

# Spilling Stardust

By Richard Wu

you once told me how our bodies and everything else are  
spun from stardust, from atoms that once pulsed within the  
blazing hearts  
of stars

I'm thinking of stars and dust as a  
ventilator blasts you full of air like a  
human-sized balloon, as I grasp  
your swollen beating hand and  
imagine holding on, anchoring you  
from floating back  
to the sea of stars above

we once filled my room's ceiling  
with plastic stars, and at night,  
they'd wash the world above in  
phosphorescent starlight  
while I slept below

now your wrinkled eyelids are closed,  
oblivious to the blinking lights of  
disinfectant-scented machines, the sterile  
constellations that glimmer against the  
ICU's artificial night

you told me that the stars sprinkled  
across the cosmos are receding  
further and further away, and now I  
think of days long gone, of the  
growing distance  
between now and back then

when they take you off  
that ventilator, when  
you deflate and your  
breaths trickle out  
slower and softer,  
I think of the stardust in each breath  
spilling out from your lips,  
suspended and cast adrift against  
the twinkling haze of time and  
memory