

if the corpse flower could speak

By Raquel Olvera

*The titan arum is a flowering plant, native to Indonesia, that fully blooms once every seven to ten years for only 24 to 36 hours. It takes a decade for a corpse flower to gather enough energy to begin its cycle. When its petals finally swell out under the night sky, it mimics the exact smell of decomposition to attract its pollinators — carrion beetles and flesh flies. In 2015, 75,000 people came to the Chicago Botanic Garden to watch the bloom event of a single titan arum.*

The seed of myself is in the ground.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

Waiting.

And then — from the seemingly sleepy, still earth — the dirt breaks open.

Thousands and thousands and thousands of people come from miles and miles and miles — gathering to watch my bloom event. Some people count it the miracle of their lifetime to witness my unfurling.

What a thing - to smell like death at the moment you are most alive - to be so charged with the heat of the whole world that your body is a memento mori. A reminder that you are beholder of a moment so brief that your own perfume is the scent of ending.

I wonder if they know I am God's favorite smell.