

Watermelon Seed

the executioner thrusts a broken boy under the guillotine,
fastens the lunette, and releases the blade. the crowd gasps
as its head splits against tile and the blood splashes my dress.
it's the pink one, mother, do you remember? the same color as
watermelon flesh.

my fingers
cling to a seed-strewn hem, caressing the pulp
that has stained the fabric. you used to bring watermelons,
sweet and sun-kissed, back from the market. we would
carve them up and bathe the seeds in brine-water jars, knowing
they would never sprout but planting them anyway. you said
everything deserves a chance at life—and yet

i wonder
if they will survive; if they will breathe without lamp-light
and lullabies and love; if one of the jars broke, fell off the shelf,
as the men came to take me away. i imagine my severed head
rolling past the town church, crisscrossing intimate alleyways,
tumbling towards the weeping willow where i buried you.
i could be your tombstone, your Watermelon Seed.

he locks me up next, facing the green sky, dress fluttering in the wind,
teenage moths jostling to see the Watermelon Seed bloom.
if i had the chance, i would sit on the cobblestone and
watch it grow. if i had the chance, mother, i would name it
after you.

the O in HOME

i disassemble the vertebrae and roll the rice grains
between my fingers. you say it is rude to play with your food.
i'm not playing, i'm composing. my melody blends with father's whisper,
who came to say THANK YOU for preparing an extra bowl, even though ghosts
don't eat. i poke at the decomposing tilapia and swallow the maggots inside.

you say dis-gust-ing but it comes out as dis-cuss-ing.
i don't correct you.

the beggars line the broken sidewalk by the station. once upon a time
i would have looked twice, but you say it is rude to stare.
i'm not staring, i'm speaking. their eyes sparkle like hard candies,
like the ones father carried in his pocket. i wonder if
the candies were buried too. maybe they would grow like seeds.
the train reads 11:34... RED LINE TO TOKYO. one-way, because
you heft the single suitcase— scarred like a war veteran, because it was—
and say that i won't miss it, that there is nothing to come back for.

we could come back for the beggars, i say.
you sigh.

the metro is a closed loop, metal arches eroded into memory. the train doors
glide open and you push me forward, saying it is rude to obstruct the line.
I'm not obstructing, I'm observing. father once told me he worked on
building arches before the war. the metro needed a metal worker, he beamed;
a few years later, the military needed one as well. you forbade me
from following his footsteps after my ACCIDENT, but now i wish i did not listen.
flesh will bubble and melt if left to the flame—that i learned the hard way.
the tongue splinters and the gum soaks up the blood—that i learned the hard way, too.

you scold me with your kiss on my cheek.
i grab my ticket tightly with my good hand.

the window blurs away into a gradient of green, father's favorite color.
i ask you if he died in the forest and you say it's rude to pry about death.
i'm not prying, i'm understanding. a bit later you fall asleep and the suitcase
falls out of your lap. it springs open; papers scatter like ashes. ADOPTION.
the word on the sheet is unfamiliar. i decide i will ask you when you wake.

on my ticket, i trace the Os in TOKYO—there are two, one for me and one for you.
(But HOME only has one.)

Pack & Unkindness

She was a raven & I was a wolf;
Promises lie devoured at the mouth of the river.

“Mother Nature has blessed us.”

“Blessed? Or cursed?”

She cooed to me & I howled back;
The thunderstorm drowned the birdsong prayer.

“Black feathers and white fur. Like yin and yang.”

“We live in the shadows of each other. That’s not life.”

She rose to the heavens & I sank to the mud;
Memories quell the floodwaters. All is quiet and pure.

“Symbiotic? That’s a weird way to spell love.”

“Is this it?”

When the wolf lays its head down
In eternal tranquility,
Does the raven not call,

To pack & unkindness alike,

For a merciless feast?