

Strange Vernacular

By Mags Webster

That summer moon reminds me
we are in the season of haiku
when blossom snows the ground around the pool
and singing holds the colour of the air
I try to imagine myself as a lotus: sexual and mysterious
and I spend centuries perfecting my smile

at length, I realise this too may be futile
you have invented all the language we will ever need

I've found when something's worth learning
I always resist it at first
you've taught me words which left their bite marks on my skin
carved your inventories on my spine
you've scoped me like landscape and I await
the brushstrokes of your breath, the weather of tongues

I'm still learning how to read your poetry,
how to ride into the blush of sunset

at night you are an untamed garden
where I am abandoned to the trees
they speak a strange vernacular,
each word an almond plashing to the ground
which splits and blooms into tiny cracks:
a new genealogy of speech

I worship you for your flavours
the umami of your flowers

beside you I am like a moth
which brims the shadows with flicker,
blots candlelight with its wings
calm as moon, you cup me in your hands
taste me syllable by syllable
phrase me tender as lychee

this time, let me script you into my flesh,
wear you like small, perfect petals on my skin.

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