

# LUNCH

SHREYOSI ENDOW

I stared at the piece of lettuce that was stuck between Roger's front teeth. It wouldn't be long before he started complaining about how he shouldn't have had a burger with lettuce on it and how he repeatedly told the boy at the deli to not add the lettuce and how the brat just pretended he couldn't hear what he was saying because he had his headphones on and how this generation of 'youngsters' were going nowhere because they didn't even know their simple manners, like not adding the lettuce when they were asked not to add the lettuce. Right now, he babbled about his girlfriend's leg hair.

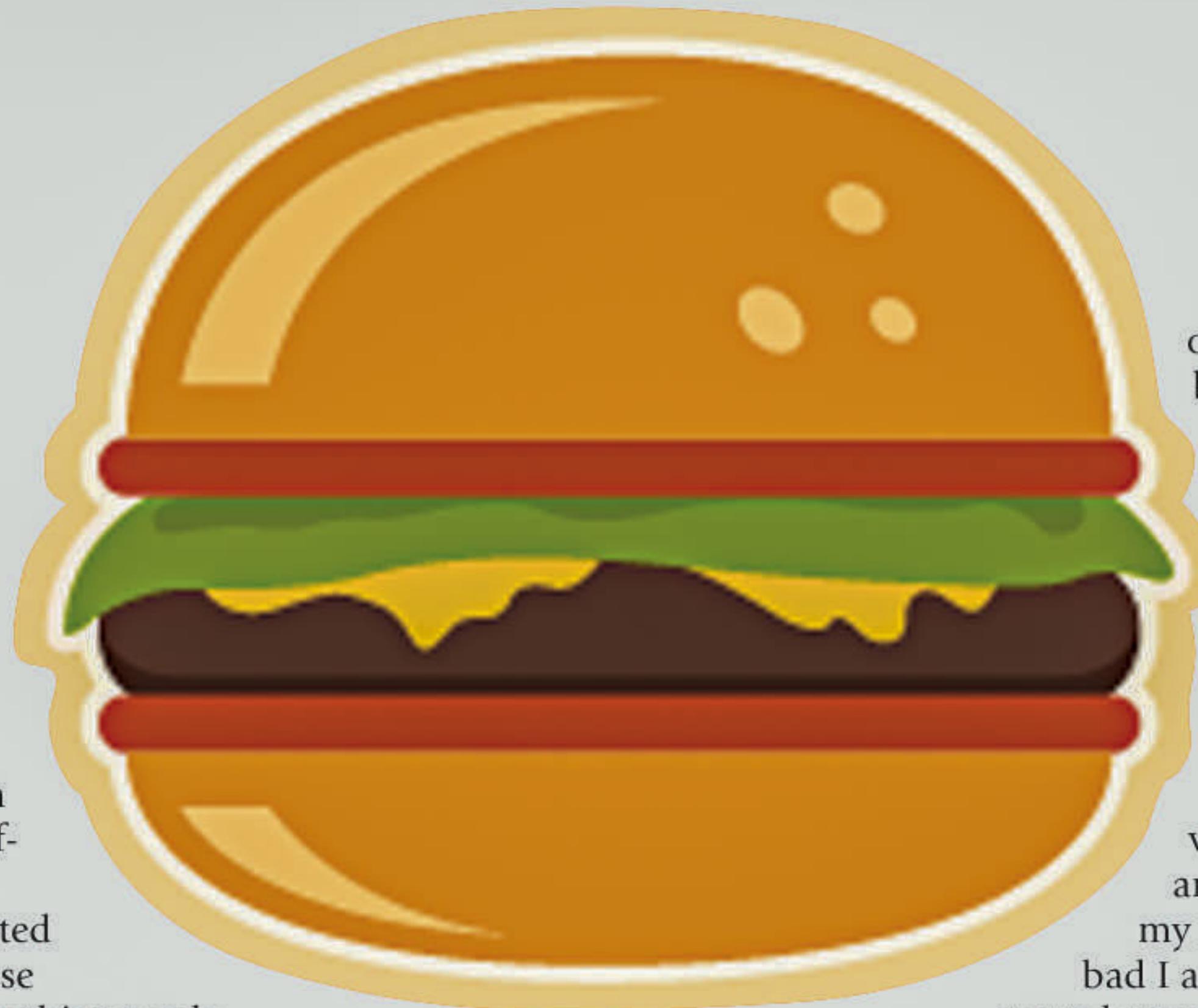
'My point is, if you can shave your calves, why can't you shave your thighs? Now I don't mean to sound like a jerk, you know, it's her choice because she is an independent woman and the CEO of this huge advertising company, but come on, what's so tough about making that extra effort? It was all nice and fuzzy in the beginning but now it's like so long, and looks so...you know...inconsistent.'

He took another bite of the burger and mumbled, 'Shouldn't have had a burger with lettuce on it.'

There he goes. I tried to distract myself by watching the kid who was hanging upside down from the monkey bars while the other kids cheered him on. He looked like he was about eight or so and was quite chubby with a pretty wide face that was slowly turning a very bright red. He was probably new in this area for I had never seen him in the park before and there weren't many children who came to the park at this hour when it was crowded with people from the neighbouring offices for whom these thirty minutes were the only break they were going to get in the next nine hours.

There was John from the insurance office, who sat next to me on the park bench sometimes. He carried this royal blue bag which looked almost like a little school bag in which he brought his lunch box because his briefcase had very inadequate space. I suggested he buy a new briefcase because this little bag thing made him look like a child and the last thing that this forty year old with a bald head and a pot belly needed was to look like a child. He said his wife would cut him up into tiny pieces if he bought a new briefcase (she was the one who bought the current one, it was their anniversary gift) and then he smiled nervously and said, 'She gets pretty cranky when I don't listen to her you know.' That was the first time I noticed he had a few missing teeth.

Keith was somebody you couldn't ignore, no matter how hard you tried. He would find you even if you were at the other end of the park. The first time I met him, he seemed so charming, and had one of those hundred watt smiles that would melt your heart and for some time, I had even considered a future with him but boy was I wrong. He turned out to be one of those guys who are always pestering you to open an account in their banks. It was like the solution to every single problem was to open an account in his bank -- my dog died, open an account in his bank. The traffic was bad,



open an account in his bank. I have the flu, open an account in his bank. One day, I actually tried to run away from him. Like literally. We were sitting on this park bench, and he went on and on about how his bank provided the best service among all the others and my head started aching so bad I actually got up and started running. I didn't even look back, or say 'bye.' I just got out of there as fast as my legs allowed me to.

I had considered socialising with the women who had their lunch in the park. I even tried. It turned out to be like *déjà vu*. Like that time in high school when I tried to be friends with the popular girls but drew a blank every time they said something. They often talked about things like contouring, and this new brand of MAC lipstick and that time when they walked into this beauty salon to find their biggest enemy having her moustache plucked out. Don't get me wrong, they had pretty intelligent conversations as well, and I'd have loved to be a part of them. But they all stood huddled together like penguins and I couldn't just walk up to them and join the conversation just like that. It was really very awkward. So I decided to have lunch all by myself but that didn't go as planned because somebody couldn't find any other seat and was always wondering if the spot next to mine was taken.

## Writing to Escape

CODEBLACK

I do not write to amaze you or renowned publishers  
Or the boy with blues eyes who blows butterflies in my  
stomach  
If I did write for you, then I'd be writing about:  
How broken we are; name the shattered pieces  
Curse men and call silly emotions love  
If I did write for the publisher in street 13  
The one who loves tobacco with tea  
Then I'd be probably writing about:  
Spaceships, archangels, drugs and magic  
Fictions and adventures  
And if I really did write for the pretty blue-eyed boy who  
Tripped over my expensive heart  
Then I'd certainly be writing about:  
How our bodies intertwined; how we spoke in moans  
and kisses  
And the heavenly warmth that laid between our bodies  
Instead I write about:  
The breeze tickling the leaves  
And sunlight caressing the sprawling city  
I write about how God speaks to me  
Through moonbeams and silver clouds  
I write about unforgettable *hola* and haunting *au revoir*  
Also about phenomenal women, sometimes  
Whose laughter impersonates crystal wind-chimes  
I write to calm the fire in my veins  
I write and scratch away my pains  
I stitch my wounds while stitching words into poems



## A Verse-less Poet

NICOLE MOONSTONE

Sometimes when you just lift a pen,  
What words come to you right then?  
Some words that speak of void and death  
Or those that sing of soil and leaves?  
Were I to man this pen of mine  
I would but write of none but me!  
Alas! This pen writes what it wills.  
It bleeds and bleeds of words, no more,  
Of words that are but ink to me!  
There are some letters which can sing  
Some songs of songbirds set in spring.  
Some more come forth to dance in pairs  
Around red-ribboned maypoles! Lord!  
Could they but praise one brow of mine  
Upon this land of white I see?  
Perhaps a word or two about  
My lovely hair when swished around?  
Oho! I see this hand of mine  
Shall write of all! Of all but me!  
Who mans these verses blooming from  
This inky spout I call my pen?  
O nay! Not me! I could not dream  
To string these strokes of black on white!  
I but deserve to say just this;  
Were I to man a pen, for truth,  
Lord knows what words would mar this page!  
For I am but a layman, yes  
I am a verse-less poet.