

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Playing Pretty
Songs About Girls

Phedra

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For my late grandmothers



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I **A LIVELIHOOD**

there are secret people living in caves
who feed on the sweat of the sea.
they very rarely bleed
like you and me.
while they carve crosses
from rocks made out of moss
my pen runs out of ink.
i am as un-invincible as i seem.
they grin at me with missing teeth,
so i become too wary even as
lone shooting stars whizz past.
confusing these with stolen fool's gold
glinting beneath the dark.

Euclides, merman and
 Conqueror of sea, who asked me
 For company on a day
 The winds of change too glorious for ease,
 The waters so adoring of their play.

I went with him on his plain odyssey,
 Our boat sailed by the oars of mute desire.
 Searching for shells and fishes with a face,
 Searching without a trace of weary tire,
 Looking for something we both could not name.

Euclides, with eyes as
 Bronze as sunken statues,
 Who gave out wishes with the deities' virtues,
 Said would you be my bride, and sail with me?
 Will you toil the ocean maze with me?

His eyes melting the gold in all land's caves,
 Yet I could not be revived by his words.
 Somewhere in the past I died and festered
 A corpse detained by shore, devoured
 By scorching heat, by greedy scavengers.

Euclides, know that
 I sail with you forever.
 In whatever form I take, I keep a light
 Should you get lost on dark and stormy nights.
 Know that I only wish for you fair weather.

i cracked my head like an egg
 at the age of two.
 i was ant crawling, hands as feelers,
 while my mother was drying her hair.
 sometimes i imagine her deciding
 what lipstick to wear. but none
 as red as the yolk that gushed out
 of my soft shelled skull, from a
 lampshade next to their
 twenty seven year old smiles.
 twenty seven forehead stitches later
 i wish they had stopped at two.
 rather than accidental magpies,
 unsure birds wondering at the
 sole egg in their nest.
 when i perspire sweat forms
 around my scar first,
 little hairs trapping clear beads
 like those stuffed in beanbag chairs.
 both lampshade and portrait have
 long since broke, my child blood
 covered with silk sheets from china
 promising cocoon's rest, daring
 my parents to put their years to test
 as my father starts to misplace his
 wedding band and my mother
 lends me make-up to cover up my skin.
 we hardly speak at dinner.
 the food is laid, like how the bed is made.
 kempt,
 glossy,
 cold.

Regardless of the way you chose
To purchase her,
Be it your rape of her mythic prowess
Upon your beck and call, be it the way
You commandeer her to speak,
Then keep her silence—
The tang of foreign tongue
Loathsome yet lucid in your ears
Too used to boorish brays
From like-minded men at work;
Her laundered skin in holographic hues
You lap up with otherworldly hound-like greed,
Her tainted lips you plunder into,
Her womanly parts exotic
Plumage on a bird of paradise.
You wish to hold her in captivity,
For longer than fifty dollars can hold out.
Regardless of this,
She once had dreams.
She wanted to walk the stage with
Other girls like her.
Tiara snug in her ebony hair,
Sash across her chest emblazoned with prestigious titles
Other than the ones callously called to her in bed.



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WORK

An Archivist
Museum Measurements
My Parents' Wedding Bed

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A Pearl On Her Mouth
Phedra

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I'll Tell You Something, Bukowski
Nobody Stops To Buy Poetry Anymore
Silence
Topography

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Euginia Tan has self-published two collections of poetry, *Songs About Girls* and *Playing Pretty*. She was in the NAC Mentor Access Program 2013 (mentored by Grace Chia-Krakovic) and Curating Lab 2014 under Heman Chong and NUS Museum. She is also the curator for the Visual Arts Development and Association by Chan Hampe Galleries from 2015 to 2016. In 2016, she wrote her first play, *Holidays* (performed in 2016) under the mentorship of Joel Tan.

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