

## Six Stories

The apartment is parked in a shadow. Through the entryway and up the steps—at every floor, a square cut from the concrete side of the building, the ground below framed as chances of colour. A chance of green from the foliage, samples of sound, swallows twittering, the winding pull of a rusted bike chain, like little bells, a silver chance, a wind sweeping from the highway, golden, orange, diffused—it rains at every window, a water falling in and splashing my feet, wetting my toes through my sandals. The water is cool and tingles. If there is ever a temperature to my dreams.

At every window, memory falls off me like leaves, like I am a tree, struck by a gong of light.

1.

Summer, Shanghai, early 2000s:

cicadas hidden in the trees, hair slick against my forehead, knees up, sitting on a ponyride, cup of gelato in my hand, the taste of a wooden spoon. Some lullaby playing until the coin runs out. Unhurried conversation, soft-lidded afternoon.

Fall, Shanghai, twenty years later:

humid, the bars damply-lit, drinks in cups like frozen lotus ponds. Mirror-yard, a fast changing city. Shaky stars in a palm of dice. Inside the back of a taxi, watching shadows cross my knees. Notice a bruise—something happens when I'm not paying attention. Someone whispers in my ear.

Spring, asleep:

spiral of breath makes the skin on my neck like a shell. Look at what's been said to me!—wearing the years like a pink rose.

2.

The apartment is a small root planted six feet into cement frost. In a hole as deep as I can dig. Ornamental, flower, cascade, nectar. River reflection. Lake-line. The staircase twists around, and has silver-brown cracked bark. Every day is a berry. If home is ever a flavour, ever sweet, ever metallic. Ever a mechanical worm in pulp, or, fruit shell, empty like a lantern floating underground. I emptied the vases. Stale water in which the willow trees shrank. It left a trail in the sink, a web. When I touched it, it made me thirsty for milk, and exhausted.

3.

I was born of the humidity of Shanghai, appearing as a bead of sweat on my mother's face, growing as the heat rose, so heavy I fell out her eye. She caught me in a plastic bucket, where me and my siblings bathed naked together. There was no solitude. Each of my siblings were at one point falling, half-formed sounds, and as such we all loved standing by the telephone. We lived our lives as if we were split-frequencies. Nowhere to go but into each others' ears.

4.

People in windows  
Orange seeds in wedges  
Held up to the light

5.

When I got out from the station it was snowing. My umbrella became too heavy to lift, and I had to shake the snow off it every so often.

I was the only person on the street and I was smiling.  
The snow made everything familiar.

6.

Every apartment you lived in, you lived on the sixth floor. If you had to choose a lucky number, it would be six. Six lights up on the elevator. Six to home. You went up six flights of steps and looked down. Everything you lose returns to you as hunger. The sort of hunger where you want to look into every window, but you can only look out. The sort of loneliness like children rolling on the ground, knocking the books off the tables and the shoes off the rack.

Now all that is left is to rearrange your objects.

///

Lily Wang is the author of the novel *Silver Repetition*. They live in Toronto.