

## **PANTHER**

On television a panther slicking its black limbs through paradise trees. Holy moly, look at this fur.

The third story of a Chinatown flat, and here the timber walls tighten around the fat Chinese man with a noodle moustache. A muddy bottle in his hand.

The bowl of cereal on the bench is a gelatine fantasy, rotten milk shivering like Anna Pavlova. And Dad doesn't throw it out and he doesn't ask me to throw it out but asks my mother to and nobody comes. We take a cab to the yellow store and pick up a Hawaiian pizza which is the only one he'll eat. He'll shut the front door so that the timber panels become perfect again and then he'll pick off the pineapple chunks until the pizza is just a pink mound. He'll change the channel on our television because watching these animals crawl around everywhere reminds him that the weather outside is good enough for it. He'll change it to a game show and call out the answers before they do. His voice swells, fattening the timber.

## FANCY CHINATOWN IN THE BIG CITY

The gutters bulge with sesame oil here. A curb exploding from the lion dance drumming and the peak of a Chinese opera playing on a stereo from the herbal shop. An old Shanghainese man whips his bongos in front of the Japanese photo shop, *pukira*. Wipes his hands on greasy newspaper, mumbles about rain that's coming.

It's an overripe swallow. A tart drunkenness. A type of porridge and century-old eggs for breakfast, a slow shuffle with wooliness and Cantonese spoken on the south side. The language is made of elastic.

In all the apartments of this fat building the televisions don't turn off. Playing anime or east coast, a rhythm of words against flax walls, and the orange juice is always pulpy on the bench. The kind of Chinatown like late morning reruns on school holidays.

## PLASTIC

My name is plastic. She used to call me Mo Mo. He calls me Monk. This is white-tile boredom.

I was raised on David Attenborough's gentle coo and Aunty Linda's yams which are getting better to eat each time. Mostly-shut blinds now and watching episodes of *Outlaw Star* by peering inside our neighbour's flat. Listening to Phife Diggy through the walls as leftovers from a thirty-four-year-old living with his parents.

## SUPERMARKET

He tells me: it cramps up your hands if you touch the frozen fish fingers. Don't touch anything, it's a risky dance in here. You slip, you have to pay for it. I've liked these supermarkets a long time.

Stop looking at me with those contaminated stares. A pale man who has a beard forming from the skin on his chin. And you really can't tell where his skin stops and where his hair begins. He picks up a carton of milk and sits it in the canned vegetable shelf. Points at it with a strict wagging finger. Squinting one eye shut, screwing the edge of his lip over, he starts to scream at it. He walks out with a can of snow peas under his armpit.

A pack of dried noodles, crispy. We buy a slab of fat and cartons of black juice that keep his eyes open to stare at the television for longer. I used to say televisions stained my eyes. Now I think the dark around it does.

The frozen boxes of pink ice-cream freeze your fingers. Don't touch unless you have to. Everything's a fat pink.

This taxi will burst from the sound of plastic bags squelching. The driver looks at me in the rear-view mirror with cowering eyes, but I'm just looking in his mirror at myself. Behind me are slum flats. Me and a panorama of this wild part of the city, and an electric scooter glides alongside us, the rider a cowboy the way his hands grip the reins.

## BIRTHDAY

A fish restaurant on the south side: whirlpool and red lobster, hard shell of plastic and ropes. Premium choice: Coffin Bay King Oysters, black-lipped abalone with winter melon, smoked eel with single cream.

I don't like fish, I tell him, and he says I can order a salad. This is my fifteenth birthday and I order just a garden salad.

The ads of a radio station play and we sit in booths so that my thighs stick to the couch.

Someday maybe a dreamy scuba dive.

He tells me to make sure I remove the little black slither inside every shrimp.

Someday maybe a dreamy swim in the ocean. Everything in here is red or blue like sailors. A birthday song being delivered to a man with no one with him except a family.

A fish tank of decorative fish, not to eat. We don't eat the beautiful fish, the manager tells me.

## 8

The bugs on the ceiling zap and fall on the minibar fridge. Luis is asleep on the mattress.

'Where are you now, Leen?' asks my mother on the phone.

'I'm staying at a new friend's.'

'How is it there?'

'There's no pool ... like there was at Doms', but I barely used it anyway. It was starting to give me acne. It's getting colder.'

'What's your friend like?'

'He likes poetry. He's very interesting.'

'That must be nice.'

'He cooks his own meals, but he only knows how to cook three things.'

'I hope you cook for him.'

'Yes, in the last week, I've cooked twice.'

'That's a good girl. You have to pay people back when they do you favours.'

'I know.'

'You have to appreciate people when they help you for no reason.'

'Isn't it the same if people help you because they want to feel like they're the kind of person that deserves something?'

'Too clever for me.'

•

## GUNK BABY

Staring at Luis sleeping. He sleeps like a cocoon holds him. The television is still playing outside the bedroom. I lie down and curl up too. He's sometimes out at his other job late at night, or in the early hours of the morning. Some job which shifts and changes, where his name tag doesn't read *Antonio*. He says it's a small cleaning job with some other guy – moving around boxes and furniture, cleaning out houses or studios or warehouses for people who need to use the space the next day.

In the morning I'm alone on the mattress and there's this sunlight coming through panels of blinds, yellow onto yellow. The soles of my feet against concrete tiling. I come out and notice the television still playing softly. A black-and-white movie has just started. A screaming woman with mascara drooling from her eyes. A man holding onto her shoulders when he kisses her, saving her from the 'wilderness', from people who are 'wild'. I wonder why they play these every morning – forcing some sort of frame of mind.

Luis comes through the door as I step out of the shower.

His roommate hasn't been around. I feel anxious about it, wonder if it's deliberate. I've forgotten his name. Forgotten what type of bellybutton he has, not particularly sure if I looked that night anyway. It feels embarrassing between the three of us, and when I shower here, in their house, the home they made of this place straight out of school, I feel a peculiar shame looking at my own body in it. Placeless, my things all packed into one suitcase. Feeling just like my mother, feeling just like the way we'd been – nowhere and everywhere at once.

There is a new line of K.A.G. foam wash on the bathroom counter. This time it is scented. It claims it is a natural scent enhancer. There is a pack of K.A.G. sanitary wipes. A K.A.G. diffuser. I stare at my body and want to wipe it down with a coolness.

Back in the living room, Luis has this pouty look on his face when he comes in and collapses on the old cat-ripped sofa.

He stares at the television and comments on the way the white man who saves the heroine is dressed in animal skins. I come over and touch his cheek. He wraps his fingers over mine. He looks at me, softening his eyebrows. I melt and overflow.

‘Was the job difficult last night?’

‘Not too bad.’ He kisses the back of my hand.

We’re both whispering. He’s letting his hair grow out a bit. I run my hands through it, bristling my fingers. He shivers a little. Someone told me in primary school that if you shiver and it’s not cold, a ghost has walked by you.

He tells me the job last night made him think about where his life is going. He’s been interested in design elements lately, how they have a power to change your mind.

The K.A.G. outlay, for example: so *addictive*. The genius behind the design of something beautiful is that it can stand alone. We live in an age where we would like things to stand alone, to be one with itself, so that we can, as its consumer, become the one to define it, the one to understand it and its purpose, and curate it alongside other things. We are less the type to fall for branding, and we buy one singular thing to be happy with it. We see ourselves now, before we see the brand. But we’ve been conditioned to *need* the product. And a product is rarely ever a product without its brand.

I’ve been learning how Luis loves to speak and rarely wishes to be silent; he is silent only if he is tired, and even then he could ramble in half-sentences. I can tell he is accustomed to speaking with people who grow tired of his voice by the way he looks at me with his eyes when I respond and counter-comment in a way that begs for him to continue. I seem to be accustomed to the sorts of men who conclude a moment of speaking together once I begin to speak. But Luis loves to speak in response to how I do, and so on and so forth.

Though he seems to switch in mood often. Sometimes very physical and sometimes not. When I ask him, over a microwave meal the following night, if he let me stay only because he thought



that I'd let him sleep with me, he ignores the question. A cigarette in his sturdy hand and a glass of tomato juice in the other.

I say to him, 'Your cigarette is such an attitude right now.' And then he puts the glass down and blunts the cigarette in the ashtray, his hands become full of me: lurching at my underarms, zapping and wrestling me over the couch arm; him softly laughing, 'You're a fucking little punk!'

I'm laughing too, we get drunk, he has no weed. There's no growth of it, but he does keep alcohol in the fridge. Run through his blue front door, sprint to the 7-Eleven for the good brand of jerky and instant noodles; they've started stocking the Ramyun usually only available from specific stores. We eat it all lying on the tattered sofa.

And now we're preparing a Thai green curry for Berta's family because the investigation is being closed for the time being while they work on another. The two children have said they enjoy Thai green curry but Berta's partner doesn't want the children eating the MSG-filled tubs they sell at the Costco, and it's too expensive to get it from the local Thai place every night. It was our idea to do the casseroles thing. Nobody else in the community has initiated it. Either they have forgotten about the incident, or they do not want to believe she is really gone. And so no one has been doing the casseroles thing.

We're having discussions while preparing the curry. Luis leaves the pot simmering too long so that the coconut milk boils over. I clean it up and we continue chopping vegetables on either side of his kitchen. We talk about his parents and the neighbourhood he grew up in. He tells me how kids stole one another's mobile phones and texted everyone on it, provocative things, so that the one kid would get beat up either by their parents or their peers. There's a ticking sound coming from his oven. He tells me he hasn't used it for two years. My fingers across his forehead, I fidget the silver thing in his eyebrow. Draw down his face, put my hand over his mouth. He yells into my palm and bites the skin.

We fall asleep for the rest of the night.

## DIGITAL WORK SAMPLES — PROJECT EXCERPTS INCLUDED

### **Full project links**

['musculi immoderata'](#)

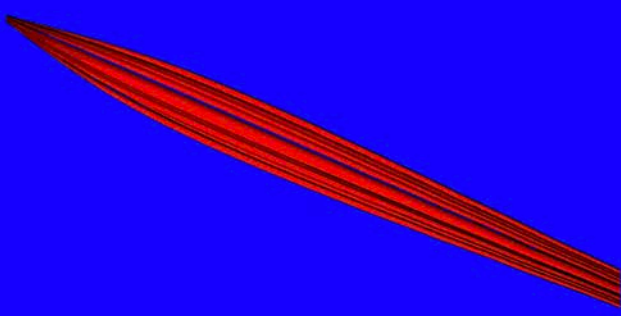
['Exploration of diamonds, wearing them on your face'](#)

['Bedrooms'](#)

From 'musculi immoderata'

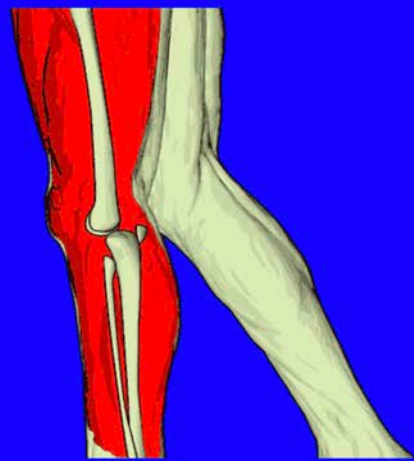
soleus ## in which on surface, seems so taut.

often it is regarded as the 'second heart' as it is the reason blood flow continues through to the lowest sector of the body. it is responsible for the lengthening of the feet and therefore the prettiness of the body in a balletic sense, the *pointe*



of the calf there are two other muscles --

we're at the dinner table and my wife asks me what it is that's on my mind. 'i know you' she says. 'there is no hiding from me.'



yes stretching is supposed to prevent the muscle from shortening and growing too tight, it moistens the hinge so to speak. kundalini is all about stretch---

i'm told by my GP that the cracking does not matter, it is just the joints catching air pockets

in the 1950s, The Penfield Homunculus established a body map exploring the connection of the brain and stimulation via bodily sensation or physicality. Observing that the genitalia is directly adjacent to the feet, it can be attested that foot fetishes are absolutely normal, if not unremarkable.



# From 'Exploration of diamonds, wearing them on your face'

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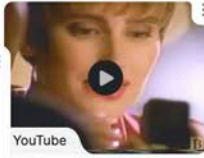
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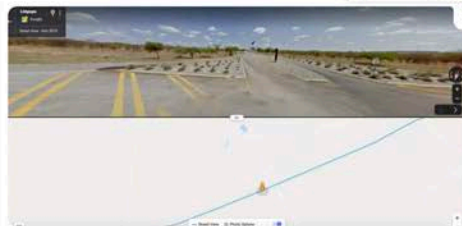
You shouldn't have waited ten years for this...



De Beers - A Diamond is

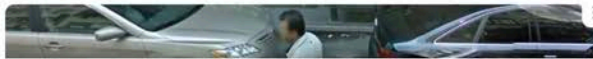
When someone asks...

you say, I'm in 'diamonds'



22°26'02.0"S 29°18'50, 0. South Africa

This is the entrance to Venetia mine in Limpopo owned by Anglo-American diamond corporation De Beers in Google



everyone started promoting it on their channels. It looked good, it really did!

## 10 months after the procedure

Helen's diamonds have been falling out gradually.

Her skin breathes it out,

Inhaling it momentarily, the next, exhaling it.

Everywhere all over the apartment floor, she sees little shining stones, playing with the sun.

It's like she is mining for them, there is one under the fridge. It glistens toward her, reaches its eyes out from underneath, calling to her

Her skin has holes in it, big man-made holes.

