

The Lineage of Ink and Heart

"Line inferiority," art revealed.

That is the problem with poets. It is a fear that has been programmed into their fingertips. The fear of that one line not measuring up, making anything written before or after it, a failure.

The cure?

Lay your body on the ground poet. Murmur your confessions on the ghosts of soles that have drum passed this journey before. Plant a stream of words on the road less travelled and watch them grow into something all your own. Pick the wild ones and place them into a vase. Watch the hunger of beauty transform the tip of your pen.

There is a glamourless reality to the art of the poetic line. Any simpleton with a wishy washy imagination can push together heart stopping metaphors. As a hopeless romantic of language, the poet is marked as the biggest fool of the trade. In a black market of having something to say, the poet engages in clandestine rituals of language every second we're not looking. These poor fools find beauty in inhaling oxidized air that breaks down our lungs with every intake for Christsake! They go around with notebooks, pens and knives, searching for the next line to imprint into the palm of your hand.

And you'll cradle it...hoping to keep a speck of beauty, cupped in the base of a naive heart taken by this being, the poet.

No art = no city!

My soul lays homeless,
laid out for sheep
to trample and graze.

I'm only vapors of a girl
who once was scribbled
on the bridge of life's nose.

Without vowels
and constants,
the ground is nameless.

I walk aimlessly
among clumps of
flesh, eyeballs, slabs of meat
grotesquely topped
with hair roots
and toenails.

Every moment
the book lays closed,
the pen stays still,
equals the blend of a
reality that has no indicators.

The world is as uniformed
as water, some parts
cleaner than others,
my eyes housed in the murkier
parts, lips moving soundlessly
against the tide of
the United States of land-filled
discontent, waiting
for the ink to blot.

Generations: La Familia

father:

he watched his father
weaken the land of his mother
over bowls of arroz y gandules.

he slapped her face
she slapped sazón,
both tenderizing
alimento para los niños.

my father only did what
he was taught, open palm
against my mother

giving her money to
cook a pernil.

mother:

she watched her mother
as she spoke to the cops
stopping by on atlantic avenue.

*él es un hijo de puta
trampa y voy a cortarle.*

knives narrowly missing
pops head as she watched
saturday morning cartoons,

waiting for afternoon
where mr. softee granted
credit for a tribe of eight.

she'll visit him in the land
of coqui and scorpions years
later, remembering how
he narrowly missed a knife.

she will not ask him
to rescue her from creatures
as she stands her ground,

shaking with kitchen knife.

her mother knew in
San Juan, the cowards will
keep on crawling.

daughter:

she was scared
to scribe all
the tragedy,
kept it locked
in her head.

she watched him
beat her
both eyes swollen shut
after she sent chairs
swinging in
curses.

her pen is her path
to their histories
they foolishly
put in a child of ten.

they did not teach
her spanish, so she snuck
it in as a ghost
at kitchen tables.

grandmothers with
tongues of swords
swiftly retold
tragedies in an alphabet
she struggled to
master

thinking la nena
would never
learn patterns if
she was a little more
gringa instead of
boriqua

never realizing

that she squeezed
herself between
the muñecas
and rocking chair

soaking in
flailing hands
and
broken hearts
to skipping needles
of Hector Lavoe
and Celia Cruz.

years later
her late night
feelings
boiled down
to everything
she learned from
home sweet home,

the only prayer
she can roll
off her tongue
as she shook
with the possibility
of history repeating:

*dame la fuerza
para encontrar un
beso en este mundo.*

Heavy hearts hold
burnt out stars deep
in their belly, laboring
hope in their hips,
desiring to birth blinding
light from their eyes.

As a little girl, I used to wish
that I could mother the skies
and protect the stems of dying
light on the edge of my lips.
Now I wander endlessly
through the dark with you
until you're ready shed some light.

We'll wait quietly
in the belly of the moon
for your heart to crown
dusty death throes of
dimming supernova
remnants, pushing
through the edge of your lips
to land on my awaiting hands.