

A dance cut short.

Angela Zhang

Ethereal music humming all around me
Tall, illuminated windows to my side
A herd of blurred bodies, shuffling in and out
The foreign and angelic melody dwindles, then wanes
Through my ears to my body to my soul
Hazy limbs, sickled ankles, and a burning abdomen
Above all, an uncontrollable line of fire
Scorching the remnants of my core, arms, and legs

“Get in a line!”

Hollers a tall, thin figure at the front of the studio
I rush, scurry—to the rhythm of the music
A sudden slip of thick, battered and brown shoes
A startled gasp escapes my breath
A desperate arm sticks perpendicular to the ground
Every finger and nerve clawing, crying out
At the excruciating agony devouring all senses

Thud.

Blood fills my vision
Hard, slippery, wooden planes pound into the soles of my feet
An aching, spreading, torturous pain escalates
Suddenly, I’m hot, too hot.

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.

All of this feels wrong.

Tears escape the folds around my eyes

Spilling over my face and dripping onto the floor

Drip. Drip. Drip. Like blood from a wound.

The contorted image of my arm enters my vision

This isn't real

But it was. Everything.

From the music

to the dance

to the thud

to the tears

to the hospital

to the doctor

to the sling...

Everything was real.