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When My Name Was Cristal

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There is something liberating about those dark cold nights when I’m the last person on campus — the winter wind sticks to my skin like thick perfume, each door of each building gets successively locked. Nowhere to hide. I walk by every bright blue light from the emergency phones, my native language burning in the back of my throat (like a secret that only belongs to me).

Can they know? How it feels when I hear myself speaking and something snaps inside of me? Surprise! I am halfway across the world alone and speaking, yelling at every bright blue light on this empty campus.

On those cold nights, when I can see my breath and the only sound is from my boots crushing rock salt, I think of simpler times: napping on the granite floors, my summer white dress stained with tomatoes, the dizzying smell of cilantro and salt and seaweed.
Simpler times when
my name still sounded like it should —
like an uninterested wave conquering a patch of sand.

Now as I hug the winter winds,
I fear that my anonymity
across this empty campus
might swallow me whole,
and I will never be Cristal again.