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Self-Portrait on a September Midnight

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Self-Portrait on a September Midnight

Pavitra Attanayake

*there is a shape-shifting wyvern
breathing out plumes of dirty laughing smoke
entangled in a bloody embrace of brotherly hatred
with a golden-striped Tiger
whose pelt is painted with the dawn sky and a dying sun
in a skeleton field shrouded
with the choking dust of an uncertain beginning
and the cloying mist of a murkier end*

*This wyvern, my wyvern, is cruel
she paints herself into the sleeping shadow of Tiger
whispering sweet promises and smiling
with all her teeth*

today, everything was normal.

I woke up bleary-eyed with a head full of knots that bit my raking fingers
from five hours of faking sleep and two more of reading under the darkness of a sleeping house
left my sweatpants in a forgotten closet corner and painted expression on my eyes in pale gold
made it through the day without my vagrant mind
wandering into the abyss I've never found the bottom of, even after all these aching years

but somedays,

somedays

Somedays.

*the wyvern likes to play
toying with its prey like an old man's game of chess*

the road to home swerves like the robin who hit my window and dropped like a porcelain angel
winter days, when silent ice lies in wait like a starved midnight python
and I fly out the house with both shoes untied
laces contorting in winter's morning wind

dancing with Death in a soaring waltz, dressed in a blue metal gown
with long sleeves to cover the faded silver stripes I drew on my arms once upon a time
that have the phantom power to hurt others much more than they ever hurt me

*Tiger snarls in warning
singing pain like the voice of a cracked violin
a musician doesn't care enough to mend*

I see it: Shoes. Laces. Accelerator.
entangling in an angry lover's embrace on stoic roads that never learned forgiveness
I tie my right shoe, just my right shoe
because Death is handsome in his mysterious ways,
and I am a summer romance destined to end
but a shattered glass mosaic around that old oak tree is a bit painful, don't you think?

and Somedays

these days,

I'm quite afraid of pain.