

When I Met You

the first time, I softened like chalk against a thumb, willing
to aspire to a higher sphere. To be moon juice dried
and powdered, made vertical, made to mark uneven squares
on smooth paths and number them green, then pale
beneath small feet. I begged to be useful, knowing nothing
is too small to be useful: brackets in a sum
or a decimal point or a stub still wagging. Even
a page thumbbed into a dog-ear has a future
listening to Alice Coltrane's harp. Beauty has its place
in bass lines, in rot: I will become whatever I become.

A Man Who Looks Like Your Best Friend's Father

passes you orange juice on a flight from Singapore to Newark. You ignore his stories, tuck a blanket around your form, but the blanket untucks itself in the formless dark. You can't move. Someone is dreaming your arm. Someone is climbing your rungs but you can't move. Up your bicep's hillock to your deltoid's cliff, climbing up and down your contours without fear. A bell claps its shadow over your mouth. Tell me: can a bell clang if it has lost its clapper? Is doubt a voice that shouts without sound? *This is happening*, a clear voice says. It yanks you back to the jet's whirring stream. It yanks you back. Your eyes fly open—the orange juice. But his lids and fat lips are clamped shut.