

MAKE A LIVING AS A POET

I do not know how to make this a livelihood
as I cannot even silence the muse.

I touched the tree frogs that sing to me, making
calls: mating calls as sunlight calls.

After I buried my father, I found a nest of
eggs hidden in the old house where he
used to swing from the hammock and
whistle his old song from the last war,
whose lyrics are about a boy waiting for his
mother lost in the jungle. The fireflies
came to him to shine the light in the
footpath. The crickets gave him directions.

The howls gave encouragement and
the lizards clear the path. I followed
the tune to the bush with thorns and
and I dipped my fingers on a chili plant.

I burned my eyes after I touch them with
my red fingers. My father said: Hush..

You have a lyric to give and bless me with
moonlight - coconut milk across my eyes.

I found eggs cracked open and birds sat
under the sun. I do not know how to make
this is a livelihood. Am I dying after the muse
touched me with the tree frog's luring calls?

EDITH

I remember the warning not to get off the last train car---

--- railroad sign scolding me from the last train station.

I counted the minutes with cold silences- that night

--- the train entered the yawning mouth of a river

which--- colonized my dreams with dead eyes of the fish.

The last time, I visited you said you trapped the fireflies

in your room--- which filtered the air with fishermen's nets

---and gave me enough electricity to soothe the heat.---

"---Don't be afraid of grandma Noning" . I see Uncle Liberato

whose future is not disguised in his sleep. --- I will be a doctor

he said where the school has a tower with a nest of eggs.

--A place where men speak a language of tiny bag brown birds

---the hands of women pulling the sticky purple cakes before

eating them. ---the dance where I scrape my sides against--

the trunks of tamarind trees. I cannot still see you in the dark--

the warning not to get off from the last car to a yawning

mouth of a river--or hang myself from the railroad tracks.

The railroad sign scolding me from the last railroad mile as

I counted the minutes with cold silences --- it is not over.

Before the sun rises---- moonlight on the trees, I cannot

shimmy up the gnarled chico trees for the brown fruit--.

I still cannot touch -- the fireflies soothe you from the long

summer heat before the moon dies—sunlight on branches—I can

climb as a lizard to feel the heat- energy like railroad tracks-

I can hear the crickets singing another the long pampas

flowers goodbye.

THE LOTUS EATERS

Sorsogon in the Philippines, during

My last vacation

At sunset, you were tired
shaking the lotus plankton as
water shuddered in the tidepools
rocking the currents and caught
the salt in your heart.

There is no memory now

In the middle of concentric waves-

No seagulls circling above

And the crabs scuttling after

Leaving the shade beating the heat.

The constant ebb and flow

After the sun lulled the mind

And time seemed to hang

By the palm trees. It seemed so

Easy just to lean against the

Nipa hut close to the shore

Watch the waves crash

The swell hanging out

like a loose tongue.

Do you have to pull that sea weeds
from the deep?

The men were weighed by

Granite stones

And the women cried for help

After the sun flayed them

With whips

And we lay down on the

shore like burned

shells.

Friend, I see the seaweeds shifting

Along the shore like many feet

And the fish telling us to dive

Deeper.

The swell rising and spitting out

Its frothy tongue again

mocking us in our sleep.