## For the Boy of Hollow Bones and an Avian Heart <br> Experimental

Tobi Park
Yorba Linda, California, USA
I. i have nothing to Give.
$i$ look into the shadows of a room darkened by 4 am and i 'm almost sure that i can see your smile silhouetted on my hanging clothes. Grey and long, the shadows on the floor spin themselves skeletal along the wood floor-panels. i don't remember your voice but i can feel your name, stale and ash on my diaphragm, crumbling off my throat.

Drip,
drop,
When it seeps through my voice, my teeth unclasp. my fingertips are empty porcelain.

## II. The Giant Country Part One

Most believe that there are seven seas, but once upon a time, there was an eighth, and if you sailed into the far southwestern corner of the globe, they say you'd find the most beautiful sea in all the world. It had a surface so clear that it you could barely see it when it rippled, and the sand below was made of the tiniest opals and at noon, the prettiest blues and the most gorgeous purples and the brightest yellows all stirred together like a storm of light. And at night, the little minnows came out of the sand and danced together.

But one day, there was a rumbling from deep under the earth. The minnows fled from their underground homes, and they cried out in terror until...

POP! When the glittery sand settled, there was a big, fat, lopsided shadow lingering above them.
"That's one giant opal," mumbled one of
the minnows, and then the minnows told the groupers, and the groupers told the tuna, and the tuna told the sharks, and thus the one, big, fat, lopsided opal became colloquially known as The Giant Country by all the fish in the eight seas.

## III. Comitatus

Inside a room that tastes like old paintbrushes, there is a machine smeared with popcorn intentions on its glass. Butter crusts its four metal corners, but it's not really butter because it comes in Agent-orange packets

Agent, Houston, we have a problem:
Even a thousand napkins cannot pass
through an ASB popcorn machine,
but the the oily fingerprints of last year And last last year And last last last year
Litter-linger up to elbows like a jaundiced headache. Though the kernels that poured in never spilled out FDA-approved, we still partook of them. A menial communion is better than none at all.

## IV. The Giant Country Part Two

Time relaxes all. At first, the Giant Country was smooth, and rigid, and strict, but now it curved with contour. A great, big mountain range has pulled itself up in the far northeastern side, but a crystal-rich valley has carved itself out of the belly of the island.
It was barren, too, but soon seabirds overhead

Drip, dropped small seeds onto it, and over time, soft grasses sprouted like the hairs of a baby. And with the soft grasses came golden shrubs, and with golden shrubs came jeweled trees and trees like jewels, and with that the minnows gaped. They are very good at gaping.
V. They Flee the Corner Table

Right eyes swirl shame while the lefts swirl righteous, but the one that is left is only hit by many half-glances.

Ignorance was never an evil; he is only a boy. Today he is a boy of thread, as Pride holds him up on his seat like a marionette. Her arms weary as the others flee the corner table.
He unravels a pen that is not his. In minutes he coaxes two springs and an artery of ink from its shell,

Is it possible to cajole a snail from its home?
They say home is where the heart is, but when you can't count all the points you care about, it's hard to find a good circumcenter to rest your head on. The air spirals around him with their stares. They watch her, too, but she stands firm in the gyre.
she pulls a stool beside him.

## We speak.

Fingers tighten.
Shell crack.
she still has the pieces.
VI. Oceans and Doorways

Amongst the jeweled trees and trees like jewels and fairy grasses, a single, crooked wax-apple tree waves in the breeze. During the winter, its meager crop always fell from its meager branches, and and the wax-apple tree imagined a meager wax-apple cider or a wax-applesauce, or wax-apple slices and caramel.

This season, it was different. Two apples clung to her rightmost branch through the spring so in the summer, when the sun finally bloomed warm, they were big, and round, and shining. The tree had grown very attached to them (for she had never had company before) but she could feel them becoming looser on the leaf.
"I don't want you to leave, just yet," she whispered. To her surprise:
"Oh, don't worry, we won't." the wax-apples chortled back. "We just want to get out. It's cramped in here."

Suddenly, from her two plump apples burst forth two grown gods, sharing three heads. And thus, the two-headed god Janus and the one-headed god Gwydd were anointed as the leaders of the Giant Country.

## VII. Zero Period

The blacktop pulse faded-number orange in crooked rows, snail-track-slow after rain. Camera rolling, a nod.

Ten minutes ago, her car was crushed like a soda can between a foot and the ground in the middle of a street. Now ten feet move together, united under the religion of desperation that chases and chases and chases

The music prowls about our dance. It
moves us across the cement with a tentative thumb. Whisks away.

The muses laugh at our effort. We will never be gods.

## VIII. The Argument

"The Giant Country is for our people, and our people alone!" The one-faced god held a cracked goblet in his right hand, but his dramatic gestures spilled a little wax-apple cider onto the ground. It sizzled. He splayed across the crystal sand, and adjusted his headdress of seagrapes.

The two-headed king laughed dryly. He turned.
"Gwydd," he said, "We have no people. We have only trees and bushes and beetles."
"And that is enough! All those unbirthed of this island is unworthy!"
"According to who?"
"Me of course!"
"But I am a king too," remarked the twofaced king. A small smirk lit up his faces as disappointment crossed Gwydd's. "We must agree on all."
"Ah, shucks," Gwydd's lips fell into a pout.
"How about we make a compromise?" Janus suggested. "Only those who pass a test will be able to--"
"The fastest!" exclaimed Gwydd. "The fastest to get here!"

An eye roll, and a chuckle.
"Fine."
IX. Track and Field and Everything After

Grass is never a question, only an answer to the primordial call of fly-foot- fall or maybe it is a question, like,
"Feet, are you listening?"
The earth is always listening, and when
the boy with flight in his eyes and feathers in his hands whispered in her ear,
she heard.
She knew he was never hers to keep. When he ran, the air blurred. He barely left footprints. The grass was never greener on the other side because he had his eyes set on the sun.

Dear boy of an avian heart,
I wish I was there to bid you farewell. You deserve nothing but the best.
X. The First Sunset
"Janus?"
"Hm?"
"The sky is burning."
"l know."
A splash. A boy, soaked with seawater,
steps onto the opal. The silhouette of wings open behind him.
"Janus?"
"Hm?"
"Someone's here."
"I know."
"Excuse me, is this the sun?" the boy asks. Janus takes Gwydd's hand in his, and they
both smile, one childlike and one less so. The opal glows as the sun tilts into the belly of the night.

Her stars are like porcelain.

Sweet dreams, friend. Rest easy.

