

LIMEADE THUNDER

By

Myna Chang

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You're squeezed in tight, four teenagers in the cab of a rusted stepside Chevy on your way to ZZ Top's *El Loco* show—obviously the best tour name ever—with your sweaty shoulders stuck together, Jace hanging his arm out the passenger window, Brandi watching her fingers weave wind and sun, shifting forward so the light touches her face, too, and Boomer, straddling the gear shifter, drumming the knob with a couple of limeade straws from the Crossroads Diner, tapping out the rhythm to *Cheap Sunglasses*, rewinding the cassette again and again because he knows this part and believes if he can hit the beat just right he'll become part of the sound, thrum with the essence of it, and you understand, you feel it too, the need to resonate past the boundaries of this closed life—then a dissonant grull jerks your attention back to the sorry state of your truck, and if you prayed, you'd pray another gasket wouldn't blow and strand you halfway to Amarillo on a deep-fried Tuesday afternoon, but then, if you thought prayer worked you'd ask for something better than an engine that didn't puke oil-smoke, you'd pray for a new truck you could drive the entire 120 miles to the Panhandle Civic Center Auditorium with no tight-in-the-gut anxiety—now you know better than to count on prayers so you talk directly to your truck, *it* always answers, one way or another, when you urge it, *Come on, Blue*, it speaks the language of an off-kilter chassis, a commandment shuddering through the drive shaft and up the steering column, delivered into your supplicant grip, *Slow down*, so you ease off the gas, silently pleading to make it to the concert in time for the opening strobes and stage-bright smoke, you don't wanna miss a single flash of the light show—always better than those tinfoil city-boy bands who scrimp on special effects—ZZ Top never looks down their noses at you even though you're in a tiny arena in a no-horse town, they don't care if you're just a bunch of dumbfuck farmkids, they spin their guitars and braid your ticket money into their freaky beards, prophesying heaven or Houston with a bass rumble that pulses from the stage deep into your breastbone, travels up your body, lifts your hair as you float light on the music—or maybe the music becomes part of you, the melody of youth woven through the beat of your heart, like limeade thunder on a gear shifter, that syncopated beat charging your

shared teenager sweat, launching you beyond the grit of this empty prairie, because that's all you want, really, all you'd pray for if you prayed, a trembling moment of beatitude, meant just for you.

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Myna Chang (she/her) is the author of *The Potential of Radio and Rain*. Her writing has been selected for *Flash Fiction America* (W. W. Norton) and *Best Small Fictions*. Awards include the Lascaux Prize in Creative Nonfiction, the New Millennium Award in Flash Fiction, the CutBank Books Chapbook Award, and the *CRAFT* Creative NonFiction Editor's Choice Award. She hosts the Electric Sheep speculative fiction reading series. See more at MynaChang.com or on Bluesky & X/Twitter @MynaChang.