

COORDINATE

There's a certain lack of shimmer—a silver sequence that once strung the days
through each other.

I track the gradual decline of my spirit, its deflation, how each wonder of
thought ends in blossom rot.

Scared of how a daydream might expose the way the waters of thought have
carved themselves into actions over time.

The corn silks of one husk turn magenta overnight. The following morning a
deep sheen of maroon. In real time, the grandmother mothers the mother to
form the granddaughter, then dries.

A figeater beetle veils behind the silk, its green iridescence distracting from
the silk's beauty, then doubling it, eating the kernels right as they form.

I'll hold the future to the past so my days may pick up a shimmer if I choose to
look at them a certain way.

There is a mystery to such beauty and then the language of hypothesis.
Crystalline nanostructures. Melanin layer morphologies.

How iridescence depends on light and an observer to notice the color shift to
another. Geometry of sight.

The figeater beetle glows like a lava lamp seen through beaded curtains of the
past brought back in fashion.

How one can feel the business casual fabric fluorescently against the skin. The
canned replies easing the pace of the day. Clerical error, communication break-
downs.

I need to be brought up all over again. I need to cross the unknown to three
generations ago.

The present multiplies, ever-shifting. I plan to enjoy my life at a later date like
a child entering contents into a time capsule.

FLOWER COLOR

Here, we reside in the armpits of stars. The typo in the double-worded description. One adjective makes the other a noun.

Violent purple fractured by a page break to describe the flower bouquets great grandfather arranged.

The author misdocumented his death as a gunshot when it was a stabbing. Diagonal clip of the stems before jars of water.

The paintbrush smears white and circles in blue. Then violet warm and cold, absorbent, and luminous. The low horizon when the first stars appear.

We will always remember the babies grandmother saw the soldiers take from their mother's arms.

Within the violet wall of her uterus, within the violet of our mother's unformed eyelids, within the violet of our own unformed selves.

Violet is a light, an impression, a love that flowers painfully beyond its bounds.

DOMESTIC VIOLET

I search for ancestors in old newspaper scans. *Celestials* and *Diggers* empire refers to the Chinese and Native subjects who were spectacle enough to mention.

Characterized as unruly and backwards. Bound to a string of nouns.

Squalor and filth, dirt and squalor, squalor and poverty, misery and squalor, squalor and wretchedness, want and squalor, squalor and holy men, squalor and misery, squalor and disease, hunger, madness pain, and squalor, squalor and vermin, rags and squalor, squalor and gloom, loneliness and squalor

The domestic condition of a subject. Too elusive, it tethers to another noun.

I exhaust myself looking for great grandmother in the slanted loops, jagged points of cursive letters sent between missionaries. Mundane and incorrect daily life observations on those they save.

I can't explain what happened to me when I read the only descriptions they gave great grandmother: *Indian woman, a pitiful sight, black and blue.*

Of her children, my grandfather: *ragged dirty and covered with—*

I stand in the archway of the mission home-turned nonprofit in Chinatown, and nothing compels me to enter. I study the gap between the building and its facade. Enacted architecture to save the neighborhood from removal, demolition.

When I was young, we moved from the city to the suburbs. I dreamed I went outside in midday to the sidewalk and laid down on landscape rocks to look up at the sky. Earth—a distant circle of blue waters and topographical shades of brown and green—was where the sun should be. The question-feeling emerged slowly then quickly as a melancholic panic. If that is the earth, then where am I?

NOTHING HERE

Typing with two fingers behind plexiglass on the 2nd floor of the Alaska State Library, she says, *you'll find nothing here.*

Ferries dock and depart endlessly unlike the fear of losing while admiring the particular slant of violet light on an object, mountain, river, or otherwise. A problem of time and record.

The sun and world are set together and continue day after day.

The clay waters to form, then fires to stay. One day it will break and bury to be found thousands of years later when planting a cutting from an old orange tree.

Paper roses for the recognition day and bean cakes for mid-autumn moon. The exchange of continents over time.

Differences enunciated through water. Ethereal choreograph of women with painted cardboard orbs above their heads. Tradition remakes itself slowly and surely over centuries.

Lost and founds accrue and hardly ever empty. How much time have I spent at work, sweeping someone else's broken glass and throwing out someone else's trash. Take the glass and trash to the dump just to scatter again elsewhere for someone else to pick up.

The star shattered centuries ago, and moves farther and farther from itself. We still refer to it—SN 1054, the Blue Star, the Guest Star. A broken record.

The impulse to whisper your name into your ear.

On my way to Vermont, outside a terminal gate, a family speaks Mandarin and repeat the only word I understand, *Alaska*. The two children, staggered heights, wear matching blue tie dye hats, so we know they are tethered.

When passing the Chapel of Memories Columbarium, a woman in the shoulder padded pencil skirt suit, nylons, heels, and magenta lipstick, disarms the dog prone to attack. The dog stands on her hind legs and whines, walking backwards. The woman says *she must know I'm a spirit—that I'm not really here*. Then laughs.

That was there, years ago. Here we live within the impossibility—nothing goes away, and nothing stays the same.

THE COORDINATOR

Inside the egg, one eye of the chicken turns inward, tucked into the self, while the other turns outward toward light through the shell.

Violet is and is not purple, red, blue, pink. Staring into spreadsheets and inboxes, I have trouble seeing. I can't explain how the years go by.

I envision the berries that might ripen dark through the obstinate surfaces of unhealed time had my siblings and I climbed a ladder on a 3-day journey to the moon. Six shades of violet from dusk to dawn to dusk to dawn to dusk to dawn.

A pain in my chest, every day. Musculature, an old farm injury, the doctor guesses. This life was only one outcome, one way of being—a coordinator translating between pay scales for a shared mission, splintered in each worker's cling to one impression of the sentence.

When taught about jobs at preschool in an urban canyon, where parents rotated tasks like making butter and jam, I scared the adults when I said I would grow up to live alone in the wilderness to save animals. Veterinarian, they corrected.

We forget the password to the afterlife, iterations of violet, ones and threes replacing letters. The incorporated angels send sentimental questions for which we go blank. A favorite friend? I've kept such distances. I hardly know the proper nouns for my own family.

I wish I'd known sooner that life is made of small happinesses, and one must actively seek them out.

I dream of a deeper sleep in an impossibly wide bed, rainbows with bonus arcs,
baby photos that don't exist of the family I grew up nearby, hardly know,
hardly saw.

This sense accrues of needing to collect oneself—sprawling mind that once
formed crystal clear lines.

Murk, opaque, franchises repeat throughout the city. One forms affinities for
specific locations on a grid.

I'm trying to call back what I have lost without knowing what to call it.

There are ladders of sound and unsound integrity the dreamer ascends and
descends throughout life. Rooftops of youth and underbellies of repurposed
industry. Staying a night in an unfinished, abandoned home—the tide gliding
through.

CLAIRE HONG

Claire Hong is the author of *Upend* (Noemi Press). She received a Stegner Fellowship from Stanford University and has creative writing degrees from the University of Arizona (MFA) and Pratt Institute (BFA). She was born in San Francisco, CA and currently lives in Tucson, AZ where she teaches writing at Pima Community College.