

paper cranes

TAMARA NICHOLL-SMITH

where I am folded, there I am a lie – Rilke

I come before you folded
like a grade school note
passed between pinky-swear friends
a tight bundle
slid along the floor
under the eyes of a teacher,
her back to the class,
her hand, writing equations
in white chalk on a green board,
dust swirling in the air.

In this way,
I am hidden.

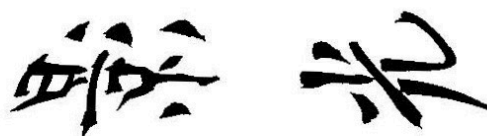
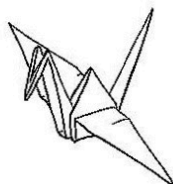
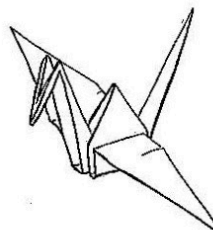
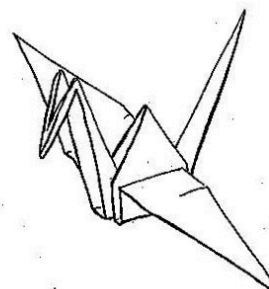
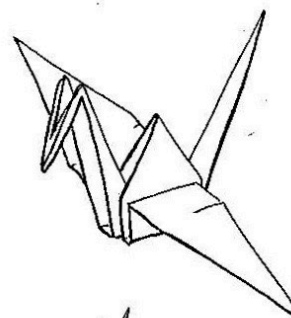
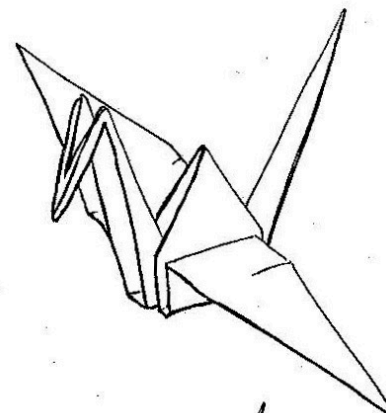
I could offer myself to be opened,
but even I cannot read what was written
in the dark creases of the folds,
worn and rubbed away
from years of paper against paper.

The page of you
is deceptively blank and crisp
like a cover sheet.
Your message brushed
by a small hand
in lemon juice.
The invisible ink of those days
when we pretended we were spies
who wanted to share in secret
the tender roots of things.

I can offer myself instead;
to be folded in new places
like an origami crane,
the kind folded by the thousands
in Honshu
and set on a river
under the closed eye
of a new moon
accompanied
by a column of floating candles
lighting the way.

There it will not matter
what is hidden
and what is seen.

We will find
all we need to know
painted in the
Kanji of shadow and light.



TAMARA NICHOLL-SMITH'S poetry has been featured on Albuquerque city bus panels, a spoken-word classical piano fusion CD, and in anthologies including *From the Page to the Stage and Back Again*, *A Bigger Boat: The Unlikely Success of the Albuquerque Poetry Slam Scene*, and *Enchantment of the Ordinary*. 'Paper Cranes' appeared in *Enchantment of the Ordinary* (Mutablis Press 2019).

Artwork by Alex Mankiewicz