

Lost

by Wah-Ming Chang

I can't find my way back to the library. I've heard of this happening, that if you leave even for just one day and for a very good reason, as good a reason as mine, you may not find your way back. Now why should this be so? I do not understand this library. It houses books, yes, but people as well, like a very old boardinghouse, only nobody borrows the people the way people borrow the books, and neither does anybody open up and read a person the way a person opens up and reads a book. There is a densely empty quality to this space that has always attracted me, and yet now the space rejects me. So here I shall stand forever on Monk Street. I am staring at the empty block that should be housing the library. I can hear its various noises ringing out—the creaking of the floors, the locking of doors, books being opened, ever-mirrored worlds being sifted through, reverberating, distorting. I stand on this curb with my hand out, for I know it is here, the library, right here. And for no clear reason, I think of the rows of pencils laid out on my desk in a corner of my room, always sharpened first thing every morning, even the ones not yet needed. A writer must keep his tools ready and able, in good supply—this is the lesson I have learned today, and I won't forget it anytime soon, not with my dry eyes fixed on the empty block and my hand so close to finding the library's door.

