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Student ID No	9605600	Name	Don Yew Li Chooi
Faculty	Design & Creative Technologies	School/Dept	Art & Design
Programme	AK3483 Master of Art & Design	Year of submission (for examination)	2017
Research Output	Thesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exegesis <input type="checkbox"/> Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/>	Points Value	120
Thesis Title	'Homebound': The illustrated graphic novel as an autobiographic voice for an immigrant Asian gay male in New Zealand		

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Student ID No	9605600	Name	Don Yew Li Chooi
Faculty	Design & Creative Technologies	School/Dept	Art & Design
Programme	AK3483 Master of Art & Design	Date of submission for examination	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
Research Output	Thesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dissertation <input type="checkbox"/> Exegesis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Points Value	120
Thesis Title	'Homebound': The illustrated graphic novel as an autobiographic voice for an immigrant Asian gay male in New Zealand		

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24 months

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- ☒ Jeopardise the future intellectual property rights of the author (e.g. a patent application or publication)
- ☐ Breach a prior contractual arrangement with an external organisation (Please attach a copy of the relevant agreement(s))
- ☐ Infringe or endanger the right to privacy or cultural respect of an individual or group

### The embargo would apply to

- ☐ The complete thesis/dissertation/exegesis
- ☒ A portion of the work (specify) : The graphic novel 'Homebound'

### Signatures

Student	Don Y L Chooi	Signature		Date	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
Primary Supervisor		Signature		Date	7 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
Secondary Supervisor		Signature		Date	8/11/16
Additional Supervisor/Mentor		Signature		Date	

### RESTRICTED ACCESS APPROVED BY FACULTY DEAN(or delegate)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE USE RELEASE DATE



Graduate Research School  
Private Bag 92006 Auckland 1020  
+64-9-921-9907  
postgraduate.centre@aut.ac.nz

Ref: 9605600

06 March 2017

Don Chooi  
34 Gunner Drive  
Te Atatu Peninsula  
Auckland  
NEW ZEALAND 0610

Dear Don,

## RE: Embargo Request

The University Postgraduate Board has approved your application for an Embargo until 11 Dec 2018 at their meeting held on 21 Feb 2017. At that point in time the University should contact you to confirm the expiry of the embargo and give you the opportunity to extend if required.

## Faculty Contacts

Your primary supervisor is Welby Ings

The Associate Dean (Postgraduate) is Rosser Johnson, ext 7818

The faculty contact for doctoral candidates is Annette Tiaiti, [doffice@aut.ac.nz](mailto:doffice@aut.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely,



Martin Wilson  
**Manager, Graduate Research School**  
[martin.wilson@aut.ac.nz](mailto:martin.wilson@aut.ac.nz)  
+64-9-921-9999 ext 8812

cc: Welby Ings C-41, Annette Tiaiti DA Master of Art and Design

# HOMEBOUND

*a personal story of family*



*a Graphic Novel by Don Chooi*





# H O M E B O U N D

*Don Chooi*





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“Home is where  
one starts from”

T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965)





*I was never one to question what 'home' meant. I believed home to be in Malaysia, in a town called Seremban. It wasn't until recent events that I learned to appreciate the meaning of the word.*

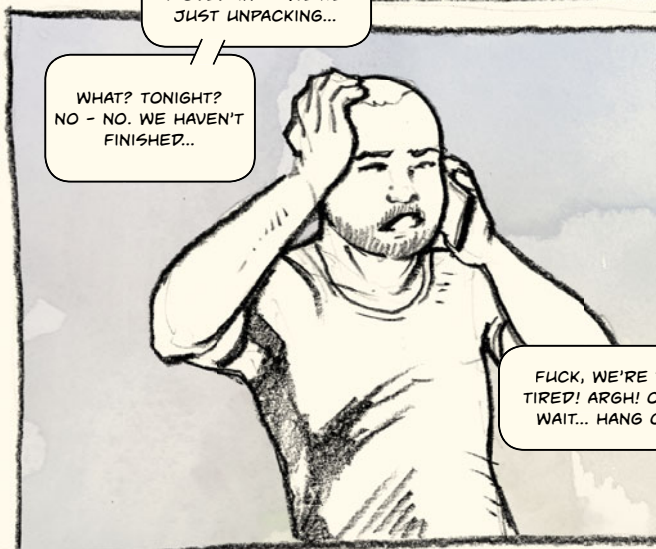
*My name is Xing Loh Yun, but I am also known as Tommy. I found my way to Auckland, New Zealand 15 years ago, seeking a fresh start and the 'real' me. Along the way, there were heartbreaks, confusion and sorrow, but in all honesty, I never felt more contented or assured. I fell in love with a wonderful man. Being in a relationship with Neil made it all the easier for me to consider New Zealand my home, and he and my friends, my family. I willingly let go of my past.*

*But the past has a way of catching up...*











"YEAH -- COME OVER AROUND 7.00PM.  
WE SHOULD HAVE MOST OF THE HOUSE  
SORTED OUT BY THEN..."







MAN -- HOW THE HELL DID WE  
END UP WITH SO MUCH CRAP?

RELAX! THERE ARE ONLY  
A FEW MORE BITS. THEY CAN  
WAIT TILL TOMORROW.

AT LEAST WE DON'T HAVE  
TO COOK TONIGHT...

ONCE WE ARE DONE,  
WE CAN GET DAD STARTED  
MOVING IN.

THANKS, BABE.

I WORRY ABOUT  
HIM. HE'S ALL BY HIMSELF  
DOWN IN TAUMARANUI WITH NO  
ONE TO CARE FOR HIM...

CAN WE AT LEAST  
ENJOY A FEW WEEKS ON  
OUR OWN FIRST?

I KNOW, I KNOW...

... HOW ABOUT A FEW  
DAYS THEN? I CAN SET UP MY  
STUDIO IN THE MEANTIME, AND GET  
BACK TO WORKING ON THE NOVEL.









HEY GUYS! HAND  
DELIVERED DINNER!  
WE SHOULD BE BEAR  
MEALS ON WHEELS!

BONJOUR!

GOD - YOU'D BETTER  
BE STARVING! WE  
BOUGHT HEAPS!



COME ON IN!



YOU KNOW YOU'LL HAVE  
TO SIT ON THE FLOOR.

FUCK OFF!

HE'S KIDDING.  
TABLE'S ALL SET!





LOOKS LIKE  
SOMEONE'S HOOKING  
UP TONIGHT.

HASN'T VINCENT  
ALREADY SHAGGED  
HALF OF AUCKLAND  
ALREADY?

FORGET IT, MASE!  
HE ISN'T EVEN  
LISTENING.



HAH! YOU'D  
THINK SO!



REMEMBER THE GUY I WAS  
SEEING? AARON?

IT DIDN'T WORK OUT.

SHIT. I THOUGHT IT WAS  
GOING SO WELL. WHAT  
HAPPENED?

I HAD A LOT OF STUFF  
GOING ON. WORK'S BEEN  
SHIT. MAYBE IT WASN'T  
THE RIGHT TIME FOR ME  
TO BE DATING.

WHAT'S WRONG  
WITH WORK?





THE COMPANY IS GOING THROUGH A RESTRUCTURE. I'VE BEEN AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. I'M GOING TO GET LAID OFF.

I'M SURE IT WON'T COME TO THAT. YOU'VE PUT SO MUCH INTO YOUR JOB, SURELY THEY CAN SEE YOUR VALUE...

I'M JUST BEING A REALIST.

I'M SO TIRED OF IT ALL. NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK OUT. MY JOB, MEN... IT FEELS ALL TOO MUCH.



HEY -- YOU CAN'T LET YOUR DEPRESSION TAKE OVER.

ARE YOU STILL ON YOUR MEDS?

OWH. BUT I HATE THEM. I PREFER WINE.

JEAN-LOUIE...



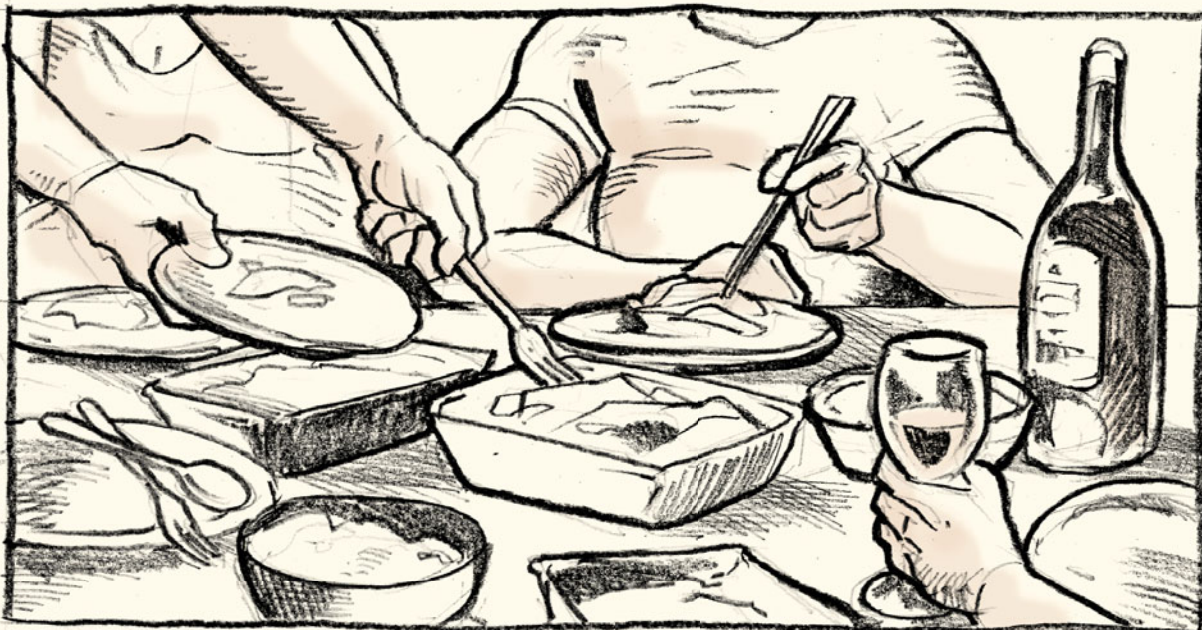
MEH -- FUCK THEM. THERE WILL BE OTHER JOBS, OTHER GUYS... RIGHT?

MMM... THIS ACTUALLY TASTES QUITE GOOD.

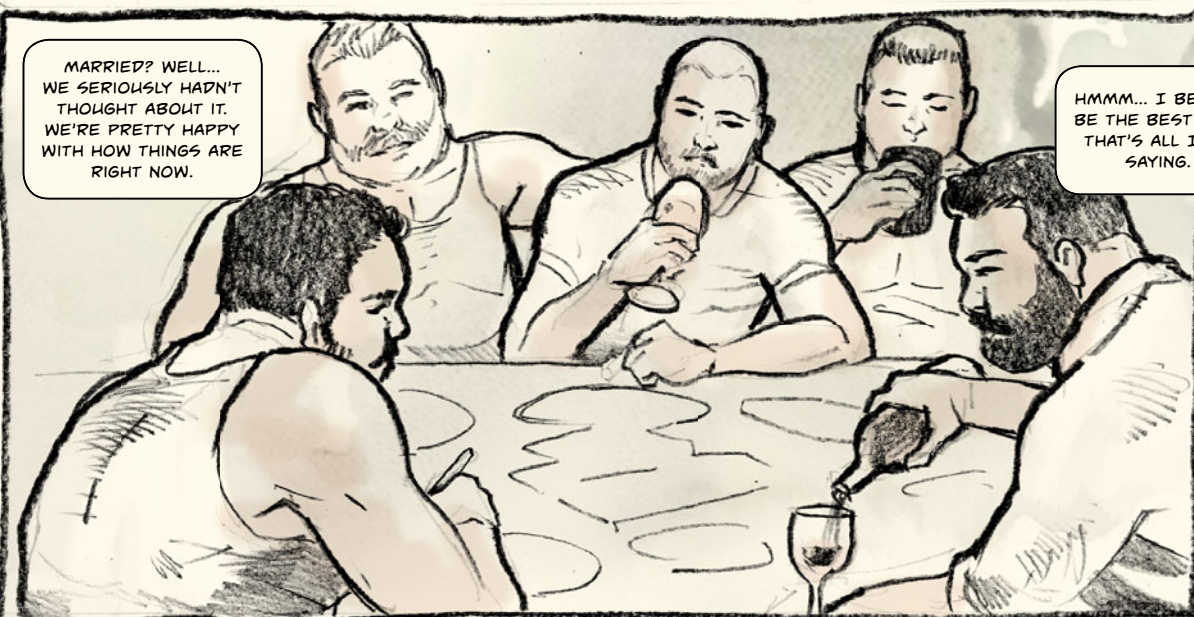


YOU TWO STOP YAPPING AND GET OVER HERE! FOOD'S DISHED UP!





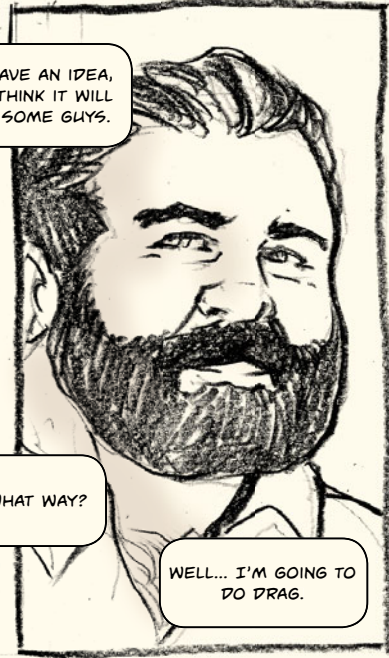
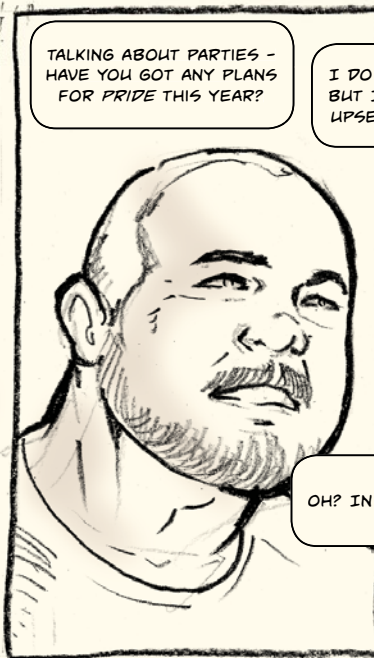
SO, WHAT'S NEXT? GONNA  
GET A CAT? OFFICIALLY GET  
MARRIED? IT'S BEEN LIKE,  
10 YEARS?



MARRIED? WELL...  
WE SERIOUSLY HADN'T  
THOUGHT ABOUT IT.  
WE'RE PRETTY HAPPY  
WITH HOW THINGS ARE  
RIGHT NOW.

HMMM... I BETTER  
BE THE BEST MAN.  
THAT'S ALL I AM  
SAYING.









IT'LL BE GREAT! I'VE BEEN DYING TO DO IT FOR A LONG TIME!

I'VE ALREADY GOT MY DRESS - ALL PINK WITH POLKA DOTS.

I EVEN GOT MY DRAG NAME SORTED! IT'S MELINDA CROISSANDA!

MAYBE I'LL THROW ON A FEATHER BOA... BUT I'LL SEE.

AND I'VE GOT A REALLY TACKY HANDBAG AND HEELS TO GO WITH IT!

BUT... BUT... YOU'RE A BEAR! YOU CAN'T DO DRAG!

WHAT WILL THE OTHERS THINK?! YOU'LL BE LAUGHED AT!

VINCENT...





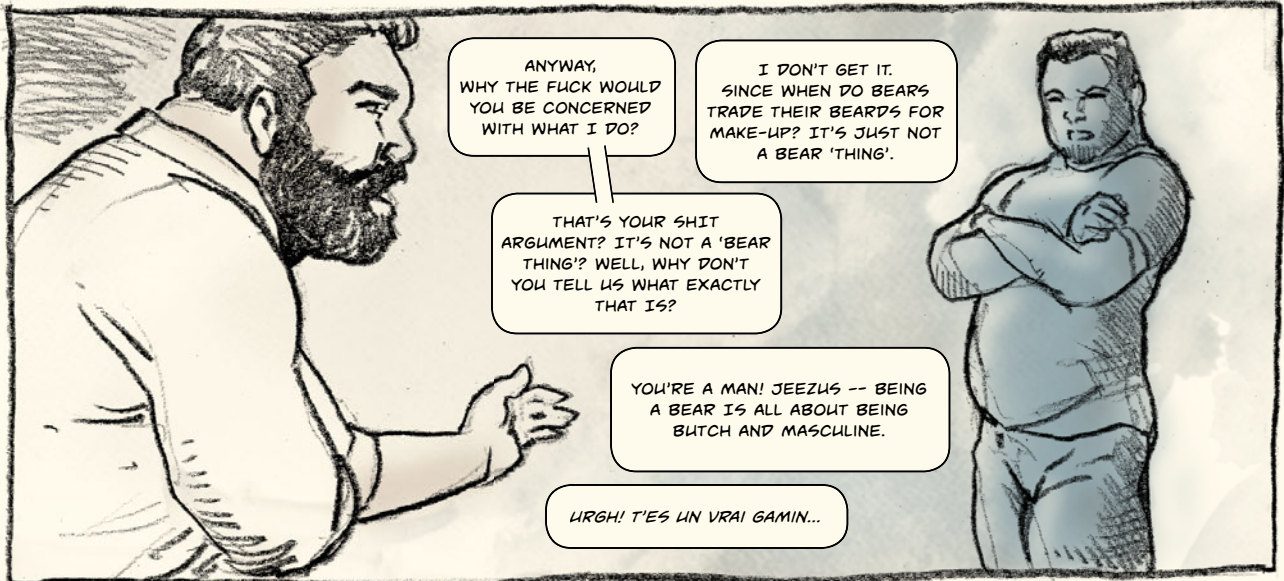
WHY SHOULD I CARE  
WHAT OTHERS THINK?  
I AM DOING THIS FOR  
MYSELF.



JEAN-LOUIE CAN DO WHATEVER  
HE WANTS. I MEAN, COME ON!  
IT'S PRIDE! EVERYONE SHOULD  
BE FREE TO CELEBRATE IT  
HOWEVER THEY WANT...

... SO, GOOD ON  
YOU MATE!

I'M NOT DOING IT  
TO PROVE A POINT.  
BUT, THANKS FOR THE  
SUPPORT.



ANYWAY,  
WHY THE FUCK WOULD  
YOU BE CONCERNED  
WITH WHAT I DO?

I DON'T GET IT.  
SINCE WHEN DO BEARS  
TRADE THEIR BEARDS FOR  
MAKE-UP? IT'S JUST NOT  
A BEAR 'THING'.

THAT'S YOUR SHIT  
ARGUMENT? IT'S NOT A 'BEAR  
THING'? WELL, WHY DON'T  
YOU TELL US WHAT EXACTLY  
THAT IS?

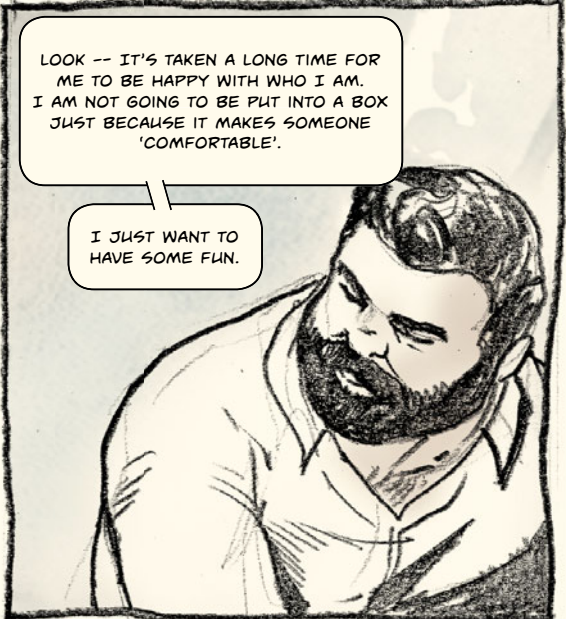
YOU'RE A MAN! JEEZUS -- BEING  
A BEAR IS ALL ABOUT BEING  
BUTCH AND MASCULINE.

URGH! T'ES UN VRAI GAMIN...



I DON'T EVEN KNOW  
WHAT THAT MEANS...

JEAN-LOUIE... ARE YOU  
SURE THIS IS WHAT YOU  
WANT TO DO?



LOOK -- IT'S TAKEN A LONG TIME FOR  
ME TO BE HAPPY WITH WHO I AM.  
I AM NOT GOING TO BE PUT INTO A BOX  
JUST BECAUSE IT MAKES SOMEONE  
'COMFORTABLE'.

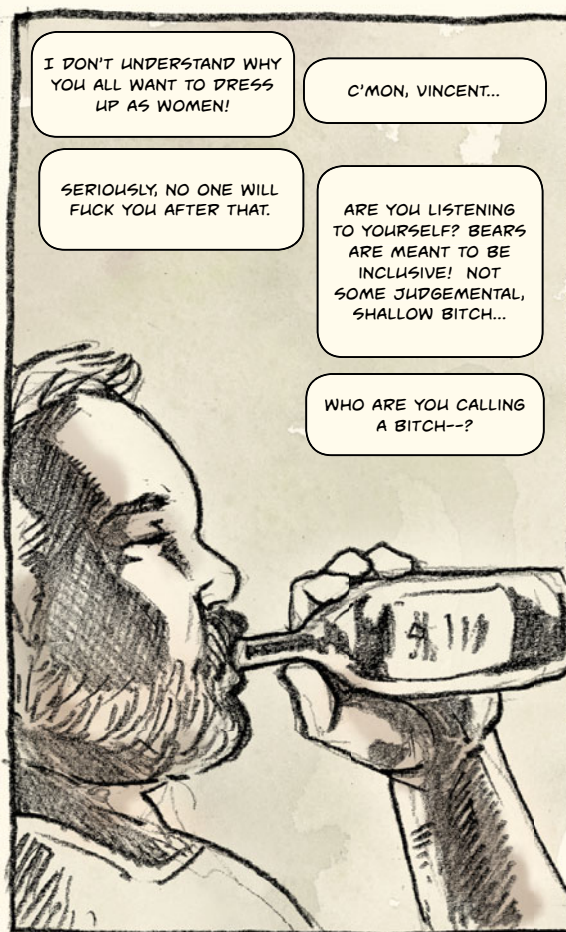
I JUST WANT TO  
HAVE SOME FUN.





PERSONALLY, I THINK IT'S A COOL IDEA. YOU ALL SHOULD LIGHTEN UP A LITTLE. THE BEARS COULD DO DRAG FOR THE PARADE.

I THINK I CAN SQUEEZE THIS PUKU INTO A SPARKLY UNICORN OUTFIT!



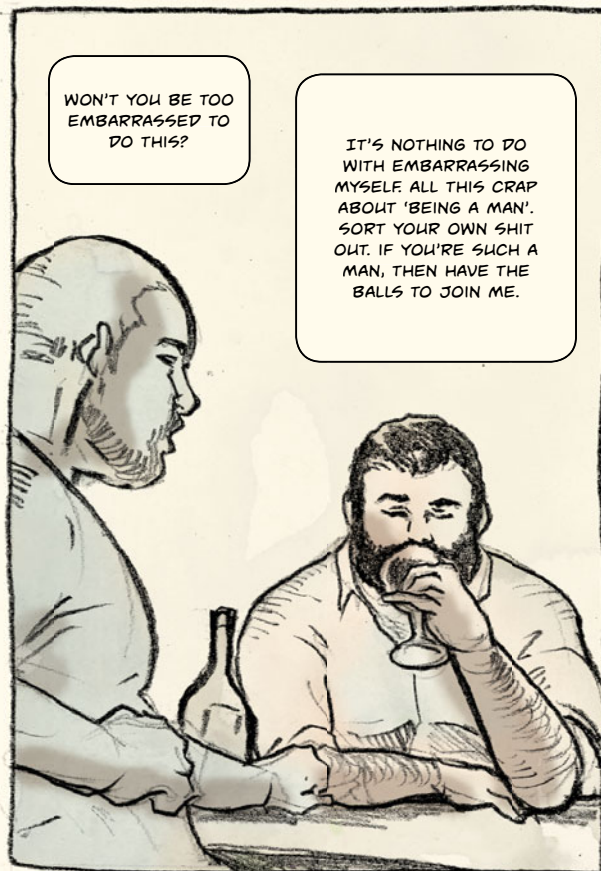
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ALL WANT TO DRESS UP AS WOMEN!

C'MON, VINCENT...

SERIOUSLY, NO ONE WILL FUCK YOU AFTER THAT.

ARE YOU LISTENING TO YOURSELF? BEARS ARE MEANT TO BE INCLUSIVE! NOT SOME JUDGEMENTAL, SHALLOW BITCH...

WHO ARE YOU CALLING A BITCH--?



WON'T YOU BE TOO EMBARRASSED TO DO THIS?

IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH EMBARRASSING MYSELF. ALL THIS CRAP ABOUT 'BEING A MAN'. SORT YOUR OWN SHIT OUT. IF YOU'RE SUCH A MAN, THEN HAVE THE BALLS TO JOIN ME.







THANKS FOR GETTING US DINNER, JEAN-LOUIE. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO STAY BACK AND HELP CLEAN UP.

IT'S ALL GOOD. I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE WITH VINCENT AND MASE ANYWAY.

MAN, VINCENT WAS REALLY FIRED UP...

WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT IDEAS ABOUT IT. BUT YOU SEEM TO HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT.

I DON'T THINK I'M WRONG.

WELL... IT'S YOUR CHOICE. AND I SEE VINCENT'S POINT OF VIEW.

LOOK, WHAT HE AND I GO THROUGH BEING ASIAN AND GAY... IT HASN'T BEEN EASY.

THIS WHOLE THING ABOUT DRAG... IT'S JUST DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

TOMMY... TRUST ME, I GET IT. BUT YOU SHOULD REALLY SEE IT AS ACCEPTING YOURSELF.

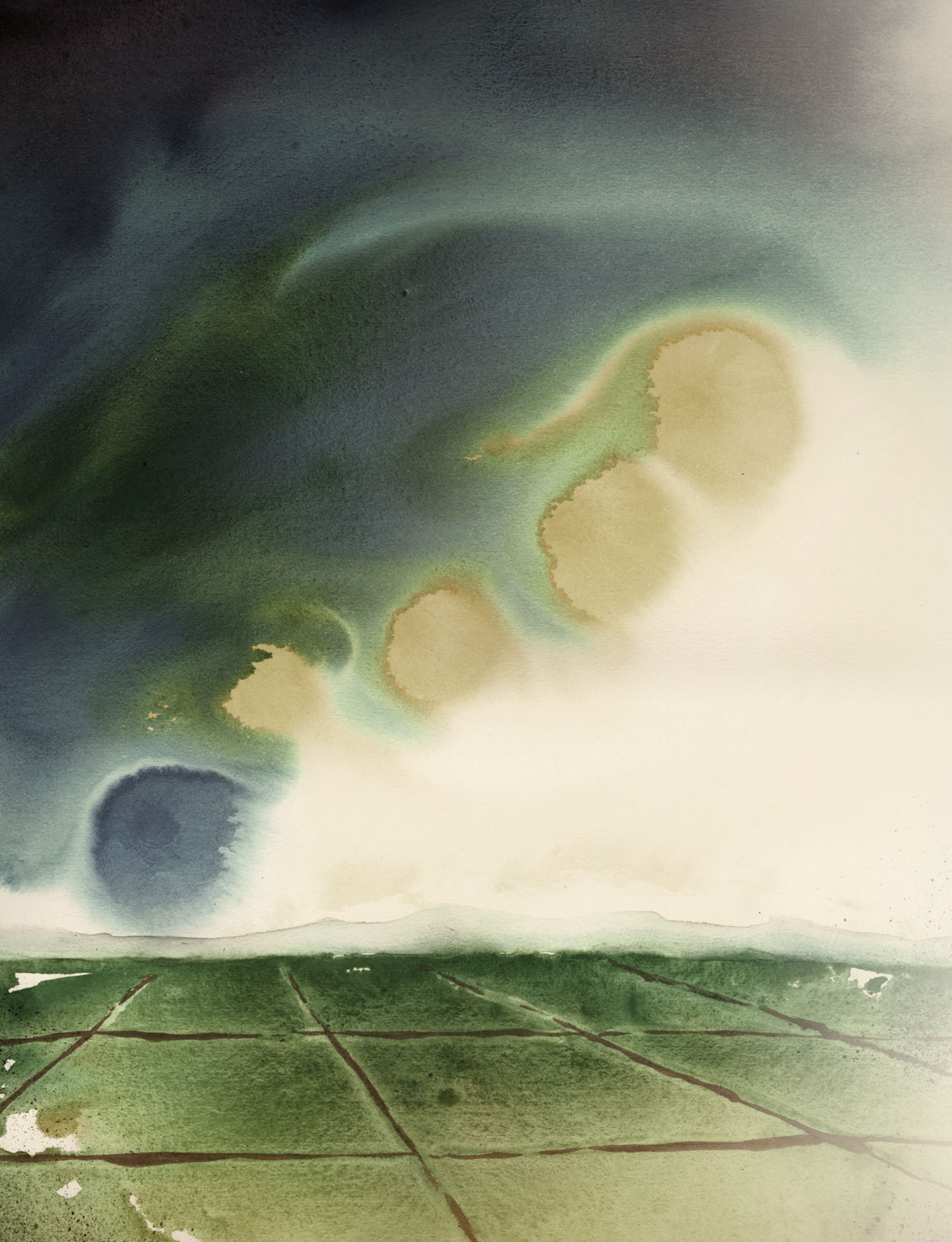
I HAD ISSUES GROWING UP TOO. AND I STILL HAVE ISSUES RIGHT NOW -- LIKE MY DEPRESSION.

BUT I DON'T HAVE TO LIMIT MY EXPERIENCES. I AM WHO I AM, AND I WILL ALWAYS REMAIN ME. FUCK THE REST IF THEY CAN'T DEAL WITH IT.

THE QUESTION IS, ARE YOU TRUE TO YOURSELF?

Being true to myself... That is a strange question. After all these years, I don't even know what it truly means.







Who am I?

This was a question I started to think about even when I was a young boy.

C 4854998

(B. & M. 21)

BORANG A  
NEGERI TANAH MELAYU  
PERAKUAN BERANAK  
(Salinan untuk Orang yang memberitahu)  
Ordinane Pendaftaran Beranak dan Mati, 1957  
[Sekhsen 14, Atoran 7]

Kawasan Pendaftaran: KEDAH

Kawasan-kecil: HOSPITAL BESAR

Nama Kanak: YUN XING LOH LAKI

Tempat di-lahirkan: HOSPITAL BESAR Tarikh dan Waktu di-lahirkan: 29th MARCH 1980 12.24am

Nama Bapa: YUN CHUNG HAN

Nombor Kad Pengenal Bapa: 13874011 Warna: BIRU

Lain? Jenis Pengenal Bapa:

Pekerjaan Bapa: PEMANTU PETANIAN

Bangsa Bapa: CINA

Nama Ibu: TING CHUN SING Umor: 24

Nombor Kad Pengenal Ibu: 78937289 Warna: BIRU

Lain? Jenis Pengenal Ibu:

Tempat Tinggal Ibu yang Biasa: PUSAT PETANIAN, PULAU GADONG, MELAKA

Tarikh Pendaftaran: 30 MAR 1980

Di-perakui sebagai chabutan yang benar dari chatitan dalam Daftar Beranak.

A. S. Lander  
Tandatangan dan Jawatan Pendaftar  
Dr. Fakar Petaling (P. Beranak dan Sakitpuan)  
Hospital Besar  
Kedah

I grew up amongst the paddy fields of Kedah, an emerald state north of the Malaysian peninsula. It was the hub of the paddy plantation. As far as the eye could see, sprawling hills were cut into carpets of long, green stalks. Come harvest season, the fields were abuzz with activity. Farmers toiled in the muddy waters with their scythes, scooping the paddy and beating it to separate the grain from the stalks. It was the '80s, and we were still reeling from the effects of the Vietnam conflict. Being so close to the borders of Thailand, the possibility of the conflict bleeding into Malaysia was quite real.

My family lived a modest and cautious life. My parents were very prudent but they made sure their children had good clothes, books and food. We were taught the principles of life – honesty, integrity and most importantly, respect for our elders. My upbringing was strict because my father believed in corporal punishment, and any misbehaviour was met with the ratan cane.

In this world, I was my father's son. I tried hard to fit in, but something kept tugging at me. There was an inexplicable yearning within me that made me feel I was somehow different from the other children.

Growing up, I remember feeling  
indescribably lonely.  
Maybe the word 'lonely' is too harsh.  
It could have been melancholia –  
but no one gets melancholic at that age..  
do they?







I remember that my father gave me a BMX bicycle for my birthday and together with my friends I went out cycling as soon as I got home from school.

The land was so flat that you could see curtains of rain approaching and we would race against them. I also kept pigeons – a hobby my parents abhorred and criticised because they thought that it wasted time when I could be studying and raising my academic performance.

Being in a rural 'kampung' fringed by deep jungle, I would sometimes go exploring. After a heavy monsoon downpour, I hunted for tadpoles that appeared in the pools of rainwater. I also ventured into the jungle in search of 'burung merbuk' (zebra dove) nests. I loved these birds and their melodic voices. When they were captured, the local people used them for singing competitions.

And then there were the snakes... Being in a rural world surrounded by jungles and paddy fields, serpents were in abundance – pythons, cobras and vipers. We had to be careful where we stepped. I carry the fear of them today.

Although my family raised my sister and me to be agnostic, we were made to 'pretend' to be Buddhists in public. This was to avoid being mistaken for communists and having the authorities bear down on us. My identification card stated that I followed the teachings of Buddha. The fear of being thrown into jail and persecuted was always there. In reflection, this may be the point when I discovered that lying could be acceptable, if used in a situation to protect oneself.

During Chinese New Year, we celebrated with firecrackers and dancing lions. The firecrackers were loud and angry, and I would run and hide. My parents would chide me for being so foolish and acting like a coward – and compared my behaviour to a girl's. So, in addition to lying about being Buddhist, I also learnt that I had to be 'manly', and to mask my emotions.

I also remember looking up to the statue of Tai Qung (the Jade Emperor) and feeling intimidated but also in awe. Red-faced, bearded – to me, he personified masculinity.





I came to the realisation that  
I was fundamentally 'different'  
when I started paying more  
attention to boys.

When I turned six, I was sent to a Methodist preschool run by nuns. Truth be told, they scared the living daylights out of me. If I thought that my father was harsh, these nuns were worse. On the first day, they sat us all down and told us to pick out an English name. I often wondered why my parents allowed this to occur. Instead of reluctant shame, I felt pride when I raised my hand and called out my new identity. I called myself Tommy.

I remember Sister Agnes beaming down with a generous smile and nodding her head in approval. It soothed me to know that I had pleased her.

Alor Setar Methodist School was an all-boys school, and it was here that I became increasingly aware of my burgeoning sexual orientation. I would steal glances in the direction of

the boys while in the changing room. Although I did not acknowledge what I was feeling as wrong, I was aware that it was dangerous to let people know how I felt. I never told anyone, not even my parents. I feared being punished. It wasn't 'manly'.

In my teenage years, I became aware that being 'different' was condemned – the effeminate, the outcasts, and the underprivileged were ridiculed. The terms 'Ah Qua' and 'pondan' (effeminate to the point of acting like a girl) were used in a derogatory way and applied to anyone who didn't behave accordingly. Slowly, I began practicing lying – I had to – in order to escape scrutiny. In time, I became fluent in the craft of deception.



In order to remain the 'good' child,  
and mindful to not bring shame to my family,  
I built a fictional world in which I performed  
the duties and mannerisms of a compliant  
and obedient son, brother and grandchild.  
I became a perfect fiction of myself.



























Dinner time was a household tradition for my family - there were no exceptions.

It was at these times my father imparted his sage advice. My dining experiences were full of lectures. My father was an attentive parent, and he often reminded me, "It is important to look ahead and plan accordingly, but you will never get anywhere if you ignore your past."

My father also said, "Do your homework. If there is an 'A', you must achieve it. There is no reason why you cannot achieve it. If you do not, it only means that you're not working hard enough."

"Children are to be seen, not heard."

And the harsher, "Do not mistake me for a friend. I am your father, not someone you think you can be on friendly terms with. You will do as you are told."

So at each meal, along with the food, I absorbed my father's values. I became a 'good' and socially well-behaved person. I do not fault my father for the upbringing I had. I lived by his wisdom. I believe I grew up to be a 'good' person... but, while I performed my duties as the obliging and diligent son, I lived a life in fear of revealing my true self.

There was this one time that I was late for dinner. I had been out with my friends flying pigeons and I lost track of time. When I came home, my family was already seated at the dining table. But no one was eating. My father had my mother and sister wait until I showed up. I was thirty minutes late and the food had grown cold. My heart dropped when my father launched into a tirade, saying that it was my sole fault that dinner was ruined. Afterwards, we ate in silence and I couldn't lift my head to look at my family. I was eleven years old.

I shudder at the memories of my father sitting me down for lectures that went on for hours. He mostly talked about life lessons such as behaviour and what are deemed good manners and attitudes. My sister was exempt from such lectures. She remained the apple of my father's eye. Despite all this, my performance at school was never stellar...











*I don't believe I was ever  
an intellectual.*



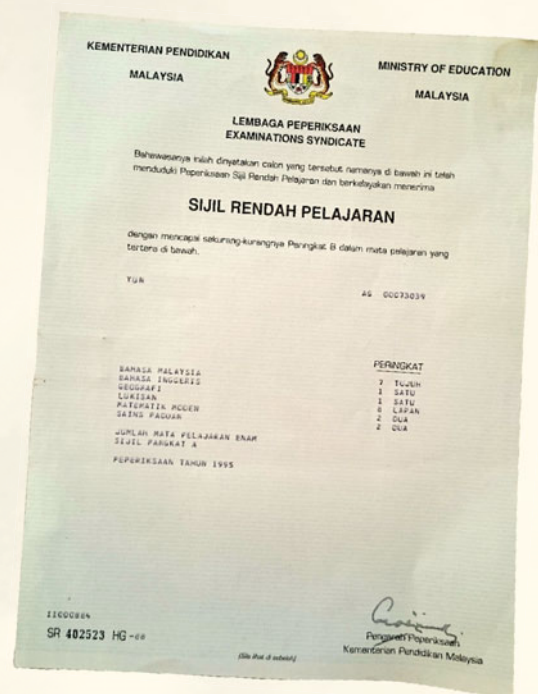
*The effort of being  
the good student eventually  
wore me out.*

When I turned thirteen, we moved further south to a town called Seremban, in the State of Negri Sembilan. I was transferred into St. Paul's Institution for my secondary schooling. I struggled with my studies. Although I tried my best in examinations, I could be recall nothing. I tried cheating and attempted to convince my classmate to provide me with answers. And every time, I would get caught. It was obvious I wasn't even smart enough to cheat.

I remember sitting in a Chemistry exam and Mrs. Zakariah was one of the attending teachers. She was one of the most feared teachers at the school and her disciplinary punishments were infamous. Being in her class was torturous. During the examination, I blanked out and panicked. I signalled to my classmate sitting next to me and discreetly pleaded for him to share his answers. Out of nowhere, Mrs Zakariah appeared. She momentarily suspended the exams and berated me in front of my classmates. I was subsequently dragged off by the ear to the principal's office. My parents were called in and were made aware of the situation.

I could sense my father's disappointment in me. He wanted a son who could become an engineer, a nanotechnologist or a medical doctor. In his eyes, I was a failure. I had no back-up skills – I couldn't handle a musical instrument – my father truly believed I would be left without a prosperous future. It was only through some considerable effort that I managed to persuade my parents that I was capable at art. My father believed that art was a lowly career and he didn't want to see me end up as a street artist, painting portraits of passers-by. However, he eventually relented and allowed me to pursue a career in design. I put my heart and soul into my studies. I needed to show my father that I wasn't a failure. Knowing that he worked three jobs to put me through my education made me even more determined. I felt obliged and bound by duty to not only make it through to graduation, but to excel and strive to achieve that elusive 100% grade.

*I had to be  
- and do - my best.*









**PINTU KELUAR**  
**EXIT THROUGH HERE**











HEY SIS! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME!

HI 'KO\*!

YOU LOOK GOOD! MA WILL BE SO THRILLED TO HAVE YOU BACK.

\* 'Ko is a Cantonese term of endearment for "older brother".



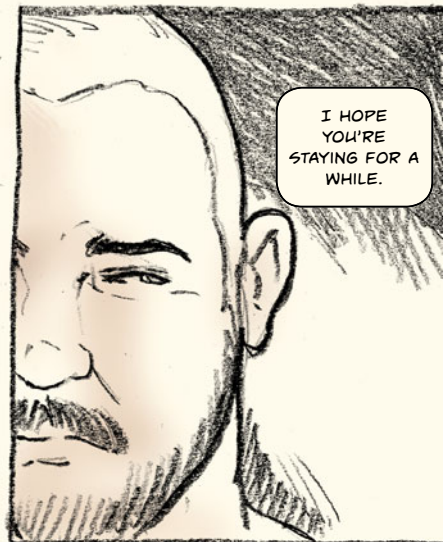
WHERE IS SHE?

SHE'S WITH PA AT THE HOSPITAL. WE'RE GOING TO HEAD STRAIGHT THERE.



HOW IS HE DOING?

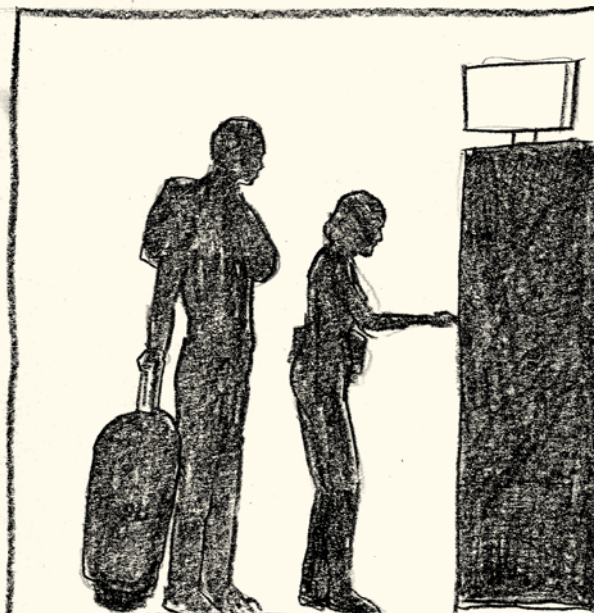
NOT SO GOOD. THEY HAD TO RUSH HIM INTO SURGERY RIGHT AWAY.



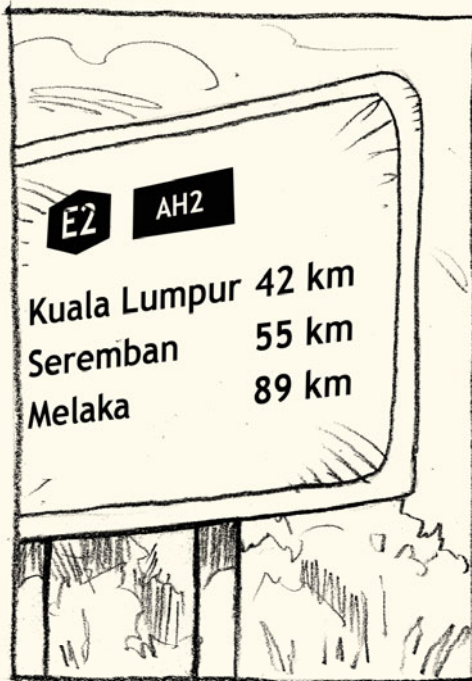
I HOPE YOU'RE STAYING FOR A WHILE.



WHERE IS THAT PARKING TICKET...?



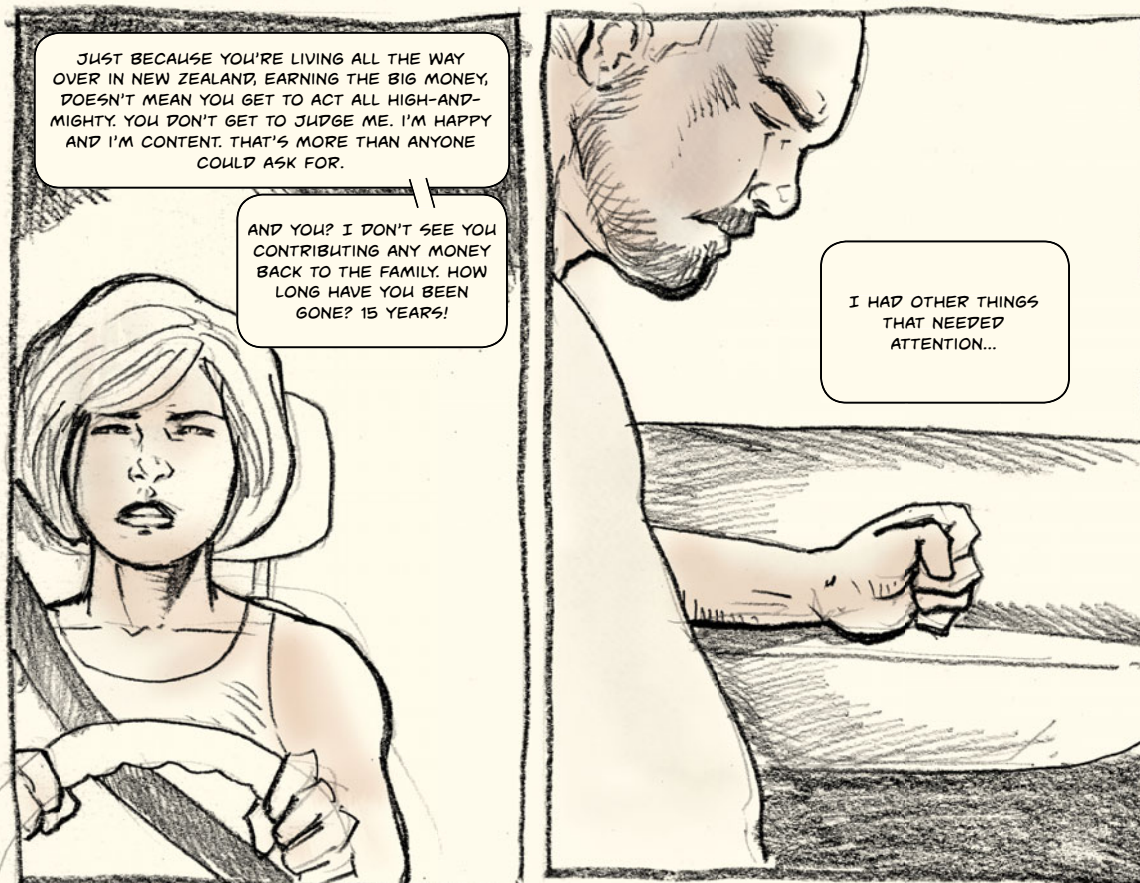




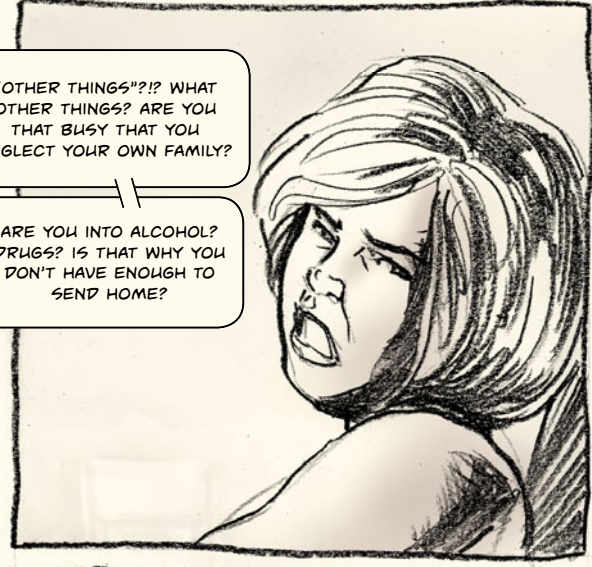












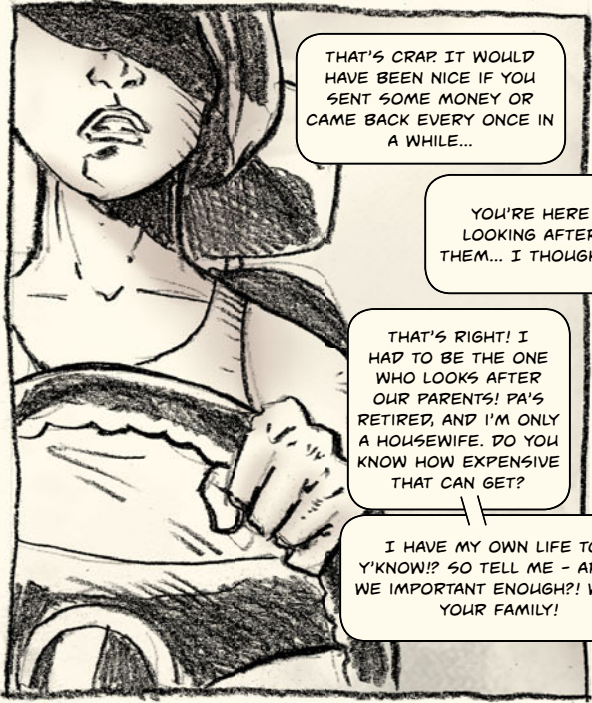
"OTHER THINGS"?!!? WHAT OTHER THINGS? ARE YOU THAT BUSY THAT YOU NEGLECT YOUR OWN FAMILY?

ARE YOU INTO ALCOHOL? DRUGS? IS THAT WHY YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO SEND HOME?



OF COURSE NOT!

IT HASN'T BEEN EASY LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND. IT'S AN EXPENSIVE PLACE...



THAT'S CRAP. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE IF YOU SENT SOME MONEY OR CAME BACK EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE...

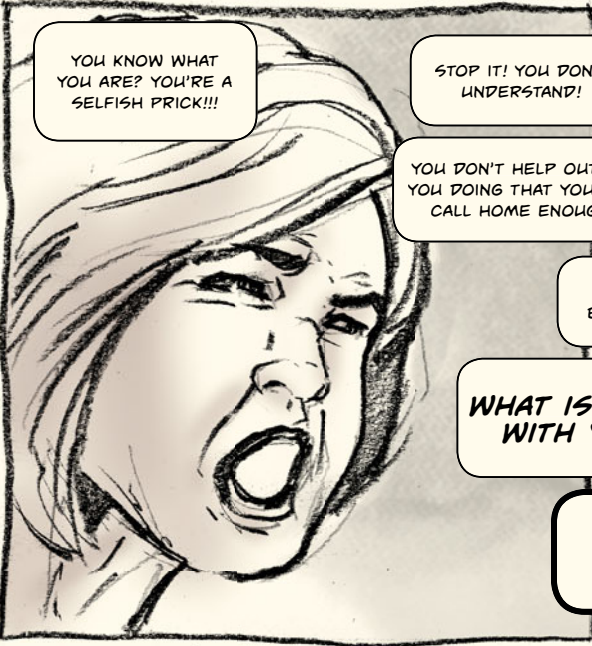
YOU'RE HERE LOOKING AFTER THEM... I THOUGHT...

THAT'S RIGHT! I HAD TO BE THE ONE WHO LOOKS AFTER OUR PARENTS! PA'S RETIRED, AND I'M ONLY A HOUSEWIFE. DO YOU KNOW HOW EXPENSIVE THAT CAN GET?

I HAVE MY OWN LIFE TOO Y'KNOW!? SO TELL ME - AREN'T WE IMPORTANT ENOUGH?! WE'RE YOUR FAMILY!



LOOK... IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE...



YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE? YOU'RE A SELFISH PRICK!!!

STOP IT! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

YOU DON'T HELP OUT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN CALL HOME ENOUGH TIMES?

I'M SORRY! BUT I COULDN'T...!

WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU!?!?

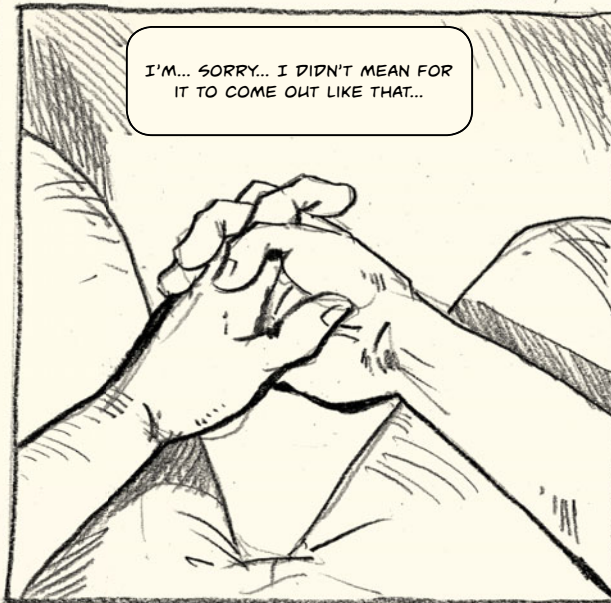


LOOK!  
I'M GAY!







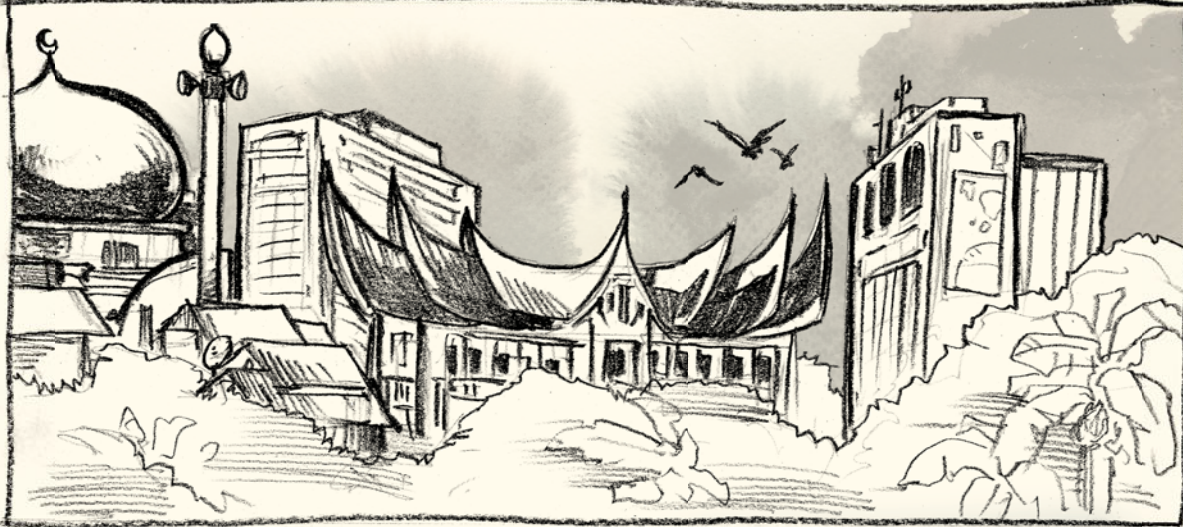








Over the next hour, I blurted it all out to my sister. I told her about Neil, the house we recently bought together, my friends and about what I do as a job. She was surprisingly calm, while I was near-manic.



WELL...

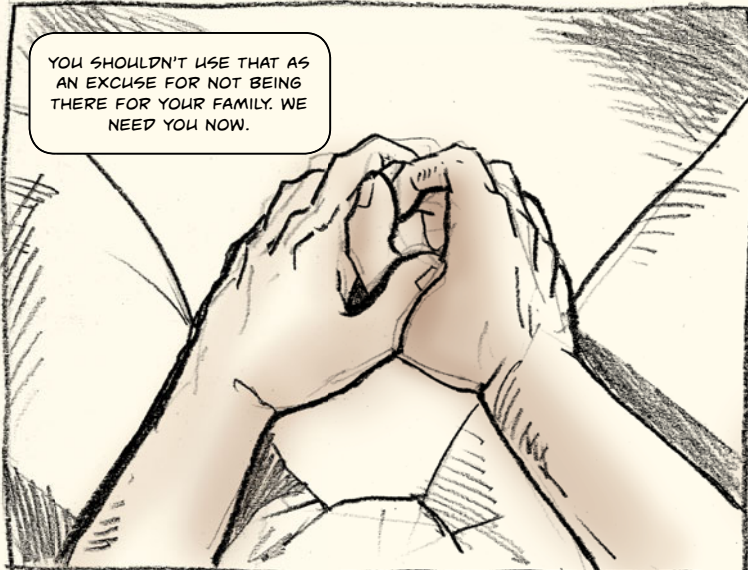
... IT'S YOUR LIFE.  
JUST SO YOU KNOW - I DO  
UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAD  
TO STAY AWAY. BUT I WISH  
YOU COULD HAVE TOLD ME  
EARLIER...



HOW COULD  
I? IT'S TOO  
EMBARRASSING...



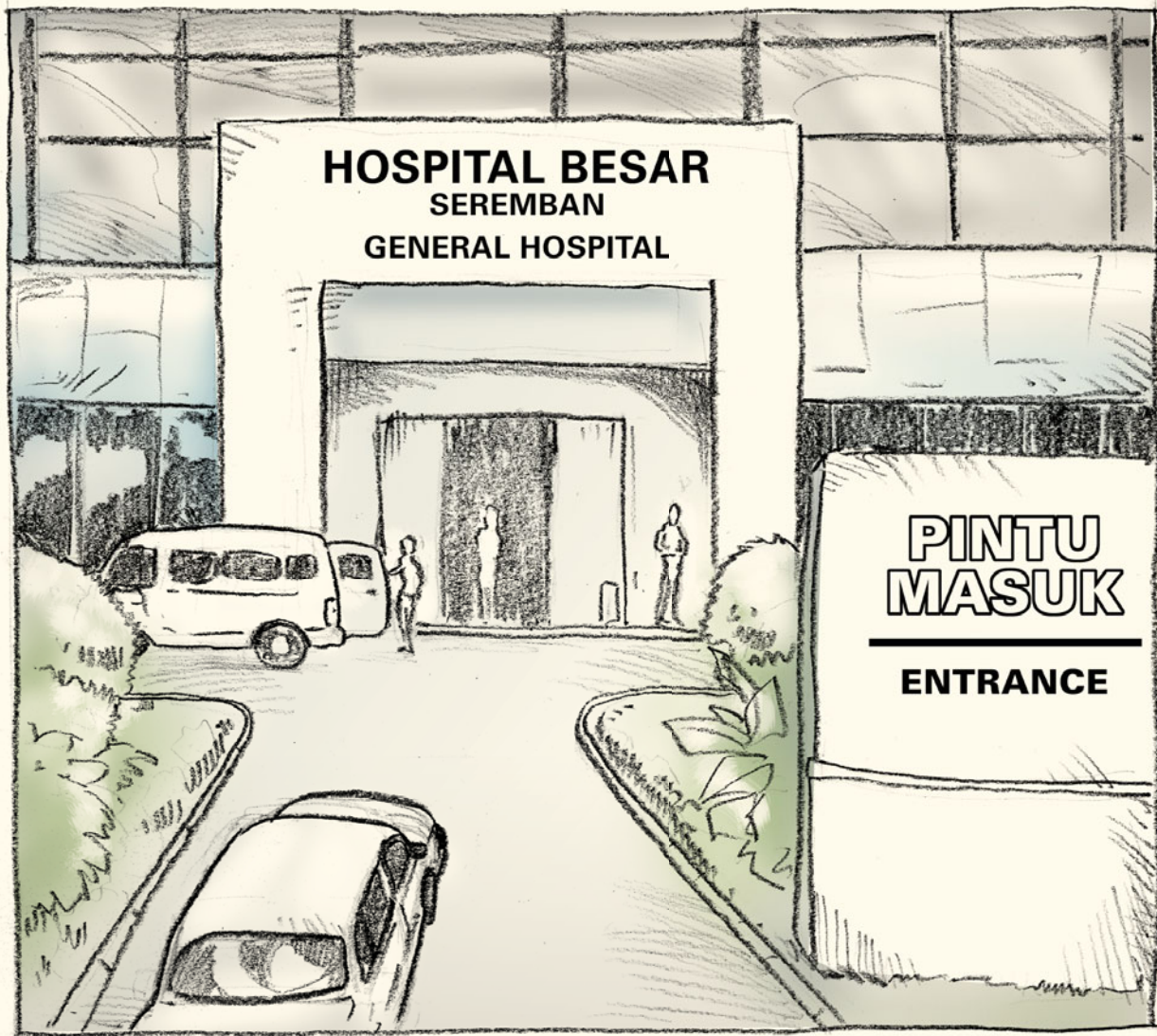
YOU SHOULDN'T USE THAT AS  
AN EXCUSE FOR NOT BEING  
THERE FOR YOUR FAMILY. WE  
NEED YOU NOW.



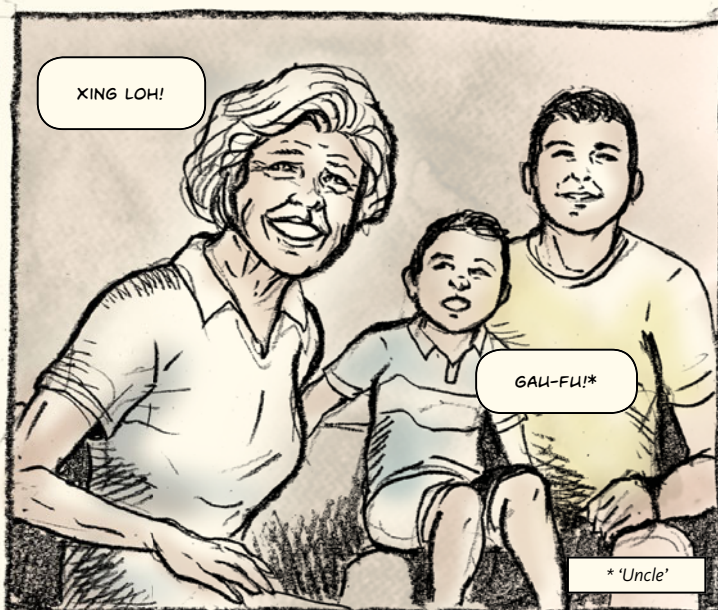
AND... DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT  
THIS TO MUM OR DAD. IT WILL  
BREAK THEIR HEARTS. NOT TO  
MENTION THE SHAME YOU'LL PUT  
ON THE FAMILY NAME.



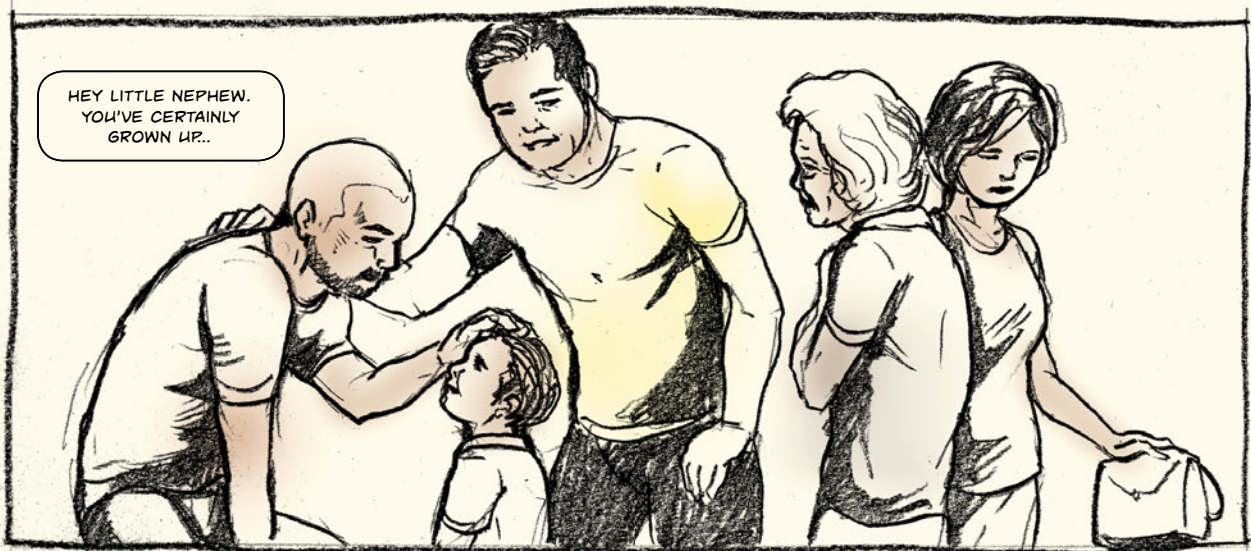












My mother wanted to know everything about me. It had been a few years since I saw her last, but she looked so much older... and tired. My nephew seemed to be taking most of her attention. I couldn't help but compare myself to him. My nephew was talkative. I was taught to be quiet. He was bubbly and exuberant. Growing up, I was aware I was different and it made me sullen and cautious. How different my own childhood had been from his.







## The idea of sex came to me through an act of voyeurism.

When I was nine, I went over to my neighbour's house. In a rural village, there wasn't any real need for locked doors. Everyone knew each other, so it wasn't so wrong to be found wandering into each other's homes. The doorways were separated only by muslin cloth to encourage air circulation in a tropical climate.

I wanted to find my friend, to go cycling and hunt for tadpoles. I casually walked into his house, and was just about to call his name – when I heard something. It came from his bedroom. I crept up, and peeked through the sheer drape, and found him masturbating. And I just stood there watching him, quietly hidden. I was mesmerised.

Over time, my sexual awareness grew and I actively sought out male-to-male encounters – I knew I had to be discreet. My desire was insatiable because, as I knew, I was acting on something forbidden. Was there confusion to my state of being then? I couldn't really say. The funny thing was, there was a certainty – a clarity of sorts. This was who I was, and what I was doing defined me.



When I got older, I would head out to the city seeking sexual relationships with other men. It was very clandestine and done in secrecy.

I arrived in New Zealand as a student and I left the world in Malaysia, eager to experience a life away from expectations.


I was still in the closet. I couldn't tell my family the real reason I was so keen to leave them. They meant the world to me – but I just couldn't be who I was...

and I didn't want to hurt them. So I told them lies that separated us.

What harm could come of that?







## *I became 'me' in Auckland.*

*In many ways, New Zealand was very different to Malaysia. It gave me the confidence I lacked and I became comfortable with my individuality. Here, there were people fighting for me to have a voice, and for my rights as a person. I made friends who hailed from all over the globe, and shared my passions and ideas. I wasn't stigmatised for being different, rather, I was celebrated. I felt like I finally belonged.*

*I visited bars and clubs – it was a rite of passage of sorts. I wanted to experience the world I had only admired from afar. I discarded my old self and explored leather and BDSM for a time. It opened my eyes to another part of the diverse gay community. I was made aware of the many roles that it offered. The dance of subtle nuances and overt sexuality proved intoxicating. But one thing remained constant – the expectation of masculinity.*

*However, alongside these opportunities, I also experienced a few darker truths. As a man of Asian-Chinese heritage, I had to deal with racism. There were challenges within the gay community itself. I wasn't seen as 'manly' still – my masculinity didn't count because it didn't translate culturally. The gay scene, as euro-centric as it was, saw my cultural being as meek, submissive and asexual.*

*It was during this time that I came across the bears. Here was a bunch of guys who were comfortable in themselves and how they appeared. Their confidence and exuberance for the ordinary (and astonishingly middle-class) made me feel at ease. Acceptance wasn't tied to income or a fashionable brand or a streamlined body. They felt like regular guys.*





*I felt free.*

As I began to identify with these men, I started drawing them – mostly in erotic poses. This gave me a platform to explore both aesthetics and my sexual identity. My reputation grew and subsequently I was offered a publishing contract. I produced my first graphic novel based on gay bear culture and it sold with some commercial success. I was so proud of myself. I was recognised. But as my reputation became internationalised, a sense of dread dawned. What if my parents found out? It would destroy me, not to mention them. Belatedly, I cursed myself for using my actual name on the novel. I considered a 'nom de plume', but deep down I felt like a traitor to the honesty of the men around me... and to myself.

*I made my own family in New Zealand.  
I met Jean-Louis shortly after he moved  
from Paris. We shared a common story  
as immigrants and as artists.  
He became my confidant and best friend.*

*Falling in love with Neil was easy.  
He has such a lovable personality  
and warmth. He is my bedrock  
and I know I can always rely on him.*





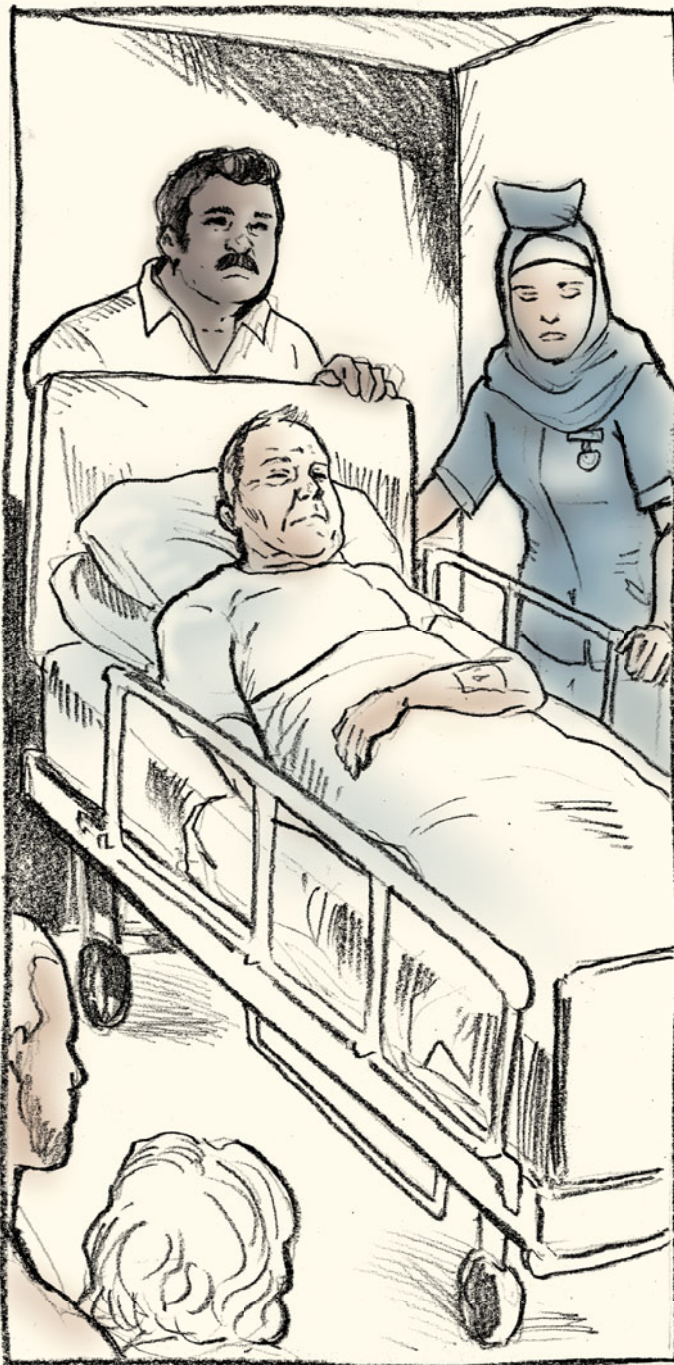






It felt like I had  
finally come home.





MRS. YUN... WE REMOVED THE TUMOUR BUT THERE WERE A FEW COMPLICATIONS. WE WILL NEED TO KEEP HIM HERE FOR A FEW MORE DAYS TO MONITOR HIM - JUST TO AVOID FURTHER PROBLEMS.

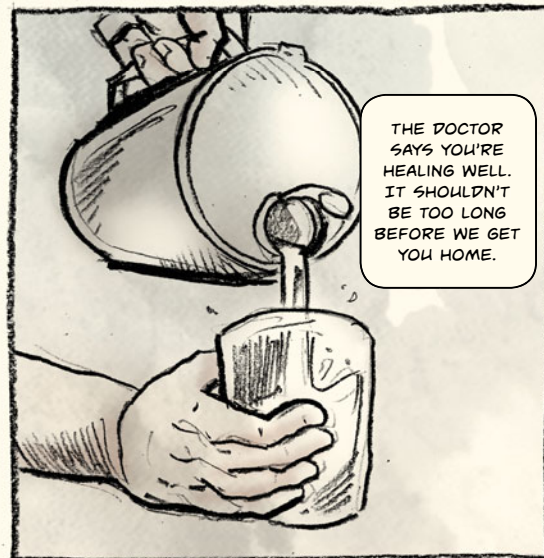
IS HE GOING TO BE OKAY, DOCTOR?

IT'S TOO SOON AFTER THE SURGERY TO REALLY TELL. WE'LL KNOW MORE WHEN HE WAKES UP AND RESTS AWHILE.









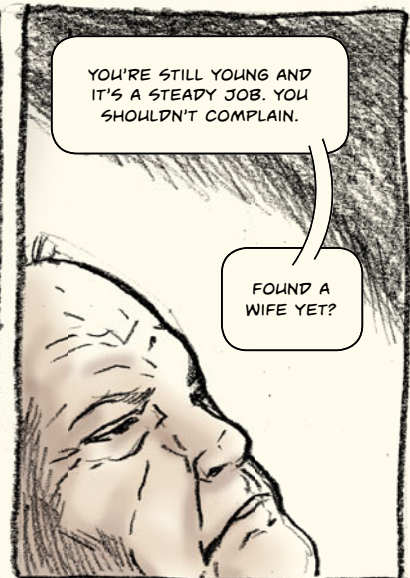




SO... HOW IS WORK?

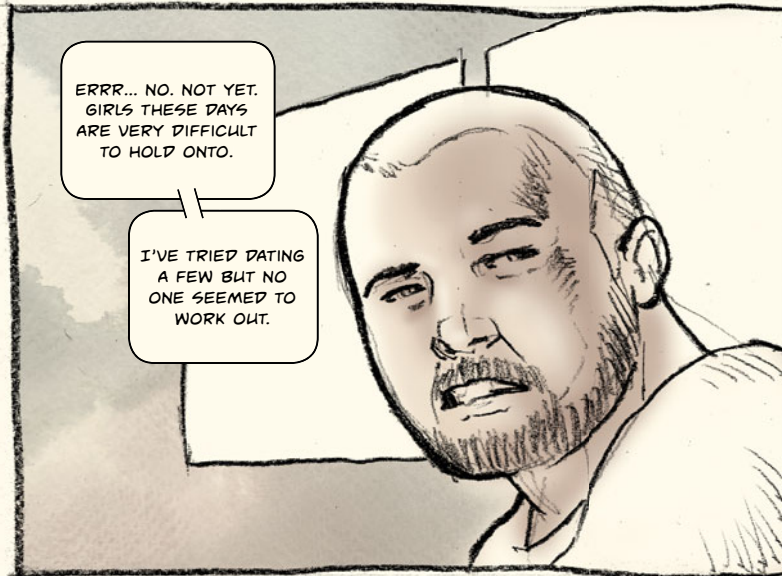


IT'S... GOOD. IT'S A HARD JOB  
AND THE HOURS ARE LONG...  
BUT I MANAGE.



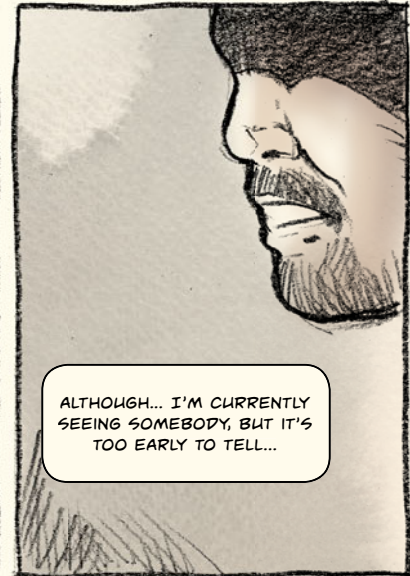
YOU'RE STILL YOUNG AND  
IT'S A STEADY JOB. YOU  
SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN.

FOUND A  
WIFE YET?



ERRR... NO. NOT YET.  
GIRLS THESE DAYS  
ARE VERY DIFFICULT  
TO HOLD ONTO.

I'VE TRIED DATING  
A FEW BUT NO  
ONE SEEMED TO  
WORK OUT.



ALTHOUGH... I'M CURRENTLY  
SEEING SOMEBODY, BUT IT'S  
TOO EARLY TO TELL...



YOU SHOULDN'T BE  
SO PICKY. YOU'RE NOT  
A YOUNG BACHELOR  
ANYMORE.



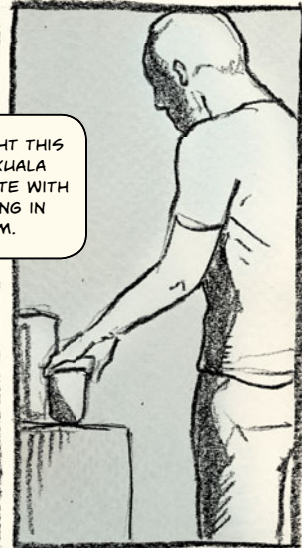


YOUR COUSIN, LEE TSING -  
REMEMBER HIM?

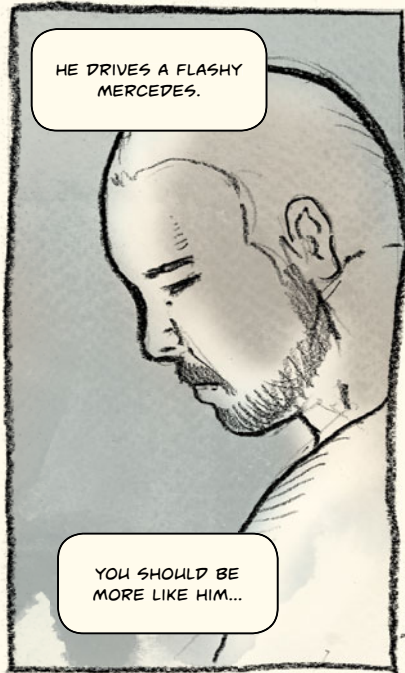


HE MARRIED THIS LOVELY  
CHINESE LADY - THEY  
ALREADY HAVE TWO KIDS.

HE IS SUCH A  
SUCCESSFUL  
BUSINESSMAN...

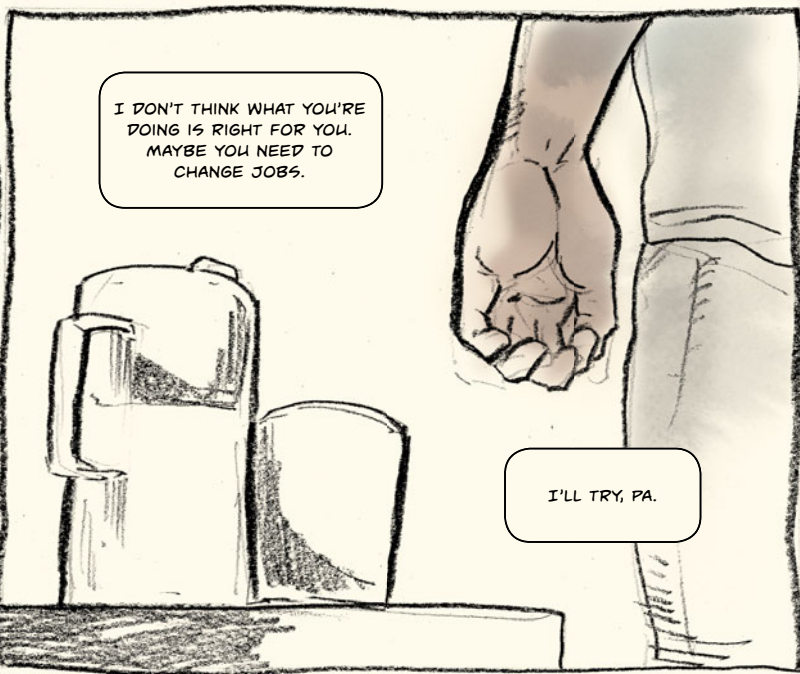


HE'S JUST BOUGHT THIS  
BIG CONDO IN KUALA  
LUMPUR. COMPLETE WITH  
AIR CONDITIONING IN  
EVERY ROOM.



HE DRIVES A FLASHY  
MERCEDES.

YOU SHOULD BE  
MORE LIKE HIM...

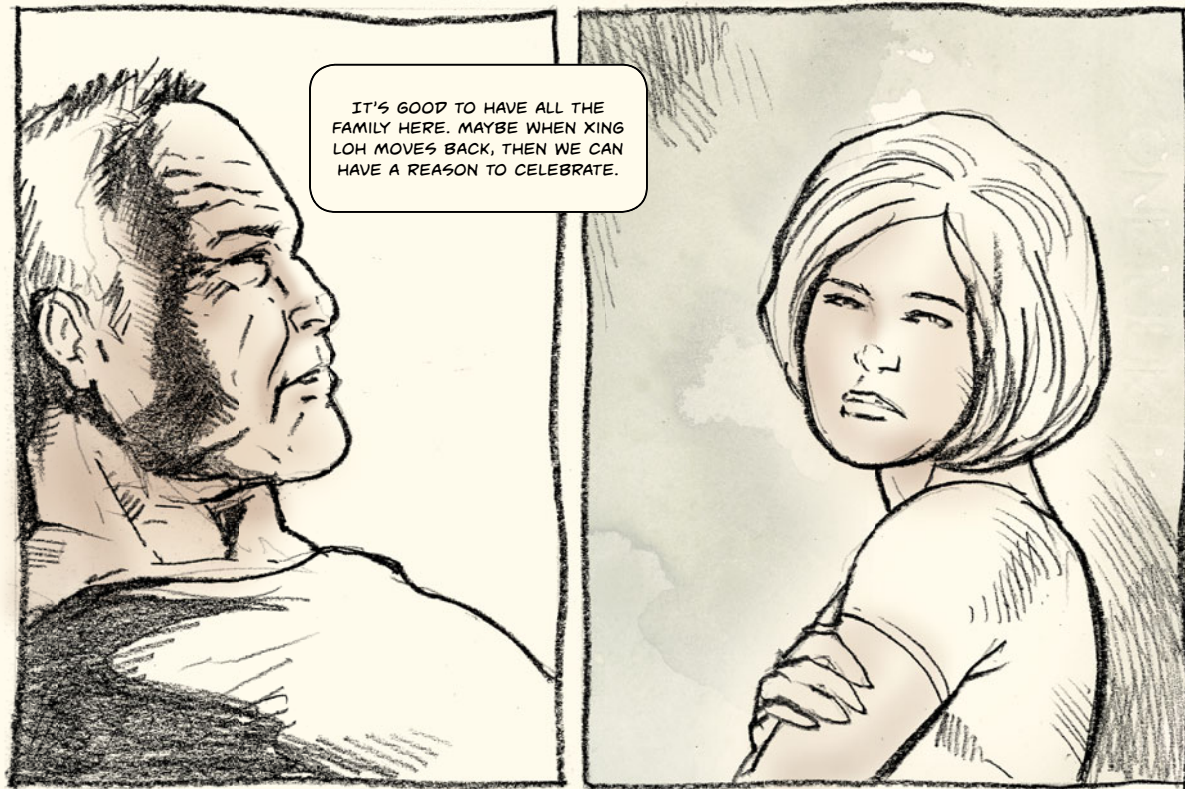


I DON'T THINK WHAT YOU'RE  
DOING IS RIGHT FOR YOU.  
MAYBE YOU NEED TO  
CHANGE JOBS.

I'LL TRY, PA.



Dad slowly recovered over the next few days. It could have been the morphine that was administered but he wasn't his usual cranky self. As my mother fussed over him, my sister continued giving me the 'look' – but I ignored her.







HEY BABE. SORRY  
I MISSED YOUR  
CALL BEFORE.

IT LOOKS LIKE A FEW  
MORE DAYS BEFORE  
DAD GETS OUT.



I CAN'T WAIT TILL I  
COME HOME...

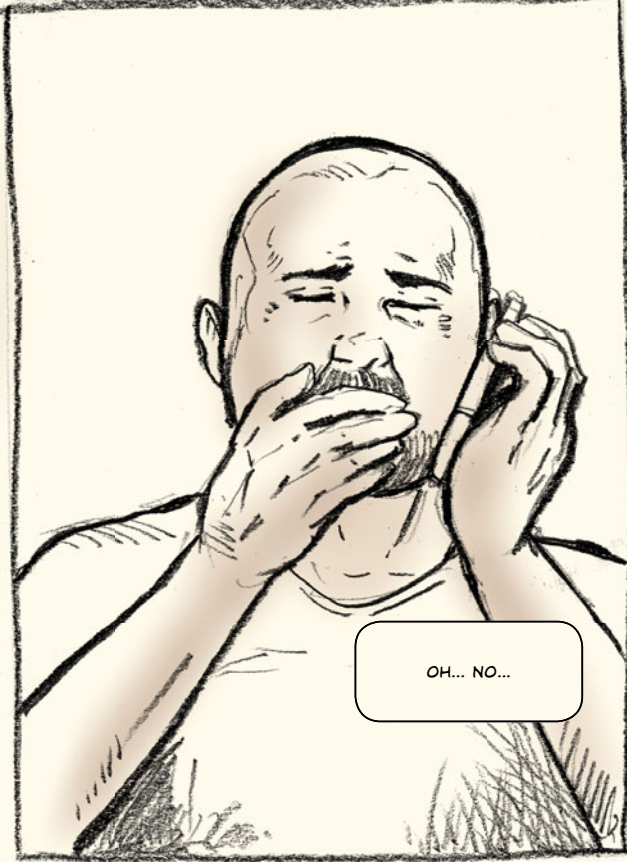


... HEY... ARE YOU  
CRYING?



WHAT'S HAPPENED?

WHAT?!?



OH... NO...

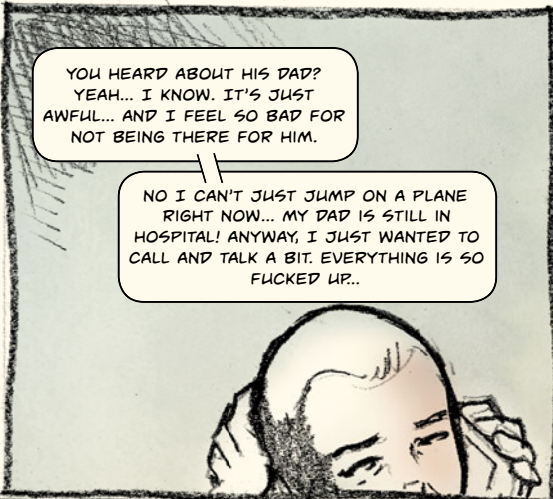








OH THANK FUCK YOU  
PICKED UP! I JUST HAD  
THE WORST ARGUMENT  
WITH NEIL...



YOU HEARD ABOUT HIS DAD?  
YEAH... I KNOW. IT'S JUST  
AWFUL... AND I FEEL SO BAD FOR  
NOT BEING THERE FOR HIM.

NO I CAN'T JUST JUMP ON A PLANE  
RIGHT NOW... MY DAD IS STILL IN  
HOSPITAL! ANYWAY, I JUST WANTED TO  
CALL AND TALK A BIT. EVERYTHING IS SO  
FUCKED UP..



HUH? NOT A GOOD  
TIME?

SINCE WHEN?

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! HAVE YOU  
GOT SOMEONE THERE WITH YOU?



YOU ARE SOUNDING  
WEIRD... WHAT'S WRONG?

TALK TO ME. PLEASE.

JEAN-LOUIE, WHAT'S  
GOING ON?





SHIT...

I AM SO SORRY TO  
HEAR THAT...

I CAN'T BELIEVE  
THEY'D LAY YOU OFF!  
YOU'RE THEIR MOST  
VALUED...

WHAT?

NO! DON'T EVEN  
THINK LIKE THAT!

STOP IT! IT'S JUST A STUPID  
JOB! YOU'RE GOING TO FIND  
ANOTHER -- BETTER -- ONE!

JEAN-LOUIE...

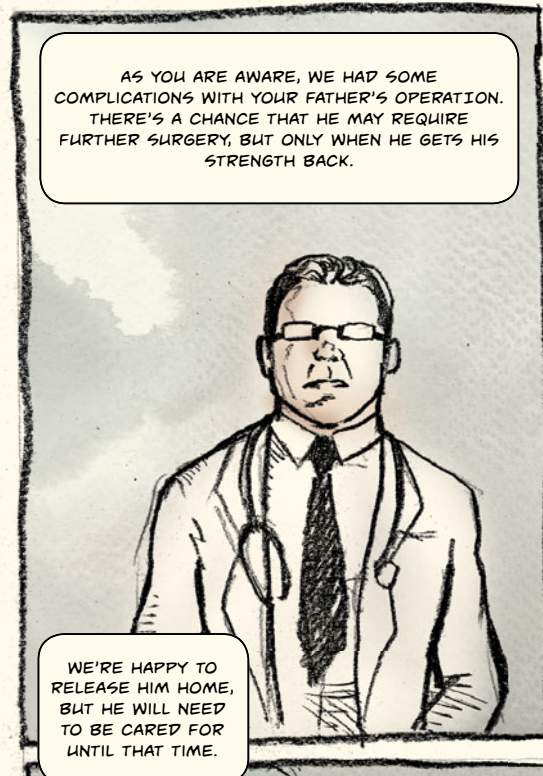
JUST HANG IN THERE.  
I'LL GET HOME AND WE CAN  
TALK IT OVER.

DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID.  
PROMISE ME.

OKAY. BYE.

SHIT.

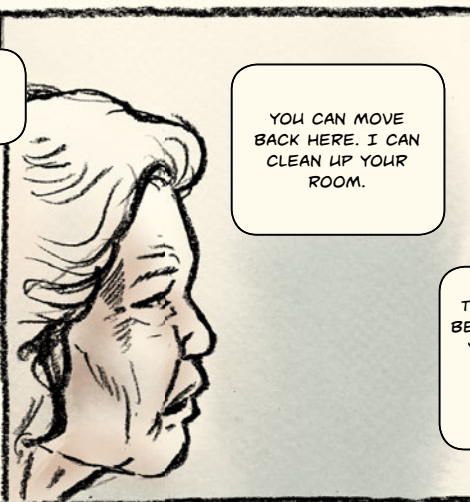








ERRR...



YOU CAN MOVE BACK HERE. I CAN CLEAN UP YOUR ROOM.



THAT WILL BE BEST -- HAVING YOU STAY IN THE HOUSE WITH YOUR PARENTS.

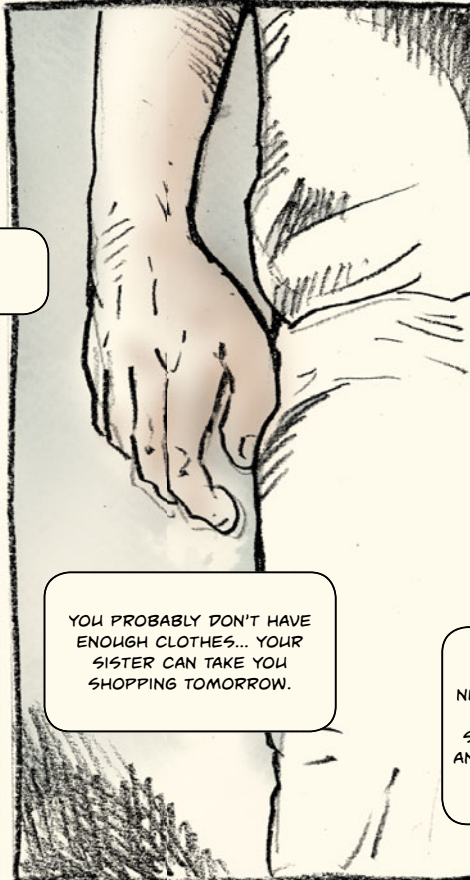


I FEEL FINE! I DON'T NEED ANYONE TO LOOK AFTER ME.



IT WILL BE SO GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME, SON.

MA...



YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH CLOTHES... YOUR SISTER CAN TAKE YOU SHOPPING TOMORROW.



I'LL SHOW WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO DO FOR YOUR FATHER ONCE HE IS SETTLED BACK. SOME DRESSING TECHNIQUES AND THE TYPES OF MEDICATION HE'LL NEED TO HAVE.



THIS WILL BE SO GOOD!  
YOUR AUNTIES AND UNCLES  
WILL BE SO THRILLED TO  
SEE YOU AGAIN.

I SAID I FEEL  
JUST FINE!

MAYBE YOU CAN STAY  
FOR GOOD.

YOU CAN CALL THE HOSPITAL  
ANYTIME IF YOU RUN INTO ANY  
PROBLEMS.

THERE'S NO NEED! MY  
SON IS VERY CAPABLE  
OF DOING THINGS.

I DON'T THINK...

YOU'LL NEED TO CHECK  
HIS BLOOD PRESSURE...

WAIT...

NONSENSE! I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'D  
WANT TO GO BACK TO NEW ZEALAND.  
THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU THERE!

MAKE SURE HE EATS...

I'LL COOK YOUR FAVOURITE  
DISHES! YOU NEED TO GET  
SOMETHING IN YOU AND PUT ON  
SOME WEIGHT.

I DON'T NEED A  
CARETAKER! I'LL EAT  
WHAT I WANT...

MA...

I... I... DON'T  
THINK...

HE DOESN'T NEED TO PUT ON  
ANY WEIGHT! LOOK AT HIM -  
HE PROBABLY JUST NEEDS TO  
EXERCISE MORE.

SO, WHEN CAN I GO HOME,  
DOCTOR? CAN IT BE TODAY?

PA...





I'M FEELING JUST FINE! WHY WON'T YOU JUST LET ME GET OUT OF BED, AND I CAN SHOW HOW WELL I AM?

COME SON. FETCH MY SLIPPERS. WE CAN GO...

I CAN'T...

MR. YUN -- WE STILL NEED TO RUN A FEW MORE TESTS BEFORE WE CAN LET YOU GO.

PLEASE...



I'LL HAVE TO CALL YOUR AUNTIE TENG. SHE CAN COOK SOME HERBAL

WAIT...

... OR WOULD YOU PREFER NASI LEMAK IT COULD BE IT TOO SPI

DO YOU WANT NOODLES FOR DINNER?



HERE ARE THE PRESSINGS -- JUST KEEP THEM

DON'T WORRY SON. WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING.

I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT YOU NEED TO



PA...

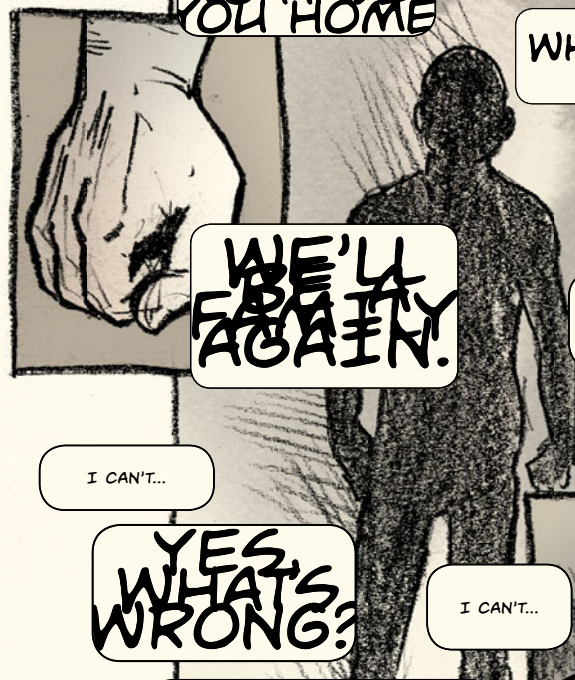


IT WILL BE GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME

I CAN'T...

I CAN'T COME HOME...

WHAT IS IT?



WE'LL FIGHT AGAIN!

I...

TELL US

I... HAVE SOMETHING...

I CAN'T...

YES WHAT'S WRONG?

I CAN'T...

TELL US

MA...

CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S



PA...

I'M...



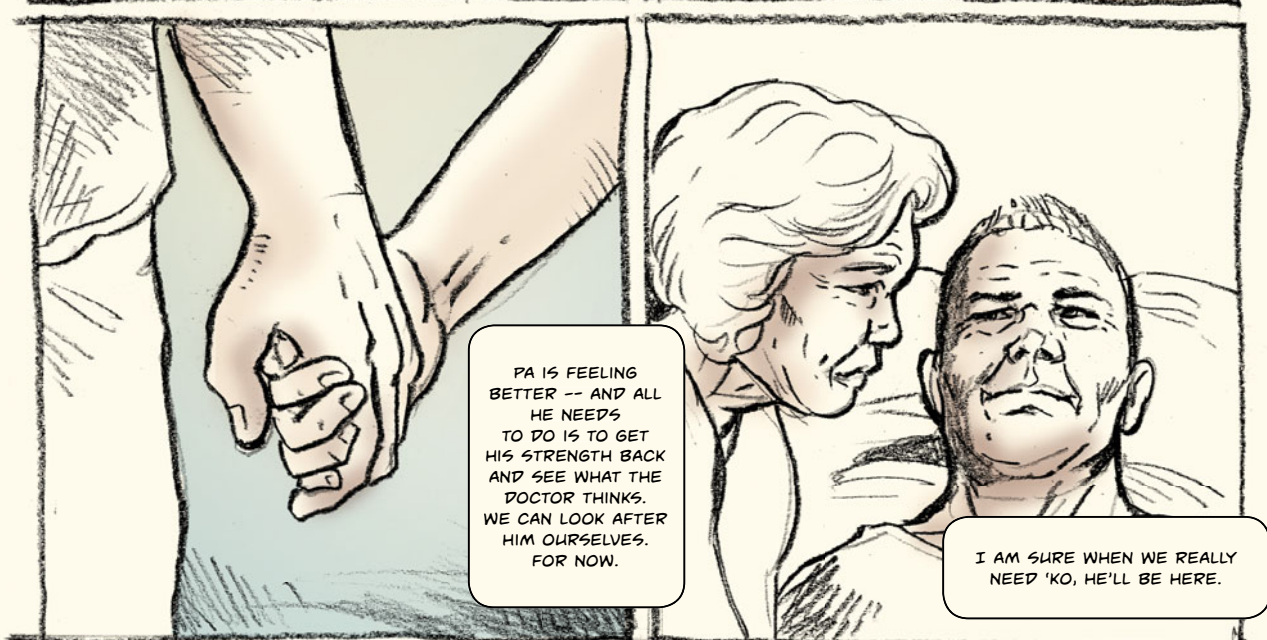
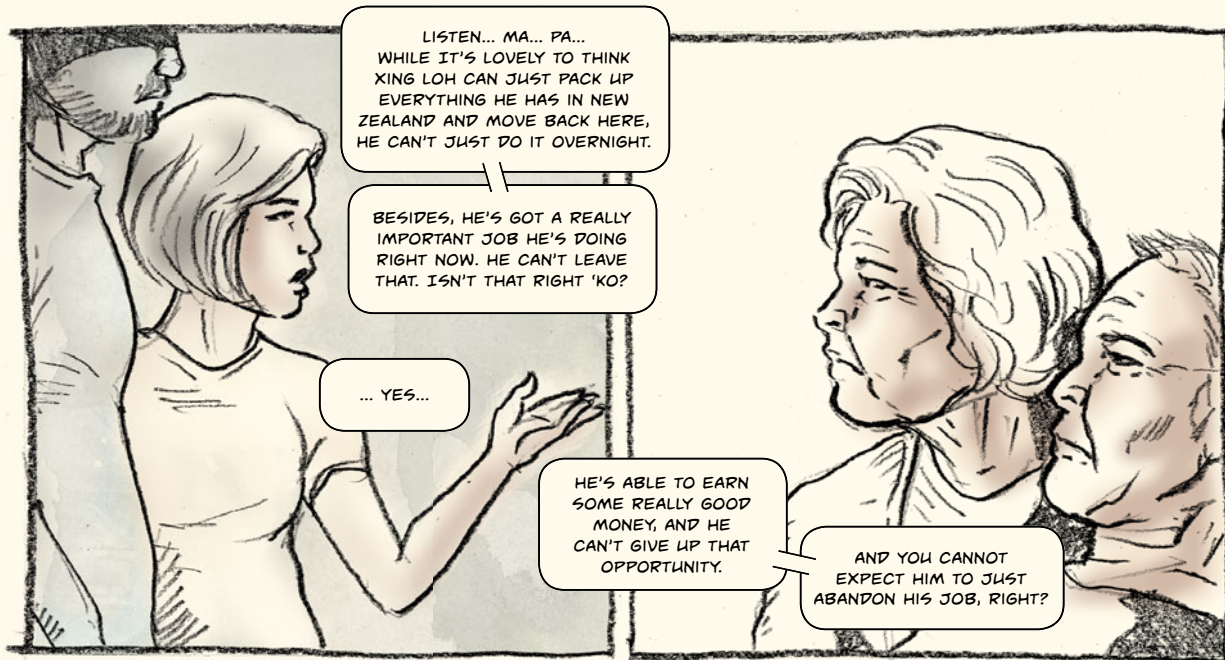


STOP

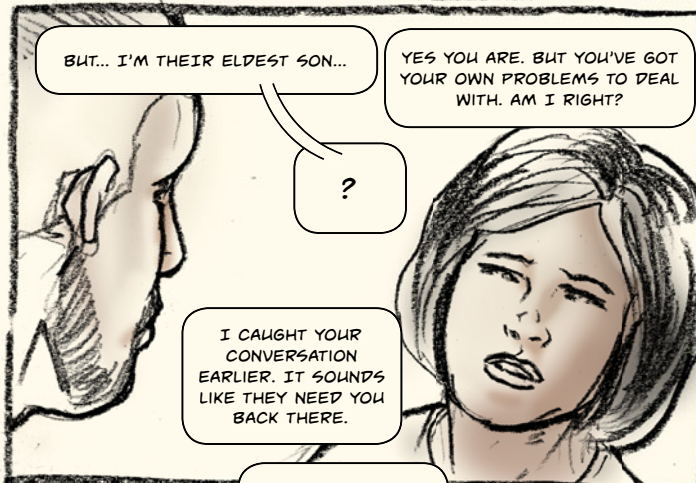
STOP IT.

ALL OF YOU.  
I THINK YOU'RE  
RUSHING INTO THINGS.













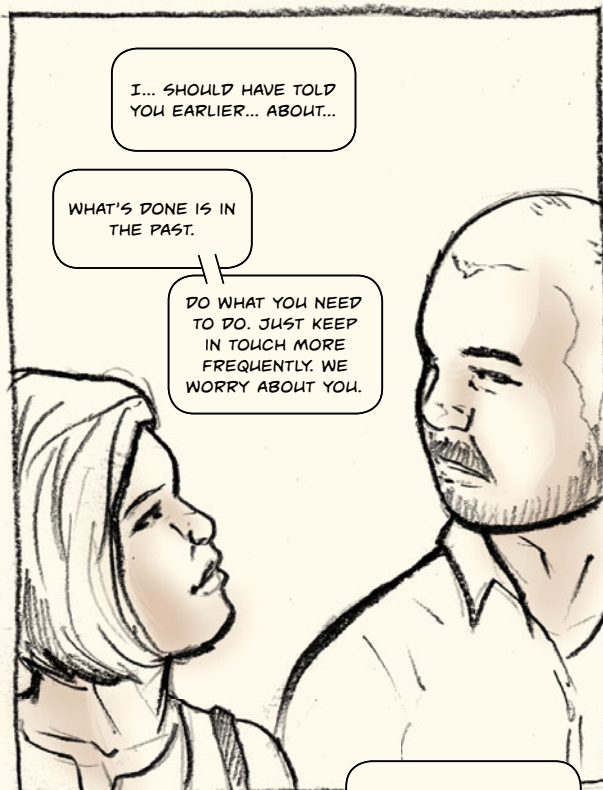








I'D LIKE TO MEET NEIL  
SOMETIME. FROM WHAT  
YOU TOLD ME, HE SOUNDS  
LIKE A LOVELY GUY.



I... SHOULD HAVE TOLD  
YOU EARLIER... ABOUT...

WHAT'S DONE IS IN  
THE PAST.

DO WHAT YOU NEED  
TO DO. JUST KEEP  
IN TOUCH MORE  
FREQUENTLY. WE  
WORRY ABOUT YOU.



I KNOW YOU HAVE  
YOUR OWN LIFE NOW  
-- BUT DON'T FORGET  
YOUR FAMILY HERE.  
WE LOVE YOU.

YOU DON'T NEED TO  
SHUT US OUT.



THANK YOU.











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*Tommy is a gay man hiding from his family in Malaysia his sexuality and to the life he has made with his partner in Auckland, New Zealand. He is confronted with his lies when his father falls ill, and bound by an unshakeable sense of duty, he returns home. The journey tests relationships with his family, as he feels trapped to conform to the construct of a 'good son', and his need to be true to himself. His sense of belonging is challenged, and he subsequently questions his responsibilities and obligations as a man, son and life partner.*

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Homebound** is Don Chooi's first graphic novel and is based on his life experience as an immigrant Asian gay man. He is an illustrator, a graphic designer and an aspiring academic. He has been contributing art to the bear community since 2005. Don's art features subjects that celebrate not only the appeal of the masculine, but also cultural diversity within the gay mainstream. His major influences include Gengoroh Tagame, Jiraiya, Christophe Jannin and Bill Ward, among many others. While he uses digital means to complete his pieces, he favours traditional media – using ink on paper – as it allows him to 'feel closer' to the illustration.

