

Charlene Ashley Taylor

Lost in Translation

Hay una constelación sobre sus sábanas enormes
Suficientes para acoger un cadaver de gigante
Alguien me dijo que
No sabemos aquí, en occidente
Lo que es un gigante
Pero enseguida rió y de su boca salieron rosas,
Llenas de espinas recorriendo los tallos,
Para llegar a mis pies

There is a constellation on his huge sheet
Enough to welcome a giant's corpse
Somebody told me that
We don't know here, in the west
What a giant is
But then he laughed and of his mouth came our roses,
Full of thorns covering the stems,
To arrive at my feet

Clam

Here is Clam, lathering his saline tongue over a rough grain of sand. Savoring this small token of the beach's love. Never would this creature have experienced such comforting dryness under normal destinies. Yet, here he is; a tiny, crystalline statue inscribed with the details of a life that he would never have known otherwise. Clam reads the Braille with his tongue, smothering and tumbling it around; making love to the ocean in his own way. Just as the ocean cradles Clam in its vast, sinuous arms, Clam envelops his lover. Many twenty-four-hour cycles chased themselves across the earth, and yet for Clam they passed like a few flicks of the tongue. And with fresh taste buds, Clam temporarily stops lapping to realize his lover has metamorphosed without his admission. Here, sleeping in his bed of flesh is this rock, this mature mound silken with age. Rock is impassive, Rock is cold, Rock yields not even a hint of the flavors that used to describe Clam's world. Clam shudders, shaking off the layers of long-dead guilt. Expelling dust and crumbs and remnants of stale love with every tongue-scraping slide against his shell. All that remains of the relationship are the imbedded lines of old tales sand used to tell. This too Clam would soon shed, for every time he shifted he could feel these tattoos writhing within and throughout him. This gesture, which was intended to dissolve the past, simply made those days more prominent. Just when it seemed that Clam would never feel relief from the daily abrasions, Rock was gone.

Peaches

shadows drool in my garden
like milk and honey
smearing beneath the skin
and swimming through the rock
like eggs to eat a rose
bitter with diamond petals
I tongue the smell of rust
and watch the water moan
ripping hair from my throat
but I do not scream
as the lather licks my forest red
the blood on the moon
sweats quick up my dress
like a peach boiling juice into rain
it shines raw above me
and burns my bed bare

Grapefruit

I sang to you hot and hollow,
a distant rhythm.
My own pulsing howl at night.

You flew to flush my face,
beating heat between wings.
My own cicada summer.

You were my own sweet and sour
seasonal hybrid. My own
acidic forbidden grapefruit.

You shed your shell –
held back your peel,
with juice in ripples.
My own
fingers sticky with sap.

I gripped your skin,
tough with moist tart.
Dripping again and
again. Shaking, you jerked away.

I drag you back to lick the bark bare,
scratching to silence the fire alarm.
My own fight for the burning feed.

The Girl From Hazard, Ky

I reluctantly walk in your room
to repair the damage
but I'm left
to pick up the pieces
of trash and scattered ashes
loose threads etched in the floor.
A kaleidoscope of abandoned fragments.

I think of the paint on your jeans and
markers without caps
how you'd stomp around the room
like a kid / I knew you were happy
on one toe to pirouette down the hall
your arms up to hug the ghost that led you
heel toe spin – heel toe spin again
and again until you spill your high,
stumbling with a smile.
A kaleidoscope of abandon fragments.

A clean void paints a silhouette where your dresser was
and I can taste the antique grime that caked its mirror.
The moment I saw the boxes
I became the candle wax on the tv,
the cat piss snuggled on your pillow.
I became the mold in the coffee pot,
the starved ball python that stunk
for a week – until you noticed.
Trash and scattered ashes.

When your smirk mimicked my pain
I became the flame reflected in your cold eyes,
the memory of the heat they once held –
Extinguished by the smoke you blew in my face.
The weight of your memory
latches on to my heavy heart –
The harder I fight
the deeper I sink
into the sand carpet.

Loose threads etched in the floor.
A clean void paints a silhouette where your dresser was
and I can taste the antique grime that caked its mirror.
Even vanity refused your reflection.