

SHERWIN BITSUI

Potsherds

You fill velvet sacks with body heat,
run east each evening,
waning daylight's tongue-scent
bleeding through your sun-dappled coating
as you silk smoky webs
to seal in this waxen light,
then cleave body heat
 from the thermometer with pine claws.

Departure gate's left lane open,
address book cupped by four mountains
drizzles down the side-view mirror
onto hands sparkling under rime
 reaching for the new *there*—
 thickening thinning air.

How the map must look when
it's your face that ripples silver,
not deer skipping across
the river's forgetting.

How it might be then
to look through their eyes
and see mountains
breaking into braided water.

Hunched over a sleeping child,
this story pivots a walking cane

then vespers through town,
sniffing vacuum-packed air

sealed in plastic bags
hanging from pawn-shop marquees.

It climbs cloud hair
only to fall back upon red soil—

saltwater masks
sweating onto our faces.

Cocoon-draped horses
weigh their spasms
on songs braiding
their highest leaves
into our necklaces of smoke.