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The sun has tripped barely below the horizon and the air itself seems to be breathing blue. A hint of stars freckle the stretch of sky above. The palm trees are shadows almost unrealized against the shore. Kind-eyed ROSAMIE, perhaps aged forty-five, perhaps aged sixty, steps dripping out of the ocean. Her hair is black and frizzy with salt water. The woman sloshes ashore with her surfboard by her side, heading towards the large campfire surrounded by laughing and drinking teenage boys. CHAD greets the approaching figure.

CHAD
Yo, Mama Bautista! Any choka’ waves today?
ROSAMIE
Yes. It was...good day.

Chad grins as she slowly clambers to her knees beside him. The other boys—JOHNNY, GABE, JASON, and LUKE—cheer and greet Rosamie, crowding around her, white California teeth bright in the blue-lit evening. Rosamie settles in just so. Her charmingly heavy Filipino accent colors every word.

ROSAMIE
Bring me my basket, you foolish sons of foolish mothers.
Jason, a broad-shouldered floppy-haired young man with a lazy eye, bows like a knight of old, and presents the basket with a flourish. Rosamie resists a smile, but it tugs against her lips nonetheless. Jason sees it and gives a mischievous look that Rosamie dismisses with a wave of her hand. She unloads a log of pitsi-pitsî (a traditional Filipino dessert) on a plate of white and blue china. Johnny, the youngest among them, reaches out a grimy hand, but draws it back at Rosamie’s laugh.

JOHNNY
Sorry.

Luke pushes up his glasses with a twiggy arm and rolls his eyes.

LUKE
Yeah, Johnny. Keep your gross little hands to yourself.

ROSAMIE
Shut up, Luke.


ROSAMIE
Now. After grace has been said, my horribles, we will eat the pitsi-pitsî. Pray for us now, John.

All bow their heads.

JOHNNY
Dear Holy Father, thanks a ton. Bless the pisty-pasty to our bones and help ’em grow a lot. I, uh, thank thee for the gnarly food again, I guess.
Amen.

The boys jump on the pitsi-pitsî delightedly. Rosamie looks over the ocean with a melancholy air for a moment before Jason approaches.

JASON
Hey. Can I talk to you, Mama? In private?
ROSAMIE

In private?

Jason tugs her over to the stack of longboards beside the outhouse.

JASON

They found us.

Rosamie clutches her mouth. Her eyes daze over and a flashback begins.

JASON (O.S)

Mama? Mama, you okay?

EXT. SHIP– DAY

Rosamie and BENJIE BAUTISTA hold hands on a balcony of a ship sailing on the ocean. Both of them have wedding rings on. They’re smiling. Rosamie rests her head on his shoulder.

INT. HOSPITAL– EVENING

Benjie is in a hospital bed, pale as death.

ROSAMIE

Benjie, gaga ka.

Tanga, tanga, tanga!

BENJIE

Call me stupid if you like, but I am right. Do not pay any more for the medicine. Take care of yourself.

ROSAMIE

Hindi! Hindi ko gagawin ito! No.

She sobs.
EXT. ROSAMIE’S APARTMENT- DAY
The surf gang—Chad, Jason, Luke, and Gabe—are walking past Rosamie’s apartment, rowdily shouting and punching each other on the shoulder on the way to the beach. Luke is holding a boombox blasting out Duran-Duran. Rosamie watches out of the window as Johnny struggles to keep up with the older boys. They are all unkempt, straggly, and hungry-looking.

JOHNNY
Hey! Wait up, guys! Guys?

The other boys laugh and walk faster.

CHAD
Keep up, donk.

Chad snatches Johnny’s hat and tosses it to Jason, who tosses it to Gabe, who puts it on. Luke looks disdainful of the entire business. He is the most well-kept of them all.

JOHNNY
I hate you!

Rosamie looks over at her homemade chicken adobo and back at the boys disappearing into the distance. She twists her wedding ring.
EXT. CRACK HOUSE - EVENING
Rosamie's arms and hands are covered in blood. She is handcuffed to a radiator. There's a gun in her face.

HOODED MAN
Where's Jason, bitch?
What did he do with the money?

ROSAMIE
I don't know.

The unseen hooded figure slaps her viciously with the butt of the gun. She dribbles blood from her mouth but doesn't flinch. She stares him straight in the eyes.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT
It's raining. Rosamie sips her tea sitting in her comfy chair near the window. She pulls her blanket closer and smiles. She then looks out the window and sees Jason and Johnny huddled together under a balcony on the street. She sighs and puts her coat on.

INT. WALMART - MORNING
Rosamie is a cashier. She stares blearily at the customer yelling unintelligible English noises at her. She rubs her forehead.

INT. CHURCH - EARLY AFTERNOON
Rosamie sits in her pew listening to the preacher. The majority of the other church members are white. The ones in her pew shift uncomfortably. Rosamie tries not to notice.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON
Rosamie is walking down the street with groceries in hand. She is bumped into by a man in a business suit talking on a bluetooth. She drops her groceries and is forced to pick them up. He ignores her and continues past, actually stepping on the plastic bag in the process.
EXT. STREET - NIGHT
Rosamie goes to Jason and Johnny under the balcony.

ROSAMIE
Come. It is too cold tonight.
I have room.

INT. CRACKHOUSE - EVENING
The hooded man lowers his hood and crouches by Rosamie's side.

HOODED MAN
Look, lady.
I'm not here to slap you around.
Just tell me where that piece of shit is and I'll let you go.

EXT. BEACH - DAY
Rosamie does an excellent boogie on the surfboard while Gabe falls off his board. The Surf Gang looks astonished.

ROSAMIE
I have passed your silly test, boys. Now will you listen? You need to go to--

Smash cut to the memories blurring faster and faster.

Gun.
Rain.
Walmart.
Church.
Beach.
Apartment.
Blood.
Benjie.

Rosamie is faintly aware of Jason shaking her.

JASON
Mama! Mama, wake up! We gotta go!
Mama, can you hear me?!
ROSAMIE
Yes, idiot. Listen up.

Jason blinks. Rosamie steps away and gestures for Jason to take the boys.

ROSAMIE
You need to go.
Where I told you long time ago.

Jason nods but pauses when Rosamie doesn't follow.

ROSAMIE
Take care of yourself.

JASON
No!

Rosamie glares. Motorcycles are heard in the distance.

ROSAMIE
They come. Go!

Jason grabs the boys and they flee. Rosamie waits on the beach as the Biker Gang roar up to her. The Hooded Man steps off and laughs.

HOODED MAN
Who even are you, lady?

ROSAMIE
I am Rosamie.

FADE OUT.
In Fall.

Shed your pretence

let the leaves, those serpent scales, drip slow

You must rub it raw; nothing’s stickier than a lie.

Death blooms sallow on your naked frame

But fear not, friend--

(In fall you will arise.)
When I didn’t care, it slipped my mind what was lost, the things I wouldn’t find again.

Now that I am overcome with a gust so strong that it attacks my heart, pounces relentlessly until it draws blood, I am convinced of NO and NOT YET and shrink under the large shadow of an imaginary YES.
Black Dog by Madeleine Meredith
I wanted those words to squeeze my heart until my eyes erupted, exploding with stinging lava.

I hate that I am relieved, that the air I so long rejected is now mine to breathe.
When I met you
a little butterfly nestled its
way into my heart,
and I still feel its wings beating.
It jostles me awake in the dead of night.

Sometimes it wraps itself so tightly
around soft things hiding in my chest
that my lips quiver too much,
and I can’t organize or explain it.
I can’t put into words
the fluttering wave of wings,
which smash themselves against my insides,
paint them a million colors
that are bright and dark and deep.

And you’ll never see it,
but I wonder if vision divine
could penetrate my skin,
traveling deep enough inside me
to notice its little antennae,
watch this butterfly dance and leap and
fill my blood
with screaming song.
I wish you could know,
and with rapid heartbeat,
I imagine your butterfly
carving my name
on your heart,
and imagine myself
scrawling every color and melody
inside you.
Warm and Cold Art by Alma Rashidi
NAKED WOMEN
WRITTEN BY SUSAN LOMASNEY & JULIANA MEDURI

Heroically nude,
a stray bare breast and occasional bare feet
Amazon warriors
battle, bathe, and live beautifully,
both naked and in armor

Bathing Beauties,
diving in to wash,
Covered in water,
they are completely exposed
It simple, or is it sexual?
Is her bare skin for us to see?
Or just a trite image?

Heroically nude,
a beautiful image,
Amazon warriors
fight and die
side-by-side.
Naked men jab and slice,
but the women still entice.

A beautiful death
is what she may face.
Bleeding, dying
but still glorious in their fight.
A titillating cameo
of the moment before death
reminds that every rose can wither,
no matter how sharp her thorns.

Keep her close,
keep her armored,
watch her back
They will take her life,
they will claim her image as their own
See the Heroine, she is glorious,
and so much more.
The cries of law again. When patterns make you remember, then forget.

The cocktail bar made handsome profit last night, yet they may never fix the sign that flickers Morse code out to forlorn cab drivers and empty store windows.

The morning keeps apologizing for having come so soon. Droplets of people, as if from pipes of copper, trail out slowly from tall doors as resinous as their eyes. Collar-stay commands come from uniforms, fall flat and are therefore lost—but one man turns his head so quickly that he must hear a sound like his name. The light shuffles coyly through tree leaves, ashamed to even be there. I can tell that the feet of the man are now ineffective, his focus heaved upward at the fleet of hotel rooms whose windows glare fiercely, throw the cycles of clouds into the wholes of his eyes while the crowds are left laboring to get going.
Punk Skull by Anu Bavra
The masks we wear upon our faces, 
cover the eyes that recognize, 
the signs that we have lost all traces, 
of the selves we’ve left behind
The firecrackers drown themselves
Quick to put out their own wicks
Gunpowder plays as dust on shelves, 
whose clouds serve just to make them sick
And shaking earth sits still now,
Somehow afraid of sun and shade
It was scarred, we don’t know how
We only see the wound it made
We can’t make out each line or word
Courage we need is all we see
So we let the carved out edges blur
Yellow fear with red bravery
I consistently refer to my body, as I walk through my quarter-life crisis, as old. Not like old milk left in the fridge too long. I’ve yet to go bad, but the kind of old where standing up comes with a soundtrack.

The mountains around my eyes that form with every smile I make show that the paths I have walked, both near and far, experienced just as much sun as they did storms. I’ve learned to always keep an umbrella handy.

The whiskers that fall from my chin present a life that has been lived, each inch of hair containing its own memories.

When I look in the mirror each morning, a live painting framed by the mist forming at edges of the glass, I look at each stroke that the brush of life has left on my canvas, and I stare into my own soul with only one question: is this the same frame of reference that the rest of you see?
Dragon Art by Alma Rashidi
butterflies,
the high staying up late brings
it makes my bones feel hollow,
and at the same time so heavy
makes my head spin
my anxieties dwindle
so I can console them with absent
reason

(it’s the closest I’ve gotten to endorphins since I quit)
(but I don’t dare say to say that out loud)

that misty peripheral consuming my
vision
tunneling
swimming
falling
in that sweet sickness

(this lust, I realize, is metamorphic)
my scars are used cocoons
(I realize, my killing of self syndrome)

they aren’t butterflies
THAT THIRD CUP

WRITTEN BY
JORDAN ZACHARY ELLIS

I think about my dreams almost as much as I do reality. Ironically, the third cup of coffee in my hands is telling everyone that will listen just how much I avoid sleep. That dreamscape holds a rough landing, slamming into my heart with the weight of lost memories, those that were forgotten as new ones took their place.

The first cup of the day is a welcoming, reality’s way of reminding me that I have a life that needs living. The second cup is the one that actually wakes me up. My third, however, is always special. More than coffee makes a home in that mug, comfort mixes in as well, a good mood as light hearted as the liquid.

That last cup of java is what jerks me away from my daydreams, what keeps me grounded when I don’t feel the ground beneath my feet. Its that warm feeling that coffee fills your throat, and then your soul, that I need. I need it to feel free from a reality that has shackled me to my own delusions.

At the bottom of my empty cup the light side of a brown moon swirls at the edges, different phases of the same day. At the very least, it gives me the energy I need to make it to the end of the day, the energy I need to make it back to my own little world.

Still Life Art by Alma Rashidi
A Mother’s Love by Regine Quintos
Progression of time
Maybe it will rhyme
Letters on a page
Scrambled to mean something
Only understood when interpreted through our own cultural lens
Cave drawings
Shapes we recognize
Johnny Cash’s tribe had in the past called written language "The white man’s talking leaves."
Our hearts do more than just pump blood.
It’s been raining a lot.
It might soon flood.

Thank you it’s fine, it’s ok not to care.
It’s not written in the rules.
We were animals once, too.
Now we wear clothes.
We drive fancy cars. We don’t run from snakes.
The water is too far.

We all have egos.
It’s a second-hand existence.
We are aware of our thoughts but we think within a system.
We are a herd on stampede.
Too busy to help one another.
We have no natural predators.
But people are starting to stop and turn around
And face the almighty dollar.
Kindness is free.
The lizard said to the sun.
My child, I will keep you warm.
The sun is lonely you know.
That’s why it burns so brightly.
It has been hurt before and it cries wildly.
Someday it will settle and so will we.

This time we spend together is only eternity.
It will someday close its eyes.
And rest from its slumber.
A world of lifetimes, to dream in comfort.
Yes, you held so many in your warm embrace.
There was a great deal of suffering.
But you should not feel disgraced.
You may be asleep now.
But there will always be faith.
Stephanie Anderson
Susan Lomasney
Juliana Meduri
Nicole Oates
Regine Quintos
Noa Sigal
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