

Thaddeus

We sat on the hill.
We watched the flames
inside the balloons heat
the fabric to neon colors.
The children played
Prediction.

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They pointed to empty holes in the sky and waited. Sometimes all the balloons lit up at once and produced the nightly umbrella effect over the town beneath, whose buildings were filling with the sadness of February.

Nights like this will soon die, Selah whispered in my ear.

Days became cooler, clouds thickened. We sat on the hill. We watched the flames inside the balloons heat the fabric to neon colors.

Nights like this will soon die, said Bianca. She ran from the woods, where she saw three children twisting the heads of owls.

Nights like this will soon die, said the butchers, marching down the hill.

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We sat there for the last time to watch the balloons, the neon colors stitched in our minds.

Pigs shrieked, and windows shattered across the town. A snout, massive and pink, traced the side of a balloon in its arc. The fabric stretched around the dark nostrils and stopped just before tearing, and it stayed there.

Still the children stood in a line with their lanterns raised to watch the first snowfall of February cover the crop fields.

Selah lowered her head. Selah folded her hands in her lap. Selah looked at the backs of the children's heads and saw ice form knots in their hair.

We can only pray, whispered Selah.



I looked at Selah and remembered the dandelions stuck in her teeth. I thought of a burning sun, an iceberg melting in her folded hands.