**Anatomy of Grief**

Samantha Liu

Because I love you so much, I will not let anybody else have your body. I leave your soul for Heaven and your journals for your parents, but your limbs I keep for myself in glass jars. Your bones I string across my laundry room like fairy lights. Twice I take your tongue, borrow and wear it in my mouth like a nametag, but it hangs too loosely, even the second time. The same can be said for grief; you never grow into it.

For two weeks, I don’t know what to do with your skin—already used, touched, consecrated by too many hands that are not mine. I settle for hanging it in the closet next to your fingernails and tongue: things which cannot be mine.

Even encased in resin, your arm keeps breaking apart. Your ulna lolls around on its hinge, and your fingers fall from your wrists like fraying rope. When stitches can’t keep them together, I use glue, then duct tape. Once your mother finds me with a soldering iron and asks what I am doing. Humming, I tell her we’re out of batteries while I fuse your ribs back together. I love you to preservation.

Another time, your mother smiles at me on the way out. I see she has your teeth—straight ridges, perfect lines, save for the gap at between her bottom front teeth—and I frown. I relabel your teeth and move them to the closet. I’m still frowning when I finish.

The other day I watched a canary crash into the window. Its body dying against the glass, a memory left smudged in grime. The smudge stayed for fourteen days until rain washed it away. My friends all said it looked like a ghost, but I thought it looked like existence.

Your spine has been particularly difficult lately. Over breakfast, I find three vertebrae in my pocket; by dinner, your tailbone has rolled out into the front lawn. I look for answers in your will—*let me be buried whole in the earth, and let my remains give rise to new life,* you said*.* Because I love you so much, I will not let the earth have your body. You are too good for it. Instead, I find new jars for your spine, multiple ones, vacuum-tight, and within them, I organize your vertebrae alphabetically and by length and seal them. I love you to pieces.

If you were there, you would have seen the canary didn’t have to die, at least not at first. It had flailed around, flightless for days, until it went stiff from starvation. But if you were there, you would have bandaged its wing and fed it raspberries until it lived. You are good like that. But here is something I have only just understood: a body that is not yours will never belong to you.

You were never mine, but in death, that is a little less so. That’s why I keep all your vocal cords wrapped in linen. So, when they say your nephew has your voice, I can have it too, for a little bit.

Sometimes I practice hurling myself headfirst against the window too. You would have hated it. On occasion, during the afterborn air rush, I can hear your voice telling me to stop, and I drink it in like a bird to nectar. If there is an afterlife, I hope it is this: the outline of collision on glass, proof of wholeness of body. Your voice, a honeyed warning.