



Indiscernible Elements: Calcium

Korynn Newville

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(80pp)

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The abstract graphic novel Indiscernible Elements: Calcium meditates on decay and natural order with ethereal beauty.

In Korynn Newville's graphic novel *Indiscernible Elements: Calcium*, a haunting cycle of decay and renewal is evoked through depictions of calcium in natural and urban forms.

Here, the equilibrium of natural order is examined through the perspective of the element of calcium. Across artistic mediums including poetry, sculpture, photography, and line art, calcium's presence is embodied in a wide array of haunting manifestations. First, the natural geological condition of the element is engaged, then its presence in living organisms such as trees, then humans and the urban metropolis. Humanity, in this light, is viewed as both invader and natural addition to the eternal rhythm.

The overall effect of these representations, in their gradual shift from one form to another, is of a smooth and inevitable entropy. One form passes into the next, but the underlying element remains consistent and eternal. Within these depictions, a narrative begins to form about the delicate and essential balance of birth and death, renewal and decay. The transience of any one form is unavoidable, yet the elements that people are composed of endure evermore.

This is a fascinating, cryptic book. Its illustrations are enigmatic, but the living quality of calcium and its ghostly, dynamic presence persist in every medium employed. Handwritten asides from calcium's perspective are a highlight; their chaotic layout, occasional illegibility, and elusive meanings construct a powerful image of a living consciousness. Likewise, the line-art sketches are complex and spectral; the occasional difficulty of understanding what the illustrations represent succeeds in eroding the boundaries between the different forms of calcium. Tree roots can be mistaken for a geological vein or a human arm; the timeless unity of the element transcends the temporary vessels.

However, some devices lack such clarity of purpose. The handwritten asides are sometimes duplicated on their subsequent pages, with the only change being that they are flipped upside down. This recurring image serves a vague purpose and disrupts the pace of the short narrative. The clarity and power of the piece are also disturbed by a lengthy author's note at the end of the book that explains, in extensive detail, Newville's artistic process, justifications, the significance of the work, and the practical minutiae of its creation. In a work so haunting and enigmatic, the sudden pulling back of the curtain to reveal the underlying mechanisms drains the project of much of its resonance. The multitudinous potential readings of the work are narrowed to a single point with retroactive authority.

A meditation on decay and the natural order, the abstract graphic novel *Indiscernible Elements: Calcium* has an ethereal beauty.

SEB FLATAU (April 3, 2023)

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