

## tattered

She craved the caress  
of kind fingerprints  
along the harrowing  
crosswalk of 42nd and Avalon,  
where the union of  
foamy golden streams  
from shattered Michelob bottles  
flow opposite one another  
as gracelessly as her threadbare knots  
of hair clinging desperately  
to each other. They're not the  
undulating waves they once  
were, before her Pavlovian  
impulse to heave the glass  
against the concrete jungle  
wall, where it crashes  
near the unassuming face  
of her counselor.  
Scintillating sounds of split

chandeliers scatter across the ground  
next to the traps of food stamps,  
needles that numb sorrow, clear  
harbingers of premature caskets  
resting across the cracked  
pavement. She just sits there  
with her coiffure weathered,  
withered and tangled  
like her shell  
of a heart,  
eyes glossed  
over from the spirited incense  
of amber brandy,  
asking strangers to pet her  
with the kinder end of cigarette  
butts.  
The counselor feigns deafness  
to her request  
and just inches closer  
to her, each step  
further removed from humanity,

her overgrown toes cracked near  
the edges, a salad of serrated  
enamel draping over the tiny divider  
on her slippers.  
"Get some rest",  
she was told,  
when she finally left the corner.

## Shallow Valleys and Snowy Hills

Syncopated taps from edges of old credit cards  
against a perfect square of cheap glass....

The creased eye of rolled-up Benjamin winks  
at the growing mound of powdered bliss...

But this song has no melody; the chorus never arrives.

Just chants that say: synthetic joy is the bitterest kind of lie.

Inhale, repeat.

Feelings, deplete.

Never, ever replete.

Next up.

Line up.

Follow the White Nose Rabbit.

## Many years

I glance upon the box of nostalgia scribbled  
with the handwritten bits of gratitude etched  
on my 19th birthday card. 엄마 in her mother

tongue graces me from Grandmother's land. I  
revel how these woven memories were birthed  
from the wombs of 3 matriarchs, 3 generations

of sorrow and longing and laughter that dawns  
over hand-crafted rice cakes, and the 옛 candy  
from streets paved from the sands of a younger

time - before we knew a kingdom could split so  
perfectly between brother and kin, justified by an  
invisible line separating freedom from modern

myth. I sometimes hear them ask, why does love  
silently ache? I offer the Japanese art of *kintsugi*  
to remind them how the edges of a broken heart

forms the golden roadmap to hard-won beauty.  
Then why does joy make us weep? Well, the fire  
of our people scorches our cheeks. Our eyes must

squint and writhe and cry, the tears will quench  
the parched desert inside. So I look again at the  
inscribed letters grounding me like an anchor.

They keep me from flying too high into my own  
bliss. For nothing lies there but the enticing abyss  
of blankness helping me forget my own name.