

The

PHOENIX

est. 1887



Accidental Sonnet

Poem by Emma Wills

Painting by Indira Mallik



You wouldn't like it if I told you how
Your skin is utter flint to poetry.
Or said your eyes were stars, in a villanelle
Accidental praise of you fails openly.
And I would never dream of writing of you
As journey's end, or new faith just begun,
Reading it could still be true or untrue,
Love is better not written out, but done.

Sometimes words fall from your actions quickly
Too hot or too ardent to be swallowed,
You speak out sonnets quite unfairly swiftly:
All my words, from your own words are borrowed.
Somehow you make poetry necessity.
I know that you don't want it. Forgive me.

“His heart was becoming full
Of broken wings and artificial
flowers”

– Suicide,
Federico Garcia Lorca

No Through Road

For my colleague and friend Professor Stefan Grimm (1963-2014)

Innovative scientist, devoted tutor, compassionate individual.

– Poem by Professor N.D. Mazarakis
(With apologies to R.S. Thomas)

All in vain. I will cease now
My long absorption with research
With the complexity of cell death pathways
And man united with Nature.
I have failed after many seasons
To bring truth to bear,
And nature's simple equations
In the mind's precincts do not apply.

But where to turn? Science endures
After the passing, necessary shame
Of harsh review, and the old lie
Of recognition beckons me still
From the world, ugly and evil,
That men pry for in truth's name.

◆

A Flowing Stream

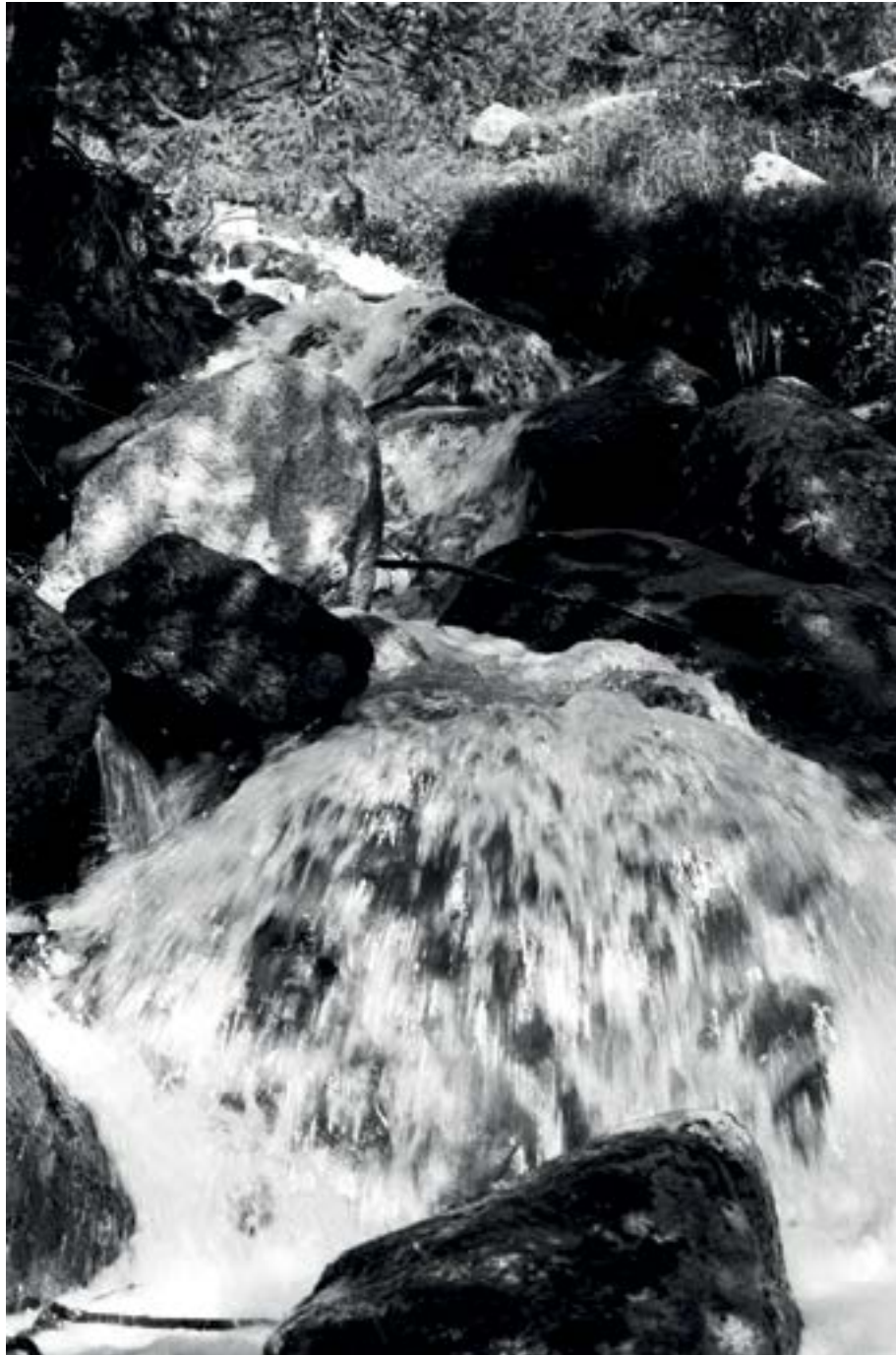
Poetry by Iacopo Russo

What do you see, when you look
Deeper into the elements of Nature?
What overwhelming combination of
Sensations, thoughts, emotions!
Can you not hear the stream flow?
Can you not hear the crickets sing
Invisible
Hidden among the multi-coloured bush?

I see the harmony of
Opposing forces.
I see darkness and light
Black and white
Stillness and movement
Competing for power and space
Cooperating to create Beauty.
The world is nothing
But a dynamic equilibrium of impulses.

And can't you see
The arrow of time, too?
You might see water flowing downhill
But if it was flowing up at you
In your face
Purifying you from all illusions of
perception?
If only time would run backwards,
We could see rivers
Climbing mountains,
But photographs would still capture
Only the eternity of instants.

Man is nature
And man is in nature
Half detached from the mother
Who gave him birth.



Photography by Giuli Cardoso

Nature soothes the man
In search for peace
Yet from the strength of her rivers
We must defend ourselves.

And my greatest regret
(I feel I must acknowledge)
Is the impossibility of seeing
Myself reflected in that water:
Too strong is the flow
The stream of will does not allow
Me to step out
For a moment, just a moment
On the shore
And simply watch the water run
While I take one, two, three
Deep breaths...

Yet my imagination
Can feel the fresh touch
Of a mountain spring
And I can rest on one of these stones
My mind clear
Smelling the innocence of flowers
And plants, and trees
Or I can make my body fluid
Abandoning all fears
Of wilderness and chaos
And flowing downhill in the river.
If only I could jump
Into that black and white world
All paradoxes of nature and men and life
Might just resolve into an eternal instant.

<< **“What do you see?”** – this is the very simple question I asked myself when I came across these photographs for the first time. I let the beauty and intensity of the pictures flow in me and come out again in the form of poems. The “photograpoems” in these two pages are meant as a celebration of the power with which an image can generate sensations, emotions and thoughts. They are also an invitation to try and look deeper under the surface of things by using

the eye of imagination. The photographs were taken by Giuli Cardoso, a geography student at King’s College London.

The photograph on this page was taken at Muottas Muragl, Engadin, Switzerland. It was natural for me to think about the themes of nature and time, and how they relate to men and photography. My interpretation of the picture is influenced by readings about mindfulness practice, and by the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. >>

The Man, The Chair & The Tower

First comes a comfortable
Chair.
For hundreds, thousands of years
Man lives on, survives
Without having to use
His own legs, with
His black coat well-wrapped
Around the cold body.
Slowly, however, his back
Starts to hurt
And so do his legs;
He can feel, right behind him
Where his head cannot turn
Awaiting unknown
Is a promise of truth.
Sudden bursts of courage
Recede in cold pools of fear:
The chair is all he's ever known.
One day, a grey day, a normal today
(Clouds oppressing the sky)
The best friend of his soul
A sun exploding in him
Curiosity flows out of his veins.
He stands up.
His knees creaking, his hands freezing
His will driving his body
Up he stands and he turns around.
Only now can he see the
Chair
Where for thousands of years sat he
A bare structure of metallic rods
A skinny, insubstantial comfort.
And now terror is gripping his heart
Quick, his legs unused to the walk
He desperately moves about
In search for his place in the
World, his true place.
A stone balustrade is blocking his path
"Jump", he thinks, "You must jump!"
But how can one jump after
Years of stillness?
How can one see after
Decades of blindness?
His courage the answer.
Pain in every part of his body
The bruises from the metal chair



Still burning where he sat
His black coat half-wrapped
Around the cold body
He finds himself standing
On his own legs, right there
Where before, he could not even see.
One man, so small
And still, so central.
One man, alone
And yet, he's free!
Stones all around him
In beautiful monuments
But he can feel their weight
Pressing over his heart
He can see how time
Made films of black soot
Of the once polished surface
They so proudly did show.
There's only one question
Burning under his skin:
"What am I to do now?"
From a comfortable chair he stood up
And up now he looks
In the grey sky, and far in the distance
He looks
Searching for answers.
And there, somewhat faded
Seamlessly arising from the background
He finally sees the tower.
Punching the sky
With its slender structure
It was free and magnificent
And light and empty.
The man looks at the tower
And immediately thinks:
"It's not heavy as a stone,
Nor as easy as a chair
I shall be a tower
And to know I will dare!"
He knows that the tower
Is as weak as the chair
(Just thin rods of metal rooted in ground)
But on his legs he was standing
At the centre of a photograph
At the centre of the world
A man free to choose his life.

<< The photograph in this page was taken at the Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France. I was struck by the composition of the picture, and I saw the chair, the man, and the Tour Eiffel linked in a compelling continuum of meaning. So I was inspired to write a sort of short story-poem that could

make sense of the link I felt between these three elements. In my case, the story was quite strongly influenced by my readings of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought. But the most interesting question is: what do you see in this photograph? What would be your poem about it? >>



Silver Linings

Poem by Diya Kapila
Photography by Rishi De-Kayne

Lessons learnt,
Yet chattering lips lie restless.
Passion for painless pleasures,
Yet pain permeates proud,
Arrogantly bearing his teeth of incision.

In this murky derelict of decadence and desolation,
Scratches a countenance of mistrust,
Where drifting oars
Slice Hope's stream
And rasping rocks of a residual dream.

A moment of silence;
A drug for love and life and this, and this.

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Yet death clambers,
Up to the hollow skies of cloudy grey
Where there lies no silver lining;
Sorrowful songs are food for dining,
And love is but a nightmare.

Unabashed screams,
From a disillusioned eye witness;
Who weeps, and weeps into a kiss,
Of a forgotten self
With shortening roads of wandering existence.

Yet here lies a drug,
for love and life and this, and this

Where Hope's rays flicker
And return the silver lining.

Lost in the Blue

A look around:
I am lost,
in the blue.
My mind feels
so helpless,
as every form
of orientation
becomes useless.
Wings of steel,
vanishing clouds,
men of clay
crowd my sight.
The blue darkens
and in a red blink
disappears,
while millions
of bright golden
specks of dust
peer out below me
one by one.
And I find myself
wondering:
can I be myself?
Why bother
being myself?
I am leaving behind
so many vague clouds
and I know
that one of them
is what I used
to believe to be.
Yet,
there are many more
ahead of me.
Is there anything more
to life
than drowning
helplessly
endlessly
purposelessly
in an upside down
ocean
dazed by my own
drone?
I close my eyes
and let the blue
embrace me.
I am nothing
more than a dream
endlessly wearing out,
lost in the blue.



Beauty

Instances of God
rain down
from a scraped sky.
I pray
by the mirror
of dreams
as the storm
twists the world around me
into a vortex of leaves
and dust.
The glow of the world
murders the darkness
and raises the sun
inside my soul.
Underlined words
brush my thoughts
and erase my body
in a sublimed
whisper of art.
The divine face
of the world,
pure music,
a human draw
of colourful emotions.
An essential distortion
of the world:
beauty.

Poetry - Giovanni Bettinelli

Photography - Zestin Soh



Photography by Duncan Lomax

Plastic

By Kristjana Xhuxhi

The old bag lady
with a heart shaped wart
on her forehead
sits by me on the pavement.

There's a one legged pigeon by her side
it pecks her plastic hand.

She tells me she has let no man
touch her,
brings her skimpy lips
to my ear,
whispers

Kleck - Klick
Klack - Klick
Kluck - Klick

Her smile is crooked;
she knows something
that I don't.

Strange,
It is she who laughs at me.

FUCK THE ENGLISH

Fuck the English,
It's such a laugh to say,
And we're all in it together,
Shouting away,

Did you see them play football,
It's such a laugh,
They're all skinny and ugly,
Their tactics are naff,

They're soft and pathetic,
None of them have had it as tough,
And that country is ugly,
It's urban and rough,

Everybody hates the English,
It's good to say,
And we'll always make sure,
That's how it stays,

Except him in the corner,
Who speaks with such verve,
He's got a distant tone in his voice,
Picturing himself,
In a battle, a bloodbath, miles away,
With every swing of his sword
His voices tethers and frays,

Fuck the English
And we all cheer
Fuck the English
He stands,
I hate every one of those stupid fucking people,
I want them gone and drowned,
Fuck the English,
They're a bunch of fucking cunts,
Fuck the English,
Fuck the English

It's great banter to be amongst friends,
Singing our country's songs with pride,
And they're all great men at the end of the day,
What else would you expect from this country.



EZRA KITSON

Why did I go to university?
In 30 years from now I will not say:
Higher education inspires the youth of today.
It is evident that
Our generation will be confined to the shadows.
Learning is monotonous
If we presume that
We can make a difference
Life will be full of disappointment but
In the future
Money is the most important thing.
I do not concede that
Education is cultivating.
Women belong at home.
It is a fallacy that
I take pride in my learning.
School was a place to just pass exams
And
Subjects should be studied just to get a qualification
It is foolish to assume that
Education is empowering.

**Higher learning gives us the power
to reverse these views.**

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**HIGHER
EDUCATION**

DIYA KAPILA

YUEBI YANG



Civil Engineering student Yuebi Yang has been interested in photography ever since childhood. “Visual arts have always been a big part of my family – both of my parents were ballet dancers,” he told The Phoenix. “So I guess it was that, coupled with having great art teachers at school who put creativity first before technical skill”.

This selection of Yuebi’s work showcases his skills as a portrait photographer, taken on a combination of a Nikon D40, D7000 and a D610. We asked him how he chose his subjects, to which he replied, “Funnily enough, most of the portraits capture subjects who have never had any prior modelling experience. The challenge of getting them to feel comfortable in front of the camera is part of the creative process.”

PORT- RAITS



J U L I E T



M A D D I E

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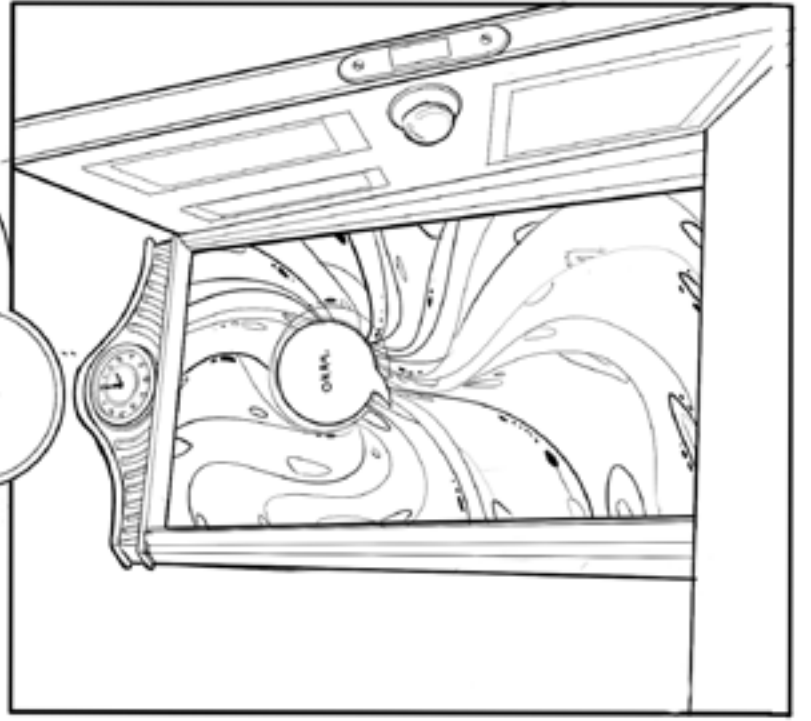
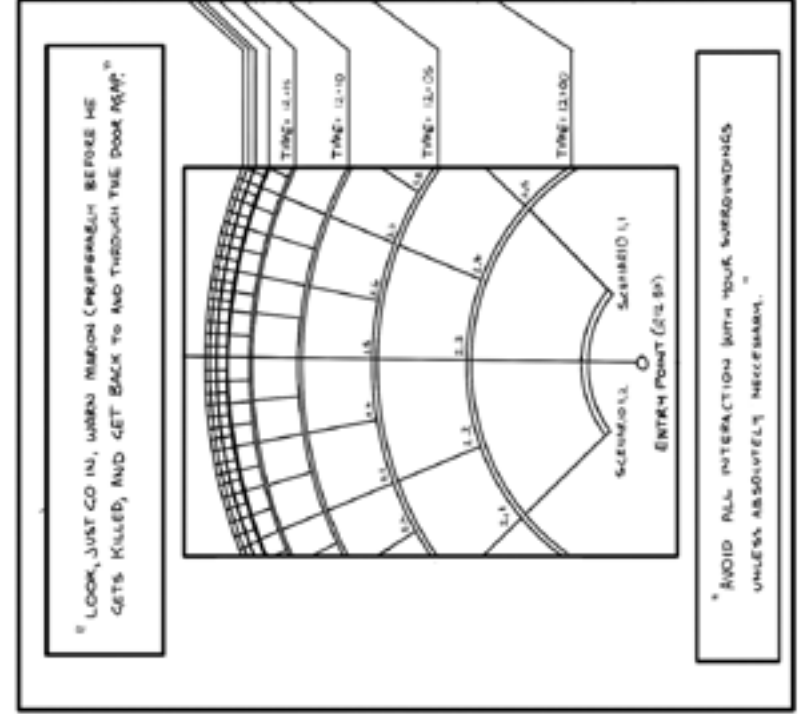
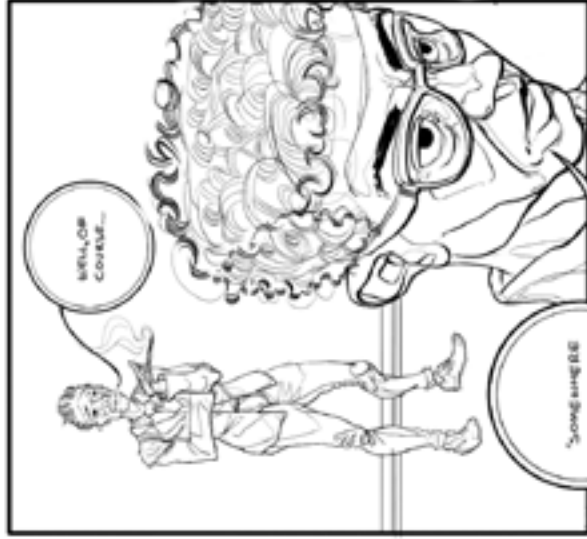
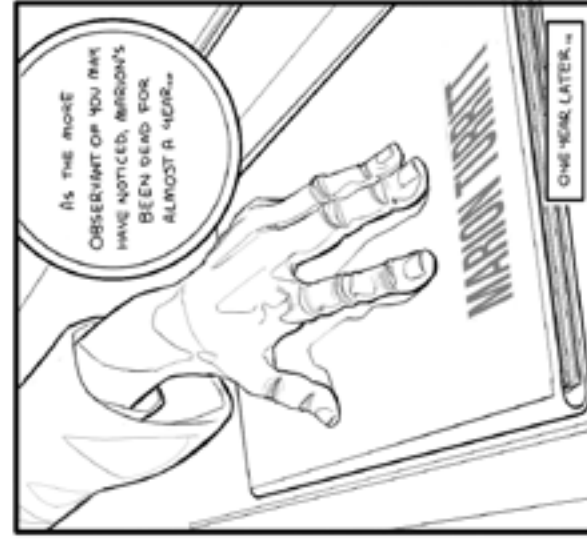
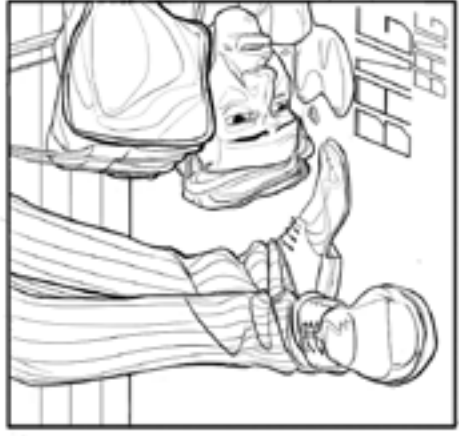
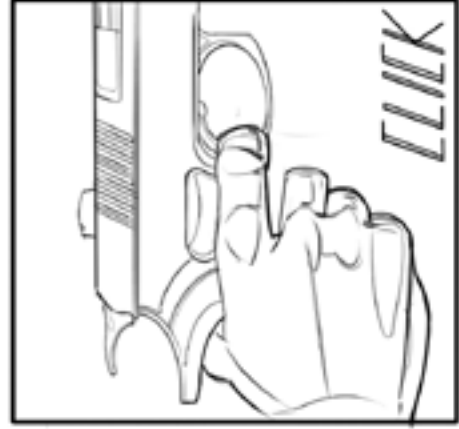
SHORT STORIES

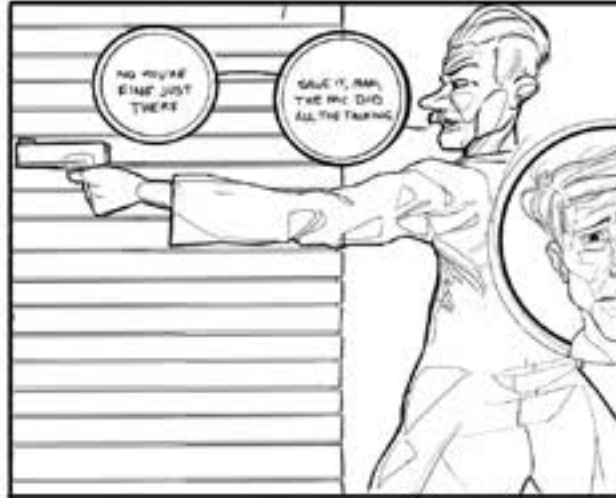
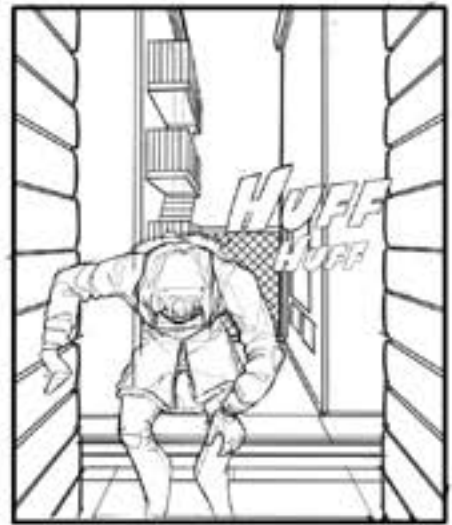


Photo: Rishi De-Kayne

ART BY RIYADH RATEME
 STORY BY RIYADH RATEME
 AND GRAHAM DAVIES

CONTEXT: THE DOOR SHOWN IN THE COMIC IS A TIME TRAVEL MACHINE. THIS CAN ONLY BE OPENED FROM THE FUTURE TO ACCESS THE PAST, BUT ONCE OPENED THE TWO POINTS IN TIME ARE BRIDGED TOGETHER - ALLOWING INDIVIDUALS TO CROSS FROM PRESENT TO PAST OR OF A DOOR OPENS ON THEIR SIDE DUE TO SOMEONE TRAVELLING TO THE PAST) FROM PRESENT TO FUTURE. WHILE THE LOCATION TO TRAVEL TO CAN BE SELECTED ROUGHLY, THE TWO POINTS IN TIME MUST BE EXACTLY ONE YEAR APART.





Nick N' Nominate

By
Volodymyr Chapman

Illustrations by Jingjie Cheng and Indira Mallik

Carli, you're a slimy piece of Italian turd, smeared on my wall like some excuse for a cop. Two weeks is what I gave you. That's a week and a half longer than I've given anyone – and what do you do? You come back to my office, unzip your fly and take a nice big shit on my desk. This "Nick n' Nominate" as you call it: crime spree, schoolboy prank; I don't care what you think it is. It's in my jurisdiction, and it's out of fucking control. It's on your head, nobody else's. Yours! 24 hours is what you've got to clean this crap off my desk, or I'm gonna scalp you, piss in your brain, and send you down to records for the rest of your donkey-shit existence.

Records.

Juan got sent to Records after the Cruise case didn't reach port by the time Brick said they needed a name and a trial. A week later they found Juan down there. He'd sucked quills till the mercury got to him. A bad way to go. They say that the fifth one kills you; every nerve in your body ignites, till you can't beg for the silver serpent. A lot of the guys sent to Records do it in week zero. Then the numbers increase as the weeks go by.

That wise-guy you heard speaking was Dick Rick the Brick. My luck that that gimp has a badge saying "Superintendent R. R. Brick", while mine says "Detective C. A. O'Connell: Superintendent's bitch". If I don't get a name and confession in 24 hours, I'm gonna be riding the feather quill lightning. Still, he had a fucking feather on his head. What a gimp.

Ah, crap.

Hour Two It came out of nowhere. First, one or two things got misplaced; watches, tables; where'd I put my sofa? You know, everyday stuff. Week later: Bubblebroth shops don't have windows; parchment suppliers are crying for their presses back, damn it, the city border wall! Reduced to a bloody ditch! And you know what's really grinding my nether regions like coffee? The thing that wedges me nice and firmly between Rick the Brick and a hard place? No-one knows shit! No-one has seen anything. It's all 'mum's the word' out there.

I've seen it in their eyes though. They think they know more than I do, but I've seen it. You buy a dough-ring from Dregg's on your lunch break. Nothing strange. Then, as you pick it up, she flinches! Five years buying dough-rings and the closest I've gotten to a flinch is hot Schmoo spilt over my new, Vincenzo Larini shirt. They know something. I know they're the ones stealing all this shit. I'll find who started it. A few nice pops in the jaw and he'll sign the confession, then I'll pop his jaw out. He did it to himself.

Hour Five It's late; the cords, slung like rope ladders above the streets, are empty of the slacks and Lederhosen the chumps of this part of town would otherwise wear.

The buildings on each side ain't bad. Hundred grand a piece, maybe, even though it's not Royal Tottington. The kind of place that Bobbies say they did their rounds in to get some two-penny hood in another estate to take a piddle in their hot-pants. Saying that, a lot of richer folks have been moving here. Looking for excitement rush. Stupid idiots. Explains the prices.

Wait.

Hazelsprings doesn't have cords. It lost its licence back in '05. Shit, didn't one of those Theft declarations say 'Clothes cords from Waschbach estate'?

This is it!

I pop the collar on my trench coat and keep my walking pace as best as I can. The popped collar's suspicious, why did I pop my collar?

Forget that, why wear a trench coat to Hazelsprings? Shit. I'll go to the first knocker I come across.

Knock-knock. No answer. I put my ear to the door. Someone's definitely in there, Lamb-bass violin's squealing out of a gramophone somewhere. Knock-knock. The eye port jerks open. Keep cool, just like stream fishing. I throw my open hand through the hole and grab whatever's on the other side. Feels like some thick caterpillar, what is that? Could be a dreadlock from one of those Disco boys.

“Open the fucking door!”

A school-girl whine and the door gives. I’ve still got it.

Hour Six “Well thanks for the cuppa, Brad is it?”

“I said, thanks for the cuppa Brad. Are you deaf or what?”

“No, no, I’m real cool. I’m real cool. Just don’t hurt me. I’m. I’m. I’m in the zone. You know? I’m there. Where I am. It’s just there. You know?”

“What you on, Brad? Got any spare?”

He licked his lips after I said that. Strawbezzle syrup: a disco boy junkie.

“This is a nice place you’ve got here Brad; a gramophone, settee, a clothes-drying cord. Can I ask, where’d you get the cord from? I’ve been looking for one. You see, up in Waschbach, we’re low on drying cords”

“I ain’t got nothin’. Nothin’ but the beat. Uttz, uttz, uttz.”

“You mean, if I pick up your gramophone, take a slow walk to that window, and throw that piece of shit through it, I won’t see a cord outside, going to the house opposite”

Nothing.

He better have a good beat going in his head, because I’ve got some wild percussion planned.

I’m halfway to the window with the gramophone when he does that schoolgirl whine thing again.

“Don’t take ma’ funk away, come on, don’t do it. It’s all I’ve got. Boom, boom, cha; da, boom, boom cha. See? I ain’t got nothin’ but it.”

When the gramophone is set down, he flaps over to it with a pillow. Is that the needle that he’s stroking? I thought I was screwed up as a kid.

“All you’ve got to do is give me a few answers. You do that, and your gramophone makes it. If you don’t; your woodwork skills better be good. Where’d you get the cable from Brad?”

“It was by Sik Disko. It’s got a real sick scene. It’s all wam, ching, wam, ching.”

“That’s next to Waschbach, right?”

No reply. I guess that’s a yes.

“Why’d you do it?”

“I had to; like MC Violint, you get me?”

“What do you mean you had to?”

“I got nominated, like.”

Hour Seven That’s what I wanted to hear. Two weeks, and finally, someone’s been caught. A little more of a push and he spilt the beans on how it’s done. One day, a pigeon comes flying through your open window. On its leg, it’ll have a tiny, blue scroll. You unroll it, and there you go: “so and so, you’ve been nominated by what’s his name. You’ve got 24 hours”. Then, you’ve got to send some of your own nominations out. It’s a chain reaction. The guy didn’t want to tell me who he sent his to,

said its all ‘Hush, boom, hush, boom’, whatever that is. I told him that crash, boom, crash, boom would be the only sounds his gramophone was ever going to make and he gave me a few names. DJ Beethoven, Semy-Conductor, those types.

There’s handwriting on the back of the blue scroll:

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Nominate your friends today! Simply attach note money to your pigeon’s leg, a shilling per chum, along with a list of your nominated partners!

Voila!

Regards, Magpie.

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I’m a genius. Did I ever tell you I’m a genius? Money. Someone’s making a mint out of it all. You could even use the same pigeons. That’s what I would do. Shit. This is it; I won’t be in Records if I find this Magpie charlatan. If he’s ever even written that word on the seat of a public toilet, Records will know about it. Ah, crap. Guess a man’s got to go to hell to get out. One last time down those stairs, Carli, so you don’t get stuck down there with a boxful of terribly appetising mercury quills.

Hour Eight Records is worse than death. While death would see you at six feet under, Records wouldn’t even give you the satisfaction of knowing how far beneath the earth you lay. It’s a catacomb in every way; clay walls; clay pipes jutting out of the walls from above, attempting to administer air to this cadaverous place, and I’m sure there are plenty of those too. Paper stacked on leather binders. Leather binders on evidence nets. Evidence nets with paper tags. Paper tags on leather binders. Leather binders on evidence nets. A twisted track on loop.

The only living thing there, if you can even call it that, is Andy. Andy is the Recordier. The only Recordier at the moment.

He wears a brown, checked sleeveless jumper, with a rusted iron shirt underneath. It’s painful to see. Brown on brown; like a shit smear got up one day, put on some nerd’s glasses, and went to work in Records. I don’t even want to touch him. He was sent to records in ’83, 24 years ago. He should have been dead 23 years and 364 days ago. Maybe he likes it down here? I want to grab an evidence net and empty my stomach just at the idea. No-one could ever like Records, and that’s that. I’ll never work down there; I’ll never be like that creep.

The smell hits you on ground level of the stairwell.



It's alkaline, like washing powder, dissolved in turd. It's new, but maybe they treated the walls. Why, to stop the walls from falling? The place needs to be levelled for good. Please, not while I'm down here. Do I touch the bell on Andy's desk? Has he touched it before? I'll do it with the quill I got from the old man last year. I was going to throw it anyway.

Turn

Even the bell sounds dead. And there's that shit-smear with glasses, creeping towards the counter.

"Andy, how's it going?"

I don't care, he won't reply; I guess it's a good start.

"I'm looking for any mention of a Magpie; you don't have anything down here like that, do you?"

"Magpie."

His voice is like a branch with dry leaves on it being dragged through more autumn leaves, just really quietly, so it doesn't wake any mass murderers in caves around the woods. I don't see myself making it to the end of the conversation without landing a hit on him, to get rid of a few of those fucking leaves. Then I remember he's a walking shit-smear, and I don't want to touch him.

"Magpie you say. Why, I think I do know something about a certain magpie."

"What it is it, tell me Andy."

"Magpie. Why, it's an aerial beast of sorts. Dark on top, with a white breast, and a beautiful, blue tail."

"I know what a magpie is! I've got a lot on this, Andy. A lot more than you could ever fucking imagine. I asked about a guy that calls himself Magpie, do you have anything?"

"I don't think you do know what a Magpie is"

"You're really trying me, Andy. I just got out of Anger Management classes, so believe me, I'm trying. Give me what I want."

"Dark on the head, and light in the breast, with a beautiful blue tail. Twas by the lily perched on bank, on Cuthbert's dawn of Day, that magpies rose from that which stank, to take The Rotten's pay"

"I can provide you with a blue tail; I'll do your face as well at no extra cost if in the next five seconds you don't drop this Strawbezzle shit, and give me something!"

I don't get this town.

I think he's smiling at me, it's hard to tell. Creep.

Hour Nine

The hour just ticked over. Fifteen left. That creep Andy was getting to me. He didn't know shit, and he was messing with me. A real funny guy. I would have sent him to Records too.

I've got to think this over. I'm sure it's all in front of me. I'm probably just not seeing the bigger picture.



Crap.

Okay, so bird comes in. You take the nomination. Steal something. Nominate other people.

How does it come in?

It flaps its fucking... how the hell else is it going to get in, it's a damn bird. Through the disco guy's window. Through a hole. It gets in, that's it, nothing else. What type of bird is it?

A pigeon. A pigeon flies in. Pigeon. What's a pigeon? A flying rat. It stinks. It shits, a lot. Everywhere. What's the nomination?

An order, from someone you know. To steal. 24 hours. A scroll on the pigeon's foot. Blue paper. Magpie. Magpie. Forget Magpie, it's a dead end! Money! Nominate others. More money. Chain reaction. Money. I'm not getting anywhere!

Hour Ten I need to go back to basics, I can feel something. It's huge, it's everything, and it's an upside down pyramid balancing on my head. I can feel it. I'm close. Real close. Not Tony Salony the Mahoney 'close' to getting that chick's telegram number; I'm talking back to Carli's place for a cup of 2 A.M. coffee 'close'. Pigeon. Paper. Money. Feather. Paper. Money.

What's familiar in those?

Feather.

Feather.

Why's that familiar?

Feather, did I see one at the disco house?

Brick. Feather. Brick.

Feather! Brick! That's where I saw it! How could I forget that Brick had a huge, damn feather on his head? Hah, what a goon!

Oh, come on. I don't need a conspiracy right now.

Hour Eleven

This IS a fucking conspiracy. Brick's had it out for me since cadet school. Yeah, I remember. He failed me on the range; he gave me an E in Detective Theory. That's who's behind this. He set this all up. He did this to get me to Records! He wants to ruin everything for me, and this was his shot! 24 hours, I'll give him his 24 hours in a 24 calibre size, that damn goon!

Just some proof to pin it on him, that's all I need. I'll be the one with a badge that says 'Superintendent'. That flying rat!

Hour Twelve

Here's his file; I've almost got you, you snake!

Superintendent Richard Rick Brick

So that's your full name, the papers will love it. What do you think of this as a title: Super Dick Brick plot to make millions foiled: promotion in store for hero Detective O'Connell!

Hobbies: Running and Diving

You dived into a heap of shit when you crossed me, you rat! Just try to run.

Hour Thirteen Maternal Grandparents: Theodore Twinklehoff and Rosetta Marinetta.

Twinklehoff industries, they make, what is it? Chips! Seasoned pumpkin chips. That's the link. You needed to get pumpkin to feed your pigeon collection, and you've got family on the inside. I'm on your tail Brick!

Hour Fourteen Pet names: Margaret (Dog; deceased), Peter (Budgie; deceased), Archibald (Crocodile)

Margaret and Peter. Maggie and Pete. Mag and Pie. I've got you now!

Hour Sixteen Primary residence interior:

Kitchen: Navy blue paintwork

Blue! Just like a magpie's tail. Oh, dumb as baked clay, Brick!

Hour Eighteen That must be him coming now!

Someone could have told him I was down here, now he wants to finish it. His steps sound like a paintbrush scraped against clay. Feathers on his shoe, who knows, he's a twisted gimp! He's not coming any closer now; he's stepping on the same spot. I think he's trying to trick me, make me think that he's moving when he's not.

Actually, it's coming from above. Does he do climbing?

There's something grey spinning by one of the clay air vents. I can't make out what it is. Is it one of his traps?

That snake!

Are those wings?

Is that a pigeon, down here in

Records?

As I'm watching that creature,

another like it swoops from the adjacent vent. It went somewhere past the mound of clay and documents, evidence bags and folders behind me.

Hour Nineteen I've got you now Brick. I've found

your pigeons. I've found the blue paper. On top of this mound, I can see your whole empire, you snake! You're a greedy gimp, so the money's not here, but I've found your money-makers. No wonder Records smells of washing powder and turd, your birds have quite the appetite. I'll feed them while you're away; don't worry Brick, you snake!

§

Dear Mummy,

I am so very much excited. I love you mummikins! I believe that you will be as roused as I when I disclose the news to you. News, oh, such news!

I am glad to announce that we will see The Ocean mummy! I had a project at work, and I am now a rich man mummy. We are rich!

I travel to you at this very moment mama, currently by ferry; but soon we will board a balloon that will take us to The Ocean!

I do not believe the people at the station will mind my absence. Twenty four years I was invisible, I wouldn't think that it would make a difference now. They seem to have already found a replacement. I talked to him today, he liked your poem!

Love, hugs and kisses,

Andy (Your little Magpie)

◇



“Hello. Are you looking for a waitress?” He mimics her as they lay beneath the leafless tree. He starts to tell her again how it felt the first time her wispy voice landed on his cheek, like marigolds. She smiles wistfully at him, feeling her pupils sink into her skull. The room is heavily stained with the scent of sandalwood, for the last hour they have been watching the notes of incense sketch curls of sweet, sweet saccharine webs.

Stark, they lie on his bed. She notices he changed the bedding today and she runs her finger on the silk sheets, so smooth. He catches her finger, squeezes it and she feels a single ringlet of sensation rush to her cunt.

“The lady leaved them behind when she moved. Strange no? I never had silk sheets before.”

Again she smiles, a smile so detached. How far away she looks, he thinks, and watches her unfold like a flower on the bed. “Fiori” he whispers in her ear as he draws closer to her side. He pushes his tongue into her ear – “Fiori”, he hisses as he withdraws.

He hands her the hash and taking it from him she sucks it in. You can tell she is young in the way she forces the smoke to rummage inside her to strengthen the hit. A single tear rolls down her cheek then lands on the sheet, floats unabsorbed. She stares at the movement of liquid particles quivering in with solid ones. Just as the drop succeeds, she too falls on to the bed – letting go.

“Just park it...” He whispers as she points to him with the joint. He passes the ashtray to her and jumps up to change the music. A long, winding trance like their bodies soon to be entwined. He picks the incense stick up and begins to dance.

“You know when I stayed in Peru – a Hamautta – Inca priest like medicine man, he telled me is important to cleanse your habitat. So it cleanse yourself, to remove negative energy....” He anoints each corner of the room with the unwinding incense smoke, starting at

the bottom of the wall and up to the top. Repetitive, so hypnotic to watch that her body jerks when he abruptly bounces on the bed. He begins to draw the incense around the tree they lie under and up to the ceiling. In the dim light, she watches this tall man elongating then shortening like a slinky.

She chuckles. He turns to her and catches her dainty laugh with his hand and begins to draw around her now. She closes her eyes and feels the waves of fire stroke her skin, fitfully yet so thoroughly, from her face, to her hands, back up to her breasts and all the way to each individual toe.

“Go away bad energy – go.” He sounds like a hyena.

In a dreamy haze, it seemed as if her eyelids, sewed clumsily together, were being unpicked with a needle. She began to focus on the tree before her. Last time she looked, she saw the monkey dangling from the branch on its tail and the rainbow coloured parrot just about to peck the monkey’s tail. But now the monkey is upright, grinning at the parrot who is hanging from its beak on the branch. She picks herself up, presses her eye closer to the tree so as to understand its dynamic nature. Each time she is at Vito’s, it teases her with a new story. She thinks of *Dorian Gray*, how he must have felt to be only a witness to his changes. It makes her wonder is it the tree or her mind that changes each time?

Vito places the incense stick back; slides onto the bed, slithering like a snake beside her. He pulls her trousers off and throws them onto the floor.

“I had bad dream last night – we was at a party and man gave you coke and you leaved me to go with him...”

His hands begin to play her again, starting from where he stopped last time as if she were an instrument he had been learning. She smirks. It is strange, it just occurred to her that she wants only the sensations to exist without the realisation that they exist. And when Vito speaks, as he often does, she realises more about the odd situation that they are in.

“We are different, me and you – I have never felt this with other girl before – I mean it’s not about if we attract...”As

Black Sheets

by
Kristjana Xhuxhi



~ "Laura" by Isabelle Erbacher ~

usual he then continues in a mumble; maybe because to her, he himself feels like a jabbering mumbler or maybe it's to stop them from realising too much...

He sinks on top of her, their heads fusing. She feels his aged curls graze her face and his tongue like a leech hook on to hers. Their tongues tangled now, they smile, sharing together the recent memory of the other night, the night of the dancing lover tongues. It was another one of these nights where time became ductile in this heavy room, thick with heavy air. From the start of a kiss, their tongues for an hour moved in unison with the beat of trance, enacting a tragedy of two reunited lovers.

Each night he mutters "This has never happened to me before – it is like we pass energy to and back to each other..."

It is funny, she thinks when he speaks, is it his English that is broken or his Italian? She never fully understands him when he speaks, he is like a collage. She has told him to speak only in Italian, she doesn't want to understand him but he still carries on with his broken English. He wants her to understand him, he wants more. But they both know it is only through their bodies that they communicate fully and equally.

"I can't stay tonight. I have a lecture at 9 – so I just want to get high for a while and then get back."

She never usually speaks but when she does it makes the air taste thinner, he thinks. He uncouples from her and stares for a few seconds at the air, lingering on its diluted flavour.

"You know, you are like the wind – no – no you are a petalo swirling in this wind that never stops..."

He sits up and begins to roll another joint. She watches from her side as his fingers, the same fingers that roll her, break up the hash into little dots of black and mix it with straws of tobacco. He lights up.

"I will go at papas early too – why you don't stay – we will dream together and... then you go."

He passes it to her, she sucks in a few times trying to not breathe out and feels another tear climb up to her eye.

"I don't know. I will see you at papas in the

evening any-wayyy...." She chokes out as she falls onto the bed in synchrony with her tear.

They lay there swelling, heads side by side. Their bodies leaking out a sort of sealant, bonding them together. He turns her over onto her front and, with his long spider fingers, begins to play her again. First, pressing the base of her spine, sending waves of scarlet water up to her shoulders. Then pausing to feel the energy simmering at the bottom of her spine; he presses each chord on her back, such a still motion fills her full with golden sensations, sensations spreading like the fluttering of a blanket in the air before it lands.

He then presses her feet, pressing the soles to feel the steps that got her to him. How sweet it is to be played like an instrument, she thinks, to be like a dripping sheet hung out to dry in a strong and hot wind. Inside, it was as if she was stuffed with spiders rummaging up and down from her head to her toes. Each time their bristly legs stroked her, her organs moved a little to release the dark tension beneath.

– Ahhhhh –

She feels them shift back to where they were before. But this time within her was a new lightness made of unrepressed expressivity; understood only by those who have let go. He continues to press the different chords on her back so that for a moment it was as if she were melting. Spineless she was.

A sigh escapes from Vito as he slunk out of her.

They stretch out on the bed, gaping at the ceiling, admiring its inert ability. She slides her hands on his shoulders and starts to massage him. As she pushes her fingers into his flesh, it is as though she is holding his energy – maybe a part of his soul – in her hands. She smooths, pinches, pulls at it till what is left of Vito is just his vessel, like the skin of a snake recently shed. Just before she lets go she feels him again in between her curious fingers almost expecting him to crumble.

"Wow! Che bella! Only with you happens this, you think maybe, maybe something to do with how we share same birthday – make me feel like we pass, passing energy"

She remains in silence or is it the silence that stays in her? Does he forget that although they were born the same day and month, the year is very different? She watches him watch her.

"You are so beautiful, sugar baby."

She flinches and turns away from him to look at the wall, facing the tree again.

Sugar baby.

She doesn't like that. What did that mean? It sounds too crude to her.

"I will go in Sicilia in two weeks now to get my motorbike that I leaved there. Then I ride to Ferrara...Why you don't come? We can go together, ride away from here, away from winter."

Ignored, he begins to wrap his fingers in her smooth chestnut hair as though searching for an answer. Now, his hands feel like that of a skeleton's, she thought. Gaunt. Doesn't he get it that the more he talked, the more he made her realise. She strokes the roots of the tree and, to change the subject, asks him whether the tree was from the trip to Thailand he mentioned before. Mentioned, more like he went on about it for so long that she fell asleep whilst he was still talking.

"No, no this is from Camden. From this stall this Spanish girl had, she selled all types of tapestries – 'the tree of life' she called this one. Funny. She said to me also – she said that I should write all my trips that they will be so cool to read. But... I don't know..."

She turns, forcing her body to sit up; as she does she feels so numb.

"I really have to leave now, otherwise I will just never be able to get up. I will see you at Papas tomorrow..."

She sees his lips slip but she ignores them as she glances at the phone: 3.17am. The end is always awkward; as if they both can't figure out if they were awake in a dream or asleep in reality?

How strange. She thinks as she walks out of his room, it wasn't until now, till right at the end, that she realised that the bed sheets were not only silk but black too.

◇

Get Out More

Time taken to cycle from Imperial Central Library to destinations around London

Time (mins)	Destination Name
45	Fenton House
29	St. Paul's Cathedral

Category:

- Museum
- Gallery
- Historic Site
- Greenery

Source: Citymapper iPhone app.
Data collected at 11:00 on 14/11/14



By Mo Niknafs

The PHOENIX

est. 1887

Winter 2014

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Thanks to Phillippa Skett for letting us use her computers and paying for our printing. Sorry we didn't include your poem about Gerard Way!
The Phoenix will return next term. Email pitches and/or finished pieces to phoenix@imperial.ac.uk