

**On the Verge Writing Contest 2023, First-Place Poetry Winner  
By Rosemary (Xinhe) Hu**

what i've learned about law school so far

being in love is a good thing  
it feels like i've never done anything so hard in my life  
and then i remember  
what i've done so far in my life and then  
i remember that law school is actually a very small thing

i have a classmate who has a one-year-old daughter  
and it made me for a split second  
want a one-year-old daughter  
which was confusing and lonely and i am a writer  
so i have to be honest or something

i want to go home to francis every night  
and i want to use my towel to dip the drop of water  
he always forgets in his belly button after a shower

i get confused when the street lights at night remind me of 大连<sup>1</sup>  
but then i realize i'm not in 大连  
and i haven't been back in 6 years  
then i remember i'm not even in Vancouver  
and that i live in Victoria now  
and my maternal grandma is dead

and i remember research shows immigration and mental illness  
puzzle piece fit

me as a math equation answer  
or something

and i miss everything  
and sometimes i hate english i just hate it so much  
all the space it takes up

the owner of Carribbean Cafe upon hearing me speak  
and hearing i immigrated as a tiny kid  
told me "sometimes it's not good to lose your accent"  
and almost muscle memory defense  
i said "but i can speak fluent mandarin"  
and he smiled

a law school is filled with colonial violence

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<sup>1</sup> Dalian, China

A beautiful, vibrant port city in northeast China, in the Liaoning Province. The authors' hometown.

and i forgot how hard it is for me to exist in academic institutions  
but then i remember how it makes sense  
i got this big scholarship  
and the only person i want to tell is my grandma but she is dead

i'm trying to put less pressure on myself so my shoulders don't hurt  
but it's hard when i see how white the law school is

i know my grandma can see me  
i was quick to memorize the bike ride home from school

now  
even in the dark  
i make all the right turns.