

Ghazal for Matrilineal Multiverse

In this life, I am star-boned. An undeniable daughter. A womb
where the universe's core once slept. I am my mother's sun,

the pinnacle of her light and undoing. A woman must love
what she is the devotee of. In this life, there is poison

in her wail that resembles mine. What burns and dies
in a girl is for her child to carry. This penchant for arson

makes us alike. In this life, ba ngoai's jade bracelet
is futile in my palm. The stonemason

told her it would ward away parasitic spirits for
generations to come. In another life, I cinder in unison

with my daughter. I love her because I must. I tell her
our anger is a religion. We cannot jettison

it from our blood. This fidelity to my mother and hers
to her mother. In another life, the comparison

ends. My mother is no mother. She lulls cuckoos in the calm of the
moonlight by a pond in New York. No vessel to inherit her crimson.

In that life, she croons coldly. Palms ba ngoai's bracelet. Her cheeks
milky with squandered stars. What a woman to imprison.

How often does the satellite believe in what she cradles? I never asked
to be believed in. I wonder if she tried to reason

out the echoes. In that other life, when she decided my existence
a preventable infinity. If ba ngoai thought this a treason

or a mercy. A wrangling of wraiths. In that other life, the sky
is glacial. The day lilies, haunted. A diorama as a lesson:

In that other life, my mother nurses a cold brew.
Sunny amidst a ghost-chilled season.