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## Song

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like steel clicking into place.  
She hears the footsteps of a man  
  
who hands the ashes back  
in a white envelope, to the mother  
  
who accepts it with the calm  
of a commuter holding a ticket  
  
to a train ride that will carry her  
farthest from the right address.

## CHARLIE SAMUYA VERIC

### Song

The shining blue water  
of the infinity pool has the sky in it.  
There is a cloud over the valley and the church bells toll in the  
distance.

What have I lost to the days?

I was not my grandmother's favorite. The neighbors  
in my town I knew as a child  
their deaths I hear now as news in the morning. And if

I went home, I would forget  
the names of streets and birds, the look of fields  
from the highway, the cliffs looking down on houses.

How they love the heavens opening above them,  
those sloping mountains.  
How isolated they are: how single  
in their isolation.

The valley knows the sky so well—  
they come to shape the void between them.

In the void, the embrace of elements. Air  
in the mango trees, air above the plains. The pores  
of petals are filled with air. And still

the sadness in them.

What sadness is I learned for the first time  
watching Moses on a projector. It was summer at the plaza.  
A boy watching a holy man raise his arms in the air,  
the Red Sea parting.

My father was not around  
to explain what miracle meant.  
I went home, repeating  
the scene in my mind. It was dark.

Yet look at the infinity pool, so pleased with the sky's likeness.  
Not with the thing itself, but with image.

The cerulean water cannot own the skies. It lies still.  
But when it is most hushed,  
what seems like sky is clearest.

When the infinity pool reflects the blue,  
does it have the sky's blueness?

And what can the river tell?  
That it knows the valley's sorrow?  
That what is kept apart is kept together?

Rivers exist because mountains forsake water.  
Rain falls on the hills of the world. The core is suffused  
that rock and soil cannot hold.  
Water gushes forth in a spring and sets out  
in another place. A river, then,  
is a sad thing.

But herons are wont to bless it.  
And salmon's journey to the ends of the sea  
remembering the river from which they came.

In their full years,  
the need to return enfolds them like wide nets.  
They swim back to the brook, rich with the sea's wisdom.  
O life, in the ways of the salmon, is a long return.

I imagine no river runs in the Arabian desert  
where my brother is, sewing garments  
for slothful queens. He is like a salmon or river:  
flung, always, by flight.

There, a canyon descends!  
Look down, and fall.

The abyss awaits. See the deep drop:  
winged insects caught in amber: remnants of Eden:  
sediments of ages. And tell  
how long grief has been.

And the bright surfaces, the shifting colors? Surprising figures  
the errant winds have shaped. What to make of them?

The cloud is gone. The church still lies hidden.

A man and a woman walk near the precipice,  
and bend over. Separately, they gaze down.

There is only one look for both of them. It is  
the look of tenderness.



I speak to you now, river and valley. And to you, too,  
blue of the infinity pool.

Teach me to live  
the way a peak regards  
the sunset.