

Girl insomniac

by [Miho Nonaka](#) in the [December 11, 2013](#) issue

No one understood my nightly need to be reassured  
I'd wake up again the next day. Eyes closed, I saw  
no sheep but the tufts of pampas grass looming silver  
like a solitary path.

The scroll hung above me, a verse in five  
and seven, its flowing hand thin  
and illegible—I still knew it was about our life  
not lasting very long.

How is it that adults were okay with such a prospect?

In July, bamboo blades rustled against  
paper cranes and prayer strips; I wondered how  
I'd made the cut, when I wasn't a boy  
my father wanted, wasn't a *koi* princess  
my mother said would magically turn  
her tail into a pair of legs.

I looked for the fabled rabbits on the moon,  
a family of them taking turns  
to pound rice into pearly cakes  
along their dark, elliptical orbit.