

Pastoral Hide & Seek

by Nicolette Wong

—After Shuji Terayama

Little bird, take me to the kimono girls. My childhood weaves a melange of faces and rose petals, and I roam the breadth of my mother's bloom. Every dawn a sepia wind stirs the mountain, recasts our karma and Buddha in the snow. Where is my surf along the cliffs, windmills sailing from rock to rock? I ask them to soothe my mother: her wooden comb, her hair a lullaby of taut strings. The sea dies where a cello torques on sand, leaving me without its compass. An old clock sings.

Who wants an altar? Her only dowry
she washed all day, sparkling
'til she rushed to the grave.

I tread strawmen and dolls sprouting between stones, each step a bell, a blue glow on the border, where her shawl flaunts a serpent dance at an abandoned carnival. I would razor my eyes to see the distant jollity, but the chants have clashed, and the clock starts to fume. Stitch the torn faces together, with a piece of red yarn, for my handprint on my mother's stone to fade. To the north of future I follow the smoke, with no longing for home.

