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Asphalt Skin

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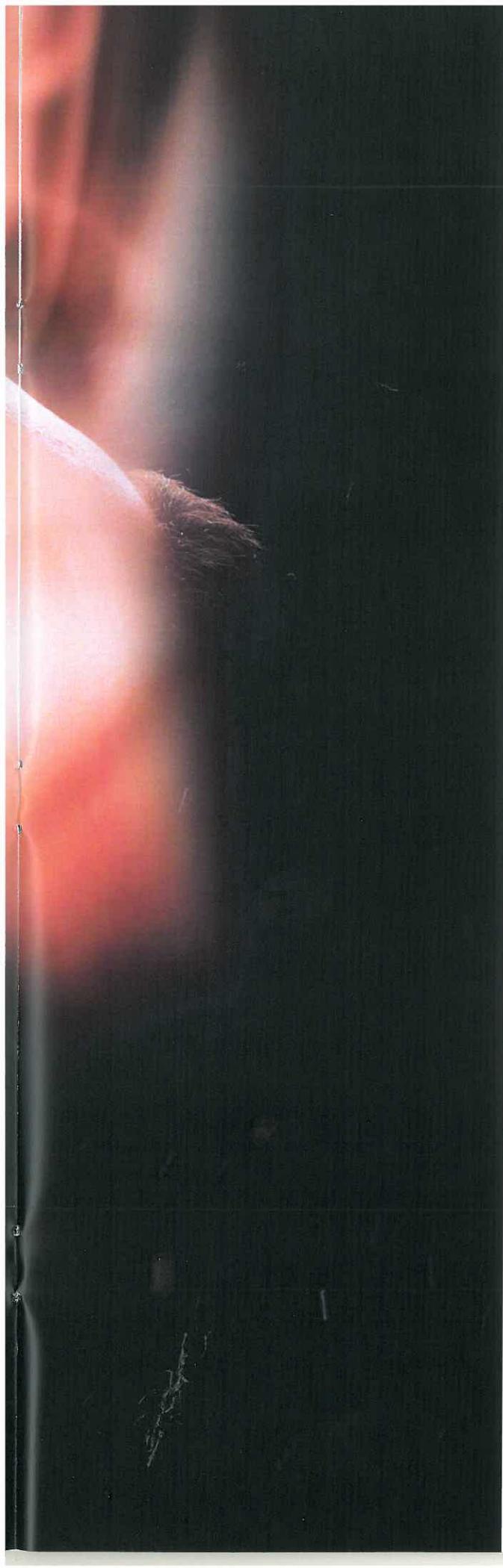
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Asphalt Skin

Chelses Charles

The asphalt scuffs the soles of feet
And echoes dreary thoughts
Of insurrection,
Misdirection,
Tearing down the locks

Walking towards them on the street
Catching hostile eyes

Continuing,
Though the fear slithers into the stomach
Gripping and squeezing the breath from both
lungs
Suffocating on anxiety
Coming near them on the street
But still keeping your distance

They come closer
Your heart thrashes against your ribcage
You think
About what
They could do
To you
And you're both infuriated and terrified

A meter away,
You turn on heel
And step into the gutter
While they stroll past on the clean pavement

They do not see you.
You blend in,
With your meekness and your
downturned head
With your asphalt skin,
 which matches the filth underfoot
In their eyes.
When you step back up,
To continue the walk of shame,
You hear the accusation.
Your heart drops into your stomach.

“How dare you mar our path!
What do you think you are?”

I think I'm human.

You say nothing.
Breathlessly -
Listlessly - You keep walking.
Past the voices, yelling after you,
Yelling after what they see:
The animal with the asphalt skin

And they watch in a sort of morbid
 fascination
As the dirt from the gutter drags across
Their sparkling pavement

And stunned, they part for you
Like a river for a stone,
They part - for the asphalt in the cement
For the dirt in the pristine
For the darkness in the light
For the Black among the White.

