Orange Robes Folding

Emily Lupita Plum*

*Iowa State University

Copyright ©2005 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
Orange Robes Folding
Emily Lupita Plum

it wasn't meant to be this way:
my fingers, his palm gripping them gripping rope
entwined here in this sky
holding us up over Angkor Wat
holding us covered in travel, holding us
this gravity reaching toward our balloon drifting
toward gathered peoples gathered
to tour the great temples.

no one
was watching until the bodies
began to land with dullness
around them.

we weren't meant to die on this day:
he bowed deeply to the young men
in orange robes who sold us bottled water
as we stepped into their balloon ride.
they sold us stones for luck and prosperity,
for calm while waking in mornings,
calm wind, calm gasses of air rising
in the heat then dropping cables snapping

the basket in which we are standing then
our memories
scattering
look!
you can see the universe all at once here.
look! people are dying here. Orange robes folding
over and over in the wind as they fall
each robe, each strand of colored thread, each
stitch sewn shut a small parachute lifting the body
lifting the body towards sunlight slightly.

it was not enough.
huddled on their knees beneath our soaring, broken balloon
fifty Hindus acted quickly, summoned the old Gods,
the Gods of Wind and Gravity, to return to Angkor Wat
to gather us up in their hands that day.
Vishnu led them as they toured the ancient city,
as they took their place on the giant chairs
of King Suryavarman and Jayavarman,
as they rubbed their hands on the fine stones and debated the merits of our failed attempt to fly.
in the basket of our tilted balloon, we kneeled,
the five who were left, and begged for their blessings,
for their forgiveness and swift intervention.

there wasn't a ceremony as I expected.

it wasn't meant to be this way:
he whispered, breathing deeply when it was all finished as he opened his palm, my fingers slipping out.

I remember his eyes as we fell,
stretching out his arms he leaned forward we

floated in a spiral.