

KIRUN KAPUR

## From the Afterlife

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I wanted to be a bone—white like  
the Taj Mahal, hard as a puritan—

when vein and wish are stripped,  
still able to rattle the essential notes.

But no music gets made when you pit  
your self against ideas of yourself.

Dust suits me better. Grey-brown fleck—  
I can mix, move into the smallest space,

spark the grittiest tunes. Divide me  
into fifty states: winsome, wondering, crazed, my face

scattered by teaspoon. Over the Great Basin  
of played out mines and salts rising in a haze,

over hard farmed heartland, the bent  
fair-headed wheat, the combine's cloud,

silt along the fat lip of river bed. Semis  
hissing and grumbling in tongues.

I can still feel the hum of the telephone wires,  
running from one life to another. I filled these lines

in case a story is a body, in case we lose our place.  
Hello? Friend? I can touch everything,

but can't stop thinking. Turns out, thoughts  
granulate. Turns out, I never was a girl, I was all

those girls, a girl statue, torch raised, you know the one—  
standing in the harbor, wearing a sari.

The tide foams up. Now, I'm so much dust,  
I am a continent, absorbing—a thimble full

of mother, angry powder, laughing specks, froth,  
filth, lover, crying cinders, particles of mineral wind.

I'm proof that nothing is lost.  
You can breathe me in.