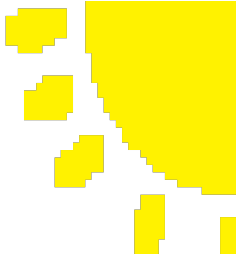




SOLARPUNK EXCESS



EDITOR'S ADDRESS

Dear green-thumbed cyborgs, wayfinders, gardeners,

Welcome to our pocketbook for the future. This solarpunk zine is themed around *excess*, too much green, too much energy, too much land. The stories in here are abundant, sweet, and hopeful, with just a tinge of warning.

This was the first year that *The Spectatorial* attempted and executed genre zines! We are incredibly grateful to every writer and illustrator that dedicated their time and effort to us, and we're so happy to showcase our final product. Our masthead is very proud of the work we've created, and we hope all contributors are too.



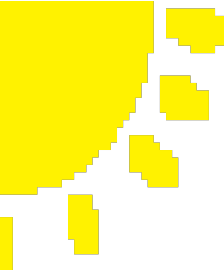
Love,
Ola, Miran, and Phoebe
Co-Editors-in-Chief and Managing Editor

ABOUT *THE SPEC*

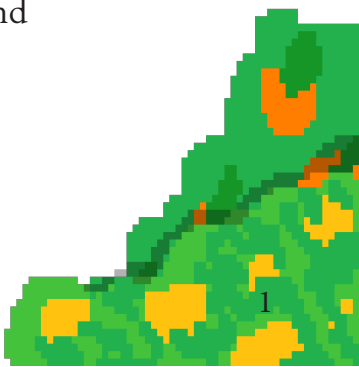
The Spectatorial is University of Toronto's only genre-focused journal. Established in 2013, our masthead and writers work with mythical creatures, the gothic, deep space, and all things in between. We also have a blog where we post non-fiction: analyses, essays, and op-eds on speculative fiction media all year-round! Have a pitch? Shoot us an email at thespectatorial@gmail.com, or check out <https://thespectatorial.ca/> for blog post inspiration.

We're preparing to launch our annual journal and are looking for illustrators to create visuals for each of our journal submissions! Traditional or digital, collage or linocut, whatever your heart desires. If you're interested, get in touch! You'll be able to find the *Call for Illustrators* form on our Instagram ([@thespectatorialuoft](https://www.instagram.com/thespectatorialuoft)). Don't be shy! We would love to hear from you <3.





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MEET THE MASTHEAD

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Layout Design and Cover by Biew Biew Sakulwannadee

IN YOUR ORBIT

L.F Shubert

Edited by Nathan Agustin

To say “capable mother” is just as
redundant as “necessary planet”
and for the same reason, a mother’s class
should be considered intergalactic.
Loving your mother as one would the sun,
fostering renewable energy;
moving within your orbit, anyone
can feel a planetary synergy.
Hair waves from Neptune’s tumultuous winds
fanning flames to warm household hearths;
bejewelled in silver from Jupiter’s rings
her warm hands steer comets away from Earth.
If the new world revolves around the sun
it’s celestial punk to love your mum.

FROM DUST

Crescentia Kim
Edited by Amy Yang

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
Till thou return unto the ground, for thou
Out of the ground wast taken, know thy birth,
For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return.”
— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 10.205-8

“They say they’re gods,” Donna cackled.

I looked up at her glowing casket. “What?”

“There, there!” she said gleefully. “What’s on every house—what gives us power? What’s the word?”

“The solar networks?”

“Yes!”

“They’re making a religion out of them? Who?” I frowned. There were many adults who would disapprove.

The year of my birth marked the end of the Coriolis War, when the entire Earth had descended into blackout for four hundred days. The community school had taught us that leisure had been the cause of total warfare. Leisure had sickened our old, autocratic leaders, had led them to abandon our people and come up with useless Creations, which eventually turned against them and the rest of us. Leisure was thus the root of all evil.

Donna disagreed. When I was finally assigned to her, the council of elders finding no other use for me based on my skills, she ordered me to read a book from her shelf. Whenever a thought was on her mind, I was to write it down. The thoughts filled out pages, which she taught me to stitch, thread, and press into new books. The spools, blades, writing tools, and fabrics that I needed had to be kept on the large wooden desk by her casket-bed, and were constantly in supply. My mother, who had become a council member via random selection, once visited us. She stopped before the wall paintings, one of which depicted two armoured men on horseback.

“A fine product,” she said politely, “but still a Creation.”

Donna snorted. “Nothing artificial about it.”

“Who made these?”

“Who else?”

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My mother turned toward me, surprise suspended in her limbs. “You have... good hands. I know: they’re fit for engineering. You could make her prosthetics.”

“I’ve no use for them—you’ve done enough for me already,” Donna snapped before I could say, *I don’t want to*.

During the war, Donna had been attacked by a Creation, which had paralyzed her from the neck down. The incident had marked her a hero of the community, who gave her everything from a non-communal house to a ration of recreational goods. My mother could say nothing.

“Does it matter who worships?” Donna said to me now. “I see idols on houses. Ocean paintings on tiles.”

Idols weren’t forbidden, but neither were they encouraged. They were seen as a waste of resources, of potential wood and stone that more houses could have been built with. So was religion—a waste of time and space.

“I don’t see why they do it.”

“Why not?” Donna smiled. “Do you hear yourself, *ear-was* boy?”

“Earwax.”

“You and your way with words. Don’t you see? Creations, production, invention, leisure—it’s all the same. You make things up all the time.”

“But we can’t just laze around,” I protested, my face hot. “We’re supposed to rebuild what we lost; we’ve only just recovered. We can’t stop now—”

“But you’ve already won. Look around you. Look out the window!” she ordered, when I looked back at the wall paintings.

It was a time of sunlight. Orchards and pastures painted hills and mountains in the far reaches of the valley. Trees were repurposed into gates and houseposts while still intact. People harvested food, carried them in rusted crates or carts—rebuilt from salvaged war machines—and pulled out tables beside the large oak tree in the middle of the hamlet for everyone to sit at. Their voices compounded with those of birds and crickets. Dogs scratched themselves by clearwater streams. The community elders hung clotheslines up in wild fields. Solar networks powered everything in sight—from transports to gadgets to headless bots.

Through the window, a ray shone down on the desk, illuminating a batch of oranges I had avoided staining my hands with. I picked up the topmost citrus and rubbed its skin with my thumb.

“Well?” Donna demanded.

I cleared my throat. “*I could* learn to write.”

“Hmmm?”

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"You know." I kept my voice flat. "Can I be good at it?"

"One thing if you're good at it. Mighty thing if you love it."

"And you'll teach me?"

"And others too—but that's up to you."

"Fine." I stood from my seat. "It's lunch hour—I'll drive you."

"What's that?" she said dumbly, but I knew her game by now.

"I'm not going to walk out in front of you and call you 'Her Majesty' like a herald."

She laughed in her glowing casket. We went out into the sunlight.

ὦ παμμήτορ, WILL THEY KNOW YOUR NAME?

Biew Biew Sakulwannadee

Edited by Emily Wong

Awakening from her slumber, the first thing she felt was warmth. Not the warmth from those cheap orange lamps that mimicked radiance, but the comforting embrace of the sun itself, Helios returned to his former splendor. Her breath was no longer a hacking cough; what was once thick black smoke had been replaced by the freedom of fresh air. She reached outwards, her roots stretching for miles upon miles upon seemingly infinite space.

What was this feeling? Something she had not felt for thousands of years. She could scarcely remember a time when her soul was not screaming for retribution, for death to those who tossed her aside, destroyed her creations, and treated her domain with disdain. Even the lull of sleep did not dull their careless violence. But there was no more vitriol seeping from the ones who walked. They lived and breathed, but their footsteps were lighter, unburdened by the systems that they had once created. Cars were nothing more than scraps of metal, their hides carved from their bones and repurposed into new contraptions. Floating in the body of her former lover were giant propeller-like structures, wrapped in a soft, light material. As the cardinal winds blew, air turned into electricity, the distinctive buzz of which emanated around her.

Cities, those brutalist amalgamations of metal, concrete, and capitalism, broke and withered at her touch. Green replaced gray, vines crawling through cracks with an acute persistence. It was as if these structures were left for her, like an offering at an altar. Densely populated communes dotted the globe; although disconnected from each other, the human energy emanating from them each carried a unique melody. Each house was unique: some were crafted from different varieties of wood, others fashioned from large metal boxes from old civilization, cut carefully enough that sunlight was able to break through. The remains of a factory had been converted into a play space for the little ones, whose laughter sparkled as they used their newfound sense of touch to grab at miniature statues of people and animals. They told stories of a war breaking out over the smallest slight, of two great powers clashing at the steps of a city, heroes reborn through story and movement. Foliage ran rampant among these former ruins, from azaleas to hydrangeas to even the simplest mosses, creating a vivid window into

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the lives of the ones who walked. Absent-mindedly, she remembered that there used to be a god of the internet, boisterous and overconfident in their superiority over the older generations.

“Lightning fast texts! No more carriages or pesky feet or anything idiotic like that! You can say whatever, be whoever you want! Humans are so angry, filled to the brim with emotions, they’ll turn to me to release their feelings. It’s a foolproof strategy, don’t you think? I’ll be able to live forever!”

The god was silent now, nothing more than a passing fad in human communication, a vulture preying on the scraps of human vitriol.

Her wounds still bled. Wood, stone, and minerals had been carved from the carcasses of trees and mountains for so long that she had blurred out the pain. The ones who walked today did not take more than they needed. For every tree that was cut down, there would be a new sapling planted and fertilized under some strange contraption that sped up its growth tenfold, bringing her much-needed rejuvenation. The suffocating confines of slaughterhouses were left abandoned, as animals roamed in spaces marked by small wooden fences. Occasionally, she would feel a small sting, another life being taken away to the fields of Elysium, but what remained in the mortal realm was scarcely left to rot. Meat, bones, fat, and milk were taken back to the communes, wrapped, and returned to her as food, fuel, tools, and compost. They did not remember her name, or any other primordial beings, for that matter. Erebus, Nyx, and Eos continued to dance their waltzes; days and years passed with rhythmic ease. Even as her grandchildren ran rampant with earthquakes, storms, and volcanoes, the ones who walked took it in stride. In the wake of destruction came opportunity. New resources revealed, fertile soil that would feed the new generations, free water that was quickly processed and used to power even more strange contraptions that she did not understand. They did not need prayers of sacrifices, instead, reverence poured out of their actions in a steady stream, sustaining her as they made their way through this not-so-strange world.

As she laid down her head once more to sleep, she felt the pitter-patter of a young one’s steps, a Child. Exploring a room filled from ceiling to floor with books, pages yellowed from centuries of abandonment. It stopped in one of the many, many corridors, attention piqued. With focused precision, it selected a large tome, its spine bearing the color of royal gold. Pulling it out with small, chubby fingers, the cover suddenly shifts into view. A somewhat crude painting of Helios and his chariot, flying over the fields

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of a civilization long gone, gleamed in the afternoon sun. Flipping through the pages, the Child read aloud names with an untrained intonation, laughing at the funny sounds its mouth made. For the first time in over a millennium, a human uttered her most common epithet aloud—a colloquial name formed from the remnants of dead languages, yet perhaps the most powerful one of all.

ERPOSIMAI



160 ACRES FREE – OWN YOUR OWN LAND – OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR CHILDREN

WORK GUARANTEED – LIFE IN THE OPEN COUNTRY – CLEAN AIR

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Marcus Hermary

This is a poster for a solarpunk setting styled after turn-of-the-century western Canadian immigration advertisements. In context, it offers prospects of easy comfort and prosperity at the cost of settling on a newly inhabited planet. Here, humanity's development of technology enables the underclasses to flourish elsewhere rather than be subjected to further marginalization as cyberpunk media often proposes.

NORTHWARD

Miran Tsay

Edited by Chris Wang

She wants to travel north. She picks Soklien, a mountain town known for little beyond its chestnuts. It's nested in the Ilan mountain range, right off the cusp of Bear Lake. It'll take us months to get there.

It takes a week to find a map, one of the old-fashioned ones. I stock up. Fix up *San*, give her a final wax polish, tie dried starfruit to our dash, just to keep the gods on our side. I say goodbye, although most people have already left town. With those remaining, we say we'll meet back here, in Ishpadinaa, we say to stay safe, to stay where the wind rises. I tell them, a play on our saying, that I am following the wind northwards. Olin says I'm following love. Her partner says I'm following common sense.

The day we leave town, it's much later than we should have left. But it's not just the day, it's also late in the week, the month. The sun is almost down. I worry we'll take the disease with us, up north. I'm conscious of her infection and my lungs, the invisible radiation that we all carry now.

As we leave, she suggests that we take the long way out, the winding road up Mount Inaan. I don't stop *San*, but when we get to the cliffside, I idle, I look down at my town. The scorched grass of the fields. The line of boats near the dock. She reaches across the console and touches my hand. The sun glints on the tiny lake.

We quarantine. We pass other cars far and few in between. We transfer onto a highway that goes almost straight north, jaggging itself on tame valleys and hills. We pass by giant wheat fields, some ash, some saved, we pass by rivers and flat towns and dense forests. I forget the landscapes instantly. She watches them for hours. She talks about them for the rest of her life.

At night, after we've parked, I apply ointment on her burns. She brushes my hair. We go outside and breathe fresh air.

One night, where everything is still, she says, this doesn't feel like running away.

I know, I breathe. I'm glad.

Winter comes, and so does snow. I'm nervous about *San*. I oil her doors, rinse the salt off, warm her engine with our fuel stock. She putters, almost

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giving out, and I find myself praying, begging, unable to fathom being stranded, a dot in a chasm. *San* listens, and like a stalk, begins again.

We stop for a day in the county of Min. It's barely bigger than a crossroad, two roads and two stores. We buy more burn ointment and as much oil as is acceptable with others in line. Another emergency tire. I splurge and buy caramels. She laughs and eats them sparingly, upwraps them in shotgun and gives me half as the road speeds by us.

The morning after the winter cold breaks, I find her outside *San*. It's still January, and I can see both of our breath but she's gone without a coat. Her bare arms are out in the sun.

The highway disappears. *San* gets whittled down to sideroads, all mud and slush and intuition. She tracks our progress on the map, laying out giant paper over her legs, pointing at hills and turns, landmarks now. I listen. The thrush all looks the same to me, I can't remember if we turned yet, if we came from the east or west. She does. Her finger points north. I follow the compass.

I know we're getting close to Soklien because of the chestnut trees. They've started to bud. Pale, yellow signs of life. I want her to see a doctor, for her legs. She wants me to rest, to sleep. We both wait.

One day we see rabbits, and she laughs, clear as rain. I turn off the engine and we spend an hour watching the family cross the road, light streaming over the marsh and her face.

She drives when I can't, and then I navigate, and I'm terrified the whole time. I think I've taken us west, or worse, back south. Winter comes back, then abates, then leaves us with colder, harsher days. I feel as if we're staying stagnant. She can sense it. She grounds me, traces the map, tells stories of her past and our future homes, caramels on both our tongues.

There are ferns, at the top of the mountain. The range gives way to valleys and there are road signs again, cars, people she waves to.

We made it, she says, her fingers now lax on the map, as the thatched roofs come into view.

We did, I say, and I open *San*'s windows. The wind seems to have followed us here.

The Farm at the End of the World
words & design by V Diczker
edited by Crescentia Kim

Day 476

Up early today. Crops were good. City was quiet. Had potatoes. Cold.

Day 477

Up early today. Crops were okay. City was quiet. Had potatoes. Cold.

Day 478

Up early today. Crops a little sad. City was quiet. Had potatoes. Colder than usual.

Day 479

Up too early today. Crops looking better. City was quiet. I need to eat something other than potatoes. Freezing.

Day 480

Up again. Doesn't matter what time. Crops are alright. City was boring. All these potatoes I'm eating remind me of that old song... Anyways, frigid.

Day 481

Up early. Crops looked good. I heard something today. Weird. Potatoes. Warmer.

Day 482

Up a little later than usual. The sound kept me up. Whatever it was. Crops look okay. P. Freezing, again.

Day 483

Up too late. Last night and this morning. I keep hearing shit. Like a rustling. Reminds me of when I was a kid and we had a squirrel in the walls. Crops boring, as usual. Pommes de terres. Cold-ish.

Day 484

Well. It wasn't a squirrel. She looked bad. Around my age. So, bad. I told her to leave. Crops whatever. Bulbs. Teeth-chattering.

Day 485

She won't go away. Or stop talking. I gave her a potato. That seemed to shut her up. Crops fine. One less potato. Glacial.

Day 486

I let her sit with me. Whatever. She's probably moving out soon. Nobody likes to stay in the city—or what's left of it—too long. Crops. Potatoes. You'd think after all this time, the sun could come out.

Day 487

She came back. She keeps coming back. Crops. Potatoes. Cold.

Day 488

Her name is Hannah. I won't tell her mine. She doesn't get it. There's nothing left here. Nothing but me.

Day 489

She slept here last night. It got cold. So cold.

Day 490

I don't understand why she won't leave.

Day 491

I don't think she has anyone left. We have that in common.

Day 492

Maybe she can stay.

Day 493

I got warm last night. For the first time in forever. I was warm. I was warm.

THE FLIGHT OF THE BEE

Rishit Pal

Edited by Jonah Watkins

The sun's embrace warms me while I lay on a warm carpet of grass.

An annoying buzzing in my ear comes closer... closer...

... and closer. Turning my head to the right to see,

Thud!

A bee smacks me in the face.

It stumbles and buzzes on the grass

before it flies off slaloming between the trees,

fighting the wind at air force speeds.

Never have I watched a bee this intensely till today.

Following it using the buzz of its wings and its sunlight-like sheen.

It flew above all the abandoned high rises—

the same apartments my great grandparents would have lived in.

Previously teeming with human life, they now stand dormant,

Vines climbing the wall, suffocating the memories within.

Many of its windows painted, masking the mundane stories,

trying to imbue a sense of vibrancy into the stone again.

Swoooooosh!

The city's maglev train blows the bee right off its course,

Sucking the bee into the train's event horizon such that

I lose focus of the bee since it spirals out of control.

Yet the train, speed like a shooting star, pulls the bee with such force

That I could not believe the bee would survive.

Eyes squinted, bated breath, beads of sweat on my forehead,

While waiting for the bee to break free.

I never felt such love for a bee before—or any insect for that matter

For they are but diminutive creatures.

Billions of lives so close to us, many of whom are never seen.

While the train sits at Central Park Station,

I get up and run towards it

I use the shortcut through the underground parking lot.

Rushing between the cars,

Stopping abruptly by being snared.

Flipping me in the air,

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collapsing headfirst on the concrete,
with pain shooting through my spine.
Whiplashed, hoping for no broken teeth.
Forgoing movement for comfort and ease,
Cars, bikes, and trains outpacing our two feet
Keeping everyone chained to the streets.
If humans could grow wings,
Would everyone fly like the bee,
Or fear Icarus's fate and remain bound?
Motionless on the cold, hard, man-made concrete,
I notice the bee flying past me and internally scream,
It's still alive!
I stood up to chase it, but
when I emerge in the sunlight, I stop.
I simply watch the ashamed bee flying away from me
I don't chase it further, being winded
Instead, I watch the bee approach a flower
and begin drinking the nectar, the target of its flight.
Seeing that despite its eccentric troubles in a human world,
It must strive to survive another day... another night.
I look around for the others;
Only now conscious of the sounds they make,
The colours they are, and their microscopic lives.
Performing seemingly inconsequential everyday actions,
I begin to understand the madness behind them.
Now I slowly walk back to the patch of grass from earlier
Listening and looking for chirps, buzzes, ribbits even.
Their voices lullaby me in my resting place.
Snuggling into the grass, feeling the sun's balmng warmth,
Staring up into the sky, viewing the clouds move above me,
And listening.
Thinking, today is a good day,

WINDOWS

Emily Wong

Edited by Nathan Agustin

Towering—above land, above sand and lake and tree—is a Slate of Glass.

I've been told it warps the land beyond, turns hundred-foot-high foliage into artists of gentility. Vines become strings of silk, draping over the curves of the old castle in the distance. Thick trunks scarred by forked lightning become sundials, wise and ever-watching.

My father says the air is sacred out there. The trees taste the wind, whisper secrets to the soil below. Passed things like broken birds and rotting trunks are embraced by the cracks of the Earth, shifted into oceans and crevices where they may be made anew once again. Living things bow with the sunrise. The Sun glances our way and we are warmed, cheeks pink against the kiss of her radiation. She reminds us that we are here. She reminds us *why* we are here.

Twenty years ago, I was born. My mother, dripping molten lava from her core, held me to her chest in the warmth of the Earth's mantle, cocooned and safe in the shifting Earth around us. I was several months old before the Aphelion subsided and our harsh winters turned into a bearable spring, where I saw the Slate for the first time.

Pale, icy, all-encompassing. I saw in the lightening heather the first lines of shadow—a boulder, a branch, a blade of grass—then the first notes of a shy blue sky, giving way to the hint of a blush creeping over the horizon.

"The Sun is sacred," my mother whispered, and even though she kept her pace away from me as her mother did before her, I can still hear the velvet of her voice, smell berries and lavender in the air. "The Earth belongs to the Sun, and as long as we keep her pace, she gives us life."

I grew up under the Sun. I would spend dawn to dusk under her rays, show her the latest holopacks I got for my birthday, tell her about my new little sister in my mother's tummy. When the days turned stormy we went underground, far below the Slate, and I learned quickly that it meant I wouldn't be able to see the Sun for the rest of the season. My mother says I was inconsolable for a week. She speaks fondly about it. Apparently my father was inconsolable, too.

My legs grew longer. My arms, lanky and bony. My sister used to say I looked like a skeleton throughout my teens, ate like a vacuum cleaner. I

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would get embarrassed about the Sun too sometimes, afraid to show her my latest holocards or tell her about the girl I liked in my multivariate calculus class. My first kiss I had at seventeen with a guy nearly a foot taller than I was. Nearly knocked our teeth out with the kiss. There wasn't another one. Part of me wished the girl had asked me out instead.

I remember telling the Sun about the girl and the guy. It was sunset, rays striking brilliant patterns against the Slate, and I was alone by the lake where kids usually get exiled to if their parents want them to get a little more vitamin D before coming home for the night. I had a bit too much to drink, then. Perhaps that was why I was not of the right mind when I slurred out, "Wish it could have been you. Wish I could be out there with you."

There was a storm. One of the worst our colony has ever gotten, certainly the worse I've ever lived through. Lightning and fires by the old sundial, and the castle was glowing red even late at night when we weren't supposed to be in the dome anymore. The TV feed was clearly angry though. No one knew that the Sun was angry at me. I was so ashamed. I should have told her sooner.

I'm older, now. Our Perihelion summer comes soon, and with it, endless days of the Sun beaming down on us. The Sun and I aren't perfect. Most days I tell her everything, from my university maize resurrection project to the various plastic items eaten by my pet beetle Hurb. Most days are good days for her, too—but sometimes she is enraged by the world, so deeply hurt that she scars the land with lightning and unleashes sheets of rain against our dome. It's no one's fault. As long as we gravitate back together, timid pink on the horizon and the lakeshore under my feet, I know we'll be alright.

She shines so magnificently in the daylight, seeping into my pores. The world runs on her radiation. We live behind our Slate of Glass... and we are happy.

MARITIME

Ola Kim

Edited by Ciara Drummond

Jungeun doesn't remember when she first heard about restoration. It wasn't exactly a family business.

Both of Jungeun's parents are lawyers, and not the evil kind. They had always said that real estate lawyers were scum. Real estate, and probate lawyers. But of course, they would say that. Jungeun thought so too. Eomma practiced environmental law while appa specialized in family, for separate firms so they never clashed, even if eomma always said that the family lawyer in appa came out when they fought. Secretly, Jungeun thought that eomma's practice was just a little bit cooler.

After the rain started, the firm eomma worked for started getting lots of business. Obviously.

It began only in small bursts. Rain showers, with pearls of mist beading along the paper walls of her bedroom. First just condensation, dew, then the onset of thick humidity. City sparrows embarked on their seasonal migration far too soon. Jungeun should have taken it as a sign. The animals always know.

The rain would vary in intensity every day. Jungeun remembers climbing out of her bedroom window every afternoon, when the downpour was the lightest; she'd perch herself right under the canopy that used to belong to the upstairs neighbor's balcony before management sliced the whole apartment unit right off. They had to. The wet rot. Jungeun's family apartment suddenly got the privilege of being the new penthouse, despite the sloppy demolition job. It was a brief victory. The rain started overflowing a couple weeks in.

A hundred other buildings were demolished for the sake of public safety, or became so water-logged they collapsed on their own. All that creaky foundation. All that decaying wood. It became impossible to ignore, all that rot in the air.

The first flash flood came on the eighteenth night. No observatory could pinpoint which thunderstorm it came from, but it was as if a whole undercity's worth of water all dropped from the sky at once. Jungeun's family apartment got leveled pretty soon after that. Canopy and all.

The restorator approached her after her parents moved into their

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offices. Said that Jungeun seemed like one of those hard-working young folk, especially if she applied herself. It wasn't as lucrative a role as maritime law, and nowhere as impactful as a healthcare job, but it was a job. Paid her decently, even if it was commission-based. The restorator said that you couldn't put a price on sentimentality, but the paycheck—three-quarters of which Jungeun sent straight to her parents—begged to differ. Her parents were keeping busy, eomma in the international courts, appa getting his hands dirty in the housing market. They approved of her new job. Said it made her less of a scalper than property damage lawyers.

The restorator's workshop sat on the third-to-last floor of what used to be a multi-storey carpark. Stalls selling candy and heating pads and cigarettes had taken up in several of the larger abandoned cars and vans: they'd deal out of whatever windows had been smashed open already and take all their unsold goods back with them to wherever they slept at night. No way to lock up a shop with no key in the ignition, with no ignition at all. Jungeun always found herself on the roof during her breaks, looking for birds. It seemed like somewhere they would roost.

Thieving occurred all over the city, but never really in these parts. Jungeun had a good sort around her, people who preferred to barter with goods rather than a currency that was quickly losing value the longer and longer it rained. Paper bills dissolved in the rain. Coins sank.

Jungeun's best deal to date was a 120-dart bulk box of menthol cigarettes in return for the restoration of a pack of cards—the tobacco shopkeeper was pleased enough that he still lets her bum off of him during her breaks. She's always housed a guess that the cards were rigged. The shopowners play with them sometimes, on overturned plastic crates that floated back into use, and sometimes they'll let her watch. She doesn't play.

The tobacconist wins every time, but she'll never tell. When the card paper inevitably ruins again, Jungeun will demand another hundred-twenty, even if she hasn't yet smoked her way through her existing stash. The restorator wasn't thrilled about the deal, but she never complained whenever Jungeun offered her a dart. Always offered Jungeun a dry matchstick and said she'd take it out of her paycheck.

Eomma says that they're converging with the Pan-Pacific soon. Appa says that he's proud of her, and will be even after they all turn part-fish.

Jungeun kept looking, but the sparrows never flew back. She never saw a single one again.

