

**From *The Karma Machine* by Melissa Carroll**

**Panning for Stars**

We sit on the curb and sip convenience store wine  
from paper cups, watching stars  
cartwheel above. I'm talking  
too much again, you're throwing cigarettes  
at disinterested pigeons.

On the cusp of daybreak we are  
blossom souls in the gutter, you a fresh pear plucked  
and me a silver windpipe. How lucky  
we two, to find each other in the wake  
of space time, fingers stamped with tar  
and horizon as distant galaxies streak the sky, smoke-like,  
all possibility dimmed in this half-morning, all longing  
drowned in cheap shiraz.

I core you whole, taste skin and sweet,  
we clank against the wind. And when  
you walk away it isn't me trailing you, or my incessant  
voice pressing your back like a hot lamp  
asking *What of all this?* It's only the moon,  
bald and indifferent.

A string of lights, not a metaphor, reaches  
my apartment to yours across 17<sup>th</sup> Street.  
Your balcony now empty, the broken  
green lawn chair and a pot  
of ungrown basil on the sill.