

SHEARSMAN

113 & 114



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Ho Cheung Lee

Wrapping Paper

Uncle's body found.
For how long he'd been lying
next to his bed we don't know,
the doctor didn't say. His neighbours
smelled him and made the call.

This afternoon, his sister, my mother-in-law,
waited at the mortuary's reception for
the large orange door to slide.
Her mind a vacuum for three minutes
nine seconds.
The tanned butcher man understood her difficulty.

Just stay right there, yes,
just stay where you are.
Just a glance will do. Yes.
That's him alright? Good.

And is his name correct?

Her muted vomit followed
her frustration that spilled out
from the top of her dark glasses.
The stink was agonizing—
it carried his face
and story of his last hours
stabbing through her shut eyelids.
It hummed.

On the way to the crematorium,
the driving lady in purple spoke not a word.
Alan Tam's duet with Teresa Carpio
muffled the passengers with

the oldies, lingering as if we
played them within our skulls.

The dangling fragrance bag in its
kimono danced to the voices as I
tore open the white packet
for the coin and the candy.

The wrapping paper's red,
rustling.
As I was about to dump it into
the cup-holder at my arm rest,
I found three pieces already
filling the unwanted hollow.
All emaciated, lifeless, forgotten.

The Temple Man

18:26.
The depressive sun still cast two
towering shadows in front of the
misty outlines, inching towards
me like two hollowed figures
surfaced from the dried, barren earth.
The visitation was punctual and silent.
They smelled like roots as they passed by,
liquefying into the smoke-drowned room.
Their words did not actually leave the aura that
draped their emptied bodies.
The boy turned his head once, his eyes
sparkled like dark pearls which
reminded me of myself waiting—
waiting to be taken at his yard sale. The day
he last climbed down from our old bed
where I lay flat to dream that my

bare chest still felt his left arm
from his remaining scent. The bedding
stained like blossoms. I heard the last
seagull stirring the gods behind me.

I hear the gods behind me every time
before the temple gates close.

five feet away

i.m. Mrs Lau Choy Yim Ling (1968-2015)

Seventh month of the moon calendar

A friend called and asked me to confirm
your husband's message

It was a bad joke

The boy was excused before
you left the bed and the six tubes
running through the emaciated body
like glass tentacles draining from a decaying prey

In your night gown you don't sleep

The aged woman burning paper offerings
in the street veiled by the mellifluous mist
Street lamp flickered, children questioned, ashes
carried away

I try to look for you and the rest
roaming around my car as it halts
The cracks and stains and wounds
on the walls need much imagination

Ventilation humming deep
A suppressed moan

I can't help scrolling backwards in time
Our last conversation never started

Your makeup
This final selfie

(I really wasn't lying
You are beautiful)

I stroke your frozen face and convince myself
that your lips curl

You are the song about stars
the verve in your disconnected words
the composure
his eyes

Marius told me about the grasshopper
on the front screen of the car this morning

I see no moth but a flattened red-whiskered bulbul
five feet away