

diaspora babies

diaspora babies, we
are born of pregnant pauses/spilled
from unwanted wombs/squalling invisible-ink poems/written in the margins
of a map of a place
called No Homeland

old *gong gong* honoured uncle is the man i won't become/
BBQ pork-scented sorrow and red
bean paste buns he sold on street corners in Chinatown/handing out sweetbread
and stories
for seventy-five cents each/red meat and red hands stained
by the winter wind's violence/as the Goddess of Mercy watched/pitying
from her curbside altar

diaspora bodies, we
wrap lips around pregnant pauses/spill
salt fluids from unwanted bodies/squalling invisible-ink poetry/written in the
margins
of a map of a place
called No Homeland

my boy makes me breakfast the morning after/he's the air i breathe/love-
flavoured oxygen/i taste him everywhere/sun-dried orange peel candy/like the kind
my father used to bring on car trips/the colour of his skin/brown
salty-sweet/we gorge ourselves on love
not thinking about tomorrow/there's never enough
time/to make you full/never enough flesh
to fill your skin/we open our mouths for stories/for sun-tinted histories
and swallow each other whole/here in this place
with no room for mercy
diaspora secrets, we
enclose in pregnant pauses/write on the walls
of unwanted wombs/invisible-ink poems in the margins
of bodies/living out a map of a place
called No Homeland

red's the color of my mother's scars/as though the Goddess of Mercy

went finger-painting across my mother's face/a mask
made of Things We Don't Talk About
there some stories that are never told/but known
nonetheless we bake them into bread/fill buns with secrets
like sweet lotus paste/ "what can't be cured must be endured"/
"chinese families
don't talk about our feelings"/"we wash them down
with pork"/ "do as you are told, child"/ "eat what's in your bowl"
swallow it/bitter or sweet
some violence, we
keep inside our bodies/scar tissue/"what love?
the kind they show in gwai lo films?
chinese women don't speak
of love"/ "we know
that people will laugh at us"
some bodies can't be touched/some poems
cannot be written/just felt

diaspora haunted, we
hunt for pregnant pauses/give birth
from unwanted yellow wombs/bodies
like invisible-ink poems/ghost children drawing maps in the margins/
of a place called No Homeland

in your mouth

there were no words in your mouth,
but there was a pen in your head
you wanted to make friends, but wrote stories instead
you fear to fight the feather tip scratching at the inside of your skull
afraid to fight the finding that fucking's no good at all
now there's pen between your thighs and he won't look you in the eyes
as he pounds you till sunrise, he stops once to say

hey

you look afraid

what's the matter

but you don't answer, why don't you answer
you should answer but the answer don't matter, do it?
cuz there's a pen between your thighs, no reflection
in your eyes, and a poem in sticky ink

a poem in sticky ink

a poem in sticky-icky sticky-icky invisible ink

that says, you always lie

you're a bad ugly boy and your lips will always lie

there are no words in your mouth

but there's a pen in your head

you want to tell the truth

but you told stories instead

there is a poem

scratched onto the walls of my throat
no one has heard it
but it is there

what the moon saw

when i was in grade five, i learned in school that the shadows on the moon
are really craters formed by the impact of meteorites pulled in by gravity.
lakes and valleys on the face of the moon, scars left by an invisible force. my mother
had three long scars on her face
the shape and colour of the crescent moon.
i thought they were beautiful.
liked to sit on her lap and trace them with my fingertips
until i grew too old for such things.

too old to sit on my mother's lap. too old
to touch my mother's face. old enough for desire
to rise and swell, glowing pearlescent beneath my skin, singing *i want
i want i want* to be touched, kissed, tasted, told
you drive me crazy like the moon.

sound of *baba's* fist against my face
if you want to be my son
sound of knuckles
against bone
like a meteorite striking
the surface of the moon.
if you want to live in my house
sound of his hand, whispering through the air
in the lines on his hand, ancient and full of grace
i saw all the love
and terror
and bitterness and rage
and love once again in my father's heart the shadow-shapes

the story echoes
that bound us to each other and a place across the sea
i'd never seen. the only inheritance we would share
 sound of his hand meeting mine
sound of my own rage, my heartbeat
thundering murdermurdermurder and love in my ears
my mother, leaping to her feet. "*if you touch him again, i'll kill you*
scars burning like fire across her face and our house fell silent, frozen
in time, quiet as the lakes of the moon

i want you to see, to listen between the lines
to notice not only the four letters that set *love* and *violence* apart
but also the four they have in common
see my history, the lines on my face
there is more to us than we can say an invisible thread
a force of gravity, a storyline binding us all together:
my father, his fist, my mother, the scar. me and moon and you, my love
and you.

its name was the Boy Without A Penis

some people also called it the Twinky Without a Winky, or occasionally, The Dickless Wonder. it didn't mind. it never wanted for other names. it never knew anything different. it lived in cornersincupboardsin holes in the wall. it knew a lot about holes. the things that hide there. the things that get stuck inside them. it spent nights in the grickle-grass garden its parents had stopped planting long ago. stood with its bare feet in the dirt wish-whispering at the moon, *make me precious. make me lovely. make me unlonely. make me a star.* like Gollum, like Ginsberg, like gratitude, like grace.

*i am with you
in Eden
where the serpent is longing for adam
i am with you
in Eden
with your fruit caught in my throat*

it wondered about the hollow space. the gap. the GAPING HOLE where its penis could have been. could have, not should have, because there was so much potential in that piece of virgin real estate. so many options to try. a bouquet of roses (de-thorned, of course) or a tiny zoo of origami unicorns. the Boy Without A Penis liked to curl up in corners and dream up cinematic fantasies all featuring the Place Between its Legs. like smuggling diamonds across the border. a handful of gemstones blazing inside its body like hidden fire. in the place where a penis could have been. the Boy stored memories and sunbeams and secrets and dust. stories that were not about emptiness but about growing about changing and being whole.

*i am with you
in the Homeland
where my spirit is waiting for the body it left behind
i am with you
in the Homeland
a flower tucked between my thighs*

the Boy Without A Penis wanted to know things. and see things. it wanted to laugh loud and long and raucously without fear of shame. it wanted sushi. and sex. possibly but not necessarily at the same time. it craved the sensations of touching and heart-pounding and shivering in the rain. it wanted to learn about stuff. all the stuff like what makes the wind howl and moan in pleasure or fear. how

to give people orgasms. how to grow tomatoes and the name of the person who lives in the moon. so it struck out on its own, left cupboards and corners and grickle-grass behind, to seek out wider places. whistling a song to the wind
oh, oh, the places i'll go. the places i'll see, the loves that i'll know.
oh, oh, the places i'll go. and the wind whispered back

beware, beware, there are wolves out there.

beware of wolves in the wide world.

i am with you

in Avalon

looking for dreams in the mist

i am with you

in Avalon

remembering the future we had

the Boy Without A Penis walked up hill and down dale through bush through briar. it went to cities. scouring concrete canyons and the thumping underground. looking for a job for sex for beauty for blow. everywhere it went people wanted to know: where was its penis? they didn't understand about holes. about sunbeams and secrets and memories and dust and they were disgusted by the scent of grickle-grass that still clung to its skin. "go home," they said, "no offense, but you're just not a good fit here." they said, "it's not that i'm intolerant, but there's just no way i could ever work with you, be friends with you, want you, have sex with you. it's not that you're ugly you're just not attractive to me." they said, "a person like you will get eaten up by wolves. you had better go home, where you can hide." and the Boy Without a Penis, starving, began to wonder, for the first time, about power. the Boy began to wonder, for the first time, about rage. stories began to blossom. crimson-coloured between its thighs.

i am with you

in Rockland

where a storyteller

is screaming our names

i am with you

in Rockland

and your skin tastes

like rebellion

the Boy With No Penis began to put sharp things in the place where a penis could have been. it started with pushpins. then thumbtacks needles and then knives. a collection of razor words to carve the shape of the truth of its desires. the Boy ran through alleys and climbed gates and stole what it needed at night. it learned to fight like a wild thing to wait in the dark for the predators to come and stab them with the blades it kept hidden in itself. it listened to the echoes of the howling of the wolves and wish-whispered to the moon, “make me dangerous. make me strong. make me untouchable. make me whole.”

*i am with you
in Gomorrah
where angels are raining fire
i am with you
in Gomorrah
with a mouthful of ashes in my kiss*

they hunted the Boy With No Penis. hunted it the way they hunt wolves. with poison and cages and torches and guns but they never found it. never caught it. never killed it they never could. they tell terrifying stories about the things it does in the dark. “it makes love to monsters,” they murmured, “it eats small children and runs a drug-smuggling gang and keeps a machine gun cocked in its crotch.” some of the stories are obviously false. some of them are true. some of them are becoming true now. the Boy With No Penis is waiting, is watching is biding its time. a pack of wolves runs, howling prophecies at its back. it is waiting for strange and rare creatures who have always known its name. it is waiting for time to tell. stars to fall. war to start. it is waiting for monsters and for Moloch. the signs of the bones. it is waiting for you.

*i am with you in blood i am with you in ashes
i am with you in memory
i am with you in dust
i am with you
i am with you
i am with you
we are here*

good communication

someday, I'm going to finish writing down everything I mean to say. on that day, i will be finished with language. forever. and anyone who wants to communicate with me will have to have totally perfected the art of touching without causing pain.

we did not ask for

girl, we are both grown now
but i still remember you
young in your white dress
the silver earrings you wore,
sunlight scrutinizing your face and the asphalt
of the schoolyard
the day you told me you'd been raped.
your face so pale i thought you looked dead
the story swirling out of your mouth like smoke
to fill the air between us
eddy between my lips, staining
my throat and tongue.
girl, i cried that day
not just for you
but for me.
felt the alchemy of your words
alter my body at the cellular level
a prophecy
i knew then that the future
would not be kind
and in hindsight, it was true.
girl, we are both grown,
and the years have not been gentle.
today i wear a white dress
and silver earrings
in the rain
in memory, not just of you
but of me
and all the stories – like smoke, like ghosts, like magic –
lost between us
and these rapeable bodies
we did not ask for.