



# dust and conscience

(book of the familiar)

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upon returning from my trip i called her to share of my experiences of drinking the blood of cobras diluted in a sweet rice wine of eating fruits the like of stars and dragons translated she said they were mythical fruits from a mythical land she could almost taste them on her tongue i spoke of meeting the relatives her sister in-law who makes a living selling noodles on a good day she can make as much as fifty thousand dongs translated she said it equates to about four dollars a hard life but a life all the same i spoke of falling in love with the country and the people and of one particular man you would like him i told her he's quiet gentle and is a writer like myself translated she said she was late for church

ours is a tonal language fifteen years a thousand miles countless attempts at telling this story how the meaning changes from father to son to sister to stranger for the record it was an accident that i am clear on a loaded gun a run away boy the need to uphold traditions in culture a camera at the funeral for pictures to send home and where did i fit in to claim such a story it was my eye that saw my hand that focused my camera that shot a phone call from your sister and what she said i still remember if you see him tell him to come home it was an accident the police say it was we want him to come home perhaps it is best that i leave it at this a futile attempt at telling the story returning to again and again like our names layered with reasons ours is a language embedded in tones

my mother called back ten minutes later to say that she was too late for church and that if i was happy then she too was happy because translated she is will always be my mother and i am will always be her son

the other night i sat in a bar with three other people i'll call them carlito anna bartholemeu for no other reason than that of music the way these names fall from my tongue we were playing this game nonsensical in the moment profound in life we each asked a question we each gave an answer if you could be a character in a sitcom who would it be note for this question you must choose a character of the opposite gender if you could relive a single moment when would it be note for this question you can relive it only altering the past is not an option if you could live in any period what period what time for this question and this question only you must change your race your gender is optional if the world would end this time tomorrow what would you do today now note the answer to the last question we'll use as a starting point to begin the next round of nonsensical questions