

Where There's Water by Derek Chan

69

It has been dusk for years & I do not remember the last time the guppies in my vase opened their mouths to the taste of rosewater there is a bear snoring in my attic a widow singing in my basement I expected less noise in purgatory & meanwhile so many Decembers have passed since the cat came pawing at the backdoor that I'm beginning to forget what my hands were made for as if I woke up in the bones of a mannequin feeling as perfect & useless as a wedding dress in a jar of formaldehyde some say the day begins in a storm of milk & ends in a thimble of prayer others say it's the reverse either way you choose it's impossible to sleep without choking on a sea of feathers nothing dries nothing hardens nothing grows here I beat clouds of moth-dust from my carpet with a judge's mallet only for it to cling to the walls & baby powder my lips for so long I thought of filling a bathtub with bright-gold seeds & slipping underneath until I forgot where I ended & flowers began but my body a garden of plastic treasures every twitching vein I tweeze out & pocket into dirt always staling into stalks of dried thyme in younger days I sat on the front porch by the pond the summer air heavy & warm as lamb fat saffron cakes sugaring my nostrils & my mother pushing honey through my hair but the years feathering away from me her face blurring over like the wings of a thrashing ghost-finch my head a vacuum of space where wooden dice collide into splinters I can still recognise beauty but only its names *honeysuckle elderflower bottled oxblood* sometimes I still look to the pond & see a single fox sipping its eyes meeting mine two glowing lilacs neither of us blinking ●

Derek Chan (23) is a Melbourne-based writer soon-to-be graduated from Monash University. He has been published in journals such as *Meanjin*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and *Verge*. ↑