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