

Alyssa

by Nicolette Wong

Before the paint spikes *Coney Island* to the wind, I walk home through the strum of a shield, colder than the one he left behind. For the hour I sprawl along the sidewalk in her laugh, crater's shadows for Wonder Wheel, he is midnight sun in The Last Waltz. Where the glow sears moist grass, he will char the gold brim with his fingers ("Nice hat, Alyssa. So Mcorley's."). What's that taste of thorn in the dark's vanishing? Or he is the froth beneath her eyeliner, a door to panache, past the bartender who draws beer on their foreheads ("Everyone has a mind to cross where you want to.") amid the crowd's roar. I recognize that handwriting anywhere he leaves it. On a tossed chair at the garage. A monochrome wrap over our tales on a raft. Of how we splash, rip curls between texts, on islands drifting into polarized splices. Her polka dot skirt through his lens. The cracking granite and wind in my veins. Chase light for home or ashes of memory. He will swing on my palm when I call to the other end of the world: *Alyssa*.

