

kinder to self

I mean to send you
a gold-embossed
paper crane with
cherry blossom wings,

and a bent Chiyogami neck
reaching for life's rich
nectar or

shying from its tough
questions. I would have
wished instead
to send a postcard,

a picturesque childhood:
a doting mother's heart
brimmed with pride

but my memory
is a clock with eager hands
pointing forever towards

forgiveness:
this bluest lake of time

or a dreamt-up hour.

Women at the Onsen

i.
Purity in a valley,
purity in a lake.

A world in silhouettes and stillness;
the shape of water in a wooden pail.

ii.
Nothing exists beyond her neck,
her shoulder blades, and
a neatly-folded towel on her head.

iii.
To have fled the glass tower
Mand all those smiles in Ginza.

What's left are just limbs,
secrets shrouded in steam.

You surrender to
the lake: its utopian
blue and amnesiac.

iv
Beyond the small ryokan
the black mountains stare
at our bare torsos.

So many butterflies in the dark.

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Por por

In my mind I'd carry you, because you have tiny feet. I'd carry you to eat the best fish and chips in town, make you dumplings which you'd clack your tongue in disapproval because the dumpling skin is far too thick, and we'd laugh at the way Alex holds his chopsticks. I'd bring you to meet his family, and they'd welcome you with their homemade chorizo and preto feijão dishes, and teach you how to say obrigada and maluco. I'd carry you to see Big Ben, turn the clock backwards like Mary Poppins surely can. I'd carry you to Diagon Alley where Harry and Hermione will emerge any minute with their owls. I'd carry you to Hyde Park, and you've never seen, never fed a swan. And I'd see your frail body regain strength, as we take a ride on an ombre-pink, sheepskin-soft rickshaw to cross the Thames, feeling triply young, singing Jasmine Flower in the river breeze