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Hanjo

Jaz Sufi

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HANJO

Jaz Sufi

Diana Khoi Nguyen selected “Hanjo” for the 2020 Yellowwood Poetry Prize. She writes, “With this hybrid piece inspired by Mishima Yukio’s play, Hanjo, the writer deftly distills the existential questioning brought on by acts between, of, and outside of love (and the performance of it). Here is a philosophy of love and performance rendered into images (“A bird flapping frantic ... is a still thing), textures (“The red felt lining ...), and bold declarations (“To be plucked from a dark room like an eye from a skull isn’t love; it’s performative”)—It is no accident that Anna Karenina comes to mind for this is poem as majestic and tragic in its lovelorn ennui.”

after Mishima Yukio

HANAKO

The motionless star and the moving star will meet.

JITSUKO

What if he is also waiting and not moving?

HANAKO

You don’t know men.

A bird flapping frantic without rocking its cage is a still thing. The red felt lining of a businessman’s briefcase against which contracts rustle, also still, even as the briefcase is snatched from his loose grip. Who is the thief? Too far away to know now. The destination? Somewhere else. To be plucked from a dark room like an eye from a skull isn’t love; it’s performative. I gave up performance when I had to introduce myself a second time. If, instead of watching strangers pass by my bench, I flung myself before a train like rice at a wedding, would that be the train you finally step out of? Would it be madness if it brought me closer to you?

JAZ SUFI (she/hers) is a mixed race Iranian-American poet and arts educator. Her work has been published or is upcoming in *AGNI*, *PANK*, *Birdfeast*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. She is a Kundiman fellow and National Poetry Slam finalist, and is currently an MFA candidate and Goldwater fellow at New York University.