

EDITION 14

SO F I Z I N E

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So Fi Zine

Edition 14

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KEEN TO SUBMIT?

SUBMISSIONS WILL OPEN AGAIN
IN EARLY 2024





Horoscopes

Libra

Harmony reigns in relationships

Scorpio

New paths beckon success

Sagittarius

Explore, adventure calls loudly

Capricorn

Structure breeds prosperity's climb

Aquarius

Innovate, embrace change's flow

Pisces

Intuition guides profound decisions

Editorial

Ash Watson

It feels like there has been a huge groundswell of interest in creative social inquiry this year. I have attended more workshops than ever on creative writing and zine-making, and on a whole host of other approaches too — tarot, photography, data visualisation, Virtual Reality, and generative AI. In different ways, these events have made me think carefully and critically about representation. This is something I reflected on in an earlier editorial, but the diverse modalities I've dipped my toe into this year have revived and opened new questions about how and why we work to make representations.

Howard Becker's passing has also made me think about this again. Howie penned the Editorial for So Fi Zine #2, back in 2017. His enthusiasm for this project and his promise to be involved was the thing that made So Fi Zine more than a one-off. His work has always meant a great deal to me and I read a number of his books again after he passed. They are brilliant, clear-eyed, fresh, and committed to the craft of sociology. The impact of Becker's ideas are so material in this zine and continue to drive much of the research I do.

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to this new edition of So Fi Zine. I continue to be so excited by the submissions and honoured to give this work a home.



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Horoscopes

Aries

Transformations lead to rebirth

Taurus

Love blooms; dreams unfold

Gemini

Communicate boldly, connections deepen

Cancer

Nurture self, joy follows

Leo

Shine bright, seize opportunities

Virgo

Organize chaos, find balance

John-Paul Smiley is a writer and independent scholar. He has a PhD in Civil and Building Engineering (Loughborough, UK), an MSc Social Research (Leicester, UK), and a BA Politics and Sociology (York, UK). His interests include futurism and science fiction, as well as politics and sociology.

Maisie Tomlinson is a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester, where she teaches environmental sociology. Her research is on the ontologies and epistemologies of professional animal behaviour expertise, as practiced on the ground. She drew on a previous professional background in theatre to write *What a Mouse Knows* as part of a SeNSS ESRC postdoctoral fellowship at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Rémy-Paulin Twahirwa is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He can be followed at:
<https://ghostlylivesaproject.wordpress.com/>

Sharon Attipoe-Dorcoo, Ph.D., MPH, is first and foremost grounded in her cultural identity as a Ghanaian-American, as well as a wife and mom. As a community scholar-activist, she found her path from engineering into public health. The vision for her work is rooted in culturally responsive and equitable tools with communities.

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Can I Ever Know Your Totality?

John-Paul Smiley

How did we come to be,
So entangled as we are?

What figurations across time and space,
Have brought you to my door?

Of the many memories of us we now carry,
Which will you hold on to?

Might such thoughts of ever perturbed you,
In your oh-so-brief existence, to date?

But it is not just youth's fault, is it?
It is not just youth.

Can I ever know your totality,
Or is a glimpse all I can see?

Might I never truly know 'us',
Without first knowing 'you' and 'me'?

Can you ever know my totality,
Or is a glimpse all you can see?

In practical truth, does it matter?
For do we still not share affections?

Dr Helen Kara FAcSS has been an independent researcher since 1999 and an independent scholar since 2011. She writes about research methods and research ethics, and teaches doctoral students and staff at higher education institutions worldwide. She also writes comics and fiction.

Holly is a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, studying something in the approximate vicinity of autistic social communication. She is also a writer at various locations (primarily coffee shops and her sofa) – though her writing is, perhaps, even less easily to categorise than her research.

Ian C Smith writes in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria, and on Flinders Island. His work has appeared in Antipodes, Authora Australis, be-longing, cordite, Griffith Review, Journal of Working Class Studies, Meniscus, & So Fi Zine. His seventh book is wonder sadness madness joy, Ginninderra Press.

J.E. Sumerau (Ph.D., 2012; First Academic Conference, 2006) is an Associate Professor and the Director of Applied Sociology at the University of Tampa. They/she are/is the author of 7 novels, 2 novellas, 5 nonfiction monographs, 13 short stories, and over 75 peer reviewed articles and chapters examining continuity and change in sexualities, gender, health, violence, and cultural forms (e.g., religion, music, and sports) in society. For more information, please visit www.jsumerau.com or follow them/her on Instagram @jesumerau.

38.00

Author Bios

Aish Ravi is a football coach and educator with a passion for creating inclusive spaces in sport. Her current research focuses on the lived experiences of women football coaches, and on developing effective anti-racism approaches for women and girls in community sport. Aish is also the founder of the Women's Coaching Association.

Alistair McCulloch is a political scientist by training, a firm believer in the value of collective provision through public ownership and local control, and has worked and undertaken research in doctoral education for the last 25 years. He has worked in England, Scotland and now South Australia.

When Bilal X is not reading books, he watches movies, eats chocolates, or sleeps.

Caroline Lenette: Writer, academic, story-creator, migrant settler living and working on stolen and colonised Bedigal Land. Arts-based methods, participatory research, anti-colonial methods, and critical suicide studies. Books: Participatory Action Research: Ethics and Decolonization (2022), Arts-Based Methods in Refugee Research: Creating Sanctuary (2019). Coming soon: Disrupting the Academy with Lived Experience-Led Knowledge (2024).



Though I am not of your kind,
Is our bond not real and true?

Though our levels of thought are dissimilar,
Does our physicalism not ensure common anchors?

Happiness, Fear, Shame, Disgust!
Surprise, Anger, Compassion, Love!

We share so much in this glorious adventure,
These mysterious, wondrous moments of existence,
together.

I know that if you leave before me,
I will miss you, and us, when you are gone.

And I hope, and do believe,
That you will miss me, and us, if I depart before you.

Then, if perchance there lies a realm beyond this veil,
We will greet each other once again.

Can I ever know your totality?
These morsels at least, I imagine I have gleaned.

* This early 21st Century poem is now part of the mandatory collection for the children of Cassini. It should be read and considered alongside the works of Elias, Nagel, Nussbaum, and Searle (see below).

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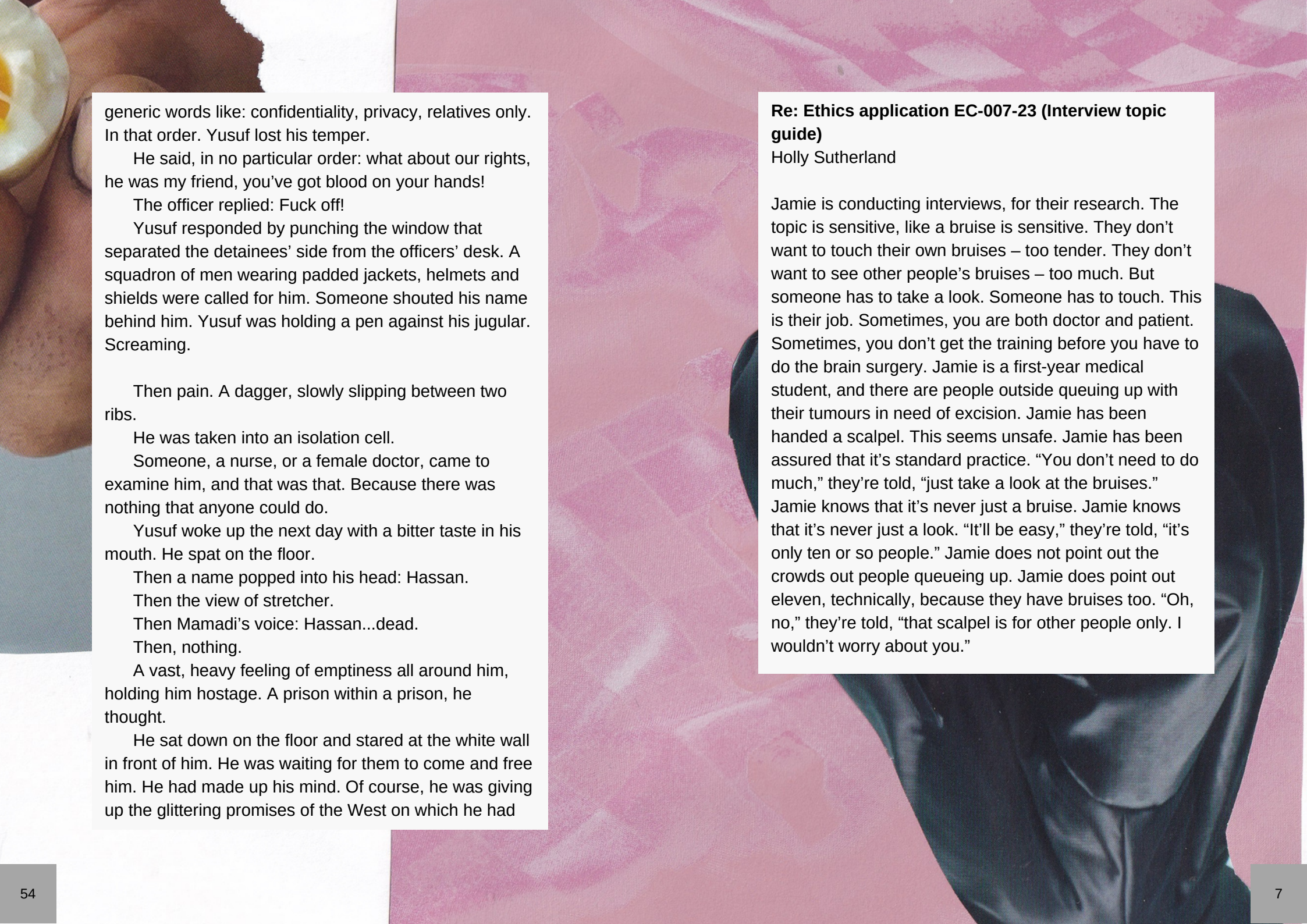
Nussbaum, M. C. (2006) 'The moral status of animals', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(22), B6-B8.

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been fed for all the years it had taken him to get here, but he couldn't see himself living on his knees for the rest of his life.

He would sign the form. He would leave this prison. He would leave this country.

And like so many others, he will be forgotten. But, as he hears the click of the door lock, he will live, Yusuf promised himself. He would remember Hassan, Ali and all those who left, never to return.



generic words like: confidentiality, privacy, relatives only. In that order. Yusuf lost his temper.

He said, in no particular order: what about our rights, he was my friend, you've got blood on your hands!

The officer replied: Fuck off!

Yusuf responded by punching the window that separated the detainees' side from the officers' desk. A squadron of men wearing padded jackets, helmets and shields were called for him. Someone shouted his name behind him. Yusuf was holding a pen against his jugular. Screaming.

Then pain. A dagger, slowly slipping between two ribs.

He was taken into an isolation cell.

Someone, a nurse, or a female doctor, came to examine him, and that was that. Because there was nothing that anyone could do.

Yusuf woke up the next day with a bitter taste in his mouth. He spat on the floor.

Then a name popped into his head: Hassan.

Then the view of stretcher.

Then Mamadi's voice: Hassan...dead.

Then, nothing.

A vast, heavy feeling of emptiness all around him, holding him hostage. A prison within a prison, he thought.

He sat down on the floor and stared at the white wall in front of him. He was waiting for them to come and free him. He had made up his mind. Of course, he was giving up the glittering promises of the West on which he had

Re: Ethics application EC-007-23 (Interview topic guide)

Holly Sutherland

Jamie is conducting interviews, for their research. The topic is sensitive, like a bruise is sensitive. They don't want to touch their own bruises – too tender. They don't want to see other people's bruises – too much. But someone has to take a look. Someone has to touch. This is their job. Sometimes, you are both doctor and patient. Sometimes, you don't get the training before you have to do the brain surgery. Jamie is a first-year medical student, and there are people outside queuing up with their tumours in need of excision. Jamie has been handed a scalpel. This seems unsafe. Jamie has been assured that it's standard practice. "You don't need to do much," they're told, "just take a look at the bruises." Jamie knows that it's never just a bruise. Jamie knows that it's never just a look. "It'll be easy," they're told, "it's only ten or so people." Jamie does not point out the crowds out people queueing up. Jamie does point out eleven, technically, because they have bruises too. "Oh, no," they're told, "that scalpel is for other people only. I wouldn't worry about you."

Empty

Caroline Lenette

74 *Psycho-Analysis: Theory and Practice*

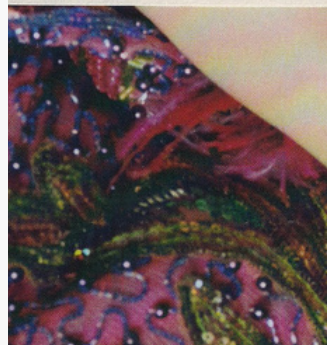
nioms rather than infants. But if we look at an infant we see an infant in care. The processes of integration, and of separating out, of getting to live in the body and of relating to objects, these are all matters of maturation and achievement. Conversely, the state of not being separated or not being integrated, of not being related to body functions of not being related to objects, (this state is very real) we must believe in these states that belong to immaturity. The problem is: How does the infant survive such conditions?

In preparing this paper I find I reached a deeper understanding than I had before of the parental function in terms of this problem, of the way infants survive immaturity. I have seen more clearly than I did that in introducing the world to the child in small doses, that is to say in her adaptation to the ego needs of her infant, the mother gives time for the development of the extensions to the infant's powers that come with maturation. In a discussion like this one, in which the state of dependence of the infant must be given an important place, we do indeed need to come to terms with the paradoxical. For instance, the baby knows only how to allow, or to disallow, the parental union that produced his own conception. The baby does not at first know how to let parental intercourse precede his existence. But the infant's body scheme eventually comes to include everything. In a good enough environment the infant gradually begins to find ways of including not me objects and not me phenomena in his own body-scheme and therefore to avoid narcissistic wounds. If steady growth is facilitated, then omnipotence and omniscience are retained, along with an intellectual acceptance of the reality principle. In a psycho-analytic statement of theory we say that defences are formed in relation to anxiety. Watching a living infant we say that the infant experiences (intolerable anxiety) with recovery through the organisation of defences. From this it follows that the successful outcome of an analysis depends, not on the patient's understanding of the meaning of the defences, but on the patient's ability, through the analysis, and in the transference, to re-experience this intolerable anxiety on account of which defences were organised.

In a so-called borderline case there has to be discovered not only intolerable anxiety but also the actual clinical breakdown of infancy, the overstretch of omnipotence, the annihilation that constituted the narcissistic wound. All this gives, for me, a vivid colouring to our picture of the parent-infant relationship, and to our view of the actual care of an infant. The word "love" is not sufficiently specific. And the word "separation" is crude for our use. All along, according to the



Petersburg; the city, formally known as Saint Petersburg, was founded in 1703 by Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century where the river Neva flows west into the Gulf of Finland. The main point where the Neva divides into the Neva, and the Nevka. The main of the Neva, and is crisscrossed by the two smaller streams form the Neva side (between the Neva and the Nevka) (between the Neva and the Nevka) (between the Neva and the Nevka). Scholars argue that some translators have then in mind. We have consistently followed I assuming it had an artistic purpose.



talking about his future life in Britain when he used to call him on WhatsApp. A good job that doesn't make you age too quickly. A caring wife - preferably British - who would look after their children. And, God willing, a place they could call home without fear of it being burnt down or riddled with bullets by one of the militias. An honourable life, as Ali used to say.

If you fill in this form, you won't be able to come back, Hassan advised Yusuf.

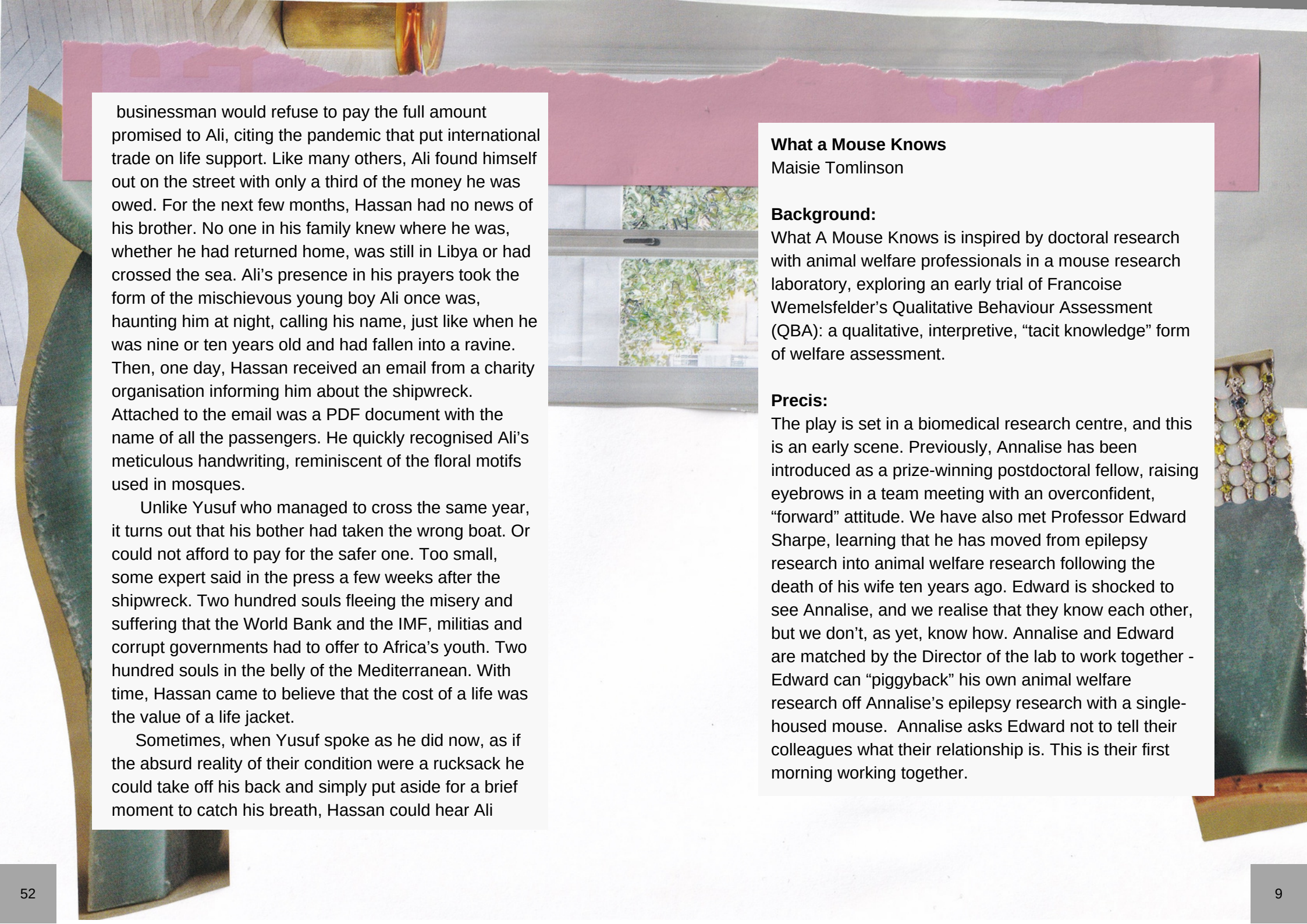
Yes, but what if they arrive today and say to me: You've got your flight. There's nothing I can do about that either, replied Yusuf, doing push-ups against the wall.

Hassan remained silent. He threw the cigarette butt into the ashtray by the door. Yusuf was right. It was a possibility. Two days earlier, men dressed all in black had run through the common room. A few minutes later, they had returned with a half-naked man on a stretcher, his hands and legs tied. His guttural yells were like those of a trapped animal calling for help. Hassan knew these cries well. They were the screams emanating from the corridor leading to the room where opponents of the regime were dealt with, the cries of men who had to be forgotten or broken.

Men like Hassan.

III.

Yusuf demanded to be given the number. He wanted to contact the family, he explained. The detention custody officer refused. He mentioned, among other things,



businessman would refuse to pay the full amount promised to Ali, citing the pandemic that put international trade on life support. Like many others, Ali found himself out on the street with only a third of the money he was owed. For the next few months, Hassan had no news of his brother. No one in his family knew where he was, whether he had returned home, was still in Libya or had crossed the sea. Ali's presence in his prayers took the form of the mischievous young boy Ali once was, haunting him at night, calling his name, just like when he was nine or ten years old and had fallen into a ravine. Then, one day, Hassan received an email from a charity organisation informing him about the shipwreck. Attached to the email was a PDF document with the name of all the passengers. He quickly recognised Ali's meticulous handwriting, reminiscent of the floral motifs used in mosques.

Unlike Yusuf who managed to cross the same year, it turns out that his bother had taken the wrong boat. Or could not afford to pay for the safer one. Too small, some expert said in the press a few weeks after the shipwreck. Two hundred souls fleeing the misery and suffering that the World Bank and the IMF, militias and corrupt governments had to offer to Africa's youth. Two hundred souls in the belly of the Mediterranean. With time, Hassan came to believe that the cost of a life was the value of a life jacket.

Sometimes, when Yusuf spoke as he did now, as if the absurd reality of their condition were a rucksack he could take off his back and simply put aside for a brief moment to catch his breath, Hassan could hear Ali

What a Mouse Knows

Maisie Tomlinson

Background:

What A Mouse Knows is inspired by doctoral research with animal welfare professionals in a mouse research laboratory, exploring an early trial of Francoise Wemelsfelder's Qualitative Behaviour Assessment (QBA): a qualitative, interpretive, "tacit knowledge" form of welfare assessment.

Precis:

The play is set in a biomedical research centre, and this is an early scene. Previously, Annalise has been introduced as a prize-winning postdoctoral fellow, raising eyebrows in a team meeting with an overconfident, "forward" attitude. We have also met Professor Edward Sharpe, learning that he has moved from epilepsy research into animal welfare research following the death of his wife ten years ago. Edward is shocked to see Annalise, and we realise that they know each other, but we don't, as yet, know how. Annalise and Edward are matched by the Director of the lab to work together - Edward can "piggyback" his own animal welfare research off Annalise's epilepsy research with a single-housed mouse. Annalise asks Edward not to tell their colleagues what their relationship is. This is their first morning working together.



gesture, his folding chair scraping across the floor. He was the first to empty his hand.

Boom! You owe me £5 each, he said to the other players. His smiling lips revealing his slightly crooked teeth.

Hassan, you're cheating! That's impossible! shouted Yusuf, gesticulating on his chair. Another player protested, calling for another game.

Maurice, the Ivorian, insisted that they should exclude Hassan from the other games. This is the fourth time!, complained Maurice.

The group laughed at those remarks did more to boost Hassan's ego than to rob him of a well-deserved victory. Hassan defended his honour, then apologised. He wanted to smoke. Yusuf followed him.

So, he said, it's decided?

Hassan shrugged. And you?

Yes, I'm telling you, they've withdrawn my visa. It's been two months now...

Hassan took out a cigarette from a blue packet. He lit it and took his first drag. He felt a warm caress along the back of his neck. Yusuf reminded him of his little brother, Ali. Like Yusuf, Ali had travelled to Libya. He had used money lent by the rest of the family to pay for the journey from Djanet to Tripoli. There, for four years, he had to work for a Libyan businessman who employed undocumented workers in his retail warehouse.

Life is hard here...But God is *good*. I'll soon have the money to pay my way and join you, Ali promised on the phone at the end of the third year.

This was without knowing that the Lybian

The cafeteria was full when he arrived for breakfast. The usual groups had gathered. The South Asians on one side, near the TV. The Romanians, Poles, Albanians and Lithuanians in the middle of the common room. The Arabic speakers from North Africa and the Middle East were near the windows overlooking the courtyard. The Indians avoided the Pakistanis, Bengalis, and Sri Lankans. So, each of these groups was at the extreme corners. Finally, there were the blacks, who seemed to be the only group to have formed based on the pigmentation of their skin. They were next to the Arabs (as some black muslims also spoke arabic), but did not mix with them.

Yusuf helped himself to a bowl of cereals and a banana, as he did most mornings. He couldn't stand the instant coffee they were served.

Tea, black, no milk, thank you, he said to the balding waiter who slid the cup of tea onto his tray. For some reason, this waiter avoided meeting Yusuf's eyes. Without being able to prove it, Yusuf had even noticed that the waiter always served him smaller portions than the others.

The bald guy? He's a racist, said Hassan, as if casting a curse.

He took a sip of his coffee and added: Him and all the white people working here.

II.

The wrinkles on Hassan's forehead faded. He slipped his last domino into the deck, then stood up with a jerky

ACT [1]

SCENE [2]

A hum of ventilation kicks in before:

Lights up.

Monday morning. A laboratory room that Annalise and Edward are sharing. The lights are bright, the materials are chrome, lino, plastic, formica.

A plastic cage is sitting in the middle of the laboratory bench. It is shaped like a fish bowl at the top of a tall stem. It's a metabolic cage – used for housing single mice and collecting their excreta for pharmacological studies.

A note on staging: the cage is empty and interactions with the mouse are mimed.

Edward is gazing at Mouse 476997 as she flits about the cage.

The other side of the door, in the changing area, Annalise enters. She puts on a white coat, fits a disposable hair cap over her head. Snaps on plastic disposable gloves and pulls on plastic booties over her shoes.

Edward hears her getting ready the other side of the door. He checks his watch and sighs.

Annalise's phone rings.

ANNALISE: Hi Natalie. What's up.
He did what?
Great. Okay. Put him on.
Sasha baby. Why did you throw your
breakfast on the floor?
Well your breakfast is on the floor.
You made your choice.

She holds her phone away from the piercing scream that follows.

Natalie – I'm sorry I'm at work. Can you just deal with it please? Put a banana in his school bag. Has he had his meds? Okay.
I'll talk to you both later. I have to go. Bye.

She puts the phone down and exclaims loudly, drumming her feet on the floor.

She exhales. Breathes out slowly, in the mirror.

ANNALISE: "Today I begin as my best self, filled with focus and resolve. I will rise above my challenges".

She opens the door.

ANNALISE: Oh. Good morning.

EDWARD: Good morning.

Chips Out

rémy-paulin twahirwa

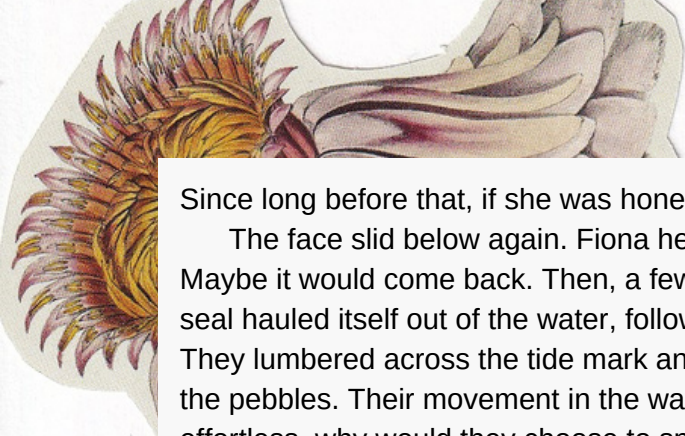
I.

What shocked Yusuf the most was not so much the long hours when he and Ashraf were locked up in their cells and even less the fact that he hadn't heard from his solicitor for two months, no it was the smell of shit that reigned in their cell. As there was no ventilation it filled the room as soon as one of them could no longer hold it in and had to relieve himself. After the first few days of living together, he had tried to make his cellmate understand that they should avoid using the toilet at night, but Ashraf didn't understand a word of English (or so he pretended).

Mate, you can't do this!, he shouted one night to Ashraf, woken by the stench coming from the left-hand corner where the toilet was located. As the only light came from the opening at the foot of the door, Yusuf couldn't see where Ashraf was, but he didn't need his eyes to imagine the heavy, sloping figure of the Afghan sitting on the toilet.

Yusuf covered his nose with the top of his blanket. This could not go on. He couldn't take it anymore. Tomorrow, he told himself, tomorrow he would go and stand in line like the others and fill in one of those voluntary return forms. He couldn't see any other solution to this nightmare.

You hear me mate? I'm not joking, next time, I'll cut your throat, he exclaimed, more to himself than to Ashraf. Ashraf's only response was a grunt of effort.



Since long before that, if she was honest.

The face slid below again. Fiona held her breath. Maybe it would come back. Then, a few yards away, a seal hauled itself out of the water, followed by two more. They lumbered across the tide mark and flopped onto the pebbles. Their movement in the water was so effortless, why would they choose to spend time on land? Maybe they needed a rest from swimming and catching fish. Dee was right, nobody should work all the time. But why were they so close to her? Didn't they know people were dangerous?

One of the seals was watching her with its clear gaze.

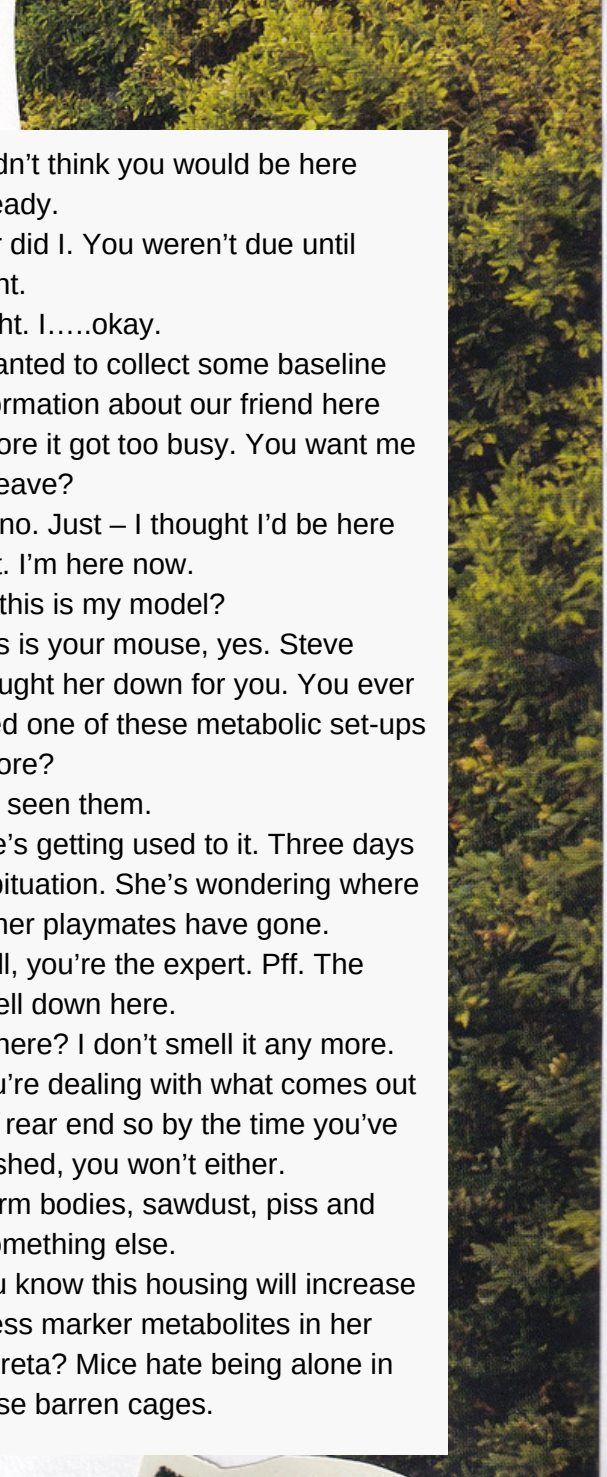
'I won't hurt you.' She felt silly for speaking, until the seal half closed its eyes and dipped its head. Could it have understood?

Fiona sat very still and watched. The seals were untroubled by their clumsiness. Not afraid, even out of their element. Easy in each other's company. Happy on land or in water.

Maybe Dee didn't try to bully her.

Perhaps she herself had been determined to keep her own wounds open.

Ideas were running into her mind one after another like the carriages of a train. Sitting at the edge of her world, in the company of three seals, Fiona decided life would be different from now on. Next year, she thought, I can go to Paris.



ANNALISE:

I didn't think you would be here already.

EDWARD:

Nor did I. You weren't due until eight.

ANNALISE:

Right. I....okay.

EDWARD:

I wanted to collect some baseline information about our friend here before it got too busy. You want me to leave?

ANNALISE:

No no. Just – I thought I'd be here first. I'm here now.

So this is my model?

EDWARD:

This is your mouse, yes. Steve brought her down for you. You ever used one of these metabolic set-ups before?

ANNALISE:

I've seen them.

EDWARD:

She's getting used to it. Three days habituation. She's wondering where all her playmates have gone.

ANNALISE:

Well, you're the expert. Pff. The smell down here.

EDWARD:

Is there? I don't smell it any more. You're dealing with what comes out her rear end so by the time you've finished, you won't either.

ANNALISE:

Warm bodies, sawdust, piss and ..something else.

EDWARD:

You know this housing will increase stress marker metabolites in her excreta? Mice hate being alone in these barren cages.



ANNALISE: All accounted for. You'll be collecting data this morning too?

EDWARD: Just getting to know her. I'll be observing her for a while, and then I'll be devising some behavioural tests to get her response to social isolation over time.

ANNALISE: I see. You'd want to ban these cages?

EDWARD: If I had my way. But I often don't.

ANNALISE: I'm not really into this animal rights fluff. With respect.

EDWARD: What I do isn't animal rights, it's animal welfare. And it's not fluff, it's science. This is a living being you have to work with, not a collection of tissues.

ANNALISE: Well, that's its destiny. It's a lab mouse, its tissues are kind of the point. We all have our path. I'm trying to cure epilepsy.

EDWARD: Of course you are (pause). So... pretend I'm not here. I'm just writing up my notes. You've done your rodent handling training?

ANNALISE: Yes.

EDWARD: Need any help?

ANNALISE: No.

Dee held up a hand, palm outwards. 'Course you will, hen.'


The Orkney island names had a disturbing sound. Westray, Egilsay, Rousay, Shapinsay. They reminded Fiona of the Pig Latin the school bullies had used so people didn't know what they were planning to do. The place names on the main island sounded much friendlier: Stromness, Scapa Flow, Kirkwall.

The ferry parted the dark waters of the Pentland Firth. Fiona gripped the rail, unnerved by the floating turtle shapes of the treeless islands. Stromness was a jumble of grey houses on a green hillside. Stepping onto the quay she felt unstable, as if she was still at sea. The wind pressed at her face, ruffled her hair. People smiled and spoke to her, but their accents were strange and she didn't understand their words. She tried to smile back but her face felt uncertain.

Maes Howe and the Ring of Brodgar were alien places, one so cramped, the other too spacious. And one sunny, breezy afternoon, she visited Skara Brae. How could people have lived in such small spaces, in dug-outs roofed with whalebones and seaweed?

Fiona wandered over to the beach. Shells crunched under her feet and the sea sucked at the land while wind and seabirds sang of discord and harmony. She sat on a cold stone and drew a deep breath of sea air.

A face slid above the surface of the sea, droplets falling from its whiskers. Its fringed brown eyes looked at Fiona with liquid appraisal, as if they took in the whole of who she was. It was the first time anyone or anything had really looked at her since she had come to Orkney.



house; the art gallery. When the sun shone she explored the city's parks or walked by the harbour. On her way home she decided her next holiday would be at Blair Atholl, because she liked the name. That was less successful; she found the open countryside intimidating. So in the following years she visited Carnoustie, Dundee, Elgin, Falkirk, Glasgow, Huntly and Inverness.

2010 was a problem.

'You'll be going to Jura,' Dee said confidently.

'I'll be doing no such thing. I'd have to go on a boat.'

'Where will you go, then? I can't think of anywhere on the mainland beginning with J.'

'Jedburgh, silly.'

Dee sniffed. 'That's almost England.'

Fiona thought the same, but she wasn't going to say so now.

The next four years took her to Kilmarnock, Largs, Montrose and Nairn. Then in early 2015 Fiona was in the pub one night when Dee said, 'Of course it'll be Oban for you this year.'

'It will not.' It would have been, actually, but she wasn't going to be bullied into a decision.

Dee raised a quizzical eyebrow. 'Then where?'

'Orkney.'

The other eyebrow joined its partner. 'You'll have to go on a boat.'

'I took a day trip to Great Cumbrae from Largs. It wasn't so bad.'

'It's a bit further to Orkney.'

'I will go,' Fiona said clearly, 'where I like.'

Edward returns to his notes. Annalise peers apprehensively into the cage. Then she takes out a folder of papers from her bag, and a marker pen. She performs a routine with the cage – weighing food, measuring water and urine output, taking the temperature of the cage, making notes.

She sorts through her materials and locates a syringe. She draws it up with the first dose of neuroprazanine and lays it on the bench.

She peers into the cage again. Turns round to see if Edward is watching. He buries his head in his papers or laptop.

She puts the syringe between her teeth and nervously opens the cage. Mouse 476997 begins scurrying from side to side. She makes a few ineffectual grabs for her tail. Finally she grabs her by the base and holds her in the air above the cage, with some disgust. Slowly, she transfers her onto the palm of her gloved hand, and then attempts to grab her by the scruff of the neck to perform the injection.

Mouse 476997 bites her finger. She shrieks and drops her into the cage.

ANNALISE:

Fuck!!

EDWARD:

She bit you?

ANNALISE:

Yes. Ouch-ouch-ouch, little...bi -

EDWARD:

The younger ones have sharper teeth. Here.

He reaches for the first aid kit.

Take a seat. Clean that.

Annalise removes her glove and applies the anti-bacterial wipe.

Edward peers into the cage to make sure the mouse is okay.

EDWARD: You'll need to report it.

ANNALISE: (Glowering) I know.

Silence

EDWARD: This is your first time working with mice since your training isn't it?

ANNALISE: No. Well... live ones.

EDWARD: It makes a difference.

ANNALISE: They've been brought to me cold and anaesthetised. How I like them. I'm not a fan of vermin.

EDWARD: Vermin's what she is when she hits the floor. Right now, she's your best friend.

ANNALISE: They make my skin crawl.

EDWARD: You're stressed. She can sense it.

ANNALISE: I'm not stressed. Fucking hell, now it's my fault?!

Seal of Approval

Helen Kara

Fiona was delighted to land a job in an office, reconciling invoices and statements, assigning cost codes, making payments. It was such a relief, after school: nobody stole her trainers or slapped her in the toilets and filmed her tears with a mobile phone. She could have lunch in the canteen, and sometimes went for a drink after work with Dee from Sales, when Dee wouldn't take "no" for an answer. But mostly Fiona kept herself to herself.

Towards the end of Fiona's first year, Dee stopped at her desk. 'Hen, when are you going to use some annual leave?'

'I haven't thought about it,' Fiona said.

'You should take a holiday.' Dee perched on the edge of Fiona's desk, the usual determined expression on her face.

Fiona hit "save" on her spreadsheet. 'What for?'

'Everyone needs a break. I'm going to Malaga, it's lovely. Sunny.'

'I want to stay in Scotland.' I like my routine, she thought. It suits me.

'So head for the highlands or islands. There are lots of good places.'

Mutinous heat rose in Fiona's chest. She would not let Dee bully her. 'I'll go to Aberdeen.'

Dee's eyes made round Os. 'For two whole weeks?' 'If I must.'

'You don't have to, you just –' Dee hopped off the desk in exasperation. 'It's up to you.' She walked away.

Fiona went to the tourist office and the library, collected leaflets, wrote an itinerary. She found something to do each day: the Maritime Museum; Provost Skene's

“when you’re feeling better, please could you send me an email...”

Holly Sutherland

this is the part where they kill you. not drag you out back, gun to the head, of course. that would be boring. obvious. also illegal, but let’s not worry about that. no, they do it slow, they set you down and say *run*, and you do, and you wait for them to say *stop*. you realise, at some point, that they will not say stop. you try to stop. run, they say. you keep running. you’re in a zoo, and the creatures behind the bars look like you. they’ve made a mistake. you belong on the other side of the bars, but they haven’t realised that yet. you’ve been running for a while now. *no one’s chasing you*, they say. *we don’t have a whip in our hands. no one’s making you run*. that’s a trap. they haven’t said stop. the things behind the bars are starting to look less and less like you. you think you’ve changed. you think they haven’t. you’re not sure where you should be any more. on which side of the bars do you belong? not with the people, surely. not with the creatures, any more. you’re still running. you’re sick. you’re gasping for air. you’re changing. something gives, in your chest. rib through the lung. run through the run. you drop. *run*, they say. *run*, they say. run, they say. they nudge the corpse with the tip of their shoe, toe to rib, foot to run, flip you over, belly up. dead fish. strange creature. wrong side of the sea. *pity*, they say. *she had so much left to give*.



EDWARD: Take a break. Here. Use this. Calm down, for Christ’s sake.

He passes her a hand-held fan.

It takes a while for you to get used to each other.

ANNALISE: I don’t have time to make friends with a mouse!

EDWARD: (Holding up his hands) You’re the boss.

Silence.

ANNALISE: Sorry.

It’s true what I said before you know. I read everything that you and...the other Dr Sharpe - published. It’s old work now, but it was so pioneering. I felt it meant something. Some kind of osmosis.

EDWARD: I’m glad it helped.

ANNALISE: I was quite surprised when you took up animal welfare. It sounded like Mickey Mouse stuff. Especially after everything you had accomplished together. All the work, all the....(*she hesitates*). You were on the verge of a breakthrough with cannabinoids. You laid the foundation for everything that came after.

EDWARD: Well, I realised the effect of poor animal welfare on the data. Stressed animals have disturbed physiology and immune responses. More normal animals mean better data, with less variation. Less variation means fewer animals used. So.

ANNALISE: I'd rather leave all that to someone else. Animal welfare's so strict in this country as it is.

EDWARD: It's better than it was, but it wasn't strict in my day. Not with mice. At least we'd started using painkillers, but no-one considered their psychological welfare. No-one really thinking about how boredom and stress affected our studies.

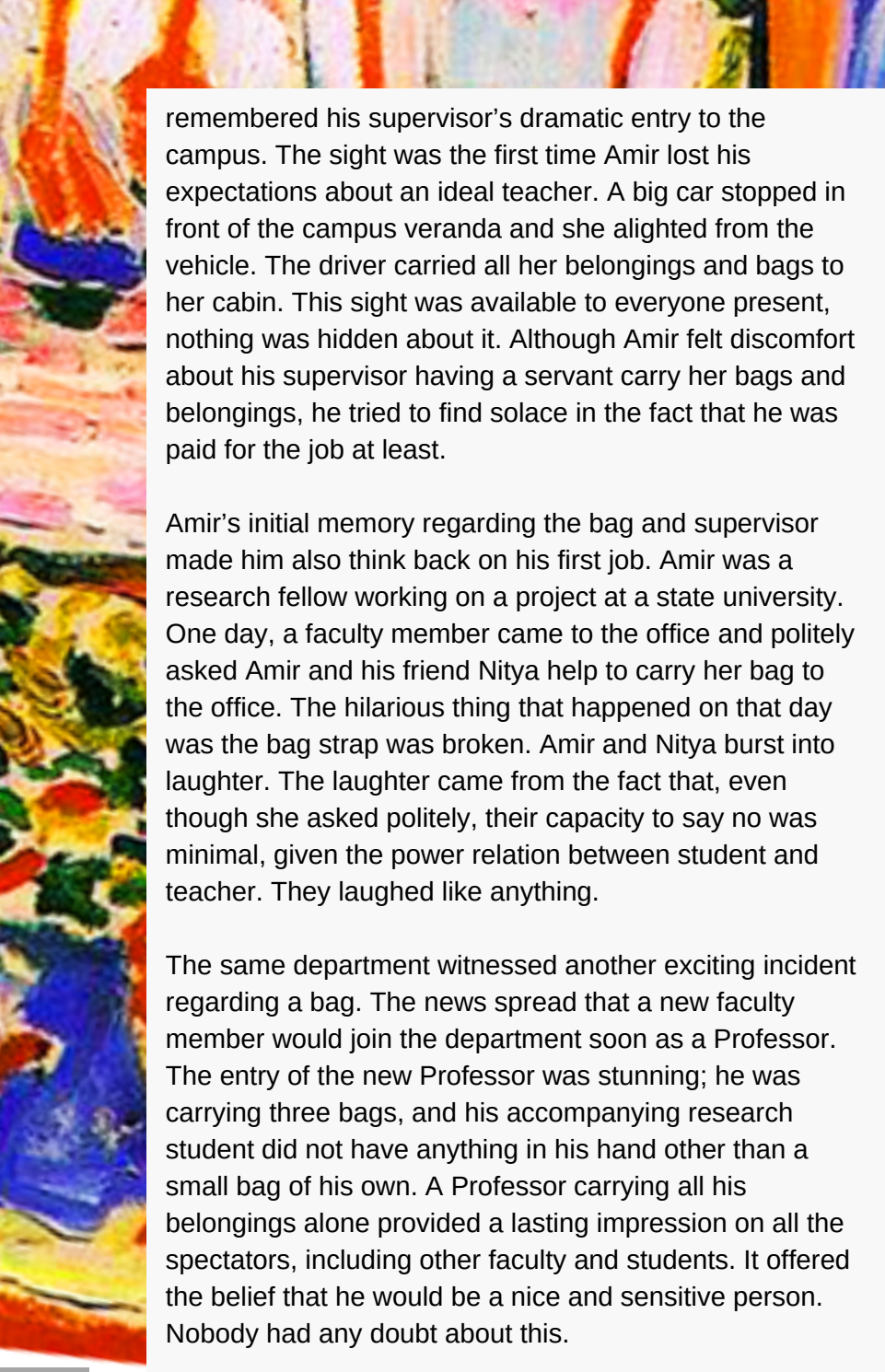
ANNALISE: But it's not boredom and stress the way humans feel it.

EDWARD: Does it matter? Don't forget that most of our treatments for mental illness come from psychological experiments on rodents. And yet – yes, that's what people say. So for example, anti-depressants are tested on mice. But I can't say my mouse is depressed. I have to call it a "depressive-like" state. If I want to say my mouse is depressed in a journal article, I have to do a forced swim test to prove it.

The juxtaposition of these memories and the visual of Amir's supervisor had a looming impact on his mind. It did not take time. The supervisor asked Amir to carry her bag. She subtly alluded that it is the duty of the student to serve the teacher. All Amir's revolutionary ideas did not work. He just froze and obeyed her bidding. He held her bag for the first time, and the relationship between supervisor and student became irrevocably flawed. Amir did not cry, later, he called Leila and shared all his feelings. That was a very lengthy conversation between them. She consoled. They shared the inevitable condition of vulnerability. There is no vocabulary for healing; all we do is self-realization and moving forward, they realized, stood for each other, and shared love. The supervisor asked Amir again to carry her bag. This time, Amir was sitting among other students. She gave the bidding, 'Amir would carry my bag.' Amir froze again.

'*Sach me (truly)!*' responded his friend. Amir usually speaks in English and not Hindi to his friends in the city. The word choice for this reaction, *Sach me* and not *truly*, revealed the intensity of the event and the expression of solidarity.

Amir learned that a person can carry ten percent of their total body weight, and above ten percent is overweight. How does one measure the weight of the caste bag? Even though it is empty, it weighs so heavily. Amir testifies to this. The weight of the caste bag froze a student, suffocated, made him unable to breathe, enfolded the student in trauma and fear. Eventually, everything seizes for the student. Amir still hopes everything will be all right one day, that he does not need to carry caste bags, and he could hold the bag of love and dignity his dear friend gifted.



remembered his supervisor's dramatic entry to the campus. The sight was the first time Amir lost his expectations about an ideal teacher. A big car stopped in front of the campus veranda and she alighted from the vehicle. The driver carried all her belongings and bags to her cabin. This sight was available to everyone present, nothing was hidden about it. Although Amir felt discomfort about his supervisor having a servant carry her bags and belongings, he tried to find solace in the fact that he was paid for the job at least.

Amir's initial memory regarding the bag and supervisor made him also think back on his first job. Amir was a research fellow working on a project at a state university. One day, a faculty member came to the office and politely asked Amir and his friend Nitya help to carry her bag to the office. The hilarious thing that happened on that day was the bag strap was broken. Amir and Nitya burst into laughter. The laughter came from the fact that, even though she asked politely, their capacity to say no was minimal, given the power relation between student and teacher. They laughed like anything.

The same department witnessed another exciting incident regarding a bag. The news spread that a new faculty member would join the department soon as a Professor. The entry of the new Professor was stunning; he was carrying three bags, and his accompanying research student did not have anything in his hand other than a small bag of his own. A Professor carrying all his belongings alone provided a lasting impression on all the spectators, including other faculty and students. It offered the belief that he would be a nice and sensitive person. Nobody had any doubt about this.

ANNALISE: What's a forced swim test?
EDWARD Look.

He rummages in his drawer.

EDWARD: This is one I did in 2010. In fact it was the last.

ANNALISE: *(Examining the photo)*. What am I looking at?

EDWARD: This was a test for seizure-induced depression, when I was studying epilepsy. You immerse the mouse in a tank of water, like this, and then remove this escape platform. You time how long it will keep swimming for before it gives up. In theory, a depressed mouse will stop swimming sooner. It's barbaric.

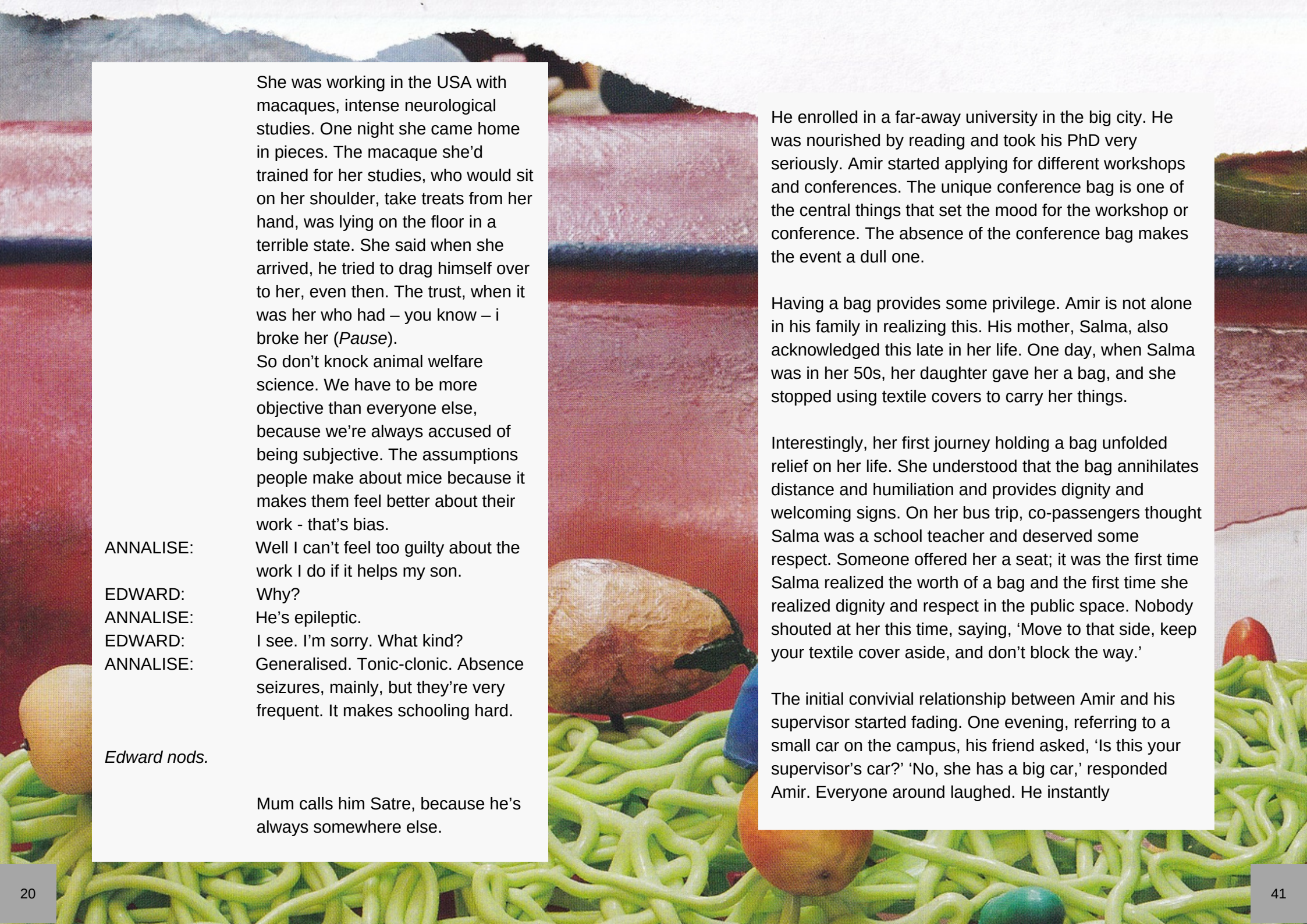
ANNALISE: You kept this picture?

EDWARD: Yes, it reminds me. What I did. What people still do. I suppose I think I owed them a debt.

Pause.

ANNALISE: You don't think you owed Aunty Jean a debt too? Everything she worked for?

EDWARD: *(sharply)* It was Aunty Jean who made me move fields. Actually. It was what she was considering. Before...you know.

The background image is a still life composition. At the top, a macaque's head and shoulder are visible against a light sky. Below it, a large, textured red surface, possibly a wall or a piece of fabric, dominates the middle ground. In the foreground, there is a pile of bright green, curly pasta. A pear with a brown stem and a blue stem is resting on the pasta. The overall scene is brightly lit, with a mix of natural and artificial colors.

She was working in the USA with macaques, intense neurological studies. One night she came home in pieces. The macaque she'd trained for her studies, who would sit on her shoulder, take treats from her hand, was lying on the floor in a terrible state. She said when she arrived, he tried to drag himself over to her, even then. The trust, when it was her who had – you know – i broke her (*Pause*).

So don't knock animal welfare science. We have to be more objective than everyone else, because we're always accused of being subjective. The assumptions people make about mice because it makes them feel better about their work - that's bias.

ANNALISE: Well I can't feel too guilty about the work I do if it helps my son.

EDWARD: Why?

ANNALISE: He's epileptic.

EDWARD: I see. I'm sorry. What kind?

ANNALISE: Generalised. Tonic-clonic. Absence seizures, mainly, but they're very frequent. It makes schooling hard.

Edward nods.

Mum calls him Satre, because he's always somewhere else.

He enrolled in a far-away university in the big city. He was nourished by reading and took his PhD very seriously. Amir started applying for different workshops and conferences. The unique conference bag is one of the central things that set the mood for the workshop or conference. The absence of the conference bag makes the event a dull one.

Having a bag provides some privilege. Amir is not alone in his family in realizing this. His mother, Salma, also acknowledged this late in her life. One day, when Salma was in her 50s, her daughter gave her a bag, and she stopped using textile covers to carry her things.

Interestingly, her first journey holding a bag unfolded relief on her life. She understood that the bag annihilates distance and humiliation and provides dignity and welcoming signs. On her bus trip, co-passengers thought Salma was a school teacher and deserved some respect. Someone offered her a seat; it was the first time Salma realized the worth of a bag and the first time she realized dignity and respect in the public space. Nobody shouted at her this time, saying, 'Move to that side, keep your textile cover aside, and don't block the way.'

The initial convivial relationship between Amir and his supervisor started fading. One evening, referring to a small car on the campus, his friend asked, 'Is this your supervisor's car?' 'No, she has a big car,' responded Amir. Everyone around laughed. He instantly

On the Weight of a Caste Bag

Bilal X

Asking PhD students to carry supervisors' bags is one of the befitting manifestations of caste practices which still occurs in universities. It underscores the idea that the student must serve the teacher.

Amir loves bags, and his love for bags is well known. He recommends or insists on gifting bags even at weddings. His intense love partly comes from his longing for a bag while studying in primary school. He did not have a bag then, like most students in his area. He had a textile cover to carry his books to school.

Amir is almost 28 and has decided to do a PhD in social science. Though passionate about his PhD, he could only join after he secured a fellowship. Once he cracked the fellowship exam and was fully prepared to participate in the PhD program, he jubilantly announced his resignation from his research assistant position at one of the premier institutes. His close acquaintance, beloved colleague, friend, and more, Leila, decided to gift him a bag.

The elegant blue and grey bag was the first gift he received before commencing his PhD. Leila spent lots of time searching and looking for a nice bag that Amir would love the most. Of course, he did. The bag has different sleeves to keep apparel, books, laptops, and more. Apart from the bag, he also received lots of books from his mentor, around five big boxes. Both Leila and his mentor wished him all the best for his PhD.

EDWARD: How is Erica?
ANNALISE: She's.... okay. I think. She moved out of London about three years ago. Likes the sea breeze in Margate.

EDWARD: Just by herself?
ANNALISE: Who'd live with her? The postman had to be specially trained.

EDWARD: Does she know you're here?
ANNALISE: We're not in contact much. But yes, she knows I'm here.

EDWARD: And Sasha's dad?
ANNALISE: Met someone else.

EDWARD: So it's just you two?
ANNALISE: And Natalie, my childminder. What about you? After Jean - are you with anyone?

EDWARD: No.
So why didn't you get in contact about Sasha? We're still family, I know it's by marriage, but -

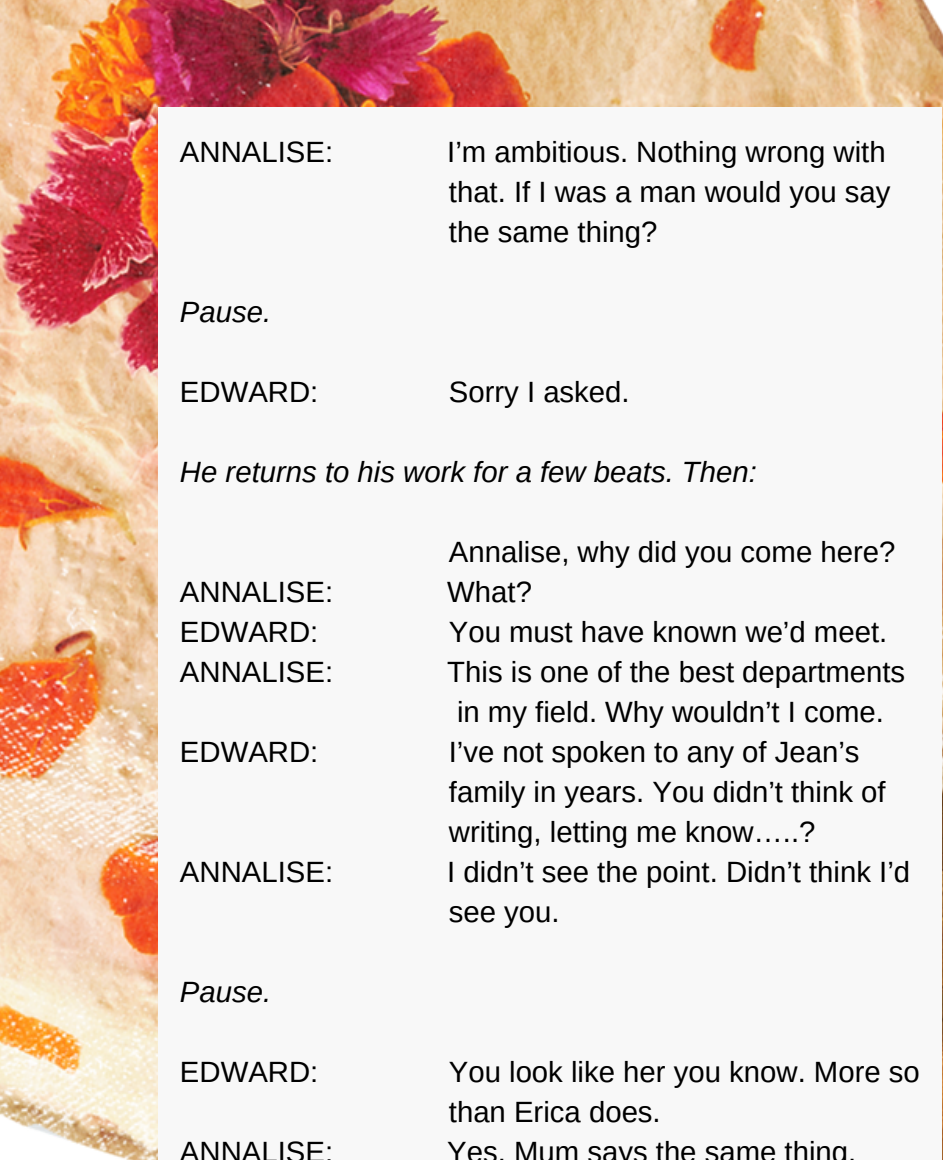
ANNALISE: I'm hardly sure you could call me family. Not after so long.

EDWARD: I would have helped you.

ANNALISE: Why does everyone think I need help.

EDWARD: Well forgive me, but it seems like you're kind of in a hurry.

ANNALISE: What do you mean?
EDWARD: The speeches. The volunteering. The attitude.



ANNALISE: I'm ambitious. Nothing wrong with that. If I was a man would you say the same thing?

Pause.

EDWARD: Sorry I asked.

He returns to his work for a few beats. Then:

ANNALISE: Annalise, why did you come here? What?

EDWARD: You must have known we'd meet.

ANNALISE: This is one of the best departments in my field. Why wouldn't I come.

EDWARD: I've not spoken to any of Jean's family in years. You didn't think of writing, letting me know.....?

ANNALISE: I didn't see the point. Didn't think I'd see you.

Pause.

EDWARD: You look like her you know. More so than Erica does.

ANNALISE: Yes, Mum says the same thing.

Silence.

I should probably get back.

EDWARD: Of course.

ANNALISE: Do I get special powers now? (*She holds up her plastered finger*). Like Spiderman?



Intimately Dying

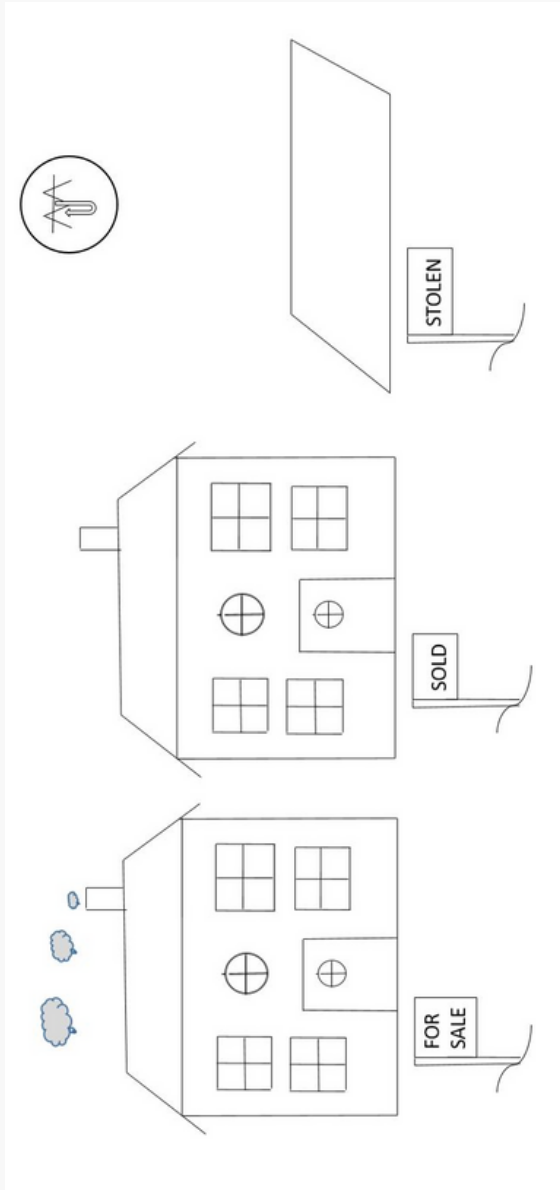
Caroline Lenette

Harsh depriving spaces are full,
extremely concerned spectators watch the beating kicking in poorly lit rooms
repeated for effect, burst in humiliating cries
separated from lip-sewing
by a thin blanket
breaking a light globe to freeze frame cuts

The brother lay on the freezing floor,
banging his head in nightmare panic, the continuing sadness
unbearable
the screaming loss and anger, endless
Cutting a washing line behind stairs, a reprieve
In this camp, death nourishes.

Stolen

Alistair McCulloch



EDWARD: Ha! Well if that was true, I'd have all my mouse mysteries solved.

Annalise approaches the cage again and picks up the syringe.

ANNALISE: Let me help.
EDWARD: I don't need your help.
ANNALISE: Evidently you do.
EDWARD: You've kind of renounced the right to tell me what to do haven't you?
ANNALISE: I get the picture. But it's my data too, Rosalind Franklin.
EDWARD: Look at her. What do you see?
ANNALISE: A mouse.
EDWARD: I get paid good money for this you know. It's amazing what experienced scientists don't see.
ANNALISE: Tell me what you see.
EDWARD: A brown mouse...black eyes, pink tail.
ANNALISE: What's her mood?
EDWARD: Her mood? She's a mouse! I don't know. Hungry?
ANNALISE: Don't be reductive.
EDWARD: Quizzical? Expansive? How on earth should I know?
ANNALISE: The quality of your data might depend on it. Tell me what she's doing.
EDWARD: Running round the side of the cage. Rearing up, sniffing. Big nostrils. Wow, look at her little paws against the glass. Like tiny pink stars.

EDWARD: So inquisitive? Active?
ANNALISE: I guess.
EDWARD: Put your hand in. Let her smell you.

Annalise does.

Take this plastic tunnel and guide her into it. It's less stressful for her and for you. Look, like this.

He snaps on a glove and deftly scoops Mouse 476997 into the plastic tunnel, blocks the end and holds it up.

Now you can see her. No need to grab the tail. And she's calm, look.

He tips her into his hand. Mouse 476997 sits calmly.

You try. Over the cage.

Annalise takes the tube. She gingerly tips the mouse onto her hand. The mouse sits calmly.

ANNALISE: Wow.
EDWARD: Now do the injection with your other hand.

Annalise picks up the syringe and swiftly delivers it into the mouse's neck. The mouse barely reacts.

EDWARD: There you go.

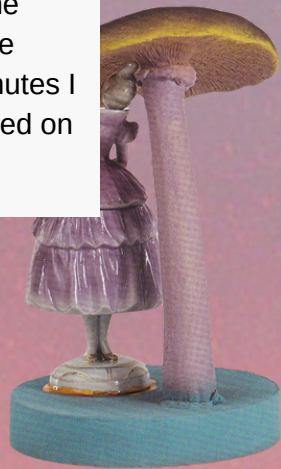
He collects up his papers.

After we broke up, after I finished off our cheap bottle of Pig's Nose whisky, I tramped November's fields blackened in slow drenching rain, a train's horn keening like a cello's sombre drawn-out final note in the gloaming near the derelict WW2 air force base haunted by distant airwave voices, haven for crepuscular creatures, brave truth we might have sorted out stuck in autumn's red, raw throat. Our poplars were being stripped of their sensuous splendour, one toppled, matted roots curling, exposed like wild sexual hair, her ripped open note with my cold hand inside the pocket of the seaman's pea-jacket she gave me to ward off icy wind the previous winter that now lies encrypted in the same pocket hanging in exile in my wardrobe eclipsed by the silent dark. I read of letters turning up lonely years after long-dead soldiers posted them, the bereft gently kissing foxed handwriting, those letters better than grave markers, certain, astonishing, mementoes. I dislike evenings, their blanketing of days, thought I knew about the transnational blueprint, but travellers move on. I didn't. I don't need reminders. Rain needs no reminder to softly fall.

Before/After

Ian C Smith

Before we broke up we thought we knew about long-haul travel. Days dimmed in mid-afternoon, our attic walls furry, so we walked. Signs pointed across barnyard mud to fields where we lost crooked trails only to find them again pointing the way towards blue smoke above a serrated cottage roofline. Ducks streamed under bridges of stone past black-faced sheep between charcoal-sketched glimpses of a distant spire. Across disused railway embankments we roamed, and through farms, climbing stiles, squeezing between gaps in broad gates. We waited while a herd of cows ambled by, a line of pale hills blurring to violet in the dwindling light. Then a dark shape crested a rise tinkling like a band of wandering minstrels. Muscular horses pulled three wooden caravans against the backdrop of lowering sky. A whippet tethered to the last caravan placed its paws with deliberate care as those travellers nursing the secrets of centuries faced the roads ahead, their shadows falling across us. We didn't stir until we no longer heard the sound of tiny brass bells. Our breath steamed as we stood there, her hair misted with diamonds, for minutes I wish I could experience again, these details imprinted on memory.



ANNALISE: Thanks.
EDWARD: You're welcome. I'll leave you to it.
I've got a lecture.

He moves towards the door.

EDWARD: One more tip for you. Give her a name.

ANNALISE: It has a name. *(Reads)* 476997.

EDWARD: A proper name.

ANNALISE: Aren't I supposed to stay detached, or something? She's data, not a pet.

EDWARD: You need to get over your fear of her, she'll sense it. Give her a name.

Annalise rolls her eyes.

EDWARD: It's extraordinary you know. Your likeness.

He leaves.

Annalise lifts the mouse to eye-level.

ANNALISE: Angel.

Lights down.

Trauma Informed Resonance

Sharon Attipoe-Dorcoo

As we step into the street
With the hope of yet another day
The resonance of collective humanity
Beats as sounds of the wind
Carrying the kick in your step
The step grounded in in power
Shared with community at center

The fact of the matter is
No power is left alone to fester
But operationalized in world to order
As we step into the street with resonance
Do we reach out to each other?
Tap into the residue of place
Emanating from each single pore we behold

Trauma-informed placemaking
We scream inwardly as
As we step into the street
Placemaking practice for who I ask
Look around you I implore
For a culture of healing
Ain't one with a single reflection in the mirror.

Pretending racism does not exist...or that our societies are "colour blind" is irresponsible. In fact, that level of pretence simply creates a form of racial insularity...in favour of whiteness.



We live in a racist world, where people of colour wage and weather battles with racism every day. It affects mental wellbeing...and if unchecked, could have dire consequences for our world.



So what do we do?

This incident offers a teachable moment to educate our sports fields, our classrooms, and our places of work.



Let's call out racism when it happens...so that it is exposed in the fabric of our world, and rooted out.

Proactive behaviours are much more constructive than reactive behaviours.

Let's amplify the voices of those who have been racially vilified, and become advocates for antiracism.



Let's validate these experiences and not deny or diminish them, instead of insisting that being called a racist is worse than racism itself.

Let's adopt collective responsibility and silence those who defend racism...because an injury to one is an injury to all.

Racism is socially constructed...and must therefore be socially dismantled. We need to speak up, and speak out. People of colour, and white people alike.

The club staff were conciliatory... but their words did nothing to heal the rising sense of injustice, and the evident, ubiquitous white denial. I needed to call it out for what it was.



I went public about the incident, which featured in both print and television news items. I was frank about the intensity of the attack and how it impacted on me.



But my calling it out evoked 'white tears'. I was cast as the angry brown woman... I was framed as the troublemaker.

The public responded and the gaslighting began. I as a person of colour could not be trusted to define racism.

Motivation was lost...and my willingness to engage in any form of play diminished...

This was 'Not Racism**' in action.

Our team won the 'Premiership'. And I was awarded the 'Best and Fairest Award'... but the emptiness of the racist attack remained deep within me.



My mental health continued to decline...

This should not have happened...I have not moved on...racism is insidious and has resulted in stress, anxiety and withdrawal.

Martin Luther King's words resonated at this stage...this was a "negative peace"...not many people around me were committed to "direct action". The collective sweeping under the carpet by my sport was eating me up.



Sunday School

JE Sumerau

The women crossing the street give dirty looks to the smokers on the corner.

They are crossing through the smoke, disturbed by having to share air space with other lifestyles. They wear dress shirts, pants, blouses, skirts, uncomfortable shoes, Sunday best. They carry bags with names pulled from outlet signs off the interstate, boutiques on the sides of roundabouts and cobblestone roads in the tourist parts of town. They discuss the theme for the services. They discuss the latest thing Tommy said to Gina, the newest disruption of monotony offered via social media scandal, different meanings for cherished quotes, what in the world they are going to do about the lack of respect and attention their group gets in some places within the broader congregation. Their dirty looks leave a film the smokers barely feel anymore.

Savannah stomps the butt of her Camel Crush, picks it up, throws the remains in a garbage can by the door of the massive building the women entered moments ago.

They/them are Savannah's preferred pronouns, but they know a barrage of "she" waits through those fancy doors. Savannah Jo Pearce, Dashboard Confessional SUPERFAN, new member of the congregation, first timer still feeling out the ups and downs and ins and outs

of Sunday. They nod to the other smokers, take a deep breath, pull their bookbag off their left shoulder and put it back on, now is as good a time as ever, or at least that's what they try to tell themselves. They enter the massive building, "Time for Sunday school," they whisper to no one else.

Men wearing basically the same suit stand in columns on the other side of the main entrance.

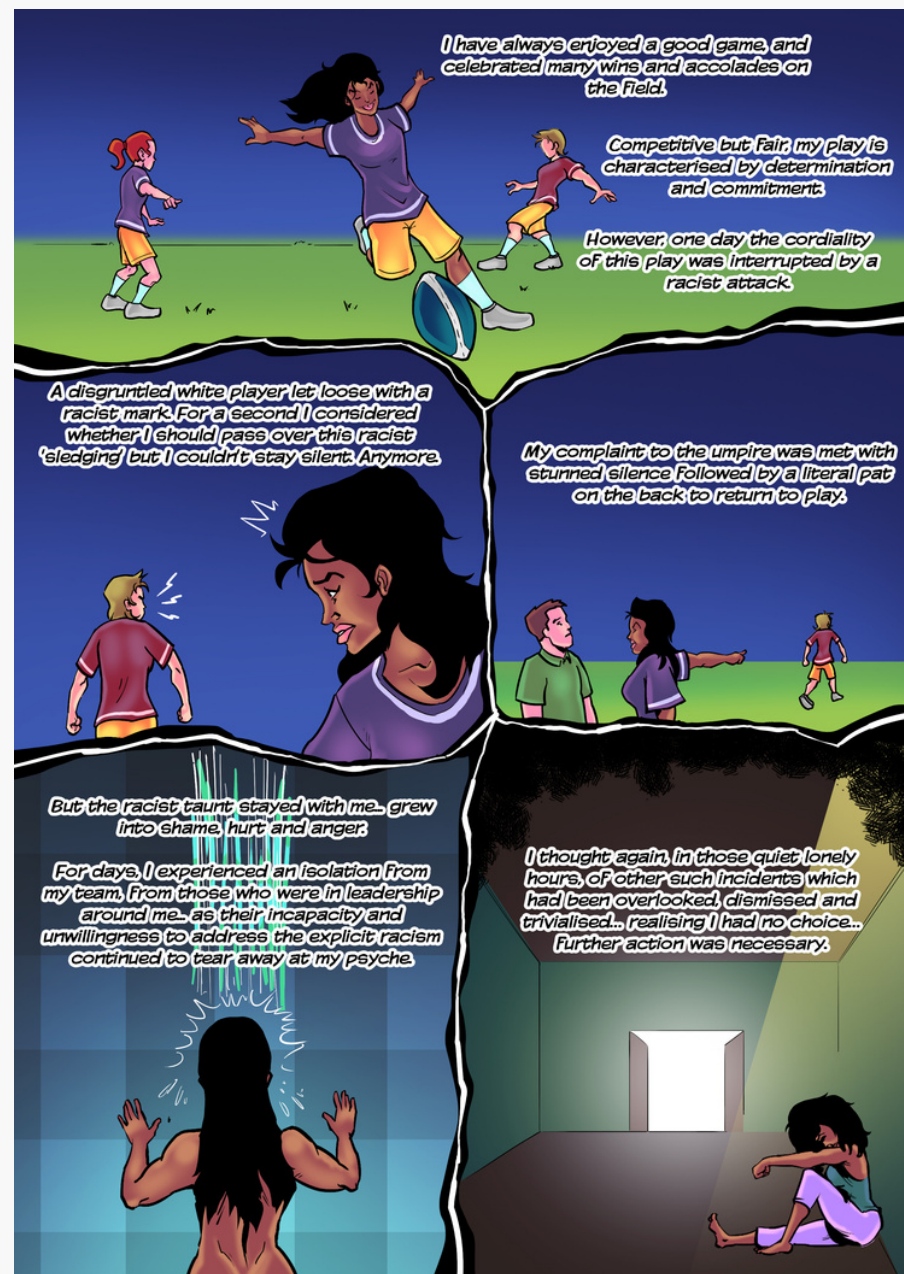
Almost all the other men wear polo shirts and dress pants in drab colors. The style is always somewhere between business and Baptist, lots of gray and black slacks that are never silver enough to shimmer, soft, subdued. The ties tell the real story. Some men wear them loose, others wear them tight, others have gone rogue, bare necks available for all to see, to cut. The men hold bags that come from the same stores as the one's the women were carrying. They take up space in the lobby, stationed like soldiers awaiting instruction, eyes on papers and cuffs and social media feeds where they rail against social media feeds. Savannah recognizes two or three from the events of the previous days, she scoots around them, toward the escalator.

The top of the escalator marks the entrance to the heart of the meetings.

It is called the mezzanine on the drab maps adorning walls and placard holders throughout the building. The registration desk is stocked with volunteer greeters.

Stamp Out Racism

Aish Ravi





doorway.

There is commotion at the end of the hallway, the space empties faster than seems possible.

Savannah leaves the small room as the fourth speaker stands; the seven audience members get ready for the next set of questions. The sanctuary (they prefer to call it the big room or by other generic terms) at the end of the hallway has come to life in full. There is a man with a suit, vest, and tie combo that would make any business school proud. He is introducing the speaker. He says the theme of this year's meetings, "Thoughts in Action: What Science Can Do In The World!". The congregants clap, some even hoot, one raises his hands, likely consumed by the spirit. A woman near the back shakes her head, pulls out a tissue, waves it in front of her face. The speaker takes the podium, pulls on his suit coat, shakes his head, and begins speaking about the importance of spreading science beyond the walls of this luxury hotel, to bring people in, to come together for the betterment of the world, for the good of knowledge.

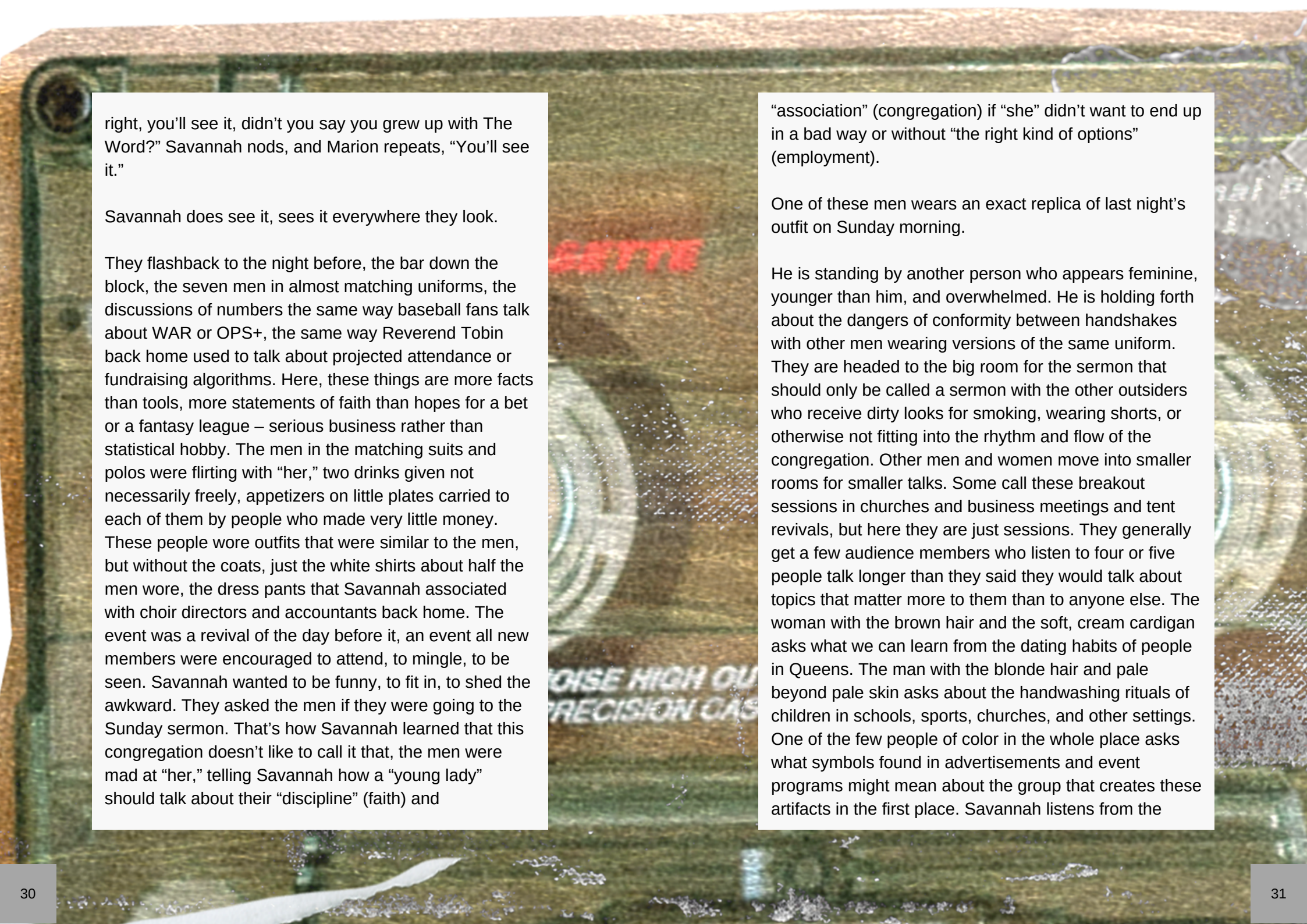
The women who gave Savannah dirty looks clap from the fourth row.

The men who lectured Savannah about word choice nod from row seven.

These greeters wear dresses or skirts or suits or business-casual promises that they do, in fact, fit in with the rest of the group. They have not been banished to the table with the name tags and information forms. No! They are part of the program, part of the service, volunteers for the greater good. Savannah ignores them, cradles the name tag in their right front jeans pocket. Beyond the information desk, parishioners take up every available seat. There is Roger talking to Dalia about his newest project, a service type likely to garner praise from the higher ups. There is Maria sipping coffee with Linda as Renee tells the two of them about a new fundraising opportunity.

The big speech is taking place in the sanctuary at the end of the massive hallway.

Lisa with the pink pigtails and the Counting Crows t-shirt called the big speech a sermon while Savannah was smoking outside trying to calm their nerves as much as possible. Attendance is required, at least it is if you want to be recognized within the congregation, if you want them to help you get a job or housing or anything else. Louis laughed at the word "sermon" and told Savannah that the speech doesn't matter, it's about being seen by the right people, the people who sit in the front pews, the ones who clap and post on social media throughout the speech, the deacons or acolytes or whatever you want to call them, the most committed among us. Marion giggled and almost choked on their Marlboro Red, "They're both



right, you'll see it, didn't you say you grew up with The Word?" Savannah nods, and Marion repeats, "You'll see it."

Savannah does see it, sees it everywhere they look.

They flashback to the night before, the bar down the block, the seven men in almost matching uniforms, the discussions of numbers the same way baseball fans talk about WAR or OPS+, the same way Reverend Tobin back home used to talk about projected attendance or fundraising algorithms. Here, these things are more facts than tools, more statements of faith than hopes for a bet or a fantasy league – serious business rather than statistical hobby. The men in the matching suits and polos were flirting with “her,” two drinks given not necessarily freely, appetizers on little plates carried to each of them by people who made very little money. These people wore outfits that were similar to the men, but without the coats, just the white shirts about half the men wore, the dress pants that Savannah associated with choir directors and accountants back home. The event was a revival of the day before it, an event all new members were encouraged to attend, to mingle, to be seen. Savannah wanted to be funny, to fit in, to shed the awkward. They asked the men if they were going to the Sunday sermon. That's how Savannah learned that this congregation doesn't like to call it that, the men were mad at “her,” telling Savannah how a “young lady” should talk about their “discipline” (faith) and

“association” (congregation) if “she” didn't want to end up in a bad way or without “the right kind of options” (employment).

One of these men wears an exact replica of last night's outfit on Sunday morning.

He is standing by another person who appears feminine, younger than him, and overwhelmed. He is holding forth about the dangers of conformity between handshakes with other men wearing versions of the same uniform. They are headed to the big room for the sermon that should only be called a sermon with the other outsiders who receive dirty looks for smoking, wearing shorts, or otherwise not fitting into the rhythm and flow of the congregation. Other men and women move into smaller rooms for smaller talks. Some call these breakout sessions in churches and business meetings and tent revivals, but here they are just sessions. They generally get a few audience members who listen to four or five people talk longer than they said they would talk about topics that matter more to them than to anyone else. The woman with the brown hair and the soft, cream cardigan asks what we can learn from the dating habits of people in Queens. The man with the blonde hair and pale beyond pale skin asks about the handwashing rituals of children in schools, sports, churches, and other settings. One of the few people of color in the whole place asks what symbols found in advertisements and event programs might mean about the group that creates these artifacts in the first place. Savannah listens from the