

The Happiness Carousel

By Moudi Sbeity

My lover suggested we drive up the canyon to Nederland to watch the leaves change color. *It'll be a good break*, he says, from the newsreels of an invasive army threatening what's left of my sanity. At the coffee shop he bought a four pack of greeting cards, then asked me to pick my favorite. I pointed to a star lit canyon shimmering extra bright by its own lake reflection. In it I'll write "miss you, can't stop thinking about the war, wish you were here."

I don't know much about what saves you these days from the violence of the world, but it might be how he suggested we try making the black bean taco shell quiche in the pastry case. I thought of warm Sunday mornings in our nook, drinking coffee to day jazz. Or how he read to me the front flap of a book about a bed-ridden woman who spent her days observing a snail charting its path on top of her nightstand. This was at the gem store, which he says, if he won the lottery, he'd spend it on large stones. The miracle of pressure and all. And what might the pressure of war turn us into if not some diamond-hearted griever's spectrums of our gratitude for the light of another day? But not now, not today, still under the immense resistance to emerge from the ground.

Close your eyes and smell, he instructed, lifting a jar of jasmine pearls to my nose. *Can you tell what it is?* I couldn't – I didn't – want to remember the perky jasmines flaunting their aroma up the stairway to *teta's* house in the south, nor am I in the mind to think of how she was pried from her land.

And still joy can be found in the smile of an old Chinese woman at The Happiness Carousel waving her fists gleefully in the air to The Beatles. I mounted the donkey bearing two baskets each with a monkey. Taylor hopped on the panda. I smiled in circles for the first time in a week.

