

*sweet
dreams
girl*

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for the lost
for my mother
for suzanne
& for you

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still life

soft girl
you know the buzz of cable
doesn't muffle anything.

your mother's hair is ripping
like the sound of zipping
body bags and goodbyes.

you are too young to think
of ways to fit your green flesh
in a grave.

you don't just take a girl
try to set her on fire
&burn.

there's a certain glee that comes with
leaving, this is how it goes—
yes he hits us like a drum

but no you are not ashen.
you are picking your lip
like you know how to have a voice

but don't want to use it because
you haven't learned to savor the lostness
that comes with overgrown girls.

Self-Portrait in My Mother's Mouth

when mama took me from the sky
she said she looked above the eucalyptus
and the melody of the moon
to see the star that birthed me.

i am girl and i am nestled between
breasts and warmth.
mama's lips against mine
humming a sleep song
for my mind.

i still have it here—
it goes: *uh na, pat, uh na, pat, uh na*
sweet girl you will grow a cherry tree
in your stomach if you do not learn to
live on your own.

there are cracks between your thighs
because sometimes we need to let
beauty breathe. i exhale myself into
gravity, let the reflection of my skin
admire itself in lamplight.

and i see
how easy it is to dim myself
in the shadows,
even if i belong in the glow.

Through the Eyes of a Child

Dried chrysanthemums on the front lawn
 with my mother's mother's glasses, seething.
Cradling a dead bee
 the one who knew of my dreams—
selfish dreams of being whole
 and bright and girl.

** *

In ninth grade, a white boy called me ugly. In
 the backyard, my father is pulling weeds
a sunburn across his blank scalp, knees gritty and ruined.
 He calls them ugly, maybe I am.

** *

Blue light on a granite island
 with an A in English and a D in biology.
My mother saying, *You are a yellow weed*
 and us weeds have to be better, at everything, always.
And the whirlwind of a lawnmower is my head
 split and spinning and lost.

WHEN MY MOTHER DIES SHE SWEARS I'LL BECOME—

lullabies, hydrangeas, tap shoes, ugly yellow houses that house ugly yellow people, stars, rotten plums on the front porch, snapping stems of green beans, grapefruits that won't grow, a girl that doesn't know, nothing at all, lullabies, a red stain that refuses to own up to itself, violent raindrops, metaphors, wrinkles, benign tumors, a reflection of a pretty girl, a reflection of a thin girl, something more than the reflection of an average girl, lullabies, a pushpin stabbing people in the front, back, and all the way through, smart, memories, bad grades, bad poems, bad daughters, nothing at all, a liar, another reason i wish i was loved, another reason i wish i wasn't so tired, another reason i just want to sleep, anxiety attacks, a ghost girl, migraines with no relief, blind, blue hour, nothing at all, cold, dependent on others, nothing, rem dreams, nothing, not anything, nothing, nothing, nothing, something invincible

erased boy

we are warm bellied mistakes
lying next to ripe milkweed angels.
wild bulbs of light with their
wings folded like tulips but i still feel
moonless.

the taste of red hibiscus seems so
foreign like it's wrong to think
i found a goodboy.
he gives me sweet citrus like
sweet kisses by an empty lake.

they tell me there are no *goodboys*
lacking a dog. but what they don't know is
i am the dog.
what i meant was i am the good boy.
or maybe i was just a boy
or maybe i wasn't anything at all.

dissonance

The car I steer does not belong to this body,
so I close my eyes and make my own sky.
I'm standing in the middle of an elevator
reflected, golden and fluid.
I wish the ridges of my body didn't feel so unsafe.
It's winter here. Even in August, winter is here.

Your footsteps have yet to recede from
my divided thighs.
Take this. Drink water. Heal.
I almost believed I could be somebody
then someone new walked through me
a ghost boy always hoping.

Goodbye porcelain doll, the mirror crackles
back to one apple slice a meal and wanting to be
thin thin thin.
Some nights I watch women and men's
faces blur until I blur with them.
But everything leaves and even spring comes again.

eighteen

i was born
woven in a hue of yellow
obscured in cloudy blue skies.
the ones that fill white wind poppies
with distaste and beauty.

i do not have delicate petals
or the stem of a sought after
girl i am not the sun—
filled with every color there is to love.
only yellow on the
outside

inside

through

come close, look at me
stranded and alone
trivial, in a sandstorm.
in between these barren plains
are my ashes, i may be marigold but
i am still scattered

forget me not

all that i love tonight—
the quiet of driving home
your body holding the undefined lines of mine
a kind of lullaby i haven't gotten sick of
and
my mother's voice warning me no,
you did not find God in a blue boy from suburbia
but yes, he might be the one
and
there's no one left to water the pot of lamb's ear
i watched you leave on the front porch
like you don't even know that we
—might be lost tomorrow.

about the author



Isabelle Jia is a writer from the San Francisco Bay Area, CA. Her work has appeared, or is forthcoming in *Alexandria Quarterly*, *The Blueshift Journal*, *Rising Phoenix Review* and many more. Jia has attended the Iowa Young Writers Studio and the California State Summer School of Arts. She has also been recognized as a California Arts Scholar, by the Walt Whitman National Poetry Foundation, and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers. Currently, she works for *The Speakeasy Project*, *The Ellis Review*, and *Bitter Melon Magazine*. For more on her work, go to <http://isabellejia.weebly.com/>