

WEIJIA PAN

Writing When the World's a Mess

He was late for the flight. She can't find her sandals.

He waved to her behind zigzagging stanchions. She thinks

about her future. He used a towel for the leaky toilet.

She scrubs the sink as rain overflows the street.

He hated continental breakfast. She thinks *continent*, an adjective

for restraint. He boiled water. She weighs out tea for a mug.

He rolled up his sleeves while the TV roared *war in Kharkiv Kharkov*

or Odessa? No matter. He continued rolling. She irons clothes

for her uncle. He landed at a midnight airport and sneezed

at the stars. She stays at home and becomes increasingly polite.

Later, he would check in at the hotel. She opens the door of a drugstore.

He stooped down to answer self-explanatory questions

at the customs. She peruses the cold eyes of her little town.

He towed his hands before an interview. She ties her pants

and stares at the pregnancy test. He sneezed louder.

She thinks about her future. He looked at a skinny girl

curling up on a poster with a donation hotline. *Call up?*

No. She plucks the hair on her left chin and murmurs

it's תּשׁוּבָה / رَمَضَانَ / 清明 and—does it matter?

—unlocks her phone. He felt like a chess piece.

She knows she's forgone. He wondered if Fate worked

at the International Terminal in No Matter Airport.

She thinks the raging war makes no sense

because her hometown is already devastated. He

tied and untied his shoes. She tucks herself in

and the night comes falling. Her pulsing temple.

More than once, he regretted leaving. She knows

as the rebels are near and the shutters are

heavy that she better learn to sleep. Or not?

He was back at the ticket counter. She reaches for her shawl.

He looked for his hometown among pixelated digits.

She latches the back door, thinking
how insecure she was when he first snuck in and out
and it was, what, five years ago? The rain stops. Dew
coalesces into held-up words. An incomplete act.
An unissued ticket. Wading through puddles
she feels her body heavier and when the pills congeal
in her belly, like two little eyes, she clenches her teeth.