "Where do you see yourself in ten years?" and "What are you going to do with an English degree?" and, essentially, "How are you going to get a job and support yourself and not be homeless and starving in 3 months?" Often, if my questioner is older I get, "Aren't you afraid the robots are going to take all the jobs?" I've started responding "God, I hope so."

I should explain: I truly love my work. Law is a beautiful thing to me, and I would be perfectly happy to work in it until the day I die. Additionally, my wish for robot overlords probably won't come true, and I'll most likely have a job. I'm not just an English major, but a triple major, double minor. I'm also studying Political Science, Philosophy, Human Rights, Public Policy, and International affairs, which means I'm headed for law school, a PhD, and then (hopefully) a well-paying job after all that homework. Because my field is old and academic I'm not as likely to be replaced by a robot or an algorithm, which is unfortunate. Regardless of my love of the law, and my relative job security, I hope every day that my dream job gets stolen by AI. I hope machines take your job too, and your mom's, because your mom is a nice lady and she deserves a vacation.

We often forget that humans, not machines, are the ones who directly benefit when machines "take" jobs. Backhoes are machines that replaced human jobs; less people have to swing shovels in the heat now because of them. Calculators reduced the number of workers necessary for record keeping, and then computers did the same thing to an exponentially greater degree years later, and yet both calculators and computers have wildly increased our quality of life

(just ask any student in a stats class). So why do we fear the advent of some new technology that, by reducing the amount of work we need to do, will free us to be happier and more productive humans?

I think there's a short-, and a longterm answer. In the short-term we're afraid of losing our jobs because jobs give us money, we buy food with money, and food keeps us alive. So, if a machine takes my job it could also be taking my life. That fear is valid. Since the current growth of AI technology is exponential, as it was with past efficiency increasing technologies, there is going to be a number of displaced workers who suffer the consequences of industry evolution. Thankfully, this isn't America's first rodeo with this stuff (see: the industrial revolution). We know what high unemployment does to our country (hint: it's massive economic depression), and we know how to fix it (hint: it's redistribution of wealth, education, and public works). Will it be difficult? Yes. Will some people face economic struggles because of technology that later generations will learn to take for granted? Yes. Will the objectively easiest solution seem politically impossible right up until it's accomplished? Yes. Is that terrible? Yes, but it's also manageable, and because we know AI is on the horizon it's something we can plan for.

I think the long-term fear is more interesting, namely, what do we do when we don't have to work so damn much? In our current culture it is not uncommon to define oneself by one's occupation or career goals. Whole books have been written on how to attain a positive "work-life balance," as if work is somehow integral and equal to life. If we define ourselves by

our work, then what do we do if work is taken from us? Are we capable of functioning in a post-scarcity society wherein all jobs are autonomously filled, and humans are left to their own devices? Is waking up in the morning worth it if you have nothing you have to do? Sure, the first few years of perpetual retirement would be great, but with so many people finding meaning in life via the solving of problems and the accomplishment of tasks, at what point do you run out of sex and world-travelling and realize you miss having a job?

I think that problem, the problem of how a work-driven people survive in a workless society, is one of the greatest challenges we face. In a world where it is getting easier and easier to work less, and from home, the question of how to spend one's time becomes paramount and, to many people, frightening. Staring at empty hands and an empty inbox can be much more difficult than we sometimes realize.

If a work-driven, know-nothing student like myself may offer a suggestion: write. Dance. Draw. Climb things and then jump off of them with a backpack full of hope and parachute. For millennia humans have been dreaming of afterlives and utopias where one can wake up and just sing all day, and it's terrifying but we might just get there soon. If you're worried about losing your job first learn to code. Then, when you've got that out of the way and you know you'll be able to eat (at least until society is truly post-scarcity and work becomes completely automated), start writing that book you said you wanted to write. Talk to the handsome mystery in the library. Train for a triathlon. Submit to Hilltopics. You may just find a new reason to keep on living.

Raise your hand if you're not a racist. I know what you're thinking—is this a trap? It doesn't really matter because most folks predictably raise their hands and adamantly argue that they are the last person on this planet remotely close to a racist. Before I delve any further, let me preface this by saying that I am just as problematic as the next person and the person after that, and I must proactively work on being better. Therefore, as you continue to read, bear in mind that I started somewhere too, and I am not exempt from the criticisms I am about to make. What does it take to not be a racist? How is this measured and is it enough? Do you wish that people of color could talk a bit nicer, less aggressively, and metaphorically hold your hand as they explain why implicit forms of racism are just as bad? This is called respectability politics and it is most definitely an extension of white supremacy. Yes, here's to white supremacy. May we identify it and may we dismantle it. We have to stop treating white supremacy and racism like a monster dwelling under the bed or in our closets. These ever-so prevalent problems are thriving amongst us in broad daylight, oftentimes wearing various masks that range from seemingly harmless Tone Policers to Colorblind-Civil- Discourse-Enforcers. Remember when Texas Vanguard, a white supremacy group, came to our campus last semester and spread messages like: "Reclaim America. No more tolerance, no more diversity. The only solution is White Revolution"? Immediately following the non-isolated incident, our campus was quick to denounce the hate speech and advocated for more civil discourse. By the way, I want to emphasize the non-isolated aspect of all this, because where there is smoke, there is fire. Dismantling white supremacy necessitates an understanding of nuance and a commitment to unlearning problematic behaviors in all its uncomfortable unpacking. Have you ever taken the time to really unpack what civil discourse even means? Who it protects and what it perpetuates? If not, there's no better time than the present.

Also last year, SMU students posted flyers that listed reasons "why white

Ally is a Verb
JESSICA CHONG

women shouldn't date black men," and then another round of flyers stating why they should. Accountability for these racially harmful incidents is a nonnegotiable given, yet punishment for these acts only addresses the problem on a superficial level, permitting the root of racism's pathological pervasiveness to "fester like a sore" (Langston Hughes, "A Dream Deferred"). Respectability politics perpetuates a hierarchical binary that equates whiteness as the normative positive default and nonwhiteness as a transgression against civility. Something to think about the next time you witness a person of color being chastised for being too angry and too emotional in response to racist incidents. School is a place for engaged learning and critical thinking, so I am suggesting that maybe it's time to reevaluate the coded racism that is intrinsically tied to respectability.

In his book, Look, a White!: Philosophical Essays on Whiteness, George Yancy explores the power dynamics of racial discourse in a predominantly white university, focusing on the "anger and defensiveness that white students undergo when

faced with the question of their own whiteness and how it implicates them in white power structures" (Yancy, 51). Whether that superiority is moral or institutionalized or something in between, respectability politics benefits the group with power (white people) while invalidating and suppressing the feelings and expressions of people of color. America's love affair with tone policing places a behavioral stressor on people of color to respond to harm in a way that centers white fragility. This upholds racism. This is the reality for one too many students of color on campuses all over our country.

As long as the unwillingness to acknowledge implicit racism in all of its pervasive forms takes precedence over decentering whiteness and allowing ourselves to feel uncomfortable, respectability politics will take up space on campuses like SMU where the superficial appearance of inclusiveness does more harm than good. Phrases like "respectful" and "civil discourse" dichotomizes the ability to say something racist with a tone of civility against the justified expressions of the group being harmed. It breeds a pedagogical environment that



prioritizes tone over content and which perpetuates the racist myth that people of color are aggressive and incapable of being civilized. Contrary to the idea that civil discourse and respectability promotes a safe platform for people to exchange meaningful racial discourse, Yancy quotes Zeus Leonardo and Ronald K. Porter to argue that "mainstream race dialogue in education is arguably already hostile and unsafe for many students of color whose perspectives and experiences are consistently minimalized" (Yancy, 58).

Racial discourse is already skewed to accommodate white folks and their expectation that racial discourse needs to be made palatable for their consumption, and respectability operates by diverting

why something is being said with them (knowingly or not). the how-that is to say, whether something appears respectful or not. As I write this on Valentine's Day, Many students of color can tell you the countless times we've been silenced in class for this very reason; respectful and civil discourse constitutes a narrative where "whites position themselves as its positive term" and "defines nonwhites as 'different' or 'deviant" (Yancy, 164). The unwillingness address microaggressions and respectability breeds a culture of racism that continues to persist uncontested, while proactively silencing policing those who have every right to resist the confines of appearing respectful and civil towards the very

attention away from who, what, and institutions and people who oppress

I just want to say that roses are red, violets are blue, ally is a verb; it's something that you do. And, in the words of Innosanto Nagara from A is for Activist, a delightful human rights A-Z book for all ages: "A is for Activist. Advocate. Abolitionist. Ally. Actively Answering A call to Action. Are you An Activist?"



The Briefalist Papers¹

No. 1

Concerning the Woeful State of Affairs and Its Solution

 \mathbf{I} t is not unlike the nature of man to seek liberty in whichever form, whether it be civil for the animation of those limbs, political for an extension to all those members, or religious for all components of that great apparatus, in order that he may be so pleased and easily disposed to find the comfort which all such forms must afford. It must be admitted that man in his zeal has sought liberty in ever various and surprising areas, and has so often prided himself on his ability to liberate all things at all times. However, experience with his iron rod has beaten down that fatal expectation once so common and dearly held that liberty can be pursued for its own sake, and pursued in the absence of other ends. Such a pursuit has unfortunately brought about man's great discomfort, for unchecked freedom exposes him to the dangers of his peers and the elements themselves.

If there ever were another end which

man has pursued with equal passion, it is the end of order. Just as man has long sought the alluring pleasure of freedom, he has equally longed for a sense of security which only the ideal of order can provide. Here too, has experience truncated man's expectations. Our predecessors rightly fled the oppressive and rigid order of previous generations, who had distorted the ideal so that all of man's capacity was restricted, muted, and in a woeful state of perpetual discomfort.

 ${f I}$ t can therefore be said that the state of affairs in this subject thus far has been most dreadful. The history of man has been a tragic vacillation between extremes. On the one hand, man has in his honorable pursuit of liberty contorted that noble ideal into shameful licentiousness; his pursuit of space in which to find comfort has led him into a void. On the other, his no less noble pursuit of order has

distorted into a desire for a security so absolute that it creates an oppressive bind which affords no room to move.

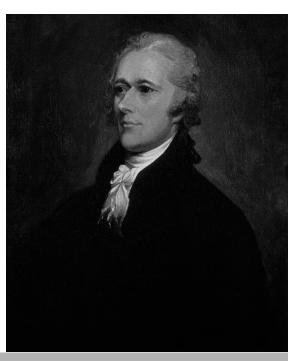
To remedy these effects, I and my peers propose the great and blessed UNION of these two ideals, those of liberty and order, so long thought to be antagonistic in their natures. This is the only way to ensure both the protection and comfort of man's most sacred condition. Though I am sure that the chief subject of this inquiry has become obvious, and that my astute readers have discerned the subject of these papers, I shall render the matter explicit so that any resemblance of confusion may be dispelled.

 ${
m Y}$ ou have no doubt guessed correctly, dear brothers, for we must indeed adorn boxer briefs! That is the only means by which we can escape the wanton liberty of boxers and the

oppressive restriction of briefs. By so combining the spacious compartments of the former with the elastic structure of the latter, we can avoid the ills of time past and at last realize that elusive comfort which man has sought for so long. Since this ingenious solution will inevitably spark controversy, even amongst the most benevolent and enlightened of minds, subsequent papers will redress all grievances and resolutely defend the formation of such a UNION.

-Boxerius Briefalis (Alexander McNamara)

1. Based, in no small part, on the style and structure of Federalist Papers No 1,9, and 10



Why You Should be Eating a Crumpet Right Now Andrew Roy Sneed

If our founding fathers had intellectual consistency then you'd be reading this article under a billowing Union Jack with a cup of tea in one hand and a biscuit in the other.

Before I explain, let's take a quick trip from the American Revolution to the American civil rights movement. When thinking through the civil rights movement, many intuitively favor Dr. King's non-violent methods over Huey P. Newton's call to arms. People bestow this favor not on mere efficiency, but also on an intrinsic moral ground. Dr. King argued for the latter saying: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral; begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it." Since Huey P. Newton did not adhere to religion, it is not surprising that his cry for murder does not align with the teachings of the Bible. On the other hand, we should expect Dr. King to align his methods with the book he taught from every Sunday morning. And indeed he did. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul writes, "Repay no one evil for evil, but

give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Later, Paul touches on citizenship writing: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Paul wrote this to Christians suffering under the murderous reign of Emperor Nero. Yet, amidst the death and violence suffered by both African-Americans and Roman Christians, Dr. King's and Paul's followers chose non-violence. They heeded the Bible's commands and remained subject to their governing authorities.

Now, let's revisit the American revolution. Contrasting with the evils suffered by African-Americans and Roman Christians, the founding fathers fail to cite government-ordained killings as a single reason for secession in the Declaration of Independence. Instead, a majority of the mentioned grievances fall under a similar vein to the oft-repeated phrase "taxation without representation."

That is, disagreement with [insert government-ordained action here] and discontent with the colonies' lack of [insert form of government representation here]. In addition to the previously mentioned Bible passages, Jesus' teachings in the gospel of Matthew seem especially relevant in this instance. In response to someone asking Jesus whether taxes should be paid to a tyrannical Caesar, Jesus took a coin and asked, "whose likeness and inscription is this?" Of course it bore Caesar's. "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," Jesus said, "and to God the things that are God's." Seems pretty plain. Yet, the founding fathers still insisted on wielding the Bible in crooked and roundabout ways to justify their violent revolution against their government. This violence seems increasingly petty when we consider that, in addition to suffering frequent death (on a scale far greater than that of the colonists), Roman Christians and African-Americans suffered a similar lack of government representation—yet they still avoided violence. We expect Dr. King to have aligned his actions with the Bible he professed, and he did. I posit that we should hold the founding fathers, and every God-fearing participant of the revolutionary war, to a similar standard. I hope you will not find it hard to grant that a majority of the founding fathers adhered to the Bible and professed the transcendence of Biblical wisdom. And if the founding fathers had held themselves to the same consistency as Dr. King did, then you would probably be spinning a Smiths record right now while emphatically uttering, "God save the queen!"

In keeping with American patriotism, many will react to this argument à la Charlie Kelly screaming, "Don't tread on me! Right now you are treading all over me!" But before you drop this article and tread all over it, I would like to kindly explain that my aim is not to attack the United States. I love it; I am very grateful

John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, 1786–1820, oil on canvas, 20 inches x 31 inches / 53 x 78.7 cm (Yale University Art Gallery). In "John Trumbull, the Declaration of Independence" by Dr. Bryan Zygmont. Accessed February 15, 2018.

 $\label{lem:https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-americas/british-colonies/early-republic/a/trumbull-declaration-of-independence$

for the many privileges it has afforded me. But, I also must insist that the ends don't justify the means, and if intellectual consistency were practiced then we should probably be a giant colony, and you should be eating a crumpet right now.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 67.
- 2. English Standard Version Bible (Minneapolis: Crossway, 2016).
- 3. Ibid.
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. I anticipate that some will shirk my point in favor of retorting that, "blah blah blah the founding fathers weren't Christians blah blah deist blah blah." This isn't relevant because all I'm claiming is adherence to the Bible, but I'll respond. Many of them were Christians, many were deists (in some sense), and many fell somewhere in between. In your own time you can find the numerous quotes from many founding fathers professing or eluding to a belief in an active God.
- 6. Evidenced by their frequent use of Biblical passages to justify their revolution.
- 7. And the United States would have also disallowed slavery from the start.
- 8. Although it seems like attacking one's country (even violently) can be justified for any number of reasons, so long as this attack ends up producing something that people generally like.
- 9. Another debatable issue that I will breeze over in a angeringly flippant way. I can't delve into this debate within this article, much less this footnote, for obvious reasons. Sorry.



Dandelion is Dead

NICOLE KISER

Last year, Crayola retired Dandelion from its crayon collection, kicking out one of only two shades of yellow in the entire 24-count box. Scientists at Oregon State University were experimenting with materials for use in electronics and accidentally discovered a blue pigment they named YinMn (The Associated Press, ABC News). YinMn became the inspiration for the crayon to replace Dandelion.

The crayon was named by popular vote on Crayola's website. Voters chose from cutesy names like "Blue Moon Bliss" and "Reach for the Stars" (ABC News), with the punny "Bluetiful" winning out. The abominably adorable crayon brings the number of blue hues in the box up to six, a full 25% (a quarter!) of the coloring capacity of the classic 24-count Crayola box ("Crayola to retire color").

This is not to say children do not understand the nuance of color. Will of Stranger Things drew a masterful rainbow rocket ship. But imagine the finesse lost when there is only one hue of yellow available! Picture Picasso going through his Blue Period, but every canvas is the same color because he only had one shade. Luckily, that would never happen because Crayola seems to deeply care about the color blue. Any grade-schooler with a 24-count will be able to color his own Blue Period portrait with blue, blue green, blue violet, cerulean, indigo, and, now, Bluetiful!

Dandelion is dead. The golden hue of my childhood hopes and dreams, the vivid hue of my innocent wishes was kicked out the door before it even turned thirty (Davis). When my dad showed me the article announcing Dandelion's retirement, I told him I was going to write a strongly worded letter to Crayola. I knew I would not. The strength of

feeling I had about a crayon was what one would call "admirable and absurd." I felt helpless in my singularity and ridiculous in my intent to save a crayon when I, and everyone else, had so much else to which we must attend.

It was not really about losing a shade of yellow in a 24-count box anyway. It was not about a crayon becoming more famous than I ever would, or retiring long before I ever will. It was about losing a piece of my past I would not be able to get back. Somehow, I was prepared to lose pieces of my childhood as an adult, but I was not prepared for those losses to make the paper.

I turned 20 in December and, with my birthday, came the flu. Stuck in a CareNow for hours waiting for service, I watched the same menu screen of a movie run over and over again on a terrible television in the corner. It took forever, but eventually I remembered what movie it was. Despite its horrible quality, I recognized the menu screen of Brother Bear, a movie I loved as a kid, but had not seen since. I realized that, though I had moved past the things I had loved as a child, I would always remember them. Dandelion did not die in vain, but had become a treasured childhood memory.

I had become content in the loss of Dandelion and the subsequent invasion of Bluetiful—until my father sent me a photograph of the crayon mascot they were using to sell Bluetiful. And it—actually she, according to her biography on the official Crayola website—had eyelashes ("Meet Bluetiful"). Crayola, be prepared for a very strongly worded letter.

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IMAGE: CRAYOLA'S BLUETIFUL

Now for a change of pace... Nihilistmas: An Excerpt

ALEC PETSCHE

An excerpt from Nihilistmas, by Alec Petsche, a play about Christmas, family, hatred, and all the horrible problems that mixing them can cause.

A what?

UNCLE CLOVIS:

UNCLE CLOVIS:

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Come on Tommy; you know I don't mean anything by it.

Relax kid, you know I don't give a shit.

Hey, be cool fruity, it's funny, I'm just

THOMAS:

MARY:

So, Thomas, how's Matt?

I'd really prefer it if you used a different word.

Well if you don't mean anything by it, then you won't mind using a different word.

MOM:

Mary! I forgot that we still need to hang up stockings!

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Come on, don't make a whole thing out of this. It's not a big deal, and we're all friends here.

THOMAS:

He's fine. He's doing Christmas with his family in Mexico. He says hi.

THOMAS:

kidding.

THOMAS:

THOMAS: Are we though?

Then stop kidding.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

MOM:

MOM reaches into a stray box and pulls out several oversized stockings with names stitched on them.

I was just fooling, it's not a big deal.

THOMAS:

Clovis, why don't you help me with... why don't we go to the kitchen?

I don't see what the big deal is-

MOM:

You don't get to decide that.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

MOM:

Come on everybody! Time to hang up our stockings!

Let's not talk about politics on Christmas.

MOM:

THOMAS:

Who's Matt?

Politics?

UNCLE CLOVIS stands and follows her to the kitchen. POP-POP turns to

THOMAS.

Clovis, come on.

MOM:

MOM: You know what I mean.

Really, it's no trouble.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

THOMAS:

POP-POP:

THOMAS: My boyfriend.

Yes, I do.

You know, a queer saved my life in the war.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Right, I forgot all that drama when you told us you were a fruit-cake.

MOM tensely begins hanging up the stockings.

In the kitchen, MOM slaps UNCLE CLOVIS as the lights go down in the

THOMAS:

the Creative Writing Corner

living room.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Shit! It's not like I called him a faggot or anything. Anyway he's not even really a queer, he still likes girls.

MOM:

Shut up Clovis.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

What did I even do? I was having a reasonable debate about language.

MOM:

I don't know and I don't care; you made him uncomfortable and you're going to apologize to him.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

For "fruit cake?" You sobbed when he came out of the closet. You even called me! That's a sign of desperation.

MOM:

I didn't say I approved. I said you're going to apologize. Do you know how many times I've seen him in the last two years? Three. I've seen my son three times in the twenty-four months since he came out.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Are you trying to tell me you visited Mom and Dad more than that at his age?

MOM:

Are you trying to claim that we had a good relationship with our parents?

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Ummm...no?

MOM:

Exactly! I invited you here to prove that I could make it work. That I could do the

one thing Mom never could. A real family Christmas with all of us here, even you.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

That's messed up Margie.

MOM:

Of course it's messed up! We're messed up! We were raised by an idiot and a lunatic! But I did a slightly better job with my kids, and you're ruining that by bringing up all of this bullshit with his little experiment with other boys into the light.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

You really need to learn to let this shit go, Margie.

MOM slaps UNCLE CLOVIS again and yanks him close to her face by his collar.

MOM:

Shut! Up! I need my kids in my life. And I don't approve of his lifestyle, but I keep that to my god damn self, and I'm not going to let your need to be a disruptive jackass ruin my Christmas. I don't know why saying "fruit-cake" hurt his feelings so much, but I don't give a shit if he says you have to talk in the third person. If he does, then you'll go out there and say "Clovis is very sorry." Got it?

UNCLE CLOVIS nods, turns around, and grabs a liquor bottle as he enters the living room. CAROL listens intently to POP-POP; THOMAS and MARY are trying not to listen to him out of discomfort.

POP-POP:

-so all I'm saying is, I know that the bonds between two men can be-

UNCLE CLOVIS clears his throat. THOMAS, MARY, CAROL, and POP-POP all look at him.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

I'm sorry. I was out of line. It's been a rough year, and it's been hard for me to think straight.

No one is impressed.

THOMAS:

Hey, it's fine. After all, I never think straight.

It's not fine, but UNCLE CLOVIS laughs and sits down.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

Oh, so it's okay for you to make jokes but not me?

THOMAS:

Yes.

UNCLE CLOVIS:

There we go man; just when I was starting to think I was the only one in this family with any wit.

Fire Kevin Wang

How holy thrives your presence that enthralls the otherwise cold corner of my heart where love's fire still burns but is after all a dwindling pit of passions past. Your art of beauty, scent of spring, you do know; yet, do you foresee my dying fire's leap?

The coldest summer night, with the heartless net, upon me draws the mist of a lonesome heap of dying love, of fading thoughts, of lore forgotten. I — my heart undone — caress the flame that traps my dreams upon the floor to feel your lips through my weak heart confess. Indeed, the flame does grow and show your smile, but I, bequiled, put my own eyes on trial.

-2/10/2018

Birds and a Bee Ashni Pabley

1517 2128 I do know I didn't know I didn't know I wasn't ready I'm still not ready I am ready He didn't tell me "He's just a loser" His grey eyes show me everything Let ME tell you the The gaps grow bigger Let's do it together We can't pull the The birds and a bee Can you hear me trigger We should die I'm the only lover simultaneously Maybe he could save 1823 Slowly I didn't know I wasn't ready He told me things Couldn't tell you why Not supposed to tell My hands feel bloody



Mountains And Valleys Oil on Canvas 18 x 24 inches Stejara Iulia Dinulescu

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