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v i n c e n t . t e r n i d a
l e s l i e . w i b b e r l e y

**chris
duncan**

yes chef

We nicknamed him Jesus, on account of his ability to make seemingly small amounts of food go such a distance. Everyone working under Jesus agrees, it's impressive. Maximum yield, minimum expenditure. But this efficiency exercise keeps broadening. Time limits on the stove usage, constant adjustments to the cold storage temperature. Weighing every plate which leaves the kitchen. A reach for, and borderline attainment of, zero wastage.

I count my steps on the way to the market for the produce, haggling with vendors to the point of tears. Arriving back at the restaurant I realise I've taken too many steps and feel my chest tighten. The presence of Jesus is everywhere.

As per his instruction, I retrieve shallots from the discard pile, revisiting them with knife strokes. Steel fresh from the stone working closely to the end of the bulb, recovering no more than a gram. Jesus hovers over my shoulder watching my movements, before assessing the pile. There will be no praise, no thanks. The absence of his fury is the best outcome, his vocal discontent with another task elsewhere on the line guaranteed. We work swiftly at our stations, all too familiar with his habits. We know how to operate

emi kodama

featuring

the scenic route home

My spacesuit is basically a snowsuit with a helmet except that I only wear underwear inside. It's temperature controlled so long johns aren't necessary. It definitely adds to overall comfort because you're not as bulky.

It's going to be a long trip, but there's only room for one square snack in the food slot below my chin. I have chosen a brownie. I can tilt my head forward and take a bite whenever I want, though unfortunately, I have to eat it all at once to avoid floating crumbs in my helmet. The space chefs use only the highest quality ingredients, and my helmet is filled with the rich decadent smell of chocolate. There's also a straw to my drink pouch filled with cold milk. I can take a sip of that anytime.

One Halloween I dressed up as an astronaut. Mom covered an old snowsuit in white duct tape and sewed on patches we got at the planetarium gift shop. Warm and toasty in the surprisingly cold October night, I headed out hoping for a minimum of the least impressive of all Halloween candy: raisins. There is nothing treat-like about raisins.

The comet appears in the window of our spaceship as a dark pebble. It's too small for our ship to land on

**nathan
stormer**

my person

I was told a story once, when I was small, in which a little girl, like me, tries to make her way back to the world she came from by finding the right person to kill. Her brother told her this lie and she considered her options for the best weapon. Poison. A candlestick. Pushed into traffic. She chose a knife. The lie her brother told her was not that the right person didn't exist, but that this was the only way to return home.

My grandpa told me that story sometime in winter, years ago. He only brought it up a second time in frantic mutters he struggled to reach for — his mind was washed to nothing by age and he was only able to muster, “The knife. The knife. The knife,” and I only realized after he died that he was referring to the story.

Now, I'm not so naive to think the girl from the story had only one person who was the right person. Many people could've been the right person for her. I never got an end to that story. Did she find the right person? Did she kill him with her knife? Did the Earth open up and swallow her? She probably lived her whole life without knowing the other way she could return home would be to die herself, by her own hand or by the hand of the right person, her right person. I hadn't

**vincent
ternida**

the door

Two months since I became admin, they built a door that separated the two departments in our office. While with everything in this nonprofit, it would balance out eventually, I had to put up with white girl problem by listening to how much the door triggered my co-workers. My eyes resisted the urge to roll and yet when I completed my day, they would side eye and roll however much I wanted. You told me that I couldn't hide my emotions and Romeo said the same thing. I should take it with a grain of salt.

I planned to take a class by next year the moment I saved enough money from my desk job. I was 35, going on 36, I didn't have much time left to break into an industry that paid well. I wanted to get into film as the city's industry was chock-full of productions. "Save BC Film" had long passed and even if they shoot most shit in Georgia now, most productions still visited Vancouver. Yes, gone were the X-Files days when PAs made oodles of cash staying up sixteen hours or more. I could take the grind, after all, I ran dope for Romeo for years.

Mishka treated me like her personal maid ever since my second month began. It felt like she probably had a pinay nanny back in Ontario. She boasted how wealthy

leslie wibberley

the poison garden

Funny how wanting time to speed up always seems to have the opposite effect. Despite the promise of our early dismissal, today is dragging on endlessly. I stare at the clock, then at Mrs. James, our history teacher, who's been droning on and on for what seems like hours. I'm tempted to throw my textbook at her, just to get her to stop talking.

With each minute that passes, the niggling worry that has burrowed itself into my stomach grows stronger, like a hungry worm.

Finally, when I'm about to scream in frustration, the blessed bell rings. I hurry to my locker, grab my backpack, then rush through the school's front doors. I pull out my phone and call Gran. She doesn't answer. Just like this morning, and at lunch. And she knew I was going to call. When I left her shop last night, I'd told her I would.

She'd seemed off yesterday, her face oddly collapsed, and so pale. For the first time in my life, I think about how old she is.

The worry worm wriggles in my belly.

My fingers drift to the fading bruise on my cheek and my body shudders at the memory of others long healed. Gran and her magical little shop, Scents of



#stayhome and protect others.

first page home quarantine survival recommendation:
read the first page of all of your books. even better: send us
your very own witty first page for our upcoming issue.

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