POETRY

Correction Tape

by Qiang Meng



"Tape" by Hana Nekrep

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We entered middle school and mocked
the erasers as childish candies,
for pencils were banished in favor of pens.
Good for your calligraphy, said Mr. Wang,
so we learned the heaviness of a nib,
and that our young hands were bound for
mistakes. Some sloppy boys, like me,
didn’t bother to buy correction tape.
To fix a miswritten word, we’d press
a piece of clear adhesive tape
onto the exam paper, then peel it back
fast enough to lift the inked fiber
like ripping off someone’s pale scab.
We didn’t mind, although years later,
we too would feel the pain
of overlooking a contract’s fine print
and of love thinned after each apology.
The tape, with its stolen strokes,
became a dictionary of nonexistent Chinese
we’d roll up and collect
like bubble gum wrappers. The boys
competed to see whose was the biggest.

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