

Sky Burial

Sertar, Tibet

From the voice of the rogyapa — the one who prepares the body to be offered to the vultures.

I.

I wake before the frost lifts from its stone, the kettle
hissing—steam climbing the dark like breath.
The valley's still asleep under its blue shawl.
My blade rests where I left it, its oiled edge catching
what little light glints from the prayer wheel.

They say not to name the dead.
That a name is a rope tethering them
too close to the land. So I don't.
I call her "offering," or "weight."
In her face, I find echoes of the girl
from the mountain school I left in childhood
who once braided her hair with red string.

I gather her life into a ball of tsampa—
dense with ghee, the kind she pressed
into shape with her flour-dusted hands.
I dip these memories into butter tea, steam
unfurling like prayer flags in the wind.
The tea is salty, thick on my tongue.
Her fingers always shone with oil, barley flecks.
Outside, a goat coughs by the tether post.

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What meaning in feeding it delicacies?

Our House Forgot Our Names

Sai Kung, Hong Kong (Outskirts)

The wind slides through the torn mosquito screen.
The hallway smells like rust, yesterday's rain.
Creaks of the door sound as we step in. A photograph of us
leans, unseen— its frame unhooked, the glass panels
stained with limescale from the ocean's sprays.
The hallway still smells of rust and rain.
Yesterday, we came back just to say goodbye.
We wipe dust and time from each unhooked frame.
You looked away, so I didn't cry.
Today, we just come back to say goodbye.
I trace the wall, hoping it might remember us.
I look away, so you don't cry.
Our childhood still flickers, faint and blue.
I trace the wall, as if it might remember
The photograph we step into, still unseen—
Ma's faded sundress, Ba's ceramic cup holding
his floating tea leaves. Faint, blue.
We let it all slide through the torn screen.