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MAG

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COVER • QIANXUAN CHEN • *Secular Shackles* • Acrylic on Paper • 8 x 11 • 2020

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PULP MAG aims to be a safe, inclusive space for emerging artists of all types. We want to give a platform to unique voices with important stories to tell, no matter the medium. We believe in the importance of artist recognition, exposure, paying our creative talent, and in building a strong community to hold the work. At pulp MAG, we especially appreciate the avant-garde; we are ready to push the boundaries of art with you.

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ISSN 2291-1294 • print ISSN 2291-1308 • online

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The Botany of Loss

The Botany of Loss

September 1948, Fallingbommel, Germany

Called wildflower or houndstongue –
it depends on your translation.

Like ruby drupelets cupped in leafy stars, nebulas
grown by a rail line – a vine to the North Sea.

You plant them in the steel

casement of a rail car window.

Ready to be sent like comets arching

across a frigid horizon, like they might

connect brother to brother and sister,

even in a country only read about.

To Canada, not back;

severance, like a torn photograph,

only adds to the story.

Like the dormouse tucked under a bench

in your brother's second-hand suitcase,

in a nest formed by the floral cotton

of your mother's Sunday dress,

you send all you have to this place

you may never see.

Ignore the burs along the tracks, the still deer, the ruby

blossoms hanging from its frozen mouth.

Ingest the stalks, lap them up quickly

if it, like the train, means possibility.

Like the houndstongue, whether

it's worth the risk will depend on your translation.

Sheila Van Delft
Acrylic on Canvas
30" x 40"
2019

Listen



Milagro

Silvia busies herself flipping corn flour tortillas on the old, oil-stained stovetop. She glances back at her kids sitting on the fake laminate floor; Valeria at six years old, Fernando at two. The little girl entertains her brother by poking at his nose and squeezing his chubby feet while singing a familiar lullaby, tapping along in her huaraches.

*A la puerta del cielo
Venden zapatos
Para los angelitos
Que andan descalzos.*

*Duérmete niño
Duérmete niño
Duérmete niño
Arrú arrú.*

Silvia smiles to herself, focusing back on the stovetop. She's already hammered out several stacks, remaining warm in palm baskets. Just out the small window she can see the other members of her family cracking open the three large pits in the backyard, the smell of fresh barbacoa, which had been cooking all night long, wafting through the neighbourhood. A deep inhale of the aromas warns her that a crowd would soon be showing up at their door.

Every Saturday night they prepare a hearty portion of cabrito to be slow roasted in shallow stone pits, lined with agave leaves to seal in the beautiful flavours. The family makes good money selling every Sunday morning before church. Served with a tortilla and fresh pico de gallo, it's a highly anticipated breakfast. The Inclán household is known for serving the best barbacoa in town, Silvia's tortillas sealing the deal.

Abuelita shuffles in, her seemingly permanent, sweet smile on display.

“¿Quieres frijoles, tita?” Silvia motions to a pot on the back burner with her chin.

“¿Vienes a la iglesia?”

Silvia frowns. She is asked the same question every Sunday. Their whole family attends

mass together in the stuffy chapel of their Oaxaca town, except for Silvia. Sometimes they take her kids along, but she has no time to waste in prayer anymore after what happened. She's convinced herself now that if she can't see it, feel it, or hear it, then it must not exist. She has never experienced anything in life to convince her there's a higher power, nor will she ever.

"No, tita."

"No, ella dice." Abuelita lightly punches her shoulder before dipping her tough fingers into the beans and plopping some in her mouth, "La próxima semana."

She waddles away with a chuckle. Silvia can't help but smile at the woman's simple innocence, watching her as she joins the others outside. Her family more or less accepts her decision to step away from religion, but they all remain hopeful. After all, she's never told anyone her reason for doing so.

There are already neighbours trickling about, some even helping remove the agave from the pits. Tío is out there chatting some ears off with a beer in his hand, and it sounds like Silvia's brother has just started singing Cielito Lindo with his guitar to attract more hungry mouths.

"Mamá. I have a secret to tell you."

Silvia looks back at Valeria with a smile, eyes crinkling as she watches Fernando crawling off to follow the family mutt.

"Oh? What is it, mi gordita?" She continues pressing more tortillas, occasionally glancing up to watch the steam blow from the hot pits as trays are set out for separating the meat.

"Jesús is sitting beside me."

Silvia chuckles, shaking her head before a thought interrupts her. Surely that can't be true, right? She's doubtful but finds herself curious. She risks a glance back, finding only Valeria pulling at the strings of her colorful huipil. Silvia stares dumbly for a moment, an odd feeling in her chest. Did she really expect to see some grown man in her house?

She shrugs it off, quickly pulling a tortilla before it burns. She's a fool for even humoring the thought. Why would 'the Son of God' appear to someone he's hurt so badly? Valeria's just playing, using her imagination. Kids say random things.

"He just told me a secret," the little girl continues, sounding very excited. Silvia chooses

to play along and let her child keep going. It can't hurt, even if it *is* about a sensitive topic. She asks what secret Valeria was told, mixing more masa in a large bowl.

"He said mamá has two ángeles up in heaven."

Silvia pauses. "Does he now?"

"Sí. One to watch over me, and one to watch over Fer. Jesús says they are our ángeles guardianes."

"¿Están estos ángeles...aquí también?"

"Sí, mamá. They're standing beside you."

A soft 'oh' is all Silvia can muster. She glances to both sides, finding nothing but the empty kitchen. A shiver runs up her spine. Surely Valeria is just pulling her leg. Pure imagination. Silvia needs to stop this conversation and focus on getting everything ready, but at the same time she's growing too curious for her own good. Valeria can't possibly be making this up, can she?

"Guess what? I know their names too."

She needs to end this, it isn't healthy. She knows it's only going to hurt, but deep down she needs to know.

"Dime, niña."

The little girl points to either side of her mother. "That one's name is Javier, and that one's name is Amancia."

Silvia's heart skips a beat. Her face pales, and her legs feel weak. Tears immediately form in her eyes as she grips the counter to hold her weight, sucking in a strangled breath. The bowl of masa tumbles to the floor, some of her family members outside look up. She barely hears her little girl calling her name.

No. That's *impossible*.

She's never told anyone about her miscarriages.

Marieken Cochius
Ink on Handmade Paper
12" x 17"
2018

Vocals



Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate

Dresses made of *sampaguita* petals,
I pose for photos with girls three years
younger than me. The church's circular
stained-glass windows watch us
from atop this hill
in the middle of the city. I wait
for Confirmation in the courtyard belly,
my sixteen-year-old body out of place,
caught between robin calls and Christian Psalms,
we file into pews while the choir sings.

Inside, my hands attached to plastic stems
stretch out to receive Our Daily Bread.
Young brides dressed in white
petals, we line up, walk down
the aisle toward the altar,
Body of Christ
held up like the sun —

Mother tells me I grew in a garden,
bloomed between tulips, opened
when she whispered my name:
Mariah Moriah Holy Mary
Mother of God, *pray for us sinners*
Holy Mountain of Father's
sacrifice, a burnt ram on my back
at the hour of our deaths...

Lola prays the rosary, draped
over arthritic wrists, she carries
winter in her womb, gives birth
to daughters who birth daughters
decade after decade

*... as it was, is now, and ever shall be,
a world without end.*

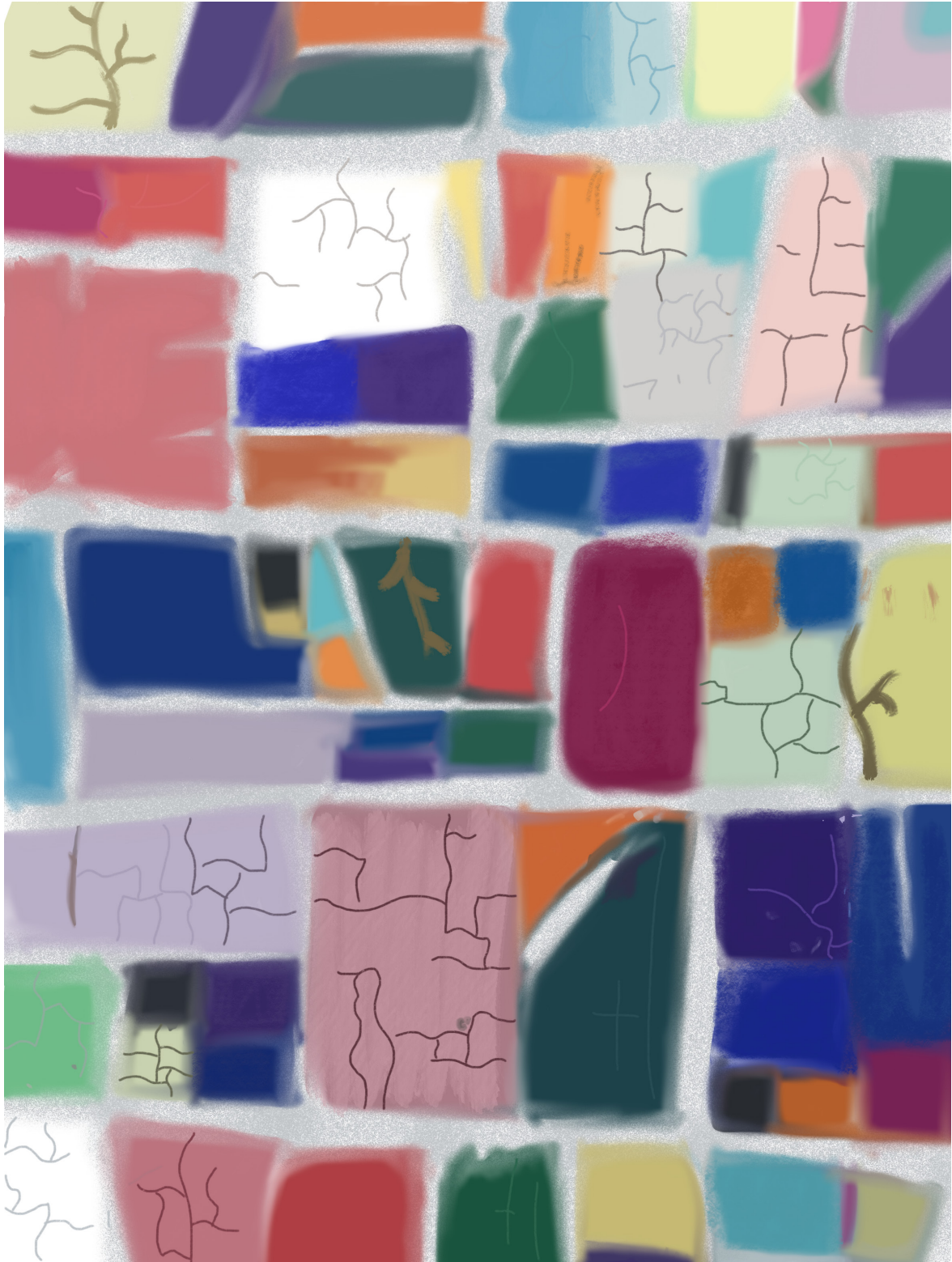
Lent begins
around my birthday:
I was born to give
more than I take.

Sampaguitas only grow by cutting
their stems, but it's wrong to harm
the Temple of God.
For forty days and nights,
my petals wilt
by sunrise.

Visual

Makayla Goldsmith
Digital
(Original: Mixed Media)
18" x 24"
2020

Borders



Mother Tongue

When I was a child my mother liked to play hopscotch over the cuts on my arm. In Tagalog, we don't have a word for mental illness. My mother asks me:

anak, child, why do I cry so much?

I don't have a translation for depression. So instead, I tell her how we are born sinkholes. Falling into lives too small to hold us.

We are so far from home, we cry the Pacific Ocean, crashing into foreign shores, fighting the white waves that love to watch us sink. I try to explain anxiety,

the storm rattling inside of me, but these words are not in her vocabulary. No one showed her how to cry without drowning— she was taught love in increments of men.

From my grandfather, to my father, then stepfather until she was buried. Measured in service, shown a life of chaos, and was told to make something of it. Her word for sacrifice was obligation.

Always bent at the knees
praying,
wilting,
waiting.

She only stayed so she could meet me. Bred in captivity, four c-section daughters, each one splitting her open. She didn't get the stitches out in time. There's a permanent line reminding her of wounds that reopen. Still bleeding, she carried me across the ocean to a different life.

ma, sorry sa lahat ng ginawa ko. How do I apologize for her pain?

For taking too long to understand what she buries. She asks if this is why I need therapy and not her to take care of me. I tell her

I am healing all the trauma before me.

I tell her I am healing
the pain Lola passed to her,
then her to my three sisters.

I tell her I am healing so if god forbid I have daughters the only thing I will pass to them is
crooked teeth and frizzy hair.

I am healing so that they may be born with hearts not yet broken. When they do shatter,
I will teach them a new mother tongue.

A vocabulary of kindness,
a language of courage
and sadness
so they will know
suffering synonymous with strength.
I tell her
I am healing
and I show her
how to cry.

Nine Stages of Getting Box Braids

Spend twelve to fourteen hours taking out last month's synthetic attempt to conform to societal beauty standards that often resemble the exact opposite of your being.

Spend another few hours combing through the nappy-knotted mess growing from your head that is often compared to shrubbery or an exotic Afro, depending on the crowd.

Exfoliate and deep condition the entire sectioned-off scalp, as the once plastic fantastic synthetic fire-resistant braid hair is individually unbraided by you from your tender head.

Weigh the pros and cons of shaving your head with a Bic razor.

Commute an hour and a half to New West to pay a week's worth of minimum-wage-shit-job-hours to sit in a chair for ten to twelve hours straight without any breaks while watching black and white television shows in a hot salon that resembles a closet.

Drift in and out of pain to help Nana braid the sectioned off and knotted hair. By hour eight, question why you keep doing this. Is hair this important?

Weigh the pros and cons of shaving your head with a Bic razor.

Once finally done, dip sectioned braided hair in boiling water to seal ends. Spend the next two months maintaining top cleanliness by boiling hair and deep conditioning scalp with tea tree oil facewash, answering extremely invasive questions about hair, skin colour, nationality, family life, whenever in public or at work to maintain a polite, kind, mild-tempered demeanour above all else.

Repeat.

Visual

Rachel Van Wylen
Oil on Canvas
24" x 36"
2020

Stasera



A Blazing Burden

All it takes is a spark. I dip into dresses of different colours. I hear them chatter in the opposite stall from me. They're excited, they can't wait for the party. Just imagine their stories. Just imagine how many hearts they'll own.

Then I see myself in the mirror and I can see them overpowering me. I throw the dress onto the floor. But they see me with pitying eyes, they sting me, saying 'no, no you'll be fine!' so I buy it. I feel something burning.

When we arrive we're dressed up and ready. I see them assembled like ducklings outside the entrance. They're pristine, graceful and handsome. They're sharp, suave and refined. They wait a second more only to hand their phones to me. The night explodes with white lights and their eyes go starry.

We sit at a table beneath moving lights and the bass rumbles beneath our bellies. I feel the floor vibrate up my bones. I look up to see them and I feel a scream inside of me; a fire begins to bleed out. They pay no mind as they preen their wings and I bury in my charred skin.

They caw and they cackle and their stomping feet makes the floor buckle. The thunder in me echoes through my ears and hair. I push away. The feet of my chair burns an ember trail across the floor. I hide away only to watch them. I see how free they seem and how light they are on their feet. I realize then – I was their shackles.

I feel myself burning.

Small Hours





Black Gold

The rich soil that gave birth to the cries and the roars of lions and tigers. The heart and the soul of survivors, of royalty, of God. Black skin forsaken and taken as slaves to the Man who came from mountain caves. I speak to you in their tongue, their songs have been sung and left us with a hoarse voice. As if we had any other choice but to scream in silence. We're prone to violence, right? More than anyone else? You snatched black skin from humanity's cradle.

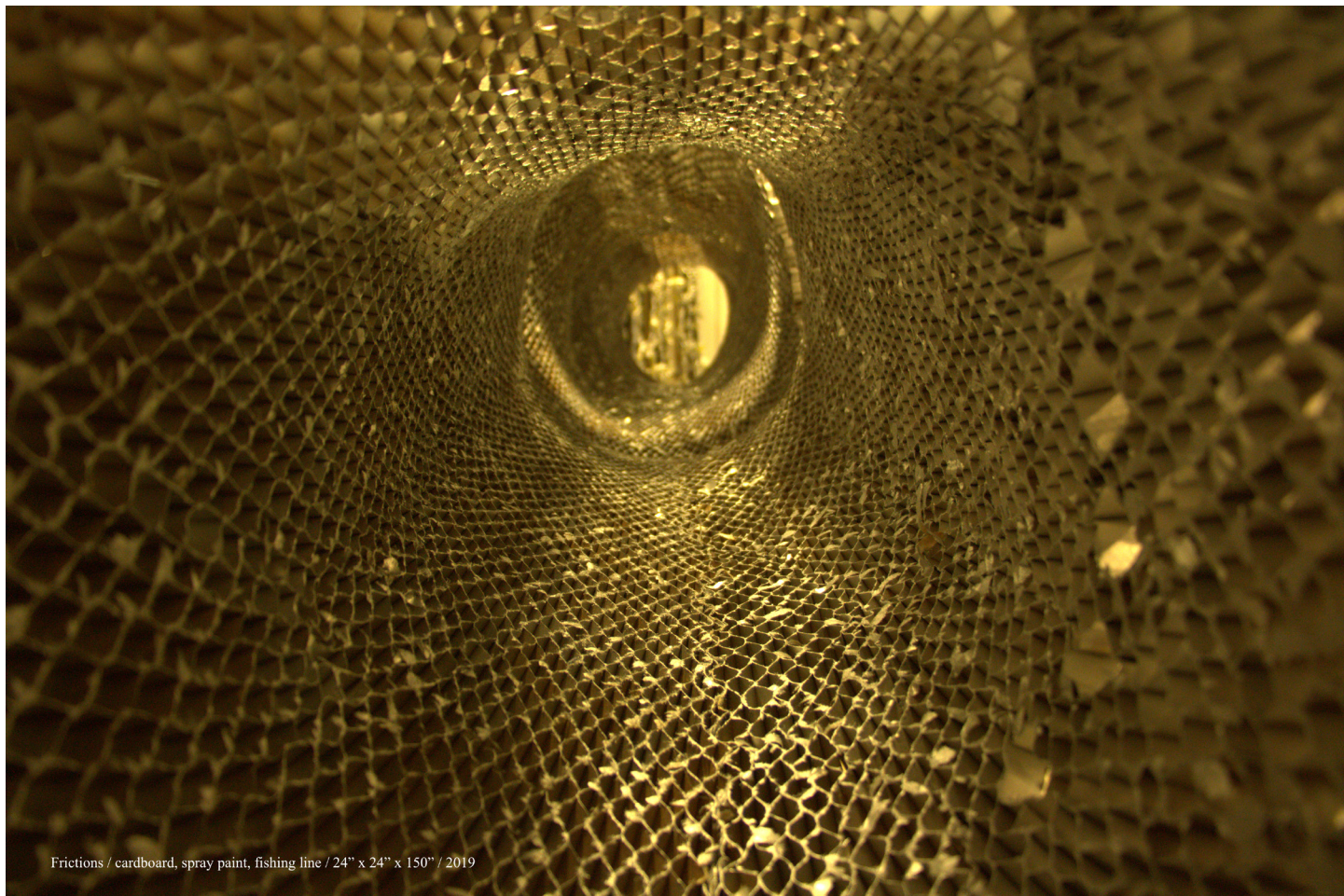
This is black skin, dregs left at the bottom of every bottle, the residue in a pipe, drops in a needle, when everything else has been sucked dry. The purest, most concentrated essence of Africa, even when diluted by hoses and attack dogs, clouded in dense fog and left to die. I am covered in skin white-washing could never change.

This black skin houses a black heart, that pumps black blood to black limbs that move through a world hostile to black men, women and children. We were born in the wild, rose from the dirt, we were one with the earth and now we pillage her. Whether we become tycoons, tyrants, teachers or villagers we're all just black. Walking around peacefully— but we could always attack. Unless you stopped and realized that we're all just human, you've cut us and we've proved it beaten us in the streets, killed us. The blacker the soil from which the berry blossoms, the sweeter the fruit.

Black skin is the stain of the berries, a taste you won't understand. Not until you realize this black beast is human. Why do memories sift out coal or gold? Past scenes are mired in everlasting sunlight or constant rain, ringing out across years with a mighty toll. We are all great prospectors for the things that hurt us. All the while hoping we might find something precious.

Something to carry back clutched to our cold chests,
something to return to the earth,
something greater than gold, is this black skin.

Frictions



Frictions / cardboard, spray paint, fishing line / 24" x 24" x 150" / 2019

Avril 14th

You send me a song
of falling
in love—
it's like
the background of an indie rom-com
montage where we walk
in forests, sun above.

We cut a path to the river's
edge. You pretend
to push me in, then
pull me close. Cut to
us in your bed,
the rain
against the windowpane—

we lay on our sides, eyes to eyes.
I tell you it's impossible
to look at both eyes at once.

You touch my nose, I bite
your finger. Fade to
messy living room,
my hair just the same.

I'm sprawled
across
your back, you pen-scratch
blue faces into the void of your notebook. I'm
trying
to memorize lines
of poetry. I mess up
but you don't mind
Listening to lines repeated

over and over and over.
Pitch black.

Two-minute Spotify single ends
with our image saying the things
the lyrics
our bodies,
I read the touch

the instrumental didn't—

of your ribs
with my lips, my exhale.

*Avril 14 is a song by Aphex Twins

Drive

It's just after sunset. The sky shifts from orange to blue, getting darker by the second; pretty soon, Casey won't be able to see anything.

Behind him, the school stands hollow. It looms over him like a bully, fluorescent lights like eyes gleaming sinister in the windows. The only people still inside are janitors, but not the ones nice enough to let him wait inside; those guys work Tuesdays and Thursdays.

He stares at the road. His gaze starts at the top of the hill and makes its way down, searching for the dim set of headlights of his uncle's dirty green van. He waits ten minutes. Twenty. Thirty. Then, his brother pulls up instead.

Declan rolls down the window to stare at Casey before leaning heavily on the horn. He doesn't move until Casey slams the passenger door closed. All along the street, people pull back their living room curtains to glare at the small silver car and its driver.

"Do you have to do that every time?" Casey asks, eyes on the rearview mirror. Someone is marching angrily toward the car. As per usual. "They all hate you."

Declan shrugs. "Good thing I don't go here, then." There's a knock on the window – the angry neighbourhood representative: a woman in her forties, vicious in her tattered pajama bottoms and Pink Floyd t-shirt. When Declan doesn't acknowledge her, she knocks louder. Then he grins at her, honks the horn one more time to make her jump, and speeds off. Casey can hear her shouting in the distance.

Casey sighs. "You're an asshole."

"Language, shithead. *You* should have been home three hours ago. Mom's pissed."

"Why'd you even come to pick me up? I called-"

"Uncle Seb, I know. He called me."

"Oh." *Traitor.*

"Why didn't you just go home? It's not actually that far. You could've made it."

“Why didn’t you just go home? It’s not actually *that* far. You could’ve made it.”

“Didn’t feel like walking.”

Declan pauses. “Right,” he says. There’s a question in his voice, but he doesn’t press any further.

After that, there’s silence: nothing but Declan’s car, and the cars around them. Nothing but their own breathing. Nothing but nothing.

Casey watches his brother, driving. He’s in sweatpants and a hoodie, both grey. He has eyes on the road, a hand on the wheel, the other fumbling in attempt to find the radio dial. When he does find it, he doesn’t turn it on – just rests his hand there, ready to do so. He taps his foot, impatient, at every stoplight.

It’s strange, how different they are. How Casey is a pit stop and Declan is a racecar; a bottle of water and a cup of coffee; goldfish and a cheetah. Casey is a deep breath. Declan is a gasp for air.

But it’s also strange, how similar they are – so obviously cut from the same cloth, with the same dark eyes and hair and skin, like they’ve been left out in the sun too long. From skinny fingers to pointy elbows to narrow chin, Declan looks like Casey but stretched to meet the height requirement. Sometimes, when he looks at his brother, it feels like Casey is looking at himself through an hourglass. One day he’ll look in the mirror and mistake himself for his brother.

Declan clears his throat, drops his hand to shift gears. He’s just as unnerved by the quiet as Casey is, only less stubborn, so he presses after all. “Why don’t you want to go home?”

Casey stares out the window. Uncle Seb had asked the same thing last week in the McDonald’s parking lot. They’d bought their weight in fries and burgers, and his mouth had been full when he spoke.

“Because,” Casey said then. He says it again now.

“Because?”

Because Mom didn’t want him there. Because Dad *couldn’t* – and shouldn’t – be there,

even if he wanted to be. Because every time Casey stepped into his own home, it felt like someone had tampered with gravity, and he'd have to walk on a ceiling made of eggshells. Because Declan, in spite of everything, was able to continue like nothing had changed. Casey used to hate him for it.

Actually, he still does. Just a bit. *Fuck you, Declan.*

His uncle hadn't known what to say, then. Maybe that's why he called Declan instead.

"Hey." Declan nudges him. "Tell me."

Something changes. Casey doesn't know what it is, but suddenly he can hear how tired his brother is. Suddenly it's easy to see that Declan already knows everything; he just wants to hear it out loud.

Casey takes a deep breath. "I don't think Dad did it."

"You don't think he—"

"I know he cheated. I don't think he killed that guy."

Last month, Casey and Declan's father had gone out of town for a three-day business trip. It was an annual thing, dubbed 'The August Conference' by their family. But on day one, somebody was dead – a higher-up in the same company. On day two, the police showed up at their door. Dad had known the victim for years, never on good terms, and their rooms were on the same floor. On day three, he was found and taken into custody. He claimed his innocence by confessing to an affair, but the woman – also married – refused to admit it. And anyways, the police needed more than that.

Casey wasn't told much else. He hadn't wanted to know much else, either. And somehow, it wasn't the murder charge that broke their mother, it was the affair.

Nothing was in the press, officially. Not yet. Uncle Seb – strange and eccentric and very, very rich – had bribed every local news source to keep everything under wraps until the investigation was over. He didn't think anyone in the family could handle it, really. And from the looks of their mother, he'd probably been right.

But Uncle Seb couldn't keep people from talking. The neighbours saw the cars, heard

the sirens, heard about the murder from their cousins in the other town – and put two and two together. Then their sons, the youngest of which was in Casey’s class, had overheard and told their friends at school. The bus became row after row of whispers, so Casey stopped taking the bus.

The car stops. Casey looks up to see their driveway, their house in all its chipped-paint 1990s splendor. Inside, every single light is on, but he imagines their mother asleep in the guest room without a blanket. Or maybe on the couch. Maybe on the cot in the basement. She hasn’t slept in the master bedroom since the arrest. Now, she only goes in if she needs a change of clothes.

Once, Casey found her lying on her side on the kitchen floor. He’d walked in to get a glass of ice water, or a mug of ice cream, or else just to open the fridge door and sit in front of it – it was that hot. The sight of her stopped him; his mother was not a small woman, but in that moment he felt like a mountain. He could only see her back, curled and shaking. It looked like shivering, from where he stood. “Mom?” he asked, but she barely stirred. Maybe he was too quiet. So he asked again. And again. And again. And though he doesn’t remember when she finally got up, he does remember it was to stop him from panicking. He remembers her arms holding him close, his cries louder than hers, for once. He remembers knowing, even then, that he and his mother were crying for different reasons.

Declan pulls the key from the ignition and leans his seat all the way back. He stares at the car ceiling, arms behind his head. Casey does the same. It’s dark, and he’s not very comfortable, but there’s something about how empty the view is that calms him. He thinks, maybe, this is how Mom felt that day in the kitchen, half her face pressed cool on the tiles.

“I don’t think Dad did it, either,” Declan says.

“You don’t?”

“No.” He pauses. “I think he’s a cheater, and a shit father, he should just take his stuff and go live with – what was her name? Jordan?”

“I think so. Maybe Joni or something.”

“Like Joni Mitchell?”

“Uh, sure.”

“Well he can go live happily ever after with her, or whatever the fuck he wants to do –”

“Language, shithead.”

“—as long as he stays the *hell* away from here. From Mom. From us.”

Casey nods. “But he shouldn’t be in prison.”

“No, he shouldn’t. He’s an ass, but he didn’t actually kill anybody.”

“I think Mom hates me for saying it.”

Declan looks at his brother, eyebrows raised. “Is *that* why you didn’t walk home? When did you even say it?”

“You weren’t there. She went nuts.” Casey closes his eyes, remembering. “She started crying and screaming at me and throwing stuff.” Tissue boxes, mainly. Or toilet paper rolls. Declan had made sure there was one in every room. It was a bit after the initial shock, and she hadn’t really stopped crying that week. “She didn’t hit me. But I thought she might.”

“Shit, man.” Declan sits up again. Casey doesn’t look at him. Instead, he looks at the house: a beacon on their street.

“Well, can you blame her?” Declan asks after a moment.

“I don’t know. Can *you*?”

Declan thinks. “Maybe if she did it again.”

“I guess.”

“I don’t think I need to tell you how broken she is right now, right?”

“Of course not,” Casey says. He’s watched his brother try to pick up the pieces every day, again and again, only to see her slap them out of his hands. It makes him wonder why either of them try. “Doesn’t mean she can’t be wrong, though.”

But that was the problem: it felt like Casey couldn’t do anything without aggravating the situation. And if things *did* get worse, he couldn’t blame anyone but himself – even if it was his

Mom's fault. Or his Dad's. Or even Declan's.

"I know," Declan sighs. "Things are hard right now." Then he sits up. "It's getting cold. We should probably go inside."

"Probably. But I don't really want to."

The driver door swings open. "Tough shit," Declan says, ducking out.

Casey sits up. "Seriously?"

"No." Declan looks at him, his expression softer. "It'll be fine, I swear. She's probably asleep, anyway. And if she gets upset, I'll handle it." He shivers. "We should go inside, though. It's cold as balls."

Casey shrugs, but he can't help the hint of a smile. "Fine."

"Do you even know who Joni Mitchell is, by the way?" His brother unlocks the front door, steps inside.

Casey locks it behind him. "Why does that even matter?"

"Come on, man. She's—" Declan stops suddenly, staring into the living room. Casey follows his brother's gaze to find a slouched, pale man sitting on the couch. Their father.

"Hey," the man says softly, attempting a smile. He stands, and Casey notices the brand-new belt holding up old jeans; Harvey Evergreen has lost weight.

"What the fuck?" Declan says, eyes wide at the sight of him.

"Language, D."

"You don't get to tell me that. Fuck you."

Casey narrows his eyes. "What are you doing here, Dad? Aren't you supposed to be, you know..."

He trails off. Their father smiles weakly. "The police didn't have enough to keep me in custody. I've been out for a while, actually."

"So where have you been?" Casey asks.

“Does Mom know you’re here?” Declan asks at the same time.

“I, uh—” Dad clears his throat. “I didn’t think it was best for me to stay here. And no, your mother’s asleep.”

“So why are you here?” Casey says.

“I—”

“You should go.” Declan says

“Now, wait a second—”

“I’m telling you now, you should go.” Declan glares at their father. Casey watches how tense his brother’s hand is, curled into a tight fist. He wonders if Declan has ever punched anyone before.

“Please.” Their father pauses, his eyes flickering between his two sons. They look nothing like him. “I just need to know if you two believe me.”

“Fine. Did you do it?” Declan crosses his arms.

“Which part?”

“You know which part.”

“Did you kill him?” Casey supplies.

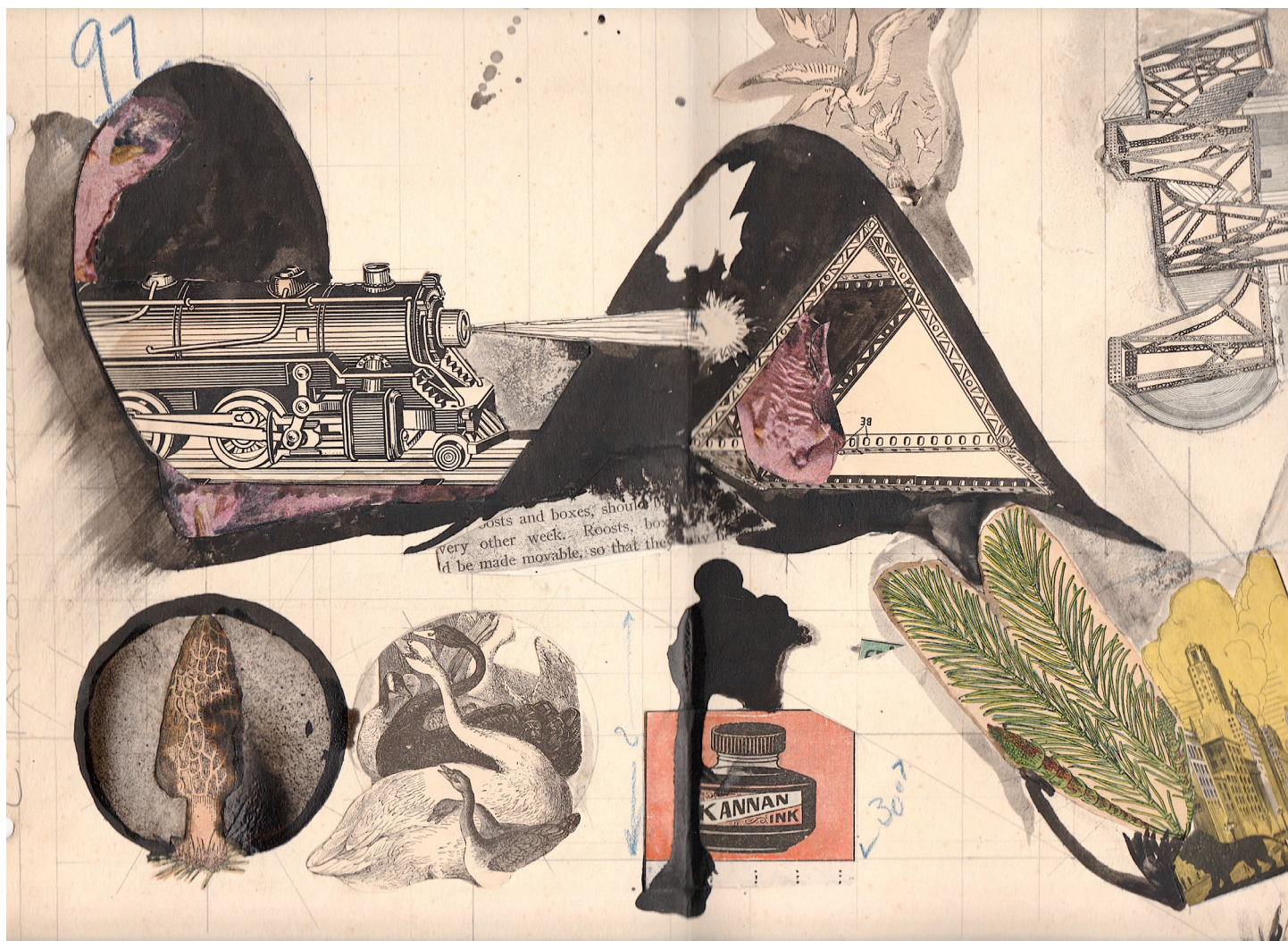
“No.” It’s the most sure their father has sounded since they started talking. There isn’t even a hint of hesitation.

“Okay.” Casey tells him. “Go.”

They don’t watch their father as he leaves. They don’t move aside when he walks past them, or turn to see the door close; they both just listen for the click. They don’t tell him to leave his keys, but he does – they listen for that sound, too.

They only move once he’s gone. Casey finds their mother, and Declan drapes a blanket over her. Then they go around the house and turn off the lights, one by one.

Working in a Vacuum



another poem about not getting out of bed

it's especially bad
after less than 6 hours of sleep
scrolling through Instagram feeds
screen-fed narratives
and wanting to be noticed
or for breakfast to be made
or for Spotify to just play my playlist
without me having to make them

a poem on crying in my sleep:
after a great day with best friends
I read nonfic on trauma healing at 3am—
dreamt they abandoned me.
alone again in the risen sunlight
pushing the shades of broken branches
onto my ceiling,
and now I can't stand sleeping
and can't stand to be awake
can I just stay home today?

for rough days despite sunlight:
the abstract art on my wall in violets & greens
& yellows & teals doesn't hold me
but I dissociate into the painting regardless.
remember breathing. remember speaking.
it's a walk in the sunlight,
outside, outdoors, out there,
with headphones & oranges & blues
from the skies to hold me through.

of open endings:
if I chose my own adventure
would I still be in bed over an hour after
waking? is it the screen I type this on?
or the fact that I wake alone
and alone and alone
and I'm always so fucking mean to myself
and I'm always tired every morning
six hours, twelve hours—
I get up when I have to.
which is to say pigeon cooing
garbage truck banging
coffee press brewing
google calendar inviting
become my reasons to endure waking up—

I wish I was my reason
to endure waking up.

Bios

Cassandra St. Godard is a queer artist born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and a third-year student at KPU. Combining visual art and creative writing they focus mainly on highly detailed character design and story-writing. Poetry is a step out of their comfort zone, but an enjoyable one.

Emma Walby is a social justice advocate using art as her medium. Her passion stems from the desire for a better shared experience of life. The majority of her art originates from questions she has about the realities of life. Her choice of materials are the objects that surround her throughout daily life. Through large peculiar forms and uncanny imagery she evokes feelings of curiosity to start a conversation. Her sculptures straddle the line between abstract and confrontational. Walby analyzes stereotypes and searches for ways to break through these preconceived thoughts by using abstracted forms of sculpture and painting.

Franz (the poet) is a writer, performer, and arts-community advocate. She creates on the unceded lands of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Tsawwassen, Kwikwetlem, Stó:lō, Musqueam, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen and Qayqayt people, colonially known as Surrey, B.C. She will soon receive her B.A. in Creative Writing from Kwantlen Polytechnic University. She's the co-founder of Melanin KPU's BIPOC Writer's Collective and main organizer of the Kwantlen Poetry Project. She aims to bring people together, to foster safe spaces where connections can thrive and where art can help heal and sprout growth. She wants you to love.

Jacob Strohan is a fourth-year student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University majoring in visual arts. This series is an ongoing exploration into the relationship between humans and the urban landscape, and how our environment can affect our psyche.

Jessica Mikulik was born in a Polish family and raised in Vancouver, a fifth-year student at Kwantlen Polytechnic University majoring in Creative Writing with the hopes that she can also earn a degree in Psychology. Her style of writing is oftentimes described as whimsical, surreal and 'like a painting' that is full of enticing imagery. Her poetry leans towards a combination of romanticism and modernism and it is her goal to master at capturing the perfect middle.

Leila Nicar is an occupant of the unceded Kwantlen, Musqueam, Tsawwassen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Qayqayt, and Kwikwetlem territories (otherwise known as Surrey, BC). Third-year creative writing major at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Writer of emotionally-charged words. Animation enthusiast. Lover of mountains, scented candles, playlists, and Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

Makayla Goldsmith: This work of art was created in response to the walls and borders that divide human kind, how messy and unrealistic they are and how when you look at the world from far away, borders become kind of irrelevant. We try to put ourselves as humans into boxes that we simply do not fit inside of.

Mariah Negrillo Soor is a fourth-year Creative Writing major at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Inspired by her experience as a second-generation, Filipino-Punjabi woman, her work explores liminal spaces and what it is like to live between worlds and identities. Her poetry has appeared in pulpMAG (issues 15-18) and has been performed at the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word (2018 and 2019) and on the final stage of the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam as part of the Verses Festival of Words (2019). She is a Pisces sun, Libra moon, and Leo rising sign, which creates the perfect storm to produce her dreamy poetry.

Marieken Cochius is a Dutch-born artist who has lived and worked in New York City since 1987, and in the Hudson Valley since 2013. Meditative, strong and intuitive work that often explores growth forms, movement and containment of energy, she is drawn to remote places where she studies nature and makes art inspired by it. Her work encompasses drawing, painting, sculpture and printmaking. A sculptural public commission was completed in 2017 for the Village of Wappingers Falls, NY. Her work is in many private collections in the US and Europe.

Michael Thompson is an artist living and working in Chicago who, pre-pandemic, had been making decorative kites for a living. Whether the market for kites or artwork of any kind is still viable will be answered over the course of the next few months, but in the meantime he has been working in his home studio on a series of collages, memory jugs, reading and practicing the piano.

Munatsi Mavhima: My name is Munatsi Mavhima and I'm an immigrant settler who comes from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. I've been writing poetry throughout my life as a means to cope. I often thought of it as the best way I communicated and the best way to express my deepest feelings. This is no surprise to anyone who writes anything and I hope to gain the consistency to write professionally. My current job has nothing to do with my degree or my passion but poetry is my truest voice and I am learning to trust it more and more.

Patricia Naguiat (Mirth) is a self-proclaimed "Tita poet" navigating the world of words. As an aspiring therapist, she believes art can heal. She hopes her poetry of a sad Filipina will comfort, inspire and reassure others that we do not have to suffer alone. As Slamapalooza's (2019) Slam Champion, she has performed at numerous showcases and competitions, including the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word (2019) in Guelph, Ontario. Her work is usually found at open mics but more recently takes up space in the notes on her phone.

Qianxuan Chen: My name is Qianxuan Chen, and I am the first year Fine Art student in KPU. I learned drawing and sketching in China for a year, and I start to practice my sketch skill by myself since 11th-grade. I learned traditional Chinese seal-cutting before, which is to use graver to create words and patterns. I take ceramics and I am finish the second level right now. I am good at hand-build, and I prefer to use watercolour, acrylic paint, and pastel to create art. Hoping I can have a chance to post my artworks on the magazine.

Rachel Van Wylene is a painter based in New Hampshire. She is interested in places, spaces, and the way we inhabit them. She works on-site whenever possible and considers the experience of being present in a location essential to understanding it. She is currently the chair of the fine arts at The White Mountain School.

Sheila Van Delft received a Diploma in Graphic and Visual Design from Kwantlen Polytechnic University in 1987 and is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program, majoring in Visual Arts, fourth year. Her art practice includes murals, portraits, illustrations, and commissioned artwork. Sheila works primarily with acrylics on canvas that can also include oils, encaustic, and found objects, but she has recently been working with installation and sculpture.

Sydney Peters is a writer of poetry and fiction, residing on the unceded lands some refer to as British Columbia, Canada. She is in the final year of her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Creative Writing at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. As a writer, she has an especial fondness for surrealism, lyric, and free verse poetry. Sydney's work often implements haunting imagery, local and family history, as well as plants and wildlife. Her poems have most recently been published in pulp Mag and Papeachu Review.

Tawahum Bige is a Łutselk'e Dene/Plains Cree/Two-Spirit/Nonbinary poet who resides on unceded Musqueam/Tsleil-Waututh/Squamish territory. Featured in over-10 lit-journals including Prairie Fire, Contemporary Verse 2, Grain Magazine and EVENT Magazine, their Scorpio-moon-ass poems expose growing, resisting and persisting as a hopeless sadboy on occupied Turtle Island. Tawahum completed KPU's Creative Writing BA-program and Banff Centre's first-ever Indigenous Spoken Word Residency.



pulp
MAG

Fall 2020
Issue 22