

Wendy Gan

Leaving

Called by the nurse, I stand nervous
At the edge of her sickbed
Bags packed, Hong Kong ticket in hand
Mother's advised me to be quick
Not give her time to know
To understand my leaving
Or else that cry, keening
Unable to call my name
Unable to tell me to stay
But she lies unmoving
I bend to kiss her
She tastes of powder
Crying, I call her back

Drone

I admire views from windows too often
A connoisseur of curtains fluttering as a coquette
And peek-a-boo blinds
Take buses that do not lead me home
Endure my mother's stab of a sigh
My father's silence wrapped around my throat

The city is quiet from this height
The sea a wavering line
Afraid to enter, unwilling to leave
I wave to no one in particular in the distance
Sinking into plush carpets like crumbling sand
Stumbling, leaving an anxious handprint splayed
On spotless glass

2 gold credit cards, 1 platinum

No car but apartment (private) in the pipeline
Expensive watch, well-cut clothes
Mother boasts 1000 times and smiles many more
My father's hand, warm on my shoulder
1 wincing slap on the back

70-hour weeks, 12-hour days
6 hours of sleep and diminishing
30 minutes per day of observing a silent city
10 minutes calculating wild escapes
2 minutes watching my breath condense on glass
Fading to leave no mark

Map-readers

We fell in love at university
As we studied together, then each other
Startled at how burning skin cooled with touch
How breath grew short in each other's arms

We almost lost our way
Well-trained, we checked our maps
Saw the books came first
Drew a line, retreated

Promising to return after tests, exams, first-job interviews
We spurred each other on, living off our maps
Knew our paths joined somewhere after
Graduation, work, promotion

It was a long trek
We didn't marry till we had the flat
Our postponed love sustained by hopes
Of cherry wood doors and steel kitchen tops

Seeing him, now, once taut as an arched bow
Hunched over dinner, sink, bed
Drained, too tired to speak
I wonder if we read our maps wrong

Had we held them upside down

Turned left instead of right
What did we do wrong
When did we lose our way

Wendy Gan is a Singaporean living and working in Hong Kong. She has previously published poems in *Ariel*, *Westerly* and *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*.