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Cover: *Violet Night Starfire*
by Lauri Burke w JK

Origami Poetry Project™

The Firefox Suite
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ii

When grass sings, foxes listen:
a scintillation of whisker and culm,
a twitch of ear and blade.

They dance in vulpine sleep:
in dreams, yes, but not
the clumsy dreams we understand –

a sublime fluency of limb and stem,
a shrug of not-quite-closed eyes,
glissando of fur and spike, rooted

sound. Listen. Listen closer:
but beneath the huff and cluck
you'll never hear the harmony

of foxes on summer lawns.

i

Chase my tail, swallow fire,
eye bright night light,
a site for soaring hearts,
liminal spirit, spirited away
before day dawns: I am
fox, I am fire, disguised desire,
tangled in tales, the lost key
to storied myth, stalking, twisting
out of reach, but look in my eyes,
I'll teach you the twinkle, sleight of tongue
sung down ages in sweet mouths-
follow me.

!!!!

Lidded eyes across a white cup
raised in steam, looking up
above bamboo screen, a fan spinning
slow, milling hours to seconds.

Flame red kimono, flesh
like fresh milk, slim fingers
weaving a cradle of intrigue, nestling
the moment, a rice paper night.

Subtle print in scented ink,
a pallet on the floor, screen door
shifts, a shape flits, tripping
cold reason to bright fire.
Deep dusk, scent of musk,
she sheds her pelt, shakes her hair
over smooth white shoulders, silk
gown tight round hourglass waist

counting time, the hours before day.
Never trust the fox, they say,
but who has seen the red lips,
sharp teeth, the slash of a smile?

!v

Low in the gloaming, roaming sly,
proud and cocky, eye on the sky,
flash that smile, be your best,
dressed to kill, taste the thrill,
lay out lines of dapper patter,
slicing through the chicken chatter
with panache, cutting a dash,
a rakish rogue, always en vogue,
slap down the cash when stakes are high,
My-oh-my, you win again,
a full house, except for the hen
dipped in your case, your face
all sweetness and light. I'll be seeing you.
Goodnight.

v

We still talk of the foxes' songs,
though no one alive now was there to hear them.
It's on nights like this, the first of autumn,
when we find brittle leaves on the stairs
though can't remember opening doors or windows,
and the house is hunkering down for whatever
may come. And it may be over dinner,
or perhaps in bed, when an embrace has become
uncomfortable, but we don't want to let go.
We'll listen, hear nothing, and that will remind us
of the songs that have not been sung
since before our grandparents were children.

vi

I fell asleep to vulpine dreams,
soft as fur in firelight. Night
led me through lost streets
where nothing moved but a young fox
with ancient eyes that shone like water
in a dark well. I'll tell your fate,
he told me, laying out cards like a clock,
a wheel, a maze, circling round
a tower struck by lightning, then laughing
left me alone, with a thousand foxes
burning bright behind my eyes.