

Paper Lanterns

Kate Marquam

the ghosts of the undead write
themselves into the strangest
places. the signature in a painting

on my wall, the restaurant I walk
past weekly but haven't entered
since the holiday art gala when

he wore Levis with a suit jacket,
swirling wine in the bottom of a blue
plastic cup printed with the name

of a charity. after dinner while everyone
was laughing he told me that September
Tenth of 2001 he was in the twin

towers, and what if the planes
had come a day early? then he pressed
a box of chocolates into my hand

and wished me a Merry Christmas.
I didn't throw the tin away until
I moved six years later. sometimes

I worry that I loved him into non-
existence, that I mistook my own
poems for answers, like when I wrote

that his ribcage was made
of rice paper. he tore so easily
but goddamn, he could light up

a room. the ghosts of the undead
write themselves into the strangest

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places, and when I say undead I mean

alive and maybe happy somewhere
else. I mean maybe someday we'll
walk into the same coffee shop

and I'll tell him that I've tried to write
myself out of loving him for three years now,
but still can't take his painting down.