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Writing Sample

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Stuart LAU

The Deer Skull in the Chinese Drugstore

You are covered in a thin layer of sleep
At any minute the eyes in your skull may open
In the asphalt-paved night you open a door for us
Yes, a door, not a window, toward
The wild grassland, sunlight madly
Scrawled in broad brushstrokes, slowing down
Around your antlers to illuminate details in your forking contours
One time in dad's drugstore
You closed your eyes as I wrote my name
and tried to memorize common medicinal terms,
youth's dreams gradually become transparent
and hanging on your antlers, like prayer slips

Your eye sockets lift tight wrinkles
Laying shivering shadows over the cold-eye spectatorship of time
Thank you for your sacrifices for nameless me
One time in the War Against Japan, you died for me
One time in the Cultural Revolution, you were struggled to death for me
One time on June Fourth, you became me and were crushed to death
One lonesome day, you bestowed a full stop that was round and bright
and therefore enchanting, and my internal longing
lifted a remorseful gun barrel up to itself
as you closed your eyes again
Silence like a crown in a museum
the turning of a starry night calming down along with it

Your antlers, under the solitude of a shadow
reach up and transform, like a flickering in a winter fireplace
surging out pasts to the rocking chair's rhythm
soon pulling apart all kinds of exhaustion
All that's left in memory is a face's swaying gold
If only I could stand erect because full like wheat
You still won't open your eyes, murkiness surrounds them still
The tears from before you were born and the tears from after my death
Brush by right here in the clear cold of waiting
They yoke each other, mixing up medicine

Translated from the Chinese by Lucas Klein and Chris Song