

## **Albino Fruit**

‘You look very pretty today.’

‘Oh. Thank you, Dr Teng.’ She strokes the plant at the doorway, taking the sting out of her dizzy giggling. ‘They’re real!’

‘They certainly are.’ He holds her with a squint before letting go. She stumbles as she leaves.

There are eight rooms in the clinic housing the same infinitely real plants—the *Rhapis excelsa*; societal name, broadleaf lady palm. I happen to be one of them. A humble, low-maintenance, leafy office plant.

Sunlight, and moonlight, gets in. A gang of three doctors and eight assistants roam this clinic. The all-female assistants are youngish, slender, and are kitted in taut, white jumpsuits.

I’ve been in Room Two for five years now. I have managed to grow three inches in those years. Beyond that, I can’t quite tell you where my eyes, brain or systems are, but I do recognise things. I am not especially concerned with my purpose but I am aware that humans, those tragically transparent creatures, are obsessed with theirs.

Take, for example, the giggling girl. Five years ago, in vocational school, she found her calling as an ophthalmologist’s assistant when really, she could have aimed higher. She’s smart, competent... too perceptive to only be attending to Lasik-seeking patients. Every weekday, in the dark room with Satie softly mewling, she studies the eyes of strangers, separated by ocular machines. Her societal name is Linda Mah. The machines are square boulders. She has bruises on her legs.

On slower days, Linda Mah doodles the word *Soledad* on scrap paper. She must love flowers. *Soledad* means ‘sun flower’ in Portuguese, I think.

A young man waits in my room. Like the others, he is tired of not seeing well, of being ‘handicapped’, and she assures him that she has undergone the same surgery at this clinic. ‘It’s all machine-based these days. Very, very safe. See, my eyes are still perfect!’

‘Do lives become better?’ he may have asked; but his thoughts are drawn towards naming a forgotten word, or was it an object or a superfluous symbol?

*‘Now, Mr Shinji, I need you to cover your left eye. Can you please read the letters on the wall?’*

*‘We’ve had over twenty years of experience and not a single failed surgery, Mr Shinji.’*

*‘You can get it done tomorrow afternoon, if you like.’*

*‘What is it that you do, Mr Shinji?’*

*‘How did you learn about our eye centre?’*

*‘Do you have any allergies?’*

Mr Shinji forsakes his hidden word to answer her questions with some interest, and a measure of concern.

\*

In the tropics, a child grows up dreaming of snow. But he must quell the thought. The silver sounds of mata putehs and cicadas; the languor of unrushed sun shadows greened by leaves—every day, the rich, watered soil embraces each touch with warmth. Even I am rendered helpless, after the rain, by a falling helix of petals reclaiming their final flight.

I have been here for a long time. I, when still a seed, was carried between the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh seams of the left sock of a Japanese soldier, societal name Fujiwara Watanabe, who survived China, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and then Singapore and Singapore’s Pulau Ubin in 1943. I believe I was originally from China but Pulau Ubin was where some version of me sprouted.

Adaptation works, and I mostly fit in now.

The next day, Shinji Man returns.

He looks afraid. But Girl’s presence is reassuring. She will assess his eyes again. He looks into the hollow feelers of a machine and sees a brilliant red farmhouse, the nave of a lush, rising prairie. The image pulls in and out of focus. He is thinking of what to say to her. ‘I’d like you to

focus on the house, Mr Shinji,' she says. She is married and his eyes, though kind, are not exceptional.

Anaesthetic eye drops are applied to his corneas and he tears uncontrollably. Someone once pointed out to Linda that all tears are biological kickbacks; she didn't know what to say.

'Riverbank.'

'Sorry?'

'Oh. Just a word. Nothing.' But it isn't the word, isn't the symbol, is nothing.

His eyes continue to sting and blur on the operating chair. Another machine is drawn before his face. Red, white and green lights chase each other without swirling as his eyelids are prised, and then plastered, open.

'You're doing good,' the doctor says. A gloved hand rests on his shoulder.

And it is really starting to hurt.

Just as he has done so at every unsuccessful job interview, his body stiffens and locks only to be betrayed by a vindictive trembling. A blurred cuboid extension of the machine swoops in and seizes an eyeball but he doesn't scream. There has never been pressure quite like this, he thinks, bracing the body for more distress. Quite simply, all that strobed, sparkled or existed seconds before are torn asunder by deep, ugly faults streaking down the edges of vision to form a visage of pure shadow. In its darkness he staggers towards panic; the stench of flesh burning becomes apparent and it has become impractical to flinch.

On the third day, Japanese Shinji man sprawls at ease in the empty waiting room. He even allows himself some chamomile tea from the dispenser.

When two people press their faces against a machine in the dark, they become conjoined bionic twins. As she reviews his new vision, she notices a long silver strand of hair spiralling away from a dimple on his left wrist. She draws closer and the hair disappears into the soft light. His skin, smooth and glazed turmeric by the sun, is pimped by the air-conditioned breeze and she wonders if he strokes it as if it were a delicate insect. It is quite pretty after all, though the thought wanders into something else and she suddenly feels compelled to yank it out like a loose thread or perhaps say something drastically out of character.

‘Mr Shinji, how are your eyes feeling?’

‘They’re dry. A little blurry.’

The farmhouse on the prairie throbs into view as Shinji reacquaints with the familiar image he will never know. Perhaps memory is as compelling a master this way—it traps you in and out of bondage with each visit—flaunting all its ironies and evidences destined to repeat, unreplaced. No, not really, for emotions are sure to be involved.

‘My grandfather was rounded up in the middle of the night,’ Linda begins. Her voice is sure. ‘There were thirty of them, all young and Chinese. After hours of waiting, it became clear that they would be lined up before a firing squad. The Japs, well the ones back then, were notoriously lousy shots; there was no protocol and they’d waste several bullets to kill someone.’

The strange narrative coming out of her mouth threatens his pleasantly ambivalent view. ‘River ice?’ Still not the word. Perhaps it can’t be found in the ubiquitous image; he always forgets that Linda sees something else. His eye, glassy and askew, fills her screen like a great, sentient jewel.

‘The guy next to Grandfather screamed as he fell to the ground. He was so loud that Grandfather missed the gunshots. There was an incredible pain in his stomach and his legs quickly gave way. They kicked his chest, even stamped on his head, but Grandfather remained silent.’

Shinji blinks. The image soul of the machine is somewhat hesitating—its lines fizzle, choking on colours now pierced red. A scarlet island consumes the house, peaking from an electric tangerine sea. Everything is heightened and he blinks recklessly.

‘Grandmother shaved her head and disguised herself as a man. She bribed the guards, managed to sneak into jail and found Grandfather two days later on the verge of death. She brought him home.’

‘A miracle,’ he murmurs.

A layer of moisture washes over the iris and Linda watches on the monitor, a giant tear breaking from the corner of his eye.

‘I’m so sorry,’ he offers again. The machine sighs; the red prairie collapses into darkness.

‘Your eyes are dry so they’re tearing up a bit. Otherwise they look perfectly fine. Could you wait outside till Dr Teng calls you?’ She touches his arm as he leaves.

Five minutes later, Shinji re-enters. His shoulders are hunched. He is feeling slightly used.

*‘Mr Shinji, just rest your chin on the support and focus on the white hole in the middle. You will feel a gush of air but try not to close your eyes.’*

*‘Mr Shinji, perhaps we could do it again? Just for safety... and try to be still.’*

*‘Mr Shinji, could you look to the side? Your right side. Now, look down. Yes... very good.’*

*‘Mr Shinji, congratulations! I believe everything is in order. Your eyes are healing well. I’ll see you again in a week.’*

After Shinji leaves, Dr Teng asks Linda about her plans for the night, her old perfume, the bruises on her legs.

‘My husband scolds me sometimes because I’m so clumsy.’ She reaches for a grin but does not giggle. The door closes. She nuzzles the dark lumps on her thighs with two fingers, trailing them to her hips, slinking into the marbled counter.

\*

There is a very rare variety of me called the Hiroshima. My cousins are so named because their leaves look as if they are constantly burned.

As with all ornamental houseplants, we are much smaller than the wild or commercial ones.

A week later, he arrives fresh and early. It is clear to me that Mr Shinji has left a bouquet of flowers in his car.

Linda attends to him and Shinji notices again the ring on her finger. ‘My husband is often away,’ she says.

Dr Teng is pleased with Shinji’s recovery and the Japanese leaves to wait in his car. ‘River man?’ Perhaps not. An hour later, she walks by and he calls out to her. She enters. He presents the flowers. They are *Lilium auratum*, non-native goldband lilies.

Lunch together and they purchase curry puffs and yakitori to eat at the park. He holds her hand instinctively when crossing the road and the silver strand of hair tickles her wrist.

‘I have something to admit,’ he says.

‘What is it?’

‘I miss them already. My lousy eyes.’

‘Why? Does it hurt?’

‘I’ve lost a place to hide.’

‘Oh man...’ she groans. He laughs with her.

Shinji works for an international Japanese construction firm. He has previously claimed to his bosses that Lasik surgery will bestow him ‘the golden insight’ towards solving a difficult situation at a coastal condominium project. Due to a disagreement with a sub-contractor, thirty tonnes of steel have been withdrawn with little time for replacements. Especially around other men, Shinji gets the feeling that he talks too much, too carelessly sometimes. What he has been careful not to disclose, though, is his passion for wandering around incomplete, unwallied buildings: all the hours spent luxuriating in an unearned sense of catharsis, as if he were the sole survivor of something apocalyptic.

‘Also, the whole Lasik operation was the worst thing I’ve ever gone through.’

‘Really?’

‘Yeah.’

‘You are so useless.’

‘It’s not supposed to hurt that much!’ he protests.

‘Sorry.’ She touches his face too tenderly. ‘I shouldn’t have said that. A habit I picked up from my mum.’

‘The people you’ve lived with, you pick something up from them,’ he commiserates. A secret knowledge, like clearing a blocked nose by lying on your side, or the alienating habit of calling everyone ‘dude’. Jap Shin Man used to live with a cat. *Felis catus* never left the house and when they were together, they lived entirely separate worlds. Hers was one sculpted by light, sound and faraway shadows. His was a lot more tangible. A sudden dart up the stairway, the

longing and pawing at invisible things behind closed doors; he once shared the bathroom with her and felt terribly exhibitionistic. Though her eyes were always mysterious, he quickly lost interest in them.

For subsequent lunches, when possible, Linda would sneak him into the old pantry with the broken espresso machine.

I have stayed in that pantry, when Room Two was being renovated, alongside the stacks of artificial tears, peeling walls and a leaky pipe that made conditions... glutinous.

'It's like the toilet in a hawker centre but I don't mind,' he jokes.

Somewhere in between their spells of heavy petting without going anywhere, I recall my previous life in Pulau Ubin and sometimes see snow falling on lush ferns or, alternatively, an albino durian.

People seem to enjoy snow-covered things.

There are pictures of Dr Teng skiing with the family, diving with the family, skydiving with his wife. He drinks sometimes, occasionally pouring what he can't finish onto me. Laphroaig's my favourite.

I do wonder if Linda is the strangest of her kind. She talks to herself sometimes as if she were talking in her sleep, in that halting, hindered sort of way where speaking is akin to confronting a foreign, once humiliating melancholy. And then I've seen her wrap a cushion around her ears and the hollow roar of silence she hears is perhaps instant. Or do all inanimate objects sound the same when flexed?

Is snow, at all, meaningful?

Do white fruits taste bitter?

Do insects that fly enjoy the view?

I have several questions to ask, each an itch like a phantom fruit.

I don't know why I think of snow so often. A whiteness I can barely recall... yet I feel the need to miss it every day.

Sometimes, I wonder if the machines long to respond, to feel, to act. I've tried moving just a little, making a soft sound by drawing my roots, nodding my leaves, reaching out to them, but they

must have been dead for a long time. They never get cold, they never grow, though they do become weak and are replaced by newer dead things.

Likewise, I am unable to bear fruits. Nor flowers. *Soledad*.

As instructed, Shinji man will have to water his eyes every three hours for a month. If only the post-op maintenance was less of a hassle, he must be thinking. It will not be nice for his bosses to catch tears flowing down his eyes due to 'onsite dust'.

His grandfather had supposedly been stationed along the Thai border overlooking the construction of the Malayan Railway. He survived the war and never talked about it till death. This silence was something Shinji understood from a young age and barring the quarrels on especially hot summer days, his family just about got along. His main contribution to the party was knowing the opportune joke to crack when no one or everyone else was speaking. His father was a quiet man with a dull sense of humour. His then-engaged sister was obsessed with having a family. She remains childless. He never took any of them seriously.

But he had left Fukuoka for a reason. The saga with his mother when he had asked for money for an abortion. 'The young are never careful and the old are too wary,' she used to say. Off her, an invisible emotion-filled thing cleaved, avalanche-sized and from too far a distance.

He took the money and left for Malaysia.

\*

An eyelash sticks to the inside of a glass bottle like the drunk squiggle of a young artist. It's lunch at Ashton's.

He reaches for her hand. She likes the touch of his skin, the silver hair.

'Have you ever thought about being more than just an assistant?'

'Yeah,' Linda muses. 'But you have to go overseas to study for it. And I missed the boat.'

'The boat?'

'It's an expression.'

'We miss the bus in Japan.'



Linda sometimes masturbates at night when her husband's away, reassured by the uninitiated shuffles her pet *Oryctolagus cuniculus* makes in the dark. Growing up, she was afraid of making friends in the event that they might just suddenly die.

'Tell me more about Japan.'

'I've been looking for a word ever since I saw you. An English word that starts with "river". River-something. I've tried "riverbank", "river ice", "river man". It's strange I know. But I just want to have it and to say it. This word of mine. Please, could you help the fool!' He laughs and she turns his left hand over to expose his wrist. He lets her play with the hair like a kitten pursuing its mother's tail.

'Riverdance? Riverside?'

He shakes his head.

'River wild? Riverpool? River Ang Bao?'

'Hmm... It's just a single word, behind "river".'

'River...Rivendell?'

'Rivendell!'

'That's so stupid! But why?'

'It's stupid?'

'Kind of.'

'I think you look like an elf. You also look at giant eye bags! All the time!'

'Eyeballs,' she snarls, nearly pulling the silver hair out. He flinches, knocking the glass bottle over and it crashes to the floor. A startled child who has been watching them starts to cry.

A waiter cleans up the mess with a grunt. Shinji apologises. A long queue for tables has formed at the entrance.

'There's something I'd like to tell you,' she finally says.

'I know that you're married.'

'No, it's not that. For the longest time, I wanted to be... to do something. Somehow, somewhere else, you know? It's just me having to do it... Not alone.'

'Hmm... Like something somewhere?'

She doesn't say anything.

'What do you want to do?' he asks again.

'I feel like I'm dying.'

After lunch, she sees him off and attends to a new patient. She is taken aback by how tiresome it has suddenly become, having to repeat the same pedantic words, examining the same confused eyes and, as such, the tests take much longer than necessary and the customer leaves without making another appointment.

'Linda, you look pretty as usual, but also slightly tired today,' Dr Teng says.

'You say that to everyone. Doesn't mean a thing.'

'Well, no. I do mean it,' he counters.

'That I'm more pretty than tired?'

'Well, I guess.'

'Then why emphasise that I'm tired?'

'Linda...'

'Maybe it's the jumpsuit.' She reaches for the zip at the back of her neck. 'It's too tight.

Should I take it off?'

'Linda... is everything all right?'

'Or would you rather I take the rest of the day off?'

'Do you need to?'

'Yes.'

'All right', he sighs, and returns to his screen. 'We'll try to manage with... Come back tomorrow and please, stop asking such questions.'

She leaves, calls him and he says, 'Yes, I'll meet you there.'

Changi Beach overlooks Pulau Ubin. The waters are dull and chocked with estuarine debris, intimating the weaknesses of waves. A park sweeper in tangerine steadily rakes the shore of dead leaves. Mud crabs retreat hastily into vestigial holes and in turn, the sand bleeds with rust-red soil. The few surviving mangrove trees are guarded by aerated roots: upon closer inspection, the roots become haunted minarets of ancient gothic quarters.

It is not a pretty beach, but it is fairly intact, it is old.

‘It’s peaceful here,’ he says.

‘My uncles used to swim across every day.’

‘Did they live near here?’

‘Here and there. The family had property on the island. A small durian plantation. But I think most of the fun happened here, on Changi Beach. In the 70s, my uncles were known as the Sand Princes of Changi.’

‘How interesting!’

‘Tourists’d come here and they would show them a good time. Boat rides, fishing, drinking. All the best snorkelling spots.’

‘Ah... and then what happened?’

‘One got into a terrible accident. Another threatened to blow up a bank.’

‘Here? In Singapore?’

‘Yeah. He’s been on pills since. But he still gambles too much, they all do.’

‘I see. You’re not close to them?’

She shakes her head.

‘And the beach?’

‘It’s become boring,’ she laments.

‘Are you a good swimmer?’

‘It’s in the genes they say,’ she says.

Shinji wades in without taking off his clothes.

She follows even though she says it is too deep, that he just had an operation, that there may be jellyfish and sea snakes.

There are kelongs to the west of the island but a long chain of tiny blue buoys splits the waters between Ubin and the mainland. Hardly anyone swims here anymore. Seagulls that never existed are replaced by mynahs, herons and, curiously, hornbills. A lone canoe bobbles adrift.

Linda is pleasantly surprised by her weightlessness in seawater. She keeps her head up as it seems less tiring to swim that way. Shinji surges ahead, waiting on her by the barrier of buoys.

They clamber over the buoys and soon reach the island. Sand-less and rough, the coast is crumbed with granite from an abandoned quarry. He kisses her, their bodies radiating from their exertions. She buries her head on a spot between his shoulders. Giant butterflies patrol the nearby forest. Cicadas trill and the yawning wind between leaves sounds belatedly like waves.

He looks to her.

‘It’s a small island,’ she says, swatting off a mosquito.

The air is soaked deep in jasmine. All manner of macaques hang around, flagrant, as if ready to offer the promise of companionship. The light dims. They abandon lost trails. By and by the myriad trees, they pass into the polite ambush of casual cold spots. The protracted trysts of mature durian trees have sucked up all heat in moisture. The plot becomes crisp, becomes dry.

I may have sprouted here, though I can’t be sure. A frightened, foreign soldier could have found some solace in its cool tranquillity seventy years ago. He spends the night here. In the morning, the soldier looks up and spies amongst the strange thorny fruits a stranger one. As if encrusted in snow, the albino durian dangles, heroic.

It seems that thoughts born of this uncommon environment can only be of an expansive, inquiring nature. A squirrel volleys in and out of sight. The humans remain still, sifting and unearthing in silence.

‘Did we invade you here?’ he asks, digging a sole into the loose grass.

‘Yes. Many villagers died horrible deaths.’

‘So sorry.’

‘Nobody really cares these days. Do you?’

‘I can try.’ He laughs weakly and looks to the sky, almost mistaking the sun-kissed durians above for skulls.

Silence sets in again. A monitor lizard slithers away unwillingly into shade.

She turns and he follows her white gracile frame from which her voice trails: ‘You know, I’m just kidding.’

The returning humidity precedes an asphalt path. A tiny ramshackle hut with the promise of cold drinks comes quickly within sight.

They order overpriced coconuts imported from Thailand. Straws are kept in large transparent containers with red lids. There are at least five coolers in the hut that do not work.

‘Excuse me, Uncle, but do you know Kew Tuck?’ The old man’s skin is leather kinked by wrinkles fading into elaborate calligraphy tattoos. He moves slowly, as if waiting on another world to catch up.

‘Who is it?’

‘Kew Tuck. Kew Meng. Kew Loong. My uncles. They used to call them the Sand Princes of Changi? Also, my grandmother, Xian Wen?’

‘Were they from here?’

‘They used to own some property in Ubin, until the government said they needed the place for a new quarry. They lived here.’

‘There are no new quarries.’

‘My family name is Koh. Koh Kew Tuck? Ah Tuck? Ling Moy?’

‘Leng Mui? The seamstress?’

‘No. Ling Moy, my eldest sister.’

He shakes his head and returns to his room, unbothered. ‘My memory is getting lazy,’ he explains. The old television flickers, flicks on.

Linda and Shinji finish their coconuts as a wind chime dances out loud. They are the only customers and the remaining chairs and tables will remain untouched for the rest of the day.

They walk again. Collapsed bicycles litter the path to the jetty like fallen marionettes. The dull thuds of durians falling are taken over by coconuts falling, and papayas falling, and mangoes and sticks, snapping.

‘I have the feeling that I won’t see you after this.’

She doesn’t say anything. He continues, ‘Your grandparents—’ but he cuts himself off. It already feels too late.

As they near the sea, he turns into a clearing that offers a great view of the kelongs, and she follows. In recent years, there have been reports of thousands of dead fish swept to shore along the straits. A seasonal algal bloom draws all oxygen from the water and its creatures

suffocate, often to death. ‘A baby whale,’ she says mournfully. But there is only the giant white carcass of a fish looping beautifully in the waves. She thinks of all the fish uncaught by men drowning in the untenable waters and those that survive only to die sometime next year carouselling, always, towards the shallow end and she thinks of how it is all so simultaneously meaningless and beautiful; tragic yet ratifying. On the other hand, Shinji is reminded of a camping trip to the countryside as a child. The memory is fresh: he drinks from a lake, palms on reeds, when he spots the rotting sheep inches away from his lips.

Because of moving water, hovering flies cannot settle upon the swollen fish.

‘It’s never meant to be erotic... The times when people talk to me and they go on and on without letting me say anything... and then the incredible urge I get to make out with them. Just to shut them up. Or maybe shock them. It doesn’t even matter who it is, an old woman on the bus, some guy at a party.’

‘I see.’ An annoying bitterness distilled from memory seeps into mouth; Shinji can’t swallow away.

‘Those people who talk, they say, “you need to go through shit in order to grow and be a better person”. My husband, my family, they take so much pride in whatever they think they’ve suffered and survived. It’s almost as if you get to relax indefinitely after you’re done.’

‘Do you love your husband?’ he asks after spitting into the sand.

‘It is exhausting to always be in love.’

‘It’s not that important.’

‘Especially these days.’

‘You must have hurt people.’

‘Plenty.’

‘And?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Are they mad?’

‘Yes.’

‘And why?’

‘Always reasons.’

‘Why do you tell me these things?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Because I’m not Singaporean?’

She shrugs her shoulders.

‘Because you’ve read those sappy Japanese novels or movies...’

Just before they board the boat, Shinji’s path is blocked by an exiting middle-aged couple. Contending excitably in Hokkien, they manoeuvre a sleekly packaged flat-screen TV to shore.

The engine sputters. She watches the criss-crossing wake of the vessel. He watches the sharply focused sky and its voluminous clouds.

Later that week, Shinji Matsumoto will quit his job for home. Thirty tonnes of steel remain missing. On the plane, he remembers to apply artificial tears, two drops per eye, before take-off.

When she returns to work the next day, indelible motes of my old island flavour her skin. I watch her repeat the choice words, her instructions masked as requests, the soft trained tone carolled to patients. She smiles. Her eyes are bright without wandering. She smiles.

The eye clinic quietens down after six.

‘Linda, would you like a drink?’

‘I wouldn’t mind one at all, Dr Teng.’

She plants herself on the swivel chair for patients, takes a long sip, then spins on a dime to rest her chin on the familiar machine, operational name the Autorefractor VISUREF 100.

It switches on with an amicable hum.

‘Many years ago, I was very into botany. I was a patron of the Natural Society; I loved plants. There were many aesthetical reasons why but I loved just how subtle, how non-threatening, how needful they are. The constant push to conserve, to protect, from all angles. We were literally bringing back the dead, creating entirely new habitats. There was real optimism. Real possibilities. Then sometime in the early 90s, we found in a forest near Choa Chu Kang village, a rather special tree. It was fifteen metres tall, healthy-looking with large clusters of flowers and whole, thick leaves. It was...’

The ophthalmologist pauses, distracted by the woman in her pristine jumpsuit, modelling coolly against his machine.

‘The tree was white as snow. Every inch of it, from root to seed, as if it were dipped in milk or ivory. Now, a pure defect, or albinism, is something so rare, so extreme in plants, it almost always becomes fantasy. How did it live? How did it photosynthesise? The villagers had always stayed away, believing in its curse. Scientists—prominent ones from around the world—came and it was stripped, piece by piece, to be pointlessly studied. Within a year, there was nothing left but a decayed, yellowing stump. The place was cleared and new flats were erected by the mid-90s.’

‘Are there pictures?’

‘Stupidly enough, we lost them during the digital conversion of our archives.’ He finishes another glass. ‘The *Durio albus* was its working name. A rather weak one, and it duly slipped through all efforts of classification. I stepped down soon after. Linda, there are dreams where I am in a forest filled with—’

Life seems not to happen when I’m around. The kind of life that only understands itself when stretched to its fullest—I slip through the tiniest pores. Before another year summers by, I’d like to meet others like me. Those that have adapted to snow, those that still bear fruit. We have branched, so differently, certain cultivars are more prized than others.

Towards these modern hybrids, dwarfed and discoloured, I have mixed feelings. But perhaps they are the ones who will live forever, replacing all of me. As it is with things that are taken care of properly, these genetic mis-creations can be passed down in wills, along with all other family treasures.