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FINALIST, 17th Annual Poetry Prize For High School Girls in New England and New York

Dusk Requiem at Perrin Park

I.

a woman with half a stomach stares at the naked trees of Perrin Park with an ocean swallowing her eyes.
her legs steeped too soft in memory's cobalt salt, knobably jade coral that crumples a beckon
to *come sit, Aihua, let's watch the sun set.* the silvering gaps of this bench
so wide bone seeps through. she waves her translucent fingers
stippled sienna in autumn's teeth, weaves them into
bluegill fish and says *look how they just leap into our palms, Aihua—*
I try to catch these stories she sutures in water-warped air but they sluice
past my upturned hands, my mind an unwilling, gilded sieve. see, I have left Shanghai
sidewalks too far an infant—strange mosses now burble and crack open orphaned cement.
I have developed an accent in the language of touch.

II.

her chin shivers like the five egg yolks churning a cold foam with her chopsticks. lips clouded by that murky
scent I now know is gastric cancer. our anti-Zeno effect: how time unsheathes knives of light, a roiling,
heatless white: she'll fade sterile into stenciled wheelchairs and post-gastrectomy gurneys
but will still dream of that bluegill boat, still smile when my decaying tongue
can only repeat one Chinese phrase—*Wai po hao/Grandma good/Grandma good?*
—a courtesy greeting or question she won't answer. jaded wish to unspool history from her
body drifting into blue: timeless. unanswerd.

III.

the pollen is salt spray until passersby blacken the wake, lapping of the light dirge-like. airless. cyan sighing
into a mirror under dusk's tongue. I reach for her hands only to clasp my own; I cannot remember
how to speak like an infant. her touch unspooling a dried river in the crook of my elbow.
the small of her back a divot in the eggy maelstrom—disappearing as
the pooling gold calms. underfoot, I find a few of her knuckles and press them against
the sky, scattering the sun's splayed palm into staccato firelight. on this churchless pew, I find
fishboned syllables with no language, oaken splinters settled for centuries, plastic roses yellowed by age.
the soft, brief handprints of a love crystallized amber.