



# Standing Water: Poems

*Eleanor Chai*

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**Standing Water: Poems** Eleanor Chai

**A profound literary debut that recounts a child's singular story**

*Since I made you, you may*

*imagine I set myself on fire?*

*or better, say: you lit the funeral pyre  
from ten thousand days away.*

A young woman in Paris encounters an uncanny presence on a tour of a small museum. A study by Rodin of the dancer Little Hanako? titled *Head of Sorrow*? triggers in the young woman recognition of her mother, a mother erased from her life since childhood.

Thus begins Eleanor Chai's *Standing Water*, one of the most remarkable first books of poetry in recent years. It is a journey into the past as well as the present? into the narrative hidden from the poet since birth, as well as the strategies that she has adopted to survive. It is a journey about how we learn to cope with, to perceive and describe, the world. It is a story about savage privilege and deprivation.

Haunting the whole is the figure of the real Little Hanako? Rodin's model, a Japanese artist displaced in Europe, the medium through which other artists dream and discover the world.

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