Tragic Kid Yearning

Frankston generations on from war’s aftermath, English immigration lured by its bayside setting, its regular train service connecting Melbourne. End of the line. The very end. True, the posh whizz past by freeway to their holiday homes far enough away to the south, but there is no work here. Never was. Misspelt, mispunctuated signs in the shopping mall, the waft of caramelized sugar, cheap sad songs, the only excitement chemical, no pros, just cons.

When Point Nepean Road was the only way through what resembled a country town to where the pointy end of the peninsula greets Bass Strait’s choppy swell, locals referred to Melbourne as ‘the city’, as if some distant dream. I contributed generously to the lone secondary school’s toxic cauldron, sweaty feral kids bussed in from outposts that are now ghettos of the unemployed overflow.

We are thirteen, on the run, from home, school, punishment; my mate and me. A divvy van brakes in that main street, cops, elite thugs of a thuggish town, hurry from it, we split up. My mate, who died from cancer years ago, hides by sliding under a parked FJ Holden on his back, but they spot him, trapped.

I skedaddle, break into a beach hut, sleep rough, bravado battered by a wave of loneliness, hungry enough to eat a seagull if I could catch one. In the quiet morning a young couple wearing bathers arrives. She drops her top for his pleasure. Staring through a gap from the hut’s shadows I feast on that scene, wanting to be old enough for love. Then I think, what if he catches me pervig? I pinch out my acrid fag rolled from collected butts, wary, trapped as usual, wonder how I shall get away, find love.


The Pangolin Review – Issue 12