

Empty Spaces

—Adrian Khoo

A round of hi-fives are passed around as the electronic grid of letters fades away in a swirling pool of flames. But the celebrations are cut short when a secret passage completely fails to open, and the touchscreen resolves into a small input box asking for a password. You remember the word you got off the scrunched up paper ball at the airport, and try tapping it in. A small beep is emitted and the words “ACCESS DENIED” prints clearly across the screen in blazing red. This screen in turn fades, bringing you back to the password input screen, but with a thirty second counter. With the seconds gradually ticking away, you fumble for all the words you can think of. What about the one you got from the local paper? No, that didn’t work. And the one from the car seat postcard? Nope, no luck there either. Time is running out, and you tap in the last thing that you can think of. Thankfully, *Gossips Xtra* delivers! and one of the Pineapple skin segments slides open in a puff of white smoke.

When the smokescreen clears, the four of you take it in turns to peer inside. To your utter amazement, you see an enormous fire-lit stone cavern hidden within, complete with stalactites and stalagmites. You follow M, A and L into the Big Pineapple and slowly edge your way down the crudely carved steps leading from the outcrop at which you entered. At the bottom of the cave, you see an abandoned stage with ossifying instruments scattered about. Approaching a pedestal where a conductor may have once stood, you grab the single remnant sheet of legible music. You stare at it for a while and wonder like what the notes might sound, especially in these types of empty spaces.

