

Throw

by Nicolette Wong

She was a dead bird the morning I found her, wings clipped in dirt and blood vanished into tiny braille maps on concrete. Her belly hummed a phantom warmth through my pulse as I wobbled between cars, cactus-shaped pedestrians in mirrored glass, road signs that said "Go" to the bridge where we once hung our minds and I felt sunlight oozing from her kiss, her hair translucent through my fingers.

I must reach my stop before she turned cold.

She had traveled to find a place of her own. When there were no words from her, I folded yellow paper cranes and folded them into microscopic birds that I pushed down my throat. The night they stopped fluttering inside me, I unlocked the rained fence of my house.

* * *

There should be homes for drifters in this city, where needlework of voices wafted from a church to chase runaways drinking from park fountains. The ones I feared were the drinkers aglow in Beijing opera masks and brass music outside a sidewalk cafe. The glass doors would collapse and I would crawl through frames to escape. In the next alley a man was guarding a metal bucket to destroy the proof of his existence: bank statements, clothes, records, ashes crystallizing in his veins.

I lacked that kind of courage. In my notebook sprawled routes, street signs, houses at every corner I turned until they were burned onto the back of my eyelids. I was a crayoned faceless man in all places at once. All the wild dances could not stop my search. No one would see me in the night rocking a lantern of lights that quickened.

* * *

The sky sprouted a many-colored void: orangey for hope, blue for transit, haze for never-ending fall. I stroked her body to recall the froth inside us when, in our last lives, I melted into her valleys and her eyes lost mine in the sound. The dead bird had no memory of this. It bent me into hollow limbs of the rusted bridge I walked. Broke my stride, the winter sun.

I lit a matchstick, stuck it in between the dead bird's beaks. The flame wavered, swirled a fireball of fur and lonely feet in my hand.

Into the void I threw. She was the brightest of all hues, across the sky.

