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## Orange-Peeled Laments

Kan Ren Jie

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# ORANGE-PEELED LAMENTS

Kan Ren Jie

“天乌乌 / 欲落雨 - *Ti Or Or / Bei Lor Hor*

*The sky is getting dark / the rain is coming” - A Hokkien Children’s  
Song*

He remembers the oranges. Peels jutting. Skin-drenched. Skin tied. A knot  
a kitchen, grime under the tiles. Grime  
in Mother’s words. *They were coming*

*for the stones, Mother said. They were coming—*

the backyard, muscular arms, ripping timber. Lumber men. Corrugated-steel men.  
Mother was, of course, trying to stop them. Hands  
bleeding sour. Hands, splayed with sweat. *Ti Or  
Or. Bei Lor Hor.*

Lullaby, citrine. Lullaby sky, blackened, discarded like pulp. *Ghut ah Ghut.*  
Digging. Their digging. These stones these men removing  
sideboards. Curtains.  
Removing living rooms. Removing living, false teeth

Drenched in motor-oil. A curtain ripped. A sky, glaring. *Ti Or Or.*

*Beh Lor Hor. Black Ti Black sky. The  
puppy eyes. Cut, this orange—*

this squeezed skin, flattened lungs—these peels crinkly,

crumbling like skin. Her veins pulsed, attempting to quiet—attempting to blind.

*Stop, stop—her cries floating, now*

putrid this body—for the house, wooden rafters—can only take  
these tears. *Beh Lor Hor, Beh*

*Lor Hor*—the rain, these hands

dripping sweat. His hands know  
their heavy sweat. *Stop stop,*

but how powerless, this sweat-drenched shirt. Mother, learning  
to stifle cries. The strange-faced men

will always take, never wait,

never—till pebbles, till rocks, till little grained-ones, large grained-ones:  
timber beams removed.  
Nails digging into flesh. Till all that's left—scooped portions of light.

An orange, a stone. The remnant of a house, the fading grasp of flesh. The son  
looks at his mother.  
Becoming then, her cries.

KAN REN JIE is a Singaporean writer living in Shanghai. He studied Literature and Creative Writing at Yale-NUS College, and currently works as a Global Writing and Speaking Fellow at New York University Shanghai. His poems have been featured at *Spittoon Monthly*, *The Parliament Literary Journal*, and *Voice & Verse Poetry Magazine*. He is currently working on a manuscript that imagines new histories surrounding artifacts about Christianity in China.

