

# SECRET CITY

Created by

PHENOMANIA

## Robson Square

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*AUDIO TRANSCRIPT*

Commissioned by the City of Vancouver & Viva Vancouver  
September 2018

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## SECRET CITY: Robson Square – EPISODE 1

### ROBSON PERSEPHONE

Written, created, and performed by C. E. Gatchalian

Music: *Boléro*, composed by Ravel, conducting *Orchestre Lamoureux*

*\*You should now be standing at the ice rink, on the lower level of Robson Square*

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*[A man's voice speaks]*

Robson Square.

I wander because I can - I have some privilege these days.

Not living from paycheque to paycheque,

not scrambling between contracts,

not caught in myopic complaining,

I can do what those old European guys did

who were either independently wealthy or leeches of the wealthy,

walk without destination, or... tangible destination.

Downtown Vancouver, where I was born and raised.

Grew up on Broughton Street, just off Robson.

Back then living here was just easier, more convenient -

today it's a marker of extreme good fortune.

In my teens moved eastward, so downtown became object,

symbol of a city that in turn became object.

What was once simply home was now the Most Liveable City on Earth,

the Most Beautiful City on Earth,

Gateway to the Pacific.

Anyways, the ice rink.

Depending on when you're there there'll either be ice or no ice,

it'll be fully empty or fully peopled or something in between,

with skaters or fox-trotters or, more likely, house dancers,

who've made this their practice hub the last number of years.

Smack in the middle of downtown,

it's free public space,

where class warfare comes to a Terpsichorean truce.

Watched Torvill and Dean skate here when I was 10 years old.

Like most queer boys in embryo I didn't care much for sports,

But, y'know, figure skating appealed to my inner burgeoning aesthete.

First heard of them the year prior when they won the Olympics in Sarajevo,

their routine to Ravel's *Bolero* shook me to my core.

Now my mother tells me they're in town for a show,

and giving a free performance at the Robson Square ice rink.

The show is at 4 o'clock, right after school.

Mom packs me *bibinka* to snack on during the show -

While I dislike most Filipino food, *bibinka* I like.

I hardly sleep the night prior, I'm up at 4 this morning -  
I hardly sleep the night prior, I'm up at 4 in the morning.  
the greatest ice dancers of all time are here, in Vancouver.  
Because Vancouver at the time is still a well-kept secret.  
Not exactly unworldly, and already pretty diverse,  
But... most of the world still isn't in on it.

*The whole world is coming to Vancouver, you know.*  
Mom says this a few times around this time.  
Something about an expo - it goes kind of over my head.  
Doesn't land till I hear Torvill and Dean are coming to Vancouver.

*Oy, kutingoy, paka makalimutan mo yng bibinka mo.*  
So says my grandmother before I leave that morning.  
*Okay, Lola,* I respond, brusquely grabbing the ziploc from her.  
I'm in a hurry because I think if I move fast  
4 pm will come just a wee-bit faster.

3:30, breathing hard coz I've pretty much run to Robson Square.  
Down to the rink through the entrance on the eastside of Robson and Howe,  
like Persephone to Hades, but with wholehearted consent.

By myself in the centre of the city -  
Mom usually accompanies me to these things,  
but she can't leave work today before 4:30 -  
so says she'll meet me after the show.  
Already close to a hundred people are gathered around the rink.  
I make an exasperated face -  
I'm not tall enough to see behind most of them.

An older white lady with a primo spot up close  
somehow catches sight of me, takes pity, beckons.  
[British accent]  
*Young man, watch from here if you want - I'm taller than you.*  
I approach her with hesitation coz I'm not supposed to talk to strangers -  
white strangers in particular are not to be trusted.  
But she's older and a woman and has a swanky British accent.  
*Thank you,* I tell her, slipping gingerly in front of her.

*Ay kutingoy. Kutingoy! Kuting na, ungoy pa.*  
Lola's nickname for me: *kutingoy*.  
*Kuting* means "kitten" and *ungoy*, "monkey";  
so *kutingoy* is "kitten-monkey" -  
a Lola-made neologism.

*Your Tagalog used to be so good - you spoke it as well as you spoke English.*  
My mother's grocery list of regrets could cover an entire supermarket.

After what seems an eternity, Torvill and Dean finally appear -

deafening applause greets them as they step onto the ice.  
By now the audience count is probably around 500 -  
most clustered downstairs, some spilling up onto the steps.  
Two kids hold a banner that says "We Love Jayne & Chris."  
I count at least a dozen Union Jacks, large and small.

So they skate around for a few minutes, occasionally waving to the crowd.  
Then they take centre ice and music starts playing.  
They skate a few show numbers but honestly it's all a blur -  
all I care about, all that matters, is their routine to *Bolero*.

*Kutingoy, nag uumpusa na Dynasty.*

I plop down beside Lola for our weekly ritual,  
feasting on the travails of the Carringtons and Colbys  
and the ever-rotating shoulder pads of Joan Collins and Linda Evans.  
*Dynasty, Dallas, All My Children, General Hospital* -  
Lola follows them all with the unironic enthusiasm of a hockey analyst.

*Gee whiz - get up and help me! You're exactly like your Dad.*

Mom's obsessive about rearranging furniture – *[he laughs to himself]*  
she rearranges the living room every week.  
I'm onto her OCD and sense the seeds of it in me, so  
I'm more defiant than lazy. I want no part of it.

*Kutingoy, tumihimk ka na - ng uumpusa na 649.*

As in Lotto 649, every Wednesday and Saturday.  
Pen, paper and tickets ready at least 2 hours prior,  
Lola's ever-hopeful that God will grant us abundance.

*Your Lola - always waiting for good luck to come our way. She was never proactive. So Filipino.*

Mom and Lola always had a tense relationship -  
each assumed the other fully understood what she wanted.

*O, sino katulad?*

Translation: remind you of anyone?  
Lola and I guffawing at *Mommie Dearest* -  
the scene where Joan Crawford strangles Christina.  
It's a rhetorical question, because the answer's a given:  
workaholic daughter, unstoppable single parent,  
super-intelligent, hyper-determined, temperamental Mom.

*Chris, if you followed your head more, think how much further along in life you'd be.*

Even today Mom likes to remind me of the tried-and-true routes I can take to financial stability,  
especially on those occasions when what I like to call integrity leads to duress.

Rites of passage:

The Indigenous Filipino one for boys is called *pukpok tuli*,  
In other words, circumcision,  
but at age 10, *[he laughs]* in the forest, and guava leaves in lieu of anaesthesia.

Rites of passage:

So I've read that the traditional Squamish one for girls is to fast,  
pluck their eyebrows and paint their bodies with red ochre.

I'm detached from one tradition,  
have no claim on the other.  
So this. THIS initiation rite, is mine alone,  
into a, an ethos of my own making.

There was never any promise they would skate *Bolero* -  
They would've been justified in leaving it for the paid show.  
So when they take centre ice to assume the dance's first pose,  
there are audible gasps and a few seconds of thunderous applause.

The Ravel starts playing.

*[Ravel's Bolero, a gentle piece of classical music featuring oboe, flutes, and trumpet, begins to play]*

*[After a few moments, the man begins to speak again.]*

Now, most know it as the piece of music that best captures the rhythms of sex but...  
Ravel said it was the machines in his father's factory that inspired the piece's rhythm,  
and a cradle song his mother sang him behind the monotonous, entrancing melody.

Their deep, flowing edges.  
The speed... with which they cover the ice.  
The quietness with which they skate -  
even standing up front, I can hardly hear a thing.  
The minimal use of basic crossover steps and two-footed skating.  
How each move in the dance leads seamlessly to the next.

Day upon day, year upon year of repetition, inscription, rehearsal, practice -  
for a glimpse, just a glimpse of the ultimate, the divine.

*[The voice stops and Ravel's Bolero continues to play on its own for a few moments. The music ends.]*

They fall to the ice, as per the end of the dance.  
Robson Square erupts in clapping and cheers.  
I... I don't remember applauding - 'cause I think I'm sad it's over.  
I move with the rest of the crowd up the steps of Robson Square.

Mom's standing in front of the art gallery to meet me.  
She asks me if I ate my *bibinka*.  
I shake my head: I forgot.  
She looks sad, goes behind me, reaches into my knapsack, grabs the *bibinka*.  
I finish it all in less than a minute - *[he chuckles to himself]* I'm hungrier than I thought.

Contract to contract,  
paycheque to paycheque,  
zero savings in the bank,

working towards the divine in the most expensive city in Canada,  
chauvinistic Lotusland,  
Occupied Territories.  
Conforming to the machine-like dictates of this city,  
Which is all the worse 'cause this is a city with hippy histories and pretensions.  
The junkies and the yogists,  
Howe Street higher-ups and cranky part-timers,  
Wounded, resilient Indigeneity and obscene settler wealth -  
the bifurcated reality I've dismissed, slept through.  
Spiritual bypass, the Buddhists call it, in pursuit of the divine.

And now, I have just enough privilege to wander either around the city or out of it -  
permanently, maybe, and to one with less dichotomous realities -  
I ascend, like Persephone, back whence I came:  
the cradle of Mom and Lola, of *bibinka* [he chuckles to himself] and Dynasty,  
of Torvill and Dean and *Bolero*,  
of machines  
and sleep.

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## SECRET CITY : ROBSON SQUARE – EPISODE 2

### LOVE IN THE SQUARE

Composed, written, and performed by Alison Jenkins  
based on a memory provided by Jerry Young

*\*You should now be standing beside the Bird of Spring statue on the north stairs of the ice rink*

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*[A guitar can be heard, and Blues music begins to play. The quality of the audio and the slight cavernous feeling suggests that this is a recording from a real life encounter at the ice rink. The music features strong melodic electric guitar with no lyrics and plays continuously.]*

*[A man, Jerry, begins speak:]*

“... and then we’re going to do just a very general, skipstep... sideways.

*[a rustling of body movements can be heard responding to the instruction.]*

And the other way.

“So one of the things that we talk a lot about in my blues class is: all of your partner technique, you should be able to use it in solo technique, or you haven’t really learned it.

*[The lyrics to the song begin. It is Big Legged Woman by Freddie King.]*

♪ I love the tip, I love the top, ♪

*[Jerry turns the music off.]*

“That’s got the... that’s the bluesiness that we’re looking for, is that, that movement. That movement quality. Cause if... if someone asks you after class, like, what step did you learn, you’re like, the step? Like, the step was this. That’s the step

*[One of the dancers, a man, speaks:]* Right.

*[Jerry:]* That’s the step, that’s not blues, right...

*[The first man laughs.]*

*[Jerry:]* ... just that’s the step.

*[A woman chuckles.]*

So it does...it does require you to have a connection, but it doesn’t need to be a close embrace. It’s easier in a close embrace because there’s just more stuff connected, um, but, but you can do it, like, one-handed, like that, n’ still feel.

*[The man responds.]* Cool.

*[Jerry:] Cool, alright, let's try it with the music.*

*[A piano begins to play. A woman begins to sing a jazzy blues tune.]*

Five o'clock, I kick off these workday shoes; hit the square, and I dance the blues  
There's so much going on here... if you look below  
Up there in the street, and you might never know  
Kick off these workday shoes, and dance the blues

*[A second piano and percussion instruments join in. There's a short instrumental break.]*

Summertime, and I see her there. By the statue, on the stair  
Captivated; I try to find the words to say. Running late, and so I have to run away

Halfway gone, I come back and stay awhile... to hear her talk, and to make her smile  
Sitting there, in the square, and I just want to stay and stay  
Like that bird of spring, furl my wings, never fly away

We move through our lives like dancers, fumbling for the steps to lead us through  
And sometimes we find the answers in the last place that we expected to

*[A short instrumental break.]*

Valentine's Day and I take her hand, lead her to the statue like I planned  
I ask her there, down on one knee: Kick off these lonesome shoes, and marry me

One year later, I take her there, to celebrate love in the square  
And in this special place, this place that makes me so happy,  
In this place... she marries me *[long held note]*

*[There's a musical shift – the percussion and piano take on a happy brightness.]*

And she don't even dance; but she plays the music so she calls the tune  
And sometimes you find romance with a lovely stranger, by a statue on an August afternoon

*[A trumpet joins in and there's short instrumental break.]*

*[The music shifts back to the earlier tone and tempo.]*

Now in this square, the circle of our rings, so much has happened by this bird of spring  
There's so much love here... if you look below  
Up there in the street, and you would never know  
Kick off these workday shoes, and daaaaance the blues

Daaaaaance the bluuues

Daaaaaance the bluuuuuuues



*[The instruments continue to play for a moment, then the song ends]*

*[The sounds shift to the earlier quality of the echoey, live recording with Jerry and his dancers.]*

*[Jerry:]* It felt a little bit weighty, rather than chunky. See if you can chunk it. Make it, the peanut butter more chunky, than smooth.

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## SECRET CITY: ROBSON SQUARE – EPISODE 3

### BEFORE THE HOUSE

Written and performed by Julie Hammond

Sound design, recording, and audio engineering by Matthew Ariaratnam

Additional recording by Julie Hammond

Based on a memory provided by Sharon Young

*\*You should now be standing in the centre of šx<sup>w</sup>ǎnəq Xwtl'e7énk Square*

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*[an eerie music, with the feeling of mist rather than monsters, plays. It underscores a woman's voice as she begins to speak.]*

It's not that I don't believe in ghosts, I just don't think I've spent much time thinking about them. Who they are, what they do, where they go during the day. *[the sound of wind comes in]* Why we can only access them at night.

*[The wind blows stronger. A bicycle can be heard travelling across pavement. The winds blow bigger, a flag flaps in the wind. Footsteps.]*

Darkness seems to arrive all at once this time of year, appearing suddenly, wagging its finger and telling me "to go inside and be careful". Of what, I'm not certain.

*[Pause. The music continues and there's unsettling ambient sounds. A far off animal cry. A vehicle far off. The music fades but the ambient noises continue.]*

The fountain is off.

Dark shapes cut across the square, hail cabs, unload suitcases, turn collars up against the wind. Fall brings the anonymity of early dusk and bulky sweaters. The bare arms and bright light of summer a quickly faded memory.

*[The wind picks up, strong blows play under her voice.]*

It's too late and too cold for bare feet in the fountain, but just right for groups of kids in loose jeans who *[a skateboard hits the pavement and begins travelling with rider]* explore the topography of the square on skateboards. *[more skateboards on pavement]* They move in and out of shadows, turning stone and curb into choreography; wheels become lines of flight, near falls erupt into laughter.

*[The wind persists, then dies down.]*

My own path is a straight line: from the museum store to my next destination – home, a dinner, a film, a book – a movement from one place directly to the next. The gallery stands solidly behind me.

*[The eerie music returns.]*

Do we make ghosts, or did they always exist? Do we become them? Which came first: the spirit or the living – or is this like trying to name darkness before light existed?

I've stopped pedaling. I turn my face to the sky. The first stars of the night are faintly visible.

There is a small car parked next to the fountain. I'm sure it was there all along as I didn't hear it approach, and yet I am certain I didn't see it a moment ago. *[The eerie music fades away]* The same is true for a figure who is moving some sort of machinery from the backseat to the hatch. The rear of the car gapes open.

All at once, *[light music tones begin, like chimes, or the edge of a glass when rubbed with a wet finger]*

Light.

Scientists believe the first light appeared in the universe 13.6 billion years ago. 200 million years after the universe came into existence.

200 million years of darkness.

*[the musical tones stop]*

The light from the back of the car comes into focus and the gallery façade is suddenly a bighouse: wolves climb up the columns, a serpent with two heads stretches across the top of the building. I am transfixed, transported.

*[the sound of First Nations drumming, on a hand held drum, begins]*

I am standing outside the gallery,

Outside a ceremonial house,

Surrounded by ghosts.

*[Pause. The sounds of drumming continues for a moment, then fades away.]*

*[Indistinguishable voices in a bus public space begin.]*

This building was a courthouse. The neo-classical columns rise skyward, a formal nod to the 'Law and Order' of Western Civilization birthed in Greece and Rome. Gavels and heavy footsteps, sentences coming down, enforcement of laws that banned potlatch and language.

There is a growing silence.

*[The crowd noise begins to fade and the drumming returns.]*

The building's columns have become cedar. Roots reach below the courthouse steps, beneath the gallery storage.

*[The drumming fades away.]*

The lions rest in the glow of the house posts, staring north. I've been told that they are exact copies of those in London's Trafalgar Square, but these lions look away from England. Their big stone eyes gaze towards the twins on the north shore, their granite muscles secretly straining to the Nelson Island quarry that birthed them nearly a century ago: 100km away as the crow flies, but I doubt the crow could carry that much stone.

Perhaps I am too doubtful...

*[Wind begins to blow. The eerie music begins again.]*

If I don't believe ghosts, do they believe in me?

*[The voice pauses. The space is filled with the noise of wind and eeriness.]*

*[The wind stops. A low xylophone plays softly in the background.]*

A colleague appears. Introductions, shaking of hands. Marianne Nicolson, the artist, explains she is testing equipment. I step back from the crowd and watch.

The sun is 4.6 billion years old, the same age as the earth, one third the age of the universe.

It takes 8 minutes and 20 seconds for the sun's light to reach the earth.

It took less time than that for the projections from the back of the car to pull the skateboarders' attention. *[The sound of skateboards on pavement.]* They gather like moths to a flame, exclaiming, awed, taken in completely.

Everything seems to have slowed down. Business executives pause, briefcases in hand. Traffic is moving along Horby and Howe but here, stillness.

*[The eerie music is added to the xylophone. The drumming returns softly, creating a symphony underneath her spoken words.]*

I turn my back to the lions, the wolves, the whales, the building, the house, the square. I watch the play of headlights and stoplights and streetlights on Georgia Street. I realize that light is a kind of ghost – traveling undetected through time and space.

There is so much that I do not recognize.

Before this museum, this courthouse, there was a field, a chicken farm. Before this field, there was a forest where trees rose hundreds of feet into the sky. Bears and beavers and elk and people lived in a complex harmony. There were days and nights. Summers, and winters. Before there was a forest or a people there was a planet. And before there was a planet, there was light. Before that, darkness.

*[the drums fade away, the xylophone and the eerie music crescendo and then are gone]*

A few weeks later, a screen is hung outside the gallery. As dusk falls the projections become visible.

*[a gentle dawning of sound commences]*

As light returns, the screen reveals text, a prayer:

*Come, Ghosts! You, whose night is day and whose day is night, in this Great House. I beg you, Great Healer, to take pity on us and restore us to life!*

*[music sounds fade]*

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## SECRET CITY: ROBSON SQUARE – EPISODE 4

### šxʷł̓ənəq SQUARE

Arranged by Julia Siedlanowska and Kanon Hewitt

Based on memories provided by Deb Pickman and Elder Jim Kew (*Musqueam*)

*Deb Pickman shares a pivotal moment at šxʷł̓ənəq Square. Elder Jim Kew shares his snəwəyət̓ on this sacred territory.*

*\*You should now be standing in front of the apartment building at 35 Seymour Street West.*

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*[A piano plays a gentle, repeating melody. After a moment, a woman begins to speak over the music.]*

It was a morning in 1984, I was undoubtedly wearing some outfit with shoulder pads in it, and I was crossing šxʷł̓ənəq Square. Formerly, the Art Gallery North Plaza.

In the rain, looking across at the entrance to Pacific Centre. That particular grand entrance to the mall was like a giant mouth ready to chew me up and spit me out.

*[she pauses for a moment]*

That's a movie, isn't it? What was my life like in 1984.

*[the music fades away to silence]*

It was like my whole life had closed up on me like a sphincter and there was no getting back in.

*[the piano returns, and plays for a moment before she speaks again]*

That year I had just moved to Vancouver from the Kootenays after the break-up of my marriage and the bankruptcy closure of a boutique I'd managed. *[her voice trembles with emotion]* I lost my kids too as they were my husband's from a previous relationship. *[she gasps for breath]* He fell in love with someone else, just like that.

*[the music fades away to silence]*

I'd dated every cute guy in the town I was living in, Nelson, in the Kootenays, and it was time to go. So I came to Vancouver, and I was so deeply unhappy, pining for my marriage and, um, my ex's kids, and just mourning, uh, everything that I'd loved about my life. So, I had a lot of good friends here that really, um, pulled me through and, uh, yes, a little tequila.

*[the piano music begins again]*

My boss, Shawneen, was almost, not even almost, ah, certifiably insane. I was working in a job that I truly hated on the lower level in retail hell. Also known as Sweet Sixteen.

My whole life I had been a reliably happy person. But this time, I had never felt so alone and miserable. On my way to work I would daydream about dramatic settings to stage my suicide, which I'm completely certain I never would have followed through on. *[she laughs]* But, perversely, I enjoyed doing it.

Anyway, this morning I'm describing in ʔxʷłənəq Square, I was on my way into the maw of Pacific Centre and I looked across at the Georgia Hotel. The bar in the front lined with small tables along the window looked like the perfect place for a romantic date. I decided I needed to start concocting a more progressive fantasy future for myself. One I was eager to fulfill.

When I was happy again in my life, loving my work, and myself, once again, I imagined I'd go to this bar with someone I was deeply in love with and mark this transition to happiness. And, honour the old unhappiness. I don't remember how many years it was before I finally enacted the scenario. *[she laughs softly]*

*[the music fades away to silence]*

My friends really guided me and, and gave me ideas about ways that I could swim out of what I was going through, and then finally one of my roommates was going to school at UBC, and um, she said 'you should go to school, we have a great theatre program', so I did *[she laughs]* and... that was the beginning of the really, um, the really happiest part of my life that I'm still enjoying today.

*[the piano music begins again]*

I think, uh, depending upon your friends, and spending time with your friends, that was the most important thing, aside from some circumstance and some decisions I made. There'd been many years of excitement and happiness after deciding to become an artist – a university degree, a fulfilling career, many happy holidays with my step-sons who I took on vacation every summer. And, also, I was with a truly wonderful man.

Finally, one day I asked him to meet me there – at the Hotel Georgia bar. He reached out to hold my hand after we sat down, confused to see me so overcome with emotion. We would both go through a lot of wonderful changes over the years. The North Plaza had to wait a lot longer.

*[the music fades away to silence]*

*[A man, Elder Jim, begins to speak. He speaks in the ancestral language of the Musqueam, hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (Hul'q'umi'num'). He then speaks in English.]*

Ladies and gentleman, good day, I trust you're all well.

*[He speaks in hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ again.]*

I am *[he speaks his indigenous name]*. In King George's language, my name is James Kew.

*[He speaks in hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ again.]*

I'm really happy that you're here. I'm an elder now. When I was fourteen I began to learn the oral history of my lineage. I was taught that our earliest memories are of the myth days, when long ago we spoke the same language as the animals. In that time, the fundamental characteristics of our culture were established. From those ancient days, come our law that all people are related. If you now live in Vancouver, then you live in our

community, you're our relative, and we have kinship obligations to you. All people are one family. Listen, then, to the law of my ancestors, your distant kin.

Late in the myth days came the Winter Without End – when even the ocean froze, when the snow never stopped. We were pushed south by this endless storm. This is the time when we learned to smoke fish, so we could get by. You might know the Winter Without End as the Wisconsin Glaciation.

When the Winter Without End left, we came home. Our first great teacher came to us then from the east, when Tsawwassen was an island. Geologists say that was 9,000 years ago. Our teachers name was ɣe:Ís.

Our Elders taught us that before he came we were not quite right. Before ɣe:Ís came to teach us, we had no empathy, no compassion. We were not charitable. We were not forgiving. Some of our Elders say that he was a god, and that he made us in to humans from what we were before he came. Other of our Elders say that he was human, that he was a great Shwanen, a great shane. To this day, we remember where he walked and performed his miracles. We followed his laws for thousands of years. We follow his laws to this day.

This place, now called ʂxʷá̌nəq Square, that my brothers and sisters from Squamish call Xwtl'e7énk Square, was once an old growth rainforest. Because ɣe:Ís taught us to respect the soul of all beings, we held those ancient growths to be sacred. We did not harvest the bones of the old growth forest. We took the small medicinal plants that grew amongst them sparingly, here and there, never depleting the source. From the ancient old growth tree we took nothing.

In our previous incarnations, when we were our ancestors, we came here to commune with the spirits of the great trees and to humbly ask their blessing, delivered through the spirits who dwell among them. For those who were worthy, for those who followed our ancient laws, for those with empathy, compassion and charity, for those who could forgive, the great spirits of the forest gave peace, tranquility, and a healing balm as their blessing. Such is the cleansing power of the great spirits of the forest. This is my memory of ʂxʷá̌nəq.

*[the piano music returns and begins to play underneath the speaking voices]*

I'm *[Jim speaks his Indigenous name]*. My English name is Jim Kew. My Secret City story is from the sniw̓, the hereditary law and teaching of my family, of my ancestors. Salish people believe we are reincarnated and it's our obligation to remember our oral histories so that we know the story of our own past. This is my Secret City story.

*{Deb's voice returns}*

Thanks for listening to my Secret City story, and I'm Deb Pickman.

*[In their own voices]*

Arranged and edited by Julia Siedlanowska and Kanon Hewitt.

*[The piano music continues for a minute, then fades away.]*

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## WHERE ARE WE?

*\*You should now be standing on the northeast corner of šx<sup>w</sup>ł̥anəq Xwtl'e7énk Square at Georgia and Howe.*

fountain is no longer there, it has been torn down for the new development you see today. They were using a megaphone to speak about things I don't remember.

The thing was, that I came to realize pretty quickly, is that the protest was about the ninety-nine percent versus the one-percent, but I didn't quite really know what that meant, other than perhaps we all hate the corptocracy in which runs our world. Everybody seemed to have these little microcosms of protests *[crowd sounds fade away]* within the whirlpool of people. It made the collective voice a little unclear. At least to me, anyways.

Well, in any case, the momentum moved onwards. My curiosity led me to follow. If you look West, down Georgia, there was a dense amount of people moving down Hornby Street. Covering street to street. Red and blue lights from police bike cruisers seemed to make little to no impact in the face of the ninety-nine percent. Never in my entire life had I seen so many people together for a protest. The number's that I found out later of people in attendance, was about four thousand. Even that seems a little less than what it felt like.

As I walked down Hornby I looked up. Looked at all these skyscrapers that we're surrounded by these lifeless windows reflecting onto each other. People surely looking down onto us. Poking out of the sea of people, I read a picket sign that said "Greed is the new black." The sun reflected off the skyscraper windows perfectly to make a lens flare that made the statement come to life. Wind. *[a camera shutter closes]* Click. I took a photo.

Then I was swallowed back into the movement. We came full circle all the way up to Howe street. Now if you're looking North towards the mountains and imagine all the way down the road to at least Cordova, that's how far it extended and came back. All still full from sidewalk-to-sidewalk. When I got to Georgia and Howe, I climbed onto the planters outside of Pacific Centre. To the left of the big dome you see there. I looked down and seen an overhead view of all the people. This is where I felt the most in the centre of it all. Nobody to tell me to get down off of where I was standing. To the right of me was another person with a video camera capturing all of this as well. We're tired of being stuck in this system that treats people poorly so that big money can be made. I loved it. As a skateboarder, as someone with a camera and an affinity of going against the grain, I felt like this is where I belonged.

However, what strikes me in the most interesting way is what is going to happen afterwards? Where is this action taking us? Is capitalism as a whole going to end? Will there finally be justice done onto those who deserve it? Will all of these people still be around for when there are no cameras or Facebook posts to tell us what to do? Or are we all just going to go back to our jobs and tell the stories about how we were together on something for half a day and it felt amazing.

I ponder that to this day. It's been seven years since I've witnessed a protest rally that big. So, as you stand here, looking around at the big buildings, the art gallery space, ask yourself this question: do we all have a common fight? *[the sound of ocean waves hitting the shore begins to play underneath his voice]* Do we know what is the most pertinent battles to be fought at this moment in time in this city? Or are there too many battles to be fought at once? Rent hikes. Pipelines. Opioid crisis. Gentrification. Racism. Meanwhile, while trying to be a better community, if you can't afford it then you're forced out. The rich are getting richer, and if you're broke then too bad.

I also wonder if you even know who the three host nations, who they are of this territory? Have you

heard of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-waututh nations? If you do, do you know why it's important to recognize these nations? Well, at the age of nineteen, in the midst of all this chaos, I certainly didn't. But now I do. And now, post-Occupy Wall Street I don't see people getting together like that anymore to help support this city. These nations are fighting for the water. For the livelihood of everyone. They are putting their bodies on the front lines so that they can defend that in which is sacred -- which we, the ninety-nine percent and one-percent thrive from. This massive day in which brought a sense of unity has seemed to have been lost.

So when I look at these relics of the past, these photos I took, I think ...are these the images of our last potential of coming together to shift the way we live? Or was just a taste of what is possible when we come together? I believe it's the latter. I believe that we all are doing our part to make a better future, but we can do more. We can come together to save what's left of our communities, because without relationships, what are we? Individualism and division keeps these structures of rent hikes and big money to run our lives. If you recognize our relatives in the water, on the land, in the skies and underground are relying on us to protect them as we move forward as a society, then you will know that we need to leave the place better than we found it for the next generations. When I stand in the epicenter of the city here at the Art Gallery, I ask myself these questions.

Though it is easy to be disheartened with how big of a paradigm shift we need, how difficult it may be for you, me, an individual to do that work, I am still hopeful. I am still going to keep standing my ground to make all of what I can be an impact. Mahsichogh. Ish nish for listening.

*[the waves fade away]*

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO SECRET CITY: ROBSON SQUARE!

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