Orientation

—James Zhao

Second week back from an oddly-timed break of bunnies, bilbies and barbecues. This usually leaves one feeling a little lethargic, but luckily the daylight savings hour you’ve been keeping in your pocket since October has instilled you with newfound energy.

You breathe in the not-so-crisp morning Carlton air, nodding a cheerful “G’day” to an old, balding, and therefore rather typical-looking mathematician as you pass by the Richard Berry building. Perhaps expecting an aloof yet strangely enlightened silence, you are surprised by a very polite “Howdy” as he walks off, presumably pondering incomprehensible thoughts.

Unable to pinpoint a sudden feeling of unease, you continue on the laborious trek to your early morning class, detouring through the glass doors on your left to grab a speedy, stomach-sating snack. Nibbling on your newly-acquired and very yummy treat, you head westwards past a cluster of commerce students grumbling loudly about lecture slides, print credits and the Yankees’ latest loss to those unbearable upstart Rays.

You emphatically correct them on their tasteless choice of sport, observing to yourself that this asphalt path would make a perfect cricket pitch were it not for the rather steep slope. Your musings take you to an intersection of paths before you realise that the downhill and hence munching-friendly route has led you in completely the wrong direction. Placing food consumption on hold to scan your surroundings, a suspicious-looking chemist in a blue lab coat catches your attention as she drags a large container on a small and very awkward trolley.

Curiosity triumphing over punctuality, you follow her at a distance. To your disappointment, she slowly but surely takes it to the nearby liquid nitrogen tank, filling it up in a haze of white mist which reminds you of a pleasant childhood fantasy involving you, the annoying kid next door, and a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher.

Your adventure prematurely over, and realising that you are now rather late, you make a quick dash for class—left at the bank, right at the courtyard, in through the doors and up the stairs to your right, arriving at your lecture just in time to plonk yourself in the last remaining back-row seat.

As you stuff the rest of your breakfast into your mouth, you admire the gentle slope of the room, as well as the gentleman for whom the room is named, smiling softly in a portrait hanging on the wall. What an endearing old professor he must have been.