

Truth

Ada Gong

I. truth

Truthfully,

I am Hou Yi who shoots down the nine suns,

The greatest archer,

Tasked by the emperor to carry a great responsibility.

I am Chang'e who is the goddess of the moon,

The immortal beauty,

Residing in the realm closest to heaven.

I am the Rat who triumphs over the other animals,

The small and mighty,

Winning the race, with cleverness and wit, to become first.

I am the color red,

The lucky color,

Making the hideous monster Nian tremble with fear.

II. lie

she eats her sticky white rice

in the bathtub, with her hair

wet. her face wet. her eyes stained

with red. her face with salt. her soul

with fear. the scent of freesia, or a kind of

floral perfume lingers around. she only gets up briefly, to

close the window, stopping the light breeze,

that tickled her skin, and burned it all up.

she stares at the mirror in front of her,

the only thing she sees is a

distorted reflection. it makes her features

look puny, and silly, with the grains of rice

stuck on the corner of her mouth,

a regret. or two. or more,

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<https://thehowlmag.org>
thehowlzine@gmail.com
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not the first, nor last.
she turns off the lights, left in
darkness. she imagines she is one with
the stars, knowing too well she cannot
be even close to being leagues upon
leagues from the moon. or the
sun. not a sun god nor moon goddess,
far from being someone's son
or daughter. she is not the sky,
but rather a weight in the bathtub, counting
the imaginary suns in her head,
like the days she spent counting
the cold tiles, the grains of rice,
the teardrops and the days,
and the wishes (or the single wish)
to wash herself
out of existence,

III.

*red is just a color, and
rats are still pests, and
hou yi's apprentice wanted to steal the immortal elixir, and
in self-defense, chang'e drank both immortal elixirs, and
floated up up up to the moon, and
cursed to be stuck on the moon, alone, husband-less, and
hou yi, now wife-less, permanently separated from her,
as mortal as ever, as human as well,
and he takes his own life.*