

# 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-membering 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