

HOLY;

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The Oracle

He presses his thumbs
into the teeth of my palms, they only remember
crude hymns and hungry solitudes.

What will your daughters say about your knuckles, your
cat-o-nine spine, leather tongue, what will your sons speak of
when they mock the agony of your womb.

Yes, I fear
cracked
half-moon hips,
fractured for rapist sons.
Yes, I scowl
at the idea of daughters
mimicking the redolence of bartered adolescence.

The oracle's solicitous fingers
search,
asks again,
pinches mitigated rage, demands again.

What will your counterfeit lovers urge out of your skin, burgeon
ūrja from holy rib, viscera of your girlhood, chalice without blood.
Why beg for a God that will not answer.

I know my body is less temple.

More unhallowed ground for unordained priests, banished
shaman, vengeful goddess; for the lawless.

Divine seer,
pierce optic nerve. Tell me what to do.

The oracle,
holds my palms like a stillborn. Psalms into skin calligraphy
unhinges his tendons, softens.

How do you taper the garment of your grief, undress
the silhouette of haunting, are you still waiting
for someone to return home?

Yes, I know. I know. I've heard this before. I've handed you eighty
this time. Just tell me, no I don't want to hear it again. Tell me what
to do. I'm so so so confused. Will I fall in love. When do I die. How
do I die. How do I die. How do I die. How do I die. How do I

Birthday

How her hips
 snapped for you
 the deep crimson
spilling
between legs,

she is the serpent
who devours herself
 ouroboros.

Gives you her mouth,
the roadwork of her feet
when you cry it is an echo, a sad nursery rhyme
dipped in your mother tongue.

Once she pulls
the feeble
 thing
from insider her,
she gives you a name
meaning
 miracle.

A blessing twenty-four days too early;
this birth is easily a mourning.
buries placenta near grandfather's ashen body;
tradition which ties you to earth.

As she wraps you in the neighbour's clothes;
something new, something borrowed,

is how you begin to think of time
as you drift within the rooms
of your mother's cavernous life.

When you say her name, *Estrellita*

It becomes an echo

Inday, anak

Dios.

They sound like a chainsaw

Teeth chattering to wood
splintered bass lines and drum beats

They sound like danger
thunder - wave crash - screech
of train tracks
burnt rubber on wet bitumen

They sound like a siren
throes of quiet ambulances
late to emergency rooms
the whimper that veiled Nagasaki
in dissonant elegy

They sound like love
clinking of fine china
fracturing driftwood
a rusty gate hinge
a clamour of butterfly wings

They sound a lot like love
bone break flesh wound
sutured kamasutra
choked mattress springs

Disappearing Act

i

We offer each other worn-out truths
as though intimacy
were an item of clothing.
A sweater, a jacket, a t-shirt,
pulled off and placed into drawers,
only to be given back.

ii

We waited for midnight.
I sat in a chair
(not facing you)
you lay on the bed
(facing me)
dressed in skin, matching
garments in prickled black and white,
we cannot face each other.
This body you read like a prosecutor
is unable to lie.

iii

Accusation masquerades
as an empty gun chamber:
you ask me
whether it were our veins
that held the burial ground of
our ancestors,
whether it were our breaths

that invoked the spirits of the dead
when our words were unkind,
whether it was the fault
of our parents
and their parents and
their parents
for not teaching us how to love.

iv

Beloved, if I sacrifice this body
made of slaughter
unto the promise of the ether
would you forgive me
for all the hurt I caused you?
If I tore skin from my fingertips
would I be rid of the memory of you?

v

The kisses of our unknown lovers
will turn to acid in our mouths,
will try to scrub clean
my name, your name
found ruined on our tongues: abandoned.

i

Midnight
cracked the skull of dawn.
I own the last of our truths;
I can live without you.

To say *ingat*

Is to know the ocean

Becomes tsunami when it finally feels the fissures

Of its spine;

Or perhaps, when you are called home

As soft as the last leaves of autumn

Staining walkways like exposed negatives;

Or perhaps, your gangly smile

The way there is no music like laughter

And how language often feels like your tita's dinners;

Or photo albums, etched with the colour of your skin,

Re-membling stories to reconcile the glory

Of your becoming;

Or the wilt of your mother's wedding dress, sleeves

That once made cocoon of her. Bare shoulders

Now envelop you in bloom