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Maya
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Mina Kumar

MAYA

You come back to this city because you don't know where else to go. It's Christmas time, the streets are empty except for steam. You lie in the polyester, black nailpolish-stained sheets, listening to the girls outside squabbling over Kentucky Fried Chicken. The smell wafts greasy under the door, coats the inside of your belly, until you want to scream. The cross-eyed white woman who is what passes for a concierge comes to collect the money for the sheets you ruined. You count over your billfold after she's gone. Mother, you cry, father, you cry, friend. All is illusion. In a sleazy boardinghouse in Toronto, on vacation, you turn away from the warm, rubbery smell of your boots and formulate Hindu philosophy.