

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