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## The Kin-Ship

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AN IU-MIEN FUNERAL

They mourned him in whispers  
as if they had done that eternally  
or in life,  
chanting and waiting to crumble from the knees,  
only to steal some rest and gossip.  
Many of them were old.  
The bodies lowered to his level of slumber,  
the skeleton of a deflated balloon.  
I could see his nose out of joint,  
for one person was wearing black, not white.  
As an atheist by document, he asked for an ethnic burial,  
and grandma nodded in agreement  
to each progressing mourner.  
The casket with one screw left half-hammered—  
glossy, smoothed, and manufactured like his radio to be buried.  
Anachronistic shrouds only and for all to open the casket  
for the final examination—is it final?  
Envelopes, radio, and toothbrushes  
and then came the hearse.  
Only straight men were allowed to flank  
the parade, and the chickens were sacrificed.  
Blood spilled accurately, according to a lost cosmology,  
around the coffin lid, unfit like his abdomen.  
An old man's stomach, wrinkled, punctured,  
and now covered in other layers, fresh or dead.  
The ritual was short enough to catch some chill in a temple.  
At the end of the parade was the boy in black,  
I reminisce, who looked like me in my twenties.  
He sobbed and later sniffled a lot, almost negligible,  
not as much a disturbance to the resting crowd,  
but he remained outside the temple roof,  
like a priest arriving late but never entering out of hesitation.  
His fine hair and lips chapped beyond  
the pallor, untanned by the summer here,  
leaving films of tears crossing the bridge  
and my vision blurry as the season straddled.  
Summer was here—  
grandpa was not dead yet, not until I saw the boy.

I couldn't but felt obliged to justify before grandma spoke more.  
He wasn't there to keep me sober but judged.  
In the old days, I would make tea for grandpa  
around this time. I invited the boy to join my routine.  
They both would have to wake up  
from that indulgent game of glares.

### THREE AM

When the faucet no longer  
speaks water, even as the noise  
washing off the late-night adverts,  
a monotone. After Three AM,  
the fountain gushed, danced  
in short and long chants.  
Too often, it paused for a tick,  
waiting for the woman upstairs  
to enjoy the last drip of her bath  
and saunter to the porch barefoot.  
No one heard her footsteps, not  
even her mother or daughter.  
A careful trail of blood in pairs  
leading to the upstream  
of something opposite to violence.  
The cusp of her ankle is caressed,  
her earlobes chilled, trembled,  
and raised aloft, leaving the chimes  
jingling as her earrings,  
raining short and long tears.