

## Poems

# Vyxz Vasquez

### **GHAZAL RIDE**

You leave a country masked unto a trap—another ride  
cutting the Pacific, luggage coats swore the 10-hour ride.

That author has written her death though alive. The molly  
mouths, “You’re not supposed to love America.” Mother bride  
of the good buy, a man with poor posture and bumble eyes,  
whose shoulders, we find out, the ghost of a brother rides.

In the orange line twilight, your bowed head resting window:  
rocking motions don’t subside as a long boat after-ride

and you have not known non-violence, have gotten used to  
leaving a life, the batting eyelash a matter of pride.

There is much to say before the crash—how jet fuel  
is as abstract as engine oil, the thick memory-mixer rid-

ing this icepick he thought he could kung-fu and matrix  
for what? A Nokia 3210 and some cash for a buster ride

30,000 kilometers above sea level where your feet unlearn  
solid ground and you, self-author, are in for another ride.

## PANTOUM

All this love is a form of unknowing—  
nostalgia for a time that does not exist  
in the city of brown boxes. We have  
no trees to long for and it's now snowing.

Nostalgia for a time that does not exist  
yet I'm trying to be where I once was—  
no trees to long for. But now it's snowing  
and there is no smog to overpower mist.

So, I drive and escape to where I once was:  
the nearest sea to breathe saltwater cold  
where all that greets is the sun-killing mist.  
They wrap the smoke of plastic flowers past.

This ocean is closest to breathing. The cold  
bruises to forget. A common thing as sweat  
wraps me and the smoky-white flowers,  
I admit, are a lone beauty. The grass is old.

I am soon forgetting common sweat,  
the smell of *kanal* (which has no place here),  
lies to admit. I am lonely and old,  
and not literal, no matter what accent.

Sure, they have sewers and other places here  
make the cops back home look good. They'll never  
be not literal despite your best accent.  
Still, food is plenty, air is cleaner, everything's near.

The bad may make home look good, but they'll never  
make you return to the city of brown boxes. You've  
all the food and all the air, some belonging's near,  
not to say all this love is a form of unknowing.

**OYAYI**

On your last breath as the tubes are pulled out,  
I take out my guitar, turn the key.

You are not yet gone five seconds;  
Facetime unbearable to our child.

Your body is washed, maybe.  
Your hair stroked by a nurse, probably not

and to tune is to know the differences  
in adjusting a string.

Perhaps they have removed your gown,  
turning your head, your skin on cold metal.

I smooth my left on the neck,  
grip light like you once taught me.

The chords still don't come as strangers  
work through your remains,

their PPEs pretending angels  
will deliver you. Another will

move your shell to a wooden box,  
cradle its body, a curve on my thigh.

In three hours, there won't be bones—  
fragments to strum until fingertips burn.

To play an A, put your finger on the 3rd string, 2nd fret.  
*To play a G, put your finger on the 6th string, 3rd fret.*

We used to get a kick out of pickguards,  
sound hole, whole sound, soul-hound,

guitar runs and puns. Hands wet with cold,  
messing the notes, freewheeling

plucks, strums, knock "More than Words."  
Head smaller than my hand, body snug

inside my bow as the child you danced  
to sleep. The hollow echoes your name.