

## *Now Spring, Now Fall*

Bonnie Chau

Antelope and I meet in the forest. The leaves rattle like paper charms, a chorus of seductive little taps, showy, proud. They are more than wallpaper. The room of the space we have is dim. Inside it might be dim, but we know there is a nearly unbearable brightness way outside. Unbearable in its loveliness, but not in its brilliance. Meaning that you could look at it, and the collapse would only happen inside your heart. My sister warned me that silent houses kept inside your heart, and the witnessing of their silent collapses, was acceptable. Other things might not be, you might not be able to bear it if Antelope came apart in your arms, if there was visible flaying.

We met in the pile of sticks and I said, give me your hand. Antelope shook. I gazed up to the sky, but there were branches in the way, and the sky was only bits and pieces of white. In the movies, there is someone with the patience of a saint, someone will, with care, with gentle and nimble fingers, collect all of the bits and pieces, and bear the process of putting things together again. Antelope promises me mending, but I balk. Antelope shows me something handmade, but all I see are words that seem pulled from my own mind, and hesitantly, I say, I, too, have always paired the words penchant and trenchant. Antelope gestures for me to look again, and I look again, and see that actually the words are mine, collected over the years, and I had confused the attribution, that what I had read as Antelope had been my own name.

I imagine that my hands can catch anything that might fall from Antelope's body. I imagine that, were it called for, I could catch Antelope's entire body in my arms. But the imagined weight is cruel. Sleek and soft-haired, yes, but cruel. Along the way, tears will be made. There will be holes torn. Antelope does not heed my warning. I hadn't said it in so many words, merely filled my eyes with the feeling and hoped, wildly, for a miracle. Antelope says, we mustn't nail ourselves to the fucking wall, not just yet, not so soon. But I am impatient now, it's spring, soon the birds will disappear, soon the petals will have blown away, soon the sepals will be splayed open only to display the remnants: brittle filaments, dried stamens and stigmas.

I decide to broach the subject carefully. Antelope, I say. I think of that t-shirt, which says on it 100% life, 零% art. But it's no use. Outside, a bird drops its dropping as it flies low over the pond. A tiny strawberry emits a prickly red gleam from within the dark underbrush. A yellow bird fights for its life inside a juneberry tree.

