

Subservient Night

Don't fret: we'll let you
arrive but never stay, past

midnight blue when red light breaks
across backs fretted by the beatings

of dragon drums in the basement
studio, swept under a caress,

matted cotton a shroud too close
for comfort. Don't rest

safe in that starry-eyed embrace;
it picks at hair that twists

deeper into your braid, sloughing off
hawthorn flakes until they fall

with you to his shined skin shoes.

You rub a stranger's cheek
in a rough palm, convinced you don't

see yourself in that tepid eye.

Mis

I say hello to Mis
every morning, watch her blood

red lip furl over fatty numbers
scattered across her plate. Mis

glazes over my choppy hair,
caressing a joint that dances

to the meter of the harsh
pizzicato jumping beneath her eyelids.

I find her leafing through my closet, plucking
matches from a burgundy pocket to light

plantation crop. I find silks and linens
on my birthday. Mis waits

for the swishing of the mailman's sack.

I like Mis in the afternoons,
the other one, whose foot rests

on my chest every night. I like
his fascination for viscera; three-dimensional

models of clinical grief, dismembered. He gleefully explains
how he could break my heart.

He grinds my old pictures into sheets of glass
tissue, kissing me

good night

so that we are both lonely.

where nothing was ever: found poem

i.

*who will tell me if I crumble
as I am made?*

love bursts in every prayer
let slip from her thinning
lips, wearing my skin ;

there is a fear within
the metallic tang that has flattened
the souls of many like us. He flies

my name to the sky, watches it
weave through the fine lines of a face
called for ,

so *stay*

until your fingers prune and I may take
them softly, roll the pit of your worry
smooth along my teeth,

when the universe breaks into sound, here,

*as quarks in the bath of a dying world, waltzing
as we lay down tea for two,*

will it fill my pupils, engorge my limbs, stain
my nails? This pas de deux to leave me
in shambles, a requiem

on the tongue. Even as the heart tears ,
you turn from what numbs you and taste

*it scorches on its way down, through the bones, around
nerves and aren't you alive?*

ii.

Beyond is where we could be if you would let me
pen a noose around your wrists and pull

*Inside, seventeen lights beating
wings ██████ back
at the flimsy edges of a polaroid refracting,
sunlight cresting over rolling obsidian.*

*in violation, hanging
for a night ██████,
cracked by hands landing
on jutting bone*

iii.

whittled porous, delineating a dream, leap

*to hear the prick of impact swallow
past the intersection*

across where even we parallel.

Destinations

A steel serpent threads through a heart
torn asunder, writhing under bared skin,
tumbling against a lock picked red,
pulsing. Does a home ever feel

like senility, remembering to forget,
a chip off the soul sustaining, blood
clotting to immortalize a blue-green fist
hissed in passing. Will my footsteps

polish the sandstone scales of my mother's
dragon, coiled in my backyard, limestone
veins calcifying on the edge of a bone
white teacup. Is understanding born under

leaking ceilings, is a destination found in a pile
of bok choy haggled invaluable, not in jade
tombs, mirrors scraping the clouds, or a serpent
slain across my skin, promising

take me home.

Tell me how we are laced with the same
arteries, torii gates cresting in the crescents
of my nails — you, an inverted capital. Can you

find me in a library of painted faces,
an eternity made ephemeral as I step
through a familiar exit, finality

a vacuous truth? Can you

hold me like a thought, crack
my worn spine like you never would with

a daydream? Can my face be seen

in a gallery pear blossom, too much
to cast away, rotten in permanence, shedding
memories like skin, the water

bear crows. Do I lose scenes of myself
in every folded paper star, collecting where
skeleton breaks from skin? Existing between

two hollows is this liminal space: crack open
the blinds and you might see why
the silence pools unbidden.

Stubborn Tissue

The voice is a bell but there is nothing graceful
in the “ching” and “chong” that escapes
the hollow vessel of my bronze body. Language

breaks as it does with the tongue, or worn
silk bought on discount, dusty in the corner
of my mind. I sometimes wish the muscle

was bendable, not broken to be forced
into the shape of a chicken egg, burst
under the heel. I have Confucious

memorized in red, white, and blue,
sinew curling around enamel, differentiating
“shi” from “si”,

*think the wind brushing through the cobwebs of lao-lao's hair, not
the rural quiet of a hometown sighing as it crumbles
into the icy tire tracks that bear the weight of two countries,*

says the hand that guides the delicate pieces of me
together, through vertical brush strokes across the shell
of my eyelids, fruit not yet pitted in the palms of a foreign land.