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## 1000 Paper Cranes

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## 1000 Paper Cranes

*Pavitra Attanayake*

Do you remember the first time you made me a paper crane?  
on the front step of our house, from a sheet of week-old newspaper  
carrying the same smell of ancient libraries that lingered within your mind  
and drifted about your room, caressing me as I snuck in for just a quick sniff  
You'd look up from your desk littered with the will of the stars  
and smile.

You don't? It's okay, I know  
it's hard, probably frightening too,  
isn't it?

More frightening than those days when I couldn't bear to see you  
lying in bed with tubes like rusted barbed wire shoved down your throat  
in a prison world that can only bring you pain

But one day, we're gonna sit together  
on that dusty front step painted with  
the bloody red of crushed vanadinite  
and I'm going to show you  
all the stories stored  
within the folds of one thousand paper cranes.

### *Three paper cranes*

one stained flaming garnet, etched with candle burns clawing up the sides  
with rips torn exactly, so precisely  
that wings couldn't leave this godless ground  
for the girl I was.

one with eyes the color of old pennies and hidden secrets left in back alleyways  
tail a bit soggy from the tears of troublemakers with hearts of gold  
pressed under a heavy, foreboding book of unspoken thought  
for the person I am.

and one folded with sharp edges of ruthless beauty  
the trembling of laughing violins and manic grins  
white sheets, embroidered in gold, honey, the first drop of rain on a desert mind  
for the woman I want to be.

*Two paper cranes*

    painted in the weeping blue of midsummer's night sorrow and stolen goodbyes  
    layer upon layer, walls of dead onyx ribs suffocating, stiff  
    like the feel of new leather armor upon a weary youth who saw too much of the world  
for the cruel princes  
    who carry around glistening jagged javelins  
    made from the colored church glass shards of my mind  
    and pick flowers for crying maidens with perfectly fake golden hair  
    from the gardens within my watching eyes

*Four paper cranes*

    made of flimsy motel stationary, grimy from too many hands, one too many nights  
    with weakened heads that droop onto my shoulder in weary defeat  
    ancient hollowed willow trees standing against a callous winter's storm  
    and tails like needles blunted  
    from regretful sorrow, folded without care  
    but with the precision of tearful anger  
for friends I hung on to  
    too long

*One paper crane*

    bathed in a sliver of snarling pewter moonlight  
    crawling into my bed uninvited and  
    drenched in smeared lipstick made  
    from the silent waterfalls of my arms  
for the battle scars that refuse to leave  
    as I sit waiting, waiting 'til  
    iron suns awaken to protect me from  
    these thoughts dancing around the sadness in my veins

*Five paper cranes*

    contorted from early morning clouds drenched in fire  
    gathered from mid-July days  
    stored in boxes of desire hidden in a shallow grave  
    so fragile that I'm afraid to even  
    think too long around them  
for the dreams I can't bring myself to let go  
    like strangers I fall in love with  
    while passing by on city roads

*And nine-hundred-eighty-three paper cranes*  
for all the desires my voice can't sing  
dying sirens buried between rotting wood and thrashing waters  
and all the sins my mind won't let me think  
lonely straw fields where lightning comes to frolic  
and all the memories I have yet to make  
forgotten libraries filled with books no one has ever read

But I'll leave one paper crane  
that we can make together  
for the time I told you goodbye  
and you didn't answer,  
I walked out remembering  
a figment of your arms  
holding me  
as a storm wind of rustling wings  
carried you away