

Yun Wang

THE BOOK OF TOTALITY

Chapter I

SHARD

I let myself fall
I dig with my fingers
into a hole
Mud and gravel fall in my face
The earth closes in on me

I don't stop when my nails break
I miss the sound of birds
I dig toward a hint of light

Each time a new light
strips me naked

WHISPERS

Alto: seasons. A face with a faint moustache above the firm upper lip.
The scent of fresh ripe fruits and rotten leaves.

Mezzo: crescents. A face brimming with ecliptic dreams.
Dark eyes gather the stars. The scent of lilacs and firewood.

Soprano: sand. A marble face hewed to translucence.
She has entered the gate of childbirth, and become a statue.

CONDENSATION

An imaginary cat
licks her feet at midnight.

At midnight, the woman
who has been herself all day
(charting the stars,
cooking, doing dishes,
tending to her child)
turns into someone else.

Someone who cannot lift
her gaze from the moon.
Someone who sits in the empty
kitchen, weeping.

One day the cat will materialize.
Everyone will leave her.

Chapter II

TRANSMUTATION IN THE TRAIN

He said his bones were brittle as glass.
He told her he had to be careful.

She said you must be from another planet
on the other side of the Galaxy.

He agreed. She told him she is always right.
He said I am not used to you yet.

Her ears burst with the mews
of her imaginary cat, dying to put
its soft paws on his imaginary cat.

His cat turned into a beagle at the scent
of a new passenger, a tall Ukrainian woman
with very gray eyes.

MIRAGES OF INDISCRETION

The man in a wheelchair contemplated Wagner and the shrinking death of stars.
Warping in the fabric of space and time.

You contemplate cherry blossoms on my blouse.

The wife conjured Helen and Paris from silenced scripts.
Her lover lit a French cigarette, stood beneath red oaks outside the house.

You traveled three continents with a backpack. I dream of women you assisted.

The nurse cried watching *Days of Our Lives*, plucked a rose from the garden.
The man contemplated a white rose in a pink vase.

You quote Nietzsche to mock my theory of the cosmos.

The man divorced his wife of thirty-six years, married his nurse.
You gave up astronomy in disgust, entered medical school in a desert.

THE KNOT

For the last time I imagine
clothing you in black leather
I watch you ride away
on a shining motorcycle
with a woman sitting behind you
Someone you touched when she smiled
hugs tightly to your waist

*You touched me when I wept
I saw aurora-lit sky
What was your excuse*

Someone else sits alone in a gas station
curtained in needles of ice
He draws with his finger on the window
my name in Egyptian hieroglyphs
Your approach rips open
the smooth dance of snow
He puts on a pair of sunglasses
Your girlfriend winks at him
when you turn to pump the gas

Black wings open once
then close for all eternity

*Chapter III*TO THE ALIEN LISTENING
THROUGH THE GALACTIC WORMHOLE

Endless bamboo forests breathe
with scarlet orchids.
Will you cross the Galaxy to see
a blue planet waltzing around
a golden star?

Will you ride with the light to hear
sidereal tides rehearse
algae-green incantations,
the wind's whisper over
moonlit graveyards?

Will you descend from the invisible
ladder in the sky
to see the giant star vanish?
A blinding diamond ring
encircles the invisible star.

CONCEPTION

The unnamed flowers close dead tight, the rain erases a collage of footprints.
They wait for ten or twenty years, to shed their seeds.

Within a lead sarcophagus, men in Mylar costumes search for the missing
nuclear fuel that could feed a second chain reaction.

And the aliens, said to be small and with egg-size dark eyes, could be conducting
biological experiments.

When the fire comes, the flowers open again, glow slowly into ashes.
The seeds remain. There will be little parachutes.

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE

The black bowl of sky
fills with birds
going home to sleep.

If you seek the sun
you will go blind.

You look down, your feet
feel the pulsing veins of Earth.

Light begins to spill
from the bottom of sky.
The horizon is dark.
Venus blazes on the white shoulder
of Jupiter.