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The Art of Deception

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Miko: The Art of Deception

THE ART OF DECEPTION

Chelle Miko

"No one notices corpses."

—Lyn Lifshin

Only up close do you discover this is not a floral tapestry;
Instead, Wang has snapped wing after silken wing

from the slender-bodied dead. He *contained them*
and *shut the lid*, then *pressed an eye to watch*.

Your eyes bore—as his must have—into the canvas
until your pupils become the size of a butterfly head,

your mouth drawn into an O. How neatly
he plucked appendages, how deftly he *coaxed*

each numbered death into focus: one by one.
Unaware, *his victims stumbled headlong*

into his netted thoughts, where they *crushed*
their bodies trying to fly, and were soon as still

as their assassin, who *smothered their breath*
then *discarded the heads and legs*, and thoraxes.

You step back. You've glimpsed another ghost
of inspiration: *other mouths, gaping and silver*

and gold, fillings mined from their teeth then melted
and sold as ingots, rings, and flatware. Your hand

brushes the serpentine necklace you always wear.
How smooth it is to the touch.