

## Repatriation

In the beginning, someone said  
Let there be light,  
but didn't say let there be dark.  
He saw that light was good  
then separated the light from the dark  
then called the segregation night and day.  
He scrambled in galloping,  
to wreak havoc on the tranquil quiet of dark.  
Dark didn't come or go or stay  
but the light was invariably  
the gleam of incendiary hope  
that began Civilizing the universe,  
the first swell of civic responsibility  
to decide the come then go for the rest of us.

In the beginning, I cry out  
The first gasp of air fills my lungs and the fluorescent hospital light makes my eyes recoil  
But,  
In the beginning,  
Somebody still said *let there be light* in the midst of all the dark, but I am unaware.  
That in the womb I would be Asian-American and a girl and they would matter more so than that  
in a few months I'd have a shock of jet black hair and a pink bib around my neck.

In the beginning,  
You were also unaware.  
You don't know that you are white. Or black. Or gay. Or that you are the child of immigrant  
parents who will scrape and save to clothe and feed you. Or that you would never walk.  
You didn't know that any of these identities mattered.  
In the beginning,  
We do not know that oppression is taught and that we are guiltless for what will happen in the  
next few years.  
Or that we were thrust into a cycle that we would either battle for the rest of our lives or actively  
support.  
We do not know that oppression came to be because someone, in the beginning, said *let there be  
light* but didn't say *let there be dark*

The sky and the sea followed suit  
The upper and lower limit founded on day two  
Forged the cavity that light craved to fill and warm  
Two blues that incentivized the sudden rush and swarm  
To begin legislating the binary.  
Two that is law, the Lord's law.

At home  
the sky and the sea glimmer but rarely clash  
Maybe, this peaceful coexistence is  
Why we have a 99 Ranch and three different Korean markets and a bustling Chinatown  
and why so many immigrants call Los Angeles home.  
I grew up enjoying the sky and the sea with other children that looked just like me.

After the beginning, he saw that it was good that there were the sky and the sea and I must've  
agreed because I also saw that it was good.  
In fifth grade, she liked me and he liked me and the teacher liked me and the coach liked me, just  
like they liked everyone else.  
I was taught and she was taught and he was taught that Martin Luther King was a good man and  
that we don't pull our eyes back in the playground.

But for him, It wasn't enough.  
The sky and sea couldn't pursue  
Without a supple flesh to consume.  
So he made the lush green the apple of his eye  
A mistress to the cycle and the limits to the sky and sea  
Where the trees reinforce the repetitive proclamations from he.  
Land, he named her  
Kneeled at the sky and sea  
Absorbing the cool throbs and pangs  
Set into stone by the clanging clambering waves and the snatched stolen breath of the sky  
Solidifying without question the edicts that only time justifies  
The land began to notice that someone never said *let there be dark* because only the light was  
good and it warmed her.  
But now,  
A kaleidoscopic pattern called the stars  
A fiery ball granted to the sky and the sea  
To toss with the turning of each day.  
So there was morning and there was night and there was a reinforcement of the binary.  
First, the light, the good, all saint's play.  
Second, the dark, the bad, Lucifer's domain.

In sixth grade, someone must have said *let there only be light*  
because I began to feel I was not the good.  
Undoubtedly, someone said *only light* because in one fell swoop it became clear being Asian but  
not long, blonde, or blue-eyed is a valid reason to pretend that I don't exist  
But still, he and she and the teacher and the coach wonder why I fret because *America is a  
melting pot* and because *Asians are so smart and good at the violin* and that in the rink that it  
*must be nice to still have the body of a child at fifteen.*  
That wearing *Brandy Melville* and earnestly shaking your head that you can't speak a drop of  
Korean and bringing peanut butter sandwiches to school and acting so WHITE in a crowd of  
Asians, these would make it *good.*

Being fed the quintessential lie that it didn't matter if I had more privilege because of *merit over money* and to  
Smile and nod  
To discount any Asianness, to conjure images of a docile doe.  
To introduce myself as American and not Asian-American

But it isn't enough.

So,

On the fifth day,

He created intention through conscience

With their barbed beaks and milk teeth

Breathing, moving beasts occupying the light and the dark and the upper and lower limits

Creating the efferent pathways in which

The Binary would be encouraged and the nonbinary punished

This hyphenated identity is a double-edged sword, the second side elucidated only recently coming to St. Paul's: a mosaic of students bearing strikingly different backgrounds.

That, where the Asian community is the most homogenous

Where hyphenated niches are unclear

One day, a seemingly benign question startles me while I am cross-legged in the kitchen:

*Celis, Asians aren't POC, right?*

I stutter.

*Yes. They are not.*

We like to believe that Asians at SPS are too well off and too talented to be oppressed.

The concertmaster, the Ferguson winner: Too often, Asian.

You begin to see why Asian struggles are as nonexistent as warm New Hampshire winters

For me: No silver spoons, no legacy, no Hermes link

But no struggles, all the opportunities, and social mobility, correct?

No.

But the penultimate day of creation yielded empathy

Didn't matter if a boy told me *girls can't be trustees especially a girl of color, would you really think that the old white men would be alright with that?*

It mattered that a girl told me *fifty years ago girls weren't allowed here, soon our girls will have "trustee" plus class year on those flimsy plastic name tags*

We repatriate our identities.

Five years ago, you saw your classmates flock away and you didn't want to be Asian

Two years ago you stepped on this campus and didn't want to be Asian.

You used to bend over backward to twist into a mold that simply wasn't you  
but now

You are tired and realize draining yourself to be less of yourself is a possibility but not a policy.

For today you see the nascent understanding of intersectionality and surround yourself with people who make your head nod enthusiastically

I repatriate my identity and begin to see how beautiful it is to be Asian American.

I gasp for air and in one fell swoop say *let there be light* and *let there be dark* and *let them be good*.