

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