

Beautiful Stranger

Heather Mandel

I take a step up onto the muddied floor of the 220 bus
Where the feet of thousands before me have left echoes of their life
Scattered on the floor.

A beautiful stranger is sitting in the seat next to the one I take
Long nails tapping a symphony against a cracked screen.
Soil-dark eyes glance up to pierce through my pounding heart
for a single moment
And in the same blink, she looks away.

Beautiful stranger, what lives have you lived?
Your experiences are as much a mystery as mine are to you.
Will you think of this moment after it's passed?
Will you remember the girl who sat next to you on the bus?
Will I be your beautiful stranger?
Or will I fade like a dream as soon as you look away?

We are two leaves in autumn, dear stranger
Brushing past as we flutter with the wind to the forest floor
So too do we meet at this single moment
Before we're swept into the next

The bus reinserts itself into our minds with the screech
of the opening doors
And you rise like the sun into a horizon beyond me.
In the moments before our paths uncross, I think to myself;

Beautiful stranger
It has been an honor
To share this moment
With you.