

Evelyn Lau / THREE POEMS

CONCLUSION

She likes it cold here —
her hands, scorched by his heat,
dance backwards to safety.
Shot by arrows of exhaustion,
his eyes pulse blue hearts, his temples
swell into tenderness,
but she seeks no refuge in soft spots,
trains instead on the cutting edges.

She remembers now the why:
the years have knit the nerves in her shoulders
high into her neck,
snapped muscles locked and secret.
Voices like warm taffy
trussed her in ropes of platitudes
while armies waited to spring unsheathed,
eyes crossed in disdain.
The hungry ones wait still
for her moment of ripeness —
they will sate their appetites
on her moment of quick weakening.

His fingers spread smooth tendrils across her skin.
Furrows cemented between her eyes,
she stacks the barriers between them
— such a small space to fill —
plucks his hairs from the mattress,
draws bitterness tight around her body.
She stands him outside, and his brave smile
shrivels in the winter frost.

I AM SURE THIS IS

better in the long run
this mixture of white wine and bile in the bathroom sink
like something marinated in a musty fridge
you haven't gotten old enough nor rich enough in the past year
for someone like me to want you
muscles and tight jeans notwithstanding
that familiar hurt look and all the while I'm thinking
of someone else, clean businessman hands
another touch, you could say it was like death
peculiar but awesome
I followed its patchouli scent

drunk now as a forgotten poet in a once-popular bar
eager to sell or sacrifice any part of himself
for that starry career
scotches and slowly sipped tomato beers
those desperate kisses at the bus station
his begging mouth open in front of passersby
I remember simply an evening where it rained
after he left, I wore high heels and it seemed
I had miles to walk alone
downhill

I'm willing to go anywhere but here
someplace sandy, with highways and many cars
I shall wear durable clothing
seems like everybody went places except me
I envy their motion, their initiative
their willingness to give up the struggle and start new
someplace cleansed of old miseries

shamefully remembered bodies
for now my eyes are so heavy
I blame it on the wind that blew up from the beach
blew the shoreline into my eyes
I pump bravely at tears but none arrive
not even four a.m. where no one hears them

you never cried either, at least not in my company
I wanted to see you broken
wanted it to be me who'd worked you over
till everything crashed inside you
like one prolonged orgasm
your adventurous hands do nothing for me
I've experienced the skill of numerous tongues
all the orifices partaken of
I've nothing special here to give you
nothing that can't be bought, and
most men could outbid you any day

certainly you have no success, just a pair of hands and needle marks
in your arms
a grinding crotch and those punk boots
I've made it so far without needing that
lived through the losses of others
the fights and then their moves to different cities
I assure you
there's no bridging ground
maybe we'll meet and have coffee someday
for now, I am sure this is best

FREEBASING

fingers urgent against the window. three a.m.

you fall indoors
a bubble clutched in shivering hands.
wind sweeps you into lamplight; a carpet
floats you towards kitchen chair.

fingers frantic
you seduce mad light into this contraption:
bottle and pipe
starred with white grains like fleas
hopping away from skeletal hands

your eyes gouged, sleepless
the pipe wobbles on your palm
like breast of bird fluttering in hand
milk-pale
cocaine crystals blooming in a glass globe

flame shoots into pipe
smoke swirls inside the bottle
a chemical smell here —
your mouth gasps for this strange bird
sucks and swallows

black figure blazes

the bottle clears
a trace of smoke escapes bleached lips
your grin wraps rubbery
around the splintering room