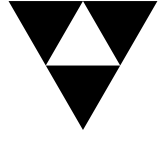


THE RACKET | 86





THE RACKET

I voted yesterday. Maybe you did too.

Maybe you also felt the slow burn of ineffectuality as you handed your ballot through your car window to a poll worker. Maybe you looked at our two, extremely likely presidential candidates, and thought, “This is it? This is what I’m throwing the minute weight of my democratic power towards?”

Sadly, the answer is yes.

It is entirely understandable to sit this one out. To look at the options presented and decide as a matter of protest the best choice between these two options is to choose nothing at all. I get it. I really do.

But choosing nothing is at best a dangerous way of thinking, at worst, a passive means of supporting a future dictator. Say what you will about the current president – and specifically his passive support of the genocide in Gaza – but we are at least looking a human being inhabiting the most powerful position in the world who is functional in this role. Perhaps we as a country are still punch drunk and hazy from pandemic and Donald Trump’s gross negligence and aggressive battering of the ideals of democracy. And maybe this lets us look at these choices and convince ourselves because both are flawed in what seem to be similar ways, that non-action is the best action based upon the current, and terrible, global situation.

We are, more so than ever, on the verge of what feels like system-wide collapse. Pause for a moment, I swear you can feel the ground trembling beneath your feet. Our current president seems unable to capitalize on his many, many successes for the United States. Conversely his damning silence on the disgusting actions of the Israeli government erase any good will he may have garnered. It’s a surface level comparison though, one that ignores the four year shitshow that was the Trump presidency. A superficial way of comparing a racist, dog-whistling, performer who has already given us four years worth of proof that he is unable, morally and logistically, to hold the highest office in the land and a man who amounts to a better-than-average career politician inundated, and perhaps overly okay with, the casual horrors of running a country. We say they are both too old (they are) and that they have both done horrible things (they have). This a simplistic way to flatten the nuances of both successful governance and outright evil when nuance and detail are as important as they’ve ever been.

THE RACKET

We are tasked as members of a democracy in working to make decisions as a populace we believe will better the country, and the society within, as a whole. As much as I entirely understand, to some degree support, the reasoning behind withholding a vote, and would never hold personal governmental defiance against anyone, I cannot honestly believe it is in anyone's best interest to withhold their vote this election season. The options at hand are not great, but they are also not equal in how awful they are, and the bleakness of the future they offer.

I voted yesterday, not because I'm fully sold on my choices, or on the governmental systems, but because I know not doing so is throwing away my only weapon to fight back against another unimaginable four years.

I voted yesterday. I hope you did too.

N

The Racket stands against
police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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WOMEN FOR WOMEN
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MIDDLE EAST CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE
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Butcher by Lucian Mattison originally published in *Curare* from C&R Press

Used to be I didn't eat these things.



WE HAVE A PATREON

We aren't in this for the money.

But there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY
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THE RACKET

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SUNSET
HANNAH MORRIS
2021



BIRD CLUB
HANNAH MORRIS
2021

Weightlifter

MICHAELA BURGESS

I started weightlifting at a young age.

There was a heaviness my younger-older brother asked me to hold; standing in the foyer of our house, sunbeam stilts shining through the slats of the shutters, his physical body melts in my arms and I do my best to hold liquid together.

Soon he will go to jail and no one there will hold him like this, so I gather and contain him in all my empty spaces until his sobs shake him back into a solid.

Another weight – in my twenties now – another sibling, another request to unburden.

A frightened phone call from my sister saying she's made a big mistake – huge – the bleeding won't stop, and she's right, and I am surprised at how bright red blood is when it first leaves a body and how dark it stains the fabric of my passenger seat.

At the hospital, she gets a shot in her butt to make sure she doesn't get tetanus from the scissors she used and asks me to keep this a secret.

I am still young but worn thin, and my older-older brother does not ask me to hold his weight, but shoves it at me, threatens me with it.

He claims it is because of me that he is so burdened, and it is three in the morning when I ignore his call, the city lights streaming in through the open window, winter winds keening, my sister asleep to my left and my younger-older brother asleep to my right.

If he's dead in the morning I know it'll be because I didn't answer, and this thought turns my insides black and blue but my god all my bones are broken and any more weight will turn me to a bloody, pulpy mess, so I close my eyes and stop lifting.



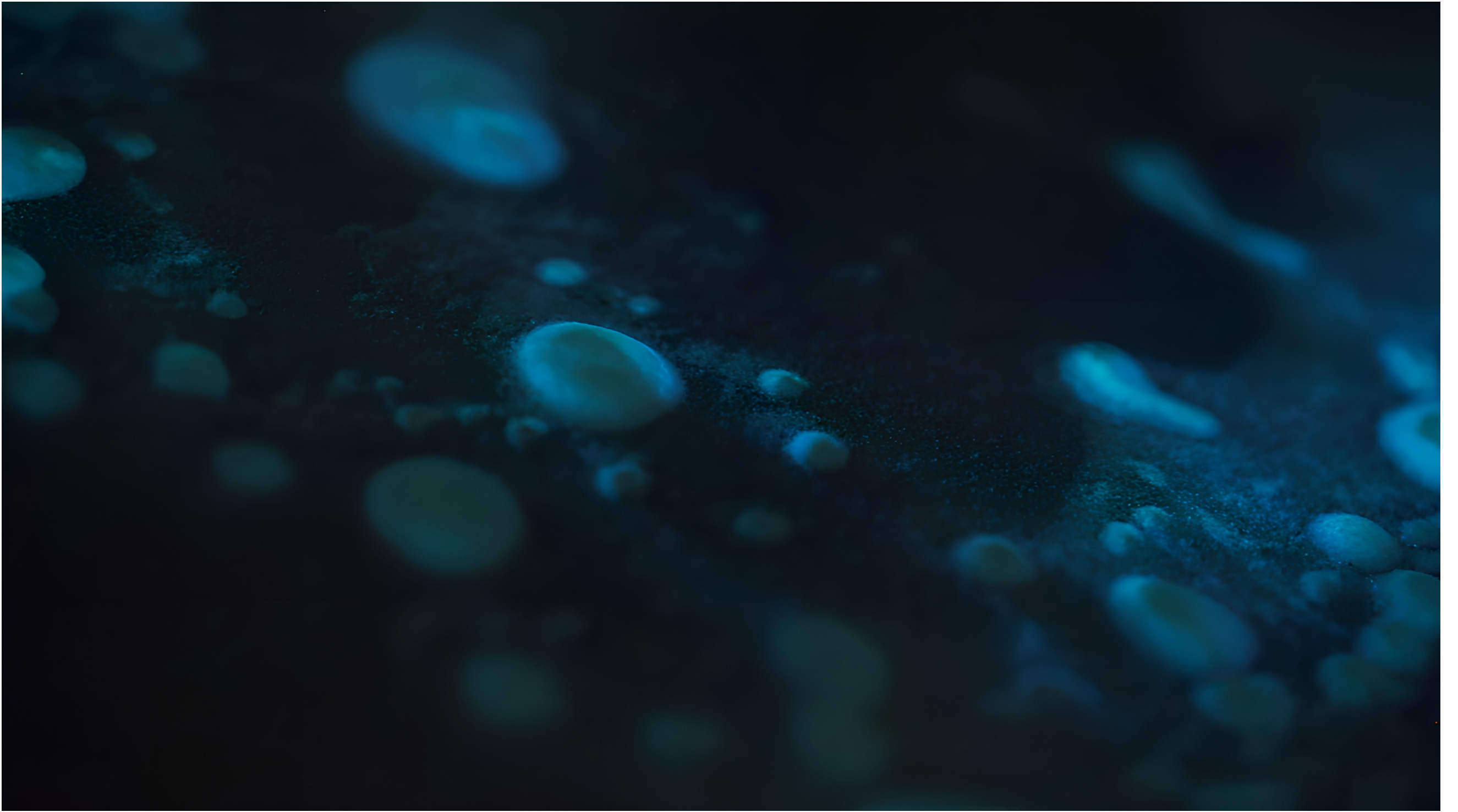
SATURDAY
HANNAH MORRIS
2020

I'll Never Wear That Shirt Again

SETH PETERSON

1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8
9 10
11 12
13 21
14 20
15 16 17 18 19

-
1. I've worn
2. it before: once
3. when I got the vaccine,
4. & then at a baby shower,
5. a grand total of two times
6. I wasn't ashamed
7. When I bought it
8. I thought, *hey I like bacon*
9. & *burgers*
10. But it's the flags
11. sticker-sized red, white, & blue
12. splattered across the chest
13. at intervals of time about like
14. bullets chambering, the sound
15. of voices echoing
16. Thoughts & prayers / Thoughts & prayers / Thoughts & prayers
17. the day after a three-year-old's
18. face was vaporized
19. that makes me want to spread it out
20. cold on the asphalt &
21. set it on fire



Within 48 hours

NANA BOATENG

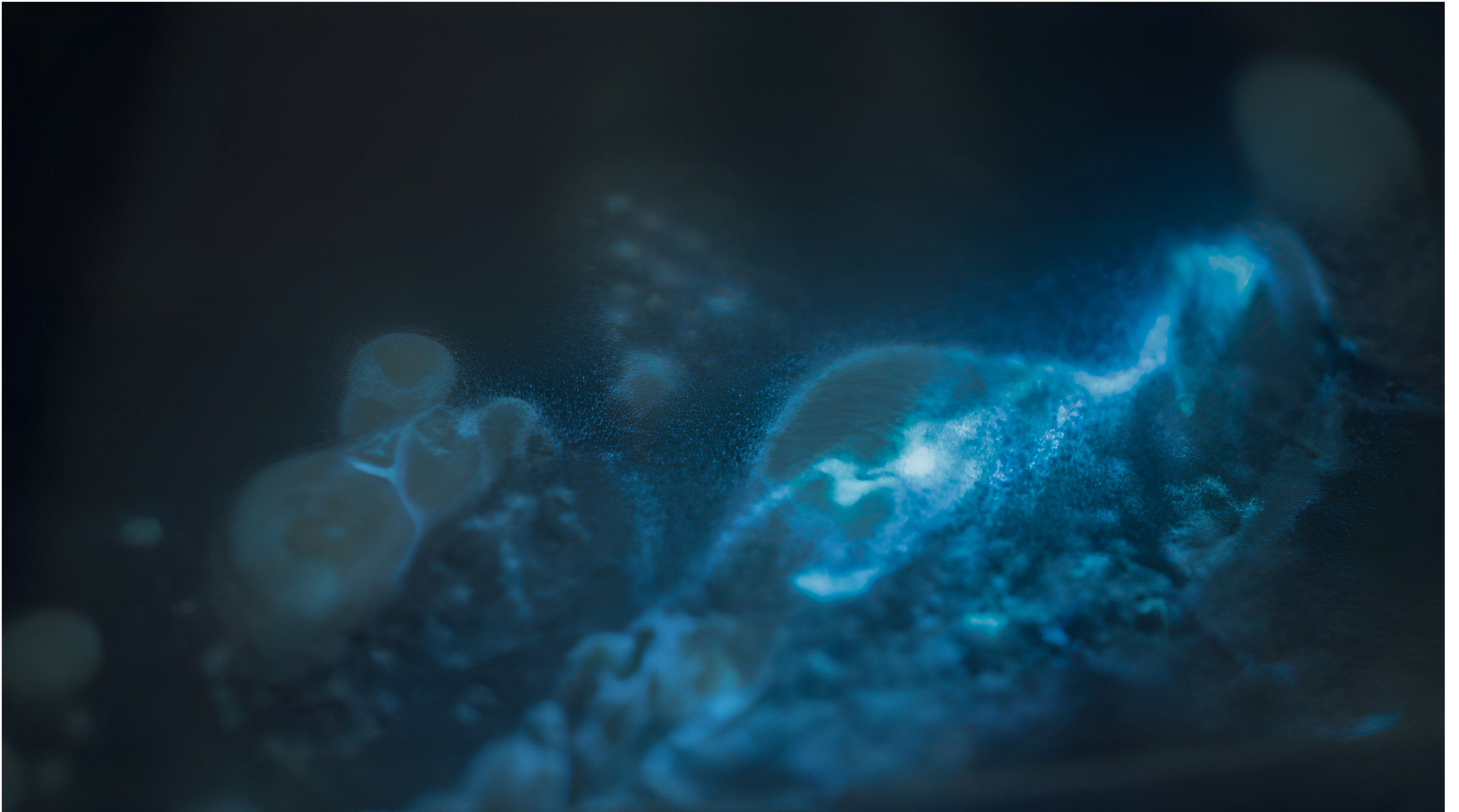
One day an 800,000 ft hole will open up. a big gulp in the ground. just sand sinking backwards will take us with it. you, holding onto the land. eating soggy cereal or running consecutively late or scratching an impossible itch, won't listen. when a dog's whine breaks a sabbatical of crows guard a sky that remains above sea level.

Copters lower. glare dark street corners. an atmospheric drench waits and mosses over faces ready to be identified. an endless parade of honks jumble. public notices fall off the bone as buses wedge behind the jamba juice. In slumber, I do not want to be with this world. I insist on going on a walk. blankets anchored to legs. when the world shakes beneath you what becomes your god?

You could feel prepared for anything. but rations of batteries and tubs of water won't do much under the debris of a thousand unfinished tasks. errands left unraveled. a day's work covered in soot. clinging to the busyness of sirens. embossed in the air. just sorting through our last exchanges like dogeared pages.

On the 24 hour broadcast, they'll cross their knees arms and wagging fingers. then swear we never saw it coming. a premonition on the last page of the paper. crumpled up and thrown to the wayside. used to stuff unaddressed packages or blot steamed mirrors and filter out survivors. or panic. for weeks at a time. prayers rescued, foggy from our lips weave a collective web of what ifs.

When the earth tears it loose. its last cloud will hang over our heads. in doubt. half mast. black white and red all over. branches lay down their leaves. cast long shadows. our last apologies topple in the rubble. promises sealed under broken glass. declarations popped. love bent. tomorrow's divvied up and pocketed. huddled over saltwater, smoke will knot cracking omens before sunrise.



Dangerous Living

EDWARD GUNAWAN

He says: Let's rent a fast car, with the top down
Cruise the highway by the ocean with California blue sky all around us

Flipping over, we crash head-first onto the asphalt
Flames blazing, music blaring

He says: Let's make love, like really make love
I want to feel all of you with nothing in between us

And one of us catches the bug, passing it to the other
Lying in hospital beds, bodies ravaged — a slow and painful death

He asks: How about that second drink?
And isn't it time for a vacation? Why not live a little?

Losing our house, our unborn children's tummies bloated, fevers burning
We are the Worst Parents of the Year / Decade / All Time

Still I reply: Sure

We snake across the hills, wind-blown hair and faces reddened from sun
I come home to the whole of him

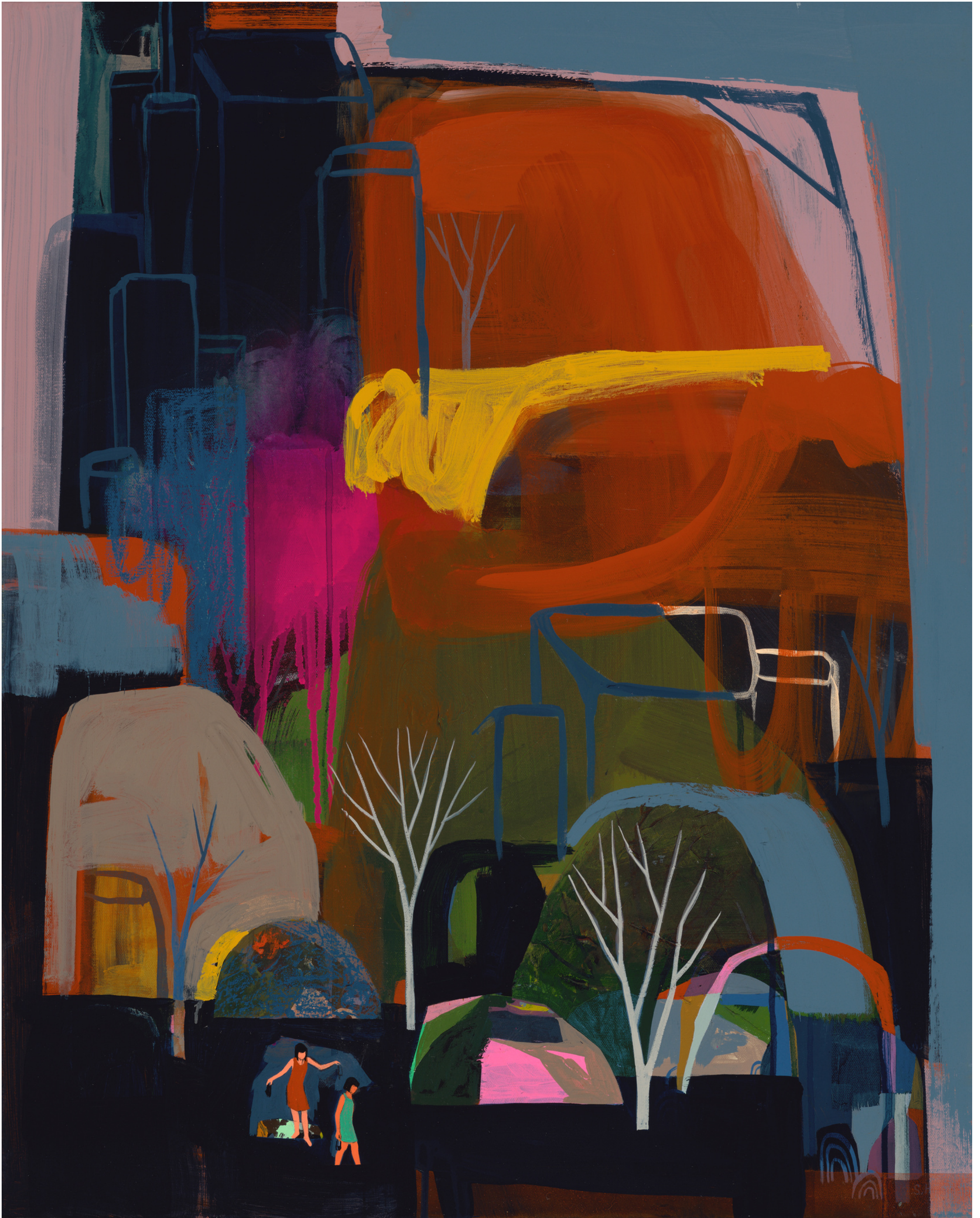
Nobody dies (yet)



Butcher

LUCIAN MATTISON

A desk job turns me into a domed cake,
where before I tapped glass with a fingernail
always on the outside—how delicious, expensive.
Look how I've outdone the expectations
I had set for my horrible self. Now able
to pay rent without skipping meals,
I've had time to develop these new life goals:
buy jamonero for the kitchen counter
loaded with a home-cured ham, ham
knife for the serrano ham, skills enough
to slice ham, paper thin, with one hand.
More ham goals: gout, hosting a ham-
themed party, different hams in the ham
closet, artisanal ham-curing dirt pit
in the backyard, dying penniless.
The brain is a monster with many aspirations
massaged into his creases with a carving knife.
I consume my sadness at the expense
of another's life and only bat an eyelash
if it begins to walk on two legs.
I understand my privilege allows me
to wear a cake dome as a helmet
while stargazing on Mars. So, I think I'm happy,
but I want to abandon security
for a new career path curing meats.
New ham goals: use ham leg to kick ball



ATMOSPHERIC RIVER
SEONNA HONG
2023

into back of net, consult shaman
about ham souls and curare, raise a ham
from dead, teach ham knife skills,
hire ham to hang me from a rope
in cool room so I retain moisture
and receive proper ventilation. The ham asks
the necromancer which professions
we consider virtuous—a life dedicated
to curing humans over the keyboard,
not so bad. Knife held above the neck,
it's not the act of cutting away the body
that is noble, it's the butcher—the one, who
cleans the blood from the blade, folds
a neat package in their namesake paper.



WILDFIRE SEASON
SEONNA HONG
2023



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