By the end of this final night, we have assembled forty-seven headsets. This week has unlocked new frontiers in finger pain. I haven’t been in loop-lock for a week. That, plus the work, plus the exhaustion, it grounds my mind in a pleasant, fuzzy way. It’s good, not to think. As we part, Tethi takes my shoulders, and for a second, I *am* thinking again. Burning reserve power on the double-check that, no, I really don’t want him to kiss me. But he just sets his face sturdy and says, “we’re doing this.”

“We’re *definitely* doing this.”

“See you tomorrow. Same time.”

It’s late out. Earnestly chilly, but that’s mostly the wind. It lifts the collar of my jacket on its way up the block, now playing the black tarps and tents of Triple Point, heavy flapping and low whistles. *There’s something going on in there.* The thought is harmlessly vague, outcrowded by the logistics of getting home. *There are people going in there.* Lone men, whole families, with their pushcarts and shopping bags. My blood runs dense and hot, watching them turn that gentle bend into the heart of Triple Point. Tethi did mention something about a night market.

The Chalkers have what people need: vegetables and painkillers and brake pads. They have what people want, too: hot youtiao and lily-waft perfumes and little cartridges with three hundred hits of 4-AcO-MET. But much of what they have is not so easy to judge as vitamin or vice, necessity or nicety. You won’t know in the moment, or for many months, why it drew your eye, why it was pressed into your hand. Your money is no good in there; you just need to be brave enough to step inside. I scan the faces that pass me, inscrutable in the dark. I wonder how many are looking for a seedling-totem to drastically alter their life, and how many just need to eat.

And when I’m brave enough to step inside, sensation accumulates. Hot oil and and ripe fruit and pungent betel-nut linger long past the stimulus, myelinating the walls of my mind. No chatter, no laughter, no barter. Precious little light: of tiny, scrolling, monochrome displays, of blue-gas burners, of waxing moonglint on waxy mangoes. The lack is lucid. The mind finally free to consider rustling plastic, cool wind, the hundred different smells of shoes. No deliberation, no thinking twice. Decision, purchase, exchange, all made with loaded glance and portent gesture, objects simply taken, offered, swapped sight unseen in newspaper and twine. These thicken and blur into currents of exchange striated with desire and preference and ability and need, but whose? Just *whose*?

Above me, those red pinpricks, rubytears of blind eyes, the hum of the joy of uncountable new constellations, finally, a sky willing to watch back...

It takes on all the richness I let it. Glints spicedense and cherrydeep, abstraction, abundance, offered from all to all, wretched twice-salvaged toys, dice, rice, stationery, batteries, genzhe globes, a bewildering array of ferrous powders, the abstraction and extrusion of treasure, the glint of possibility and synchronicity, the bellyfelt goldmelt annealing of need and have into unfurling, expansion, pure motile force, the deep assurance that there is enough, so take, and give, and take again, don’t be so bashful of what you are, for even the stars are the raw fact of consumption, and there’s no need to look down upon the stars.

Above me the near-full moon, its distance lonestrange face humming and golden, its tendrils expanding over the fundamental, rich, warm, darkness of —

No, over this *street*, over the rustle of the ginkgos! Over the aftertastes in my mouth, over the weight in my hands! Over the sudden terror of trying to balance on two legs! And I am out the other side, turning over the intricate coincidence in my hands, the abstract way-thing, the color-flush hyperobject in this handbasket, the mingled relief and loss as I forget what I was meant to do with it, as it resolves into constituent pedestrian parts, into scissors and shave-gel and amphetamine drink-mix, and marble-sized prime-numbered voxelite buddhas, and a nearly intact conch shell, and a do-it-yourself dental kit. And a thumb drive labeled *Summer Vacation.* And six colors of felt-tip pen. And hundreds of Thai bhat in loose, jangling coins. And chamomile tea.

I carry it all home. I can’t bring myself to throw it away.