

Cassandra Mainiero

UMEBOSHI

On the cliff

of one of three Castles on the Sea,

we sit like *ume* plums

plucked to pickle.

Sprinkled with a pinch of pinkish salt.

Stirred with purple shiso leaves.

Soaked in vinegar.

Sundried on a bamboo colander,

nearly

touching;

we sat

one smooth stone

apart. We're drunk

out of our minds

again.

Soused on

May's Flower Moon.

We find each other

to bike back home

side by side,

after not sitting

side by side

all night

among our friends.

Friends that don't see us

stopping here

halfway

together.

Now, alone, together,

I shrivel. Sour.

Sweetness

puckers into salt. Soon, I ask:
we have no glass jar,
do we? There's nothing that will hold us
bunched. Except this warm moment
and our making. Even if we wanted or waited
to be puréed into a paste
grounded beneath a wooden mortar and stuffed in
boiled rice—we'd both
sacrifice some part
of ourselves inside that mix. We're too mixed
already,
aren't we? You need me
when I don't want you, and I only
want you, when you don't
need me.
We'd never make it to a plate.
I want a plate. Don't you want a plate?
With me? To me,
You say: *If I did,*
it'd be with you. All I want is you
when I am not with you. Now,
two years later, when I am
back home, and you're still
half-a day
ahead,
practicing taiko at the Castle.
Today, I am picking plums to practice
brining, remembering

us and how we sat and shared
one *onigiri*.

You bit. I bit.

I bit. You bit.

Neither of us asked for the time.

Neither of us talked about tomorrow.

(Though it was tomorrow.) Eye-to-eye,

brown to hazel,

you looked and let me

take the bite and I split that bite into two

so neither one went hungry.

Don't you see

we were both

hungry?

What else could we have done?

What could I have done?

We ate

in silence till we sobered, watching a red light
blinking across the one-way street,

the long way

home covered in fallen

blossoms.

SEA GLASS

The difference between
hurricanes and tsunamis is
location. Hurricanes form over warm waters. Tsunamis
break out
from below. In my dream, I stand alone
in some littered, stainless steel city, the epicenter
of both storms, wide-awake. Dead
fish and black water overflow
sewers and soak
concrete. Waves sweep a street and slip away—
no—
pull away— no —tear away—
no—
obliterate
roads. There's multicolored sea glass raining
from a seismic wall. I think I'm not awake
and then I wake.
Awake, I find
sheer curtains billowing. Hungry,
my yellow betta
circles in its glass bowl. Jewels of rain
cut through a ripped
window screen. The wind and water ask me:
what makes a dream,
a dream?

COMMON WHITE MOTH

You are a small paper

diamond kite un-

spooled from its spool,

tailless by storm, and tonight

the night is a jungle of shapes

stagnant and woolen,

collapsing on crabgrass

like scrim. It's too hot to sleep.

Too dark to lie still. You shimmer, but cannot

see yourself. The bright

window feels warm, tells you

you are warm too. *Hush. This great*

migration is over. Come in. So,
you come in.

I don't blame you. For believing the sink

is the Moon. Nor

do I blame you for thinking this light

is the Light

of your life. No one told you:

You are a moon.

We should have. Sooner.

If we had,

you may have found home. You may have known

home is not here

wet and dead

in this sink. You were meant for something

unworldly,

but this is not what we meant. I would have asked:

can't you see

your own pull?

Your own

quiet

gravitation? How you lurched

and spun a tide

inside me slowly? Its waters' warmth—

a needle's eye. The air—

threaded

string. The typhoon inside

breaking this inner world—

the hole

poked before stitch and the stitch. You would know, what remains—

you and me— were seams—trying to join together

sense like scrapped

fabric to create patchwork quilts. Our longing

was the blanket and its softness,

wrapping us together. You would have known:

You are not alone. We are never alone.

Not really. Rather,

we are like little moons—

distant, cratered, and brilliant—

even untouched. People point
and say: *see?*

I would have said: Oh,
yes,

I see.

See? Even now,
you reel me in.

Stay. Let me

sleep in your light

a little longer.