

Failed Sestina for a Half-Broken Chain

**a sestina = an intricate poetic form that repeats six end-words six different times in a specific pattern.*

I wish I could say it feels wonderful to be seen.
But everything depends on the kind of eyes
looking, and if I can bring myself to stare back.
Please don't be mad if I look away,
up to the sky. I used to pray to God
until the sun made me flinch. I hardly remember

how the gospel goes. The irony. I still remember
his words, and how they made me feel seen
but never quite understood, like a god
with a hundred faces. And his eyes—
a blue deep enough to make me run away
from home. I never glanced back.

Now, I wonder. Does his hand on my back
look like it was always meant to be there? Do I remember
a single symbol for help, a way
to get his hand off? Don't people see
how his nails were shaped to scar? Do their eyes
slip past my prism of a body? Dear god,

I think he is less human than vengeful god
of commerce. How easily he back-
stabs, sells me to body after snake-eyed
body. There are too many cash ties to remember.
They twist themselves into a pretty little bow: unseen,
beating against my throat. Nobody comes to snip it away.

The nights crumple into themselves, and if I find a way
to set myself free, I will take it. God—
this is punishment. I confess, I've seen
the stories online and turned my back
to the screen-bleached faces. I rarely remembered

the bones sucked dry of spirit, the sallow eyes.
Now, I house their pain. It reflects in my eyes
and I try to hide the mirrors away.
Nobody sees me except myself, nobody to remember
save a million hidden faces. Nobody to save us but a god
hiding himself in the sun. To think back
then, I assumed we were already seen.

Here is a prayer: God—if we aren't hidden from your eyes,
please take us away from here and back to a place
where we can be seen. Remembrance is not enough.

Amen.