Lost Sunday Supper
an offering
Ghosts

Cross boundaries, leak through drywall like tepid water. Disrupt your day.

Form deep in the pit of your stomach, at the back of your throat, sit on your shoulders.

Have no papers but a history so heavy they bring you to your knees

There is no recourse but to ignore them, you think. So they furrow your brow, scar your mind

I never got to say goodbye.
I never got to say I was happy to have met you Just as you were leaving for good.
So this Is like talking to someone who accidentally hung up on you.
So this Means to me, you might still be around.

In a way, I have become a caretaker to your ghost.
I ask,
How would you like to live today?
Comfort food and eating together
Cilantro to scent your hands and remind you of mother
One cup of morning coffee on the porch or in your favorite chair
hot and con leche wine after dinner to calm the nerves and make laughing just a little easier

Daily prayer as poetry as walking as eating as dance as in the shower as cooking as writing as “I love you”
Human touch serve often and throughout the day sleep and breathe into the space between your ribcage and deep down in the belly so the light comes in and keeps you like a flame burning
I am strong because I come from you
Your heavy shoulders carried your three boys across the world
Your tired hands sold toiletries to get enough money to do so
Your hopeful smile let those boys know they were safe
Even though you yourself didn’t
But you all escaped together

Whenever I feel weak I think of your blood
Our blood
Running through the body
Connecting everything
I am strong because I come from you

The sweet scent of pho fills my lungs
I am strong because I come from you
My blood
My strength
Your hopeful smile let me know I was safe
Even though you yourself didn’t

But we can escape together
In white noodles
In chicken broth and boiled beef
In onions and a shit ton of Hoisin sauce
In cilantro, mint, and basil
In our found miraculous supper
Someone called me ugly
But you said I couldn’t be because I came from you.
I remember your round cheeks
and long painted finger nails.
Always wearing lipstick
Even when watching your novellas
You married a sailor
Who always sailed away
You were pregnant every time he left for the sea
There was always a new baby awaiting their father’s return
It was true love until he was murdered
Left with 15 children
And no food to feed them
You knew you needed to survive
But no one had taught you how
So you married again
This time a drunk driver
Who cheated on you and enslaved you
But you didn’t leave
You stayed and had more babies
So that you could take care of your other babies
And now your heart that has been broken
Beaten
Birthed 18 babies
Is weak
Long maroon frosted fingernails flip the tortillas in the oil
Now dip them in the red sauce
Stuff and roll
You must feed your man
You must feed his babies first
You must survive
Heart is growing weaker
Too weak to fight
One of my children will take care of me
Which one will take care of me
No one is taking care of me
It would appear as if I have failed
Failed to secure
Failed to inspire
Heart is growing weaker
Too much manteca
Too much pain
Lost a son to a drive-by, lost his brother to a suicide
One son became a daughter
One daughter became a son
Too much heartbreak
More than your heart has the strength to understand
You die on Christmas Eve
They all cried for you
They all claimed to be the best child
They all demand what is rightfully theirs
But all that’s left are some monetos and pieces of furniture
That your ungrateful kids fight over
All that was left
After the vultures
Was packed and shut away
I roll each of your lipsticks up
The funny curve that your lips left
Each tube pink
Each lipstick a shade of red
They smell like you
I inhale you one last time
Rose water, Poison and the grease that pulses through your walls
You taught me how to make enchiladas
Always cook the tortilla in oil before dipping it in the sauce
Make two trays
One with onions
And one without
I can still hear your laugh
I can still see your long red nails
Your red lipstick
I am beautiful because I come from you

el molcajete
grinding, twisting of the wrist
rhythm, routine, life

4 Pieces Long Peppers / 2 Pieces onion (chopped)
I wonder whose hands this recipe has passed.
How many tears cried of the onions chopped,
how many mouths fed.
I wonder the same thing now of our millions of nurses, the Filipinas
globally;
who has shed tears for them,
whose mouths have been fed by them?
You used to like chili peppers in your dishes,
And I served you extra
You even liked to dip it at the side.
But now.. Not anymore.
“No chili peppers” you said.
“No Tortilla” you went out to the patio and closed the grill.
Only BBQ, and Steak.
The exotic delicacies now turn into xenophobe.

The journey is not your burden to bear.
Release that which weighs you down and dampens your light.

Simmer the burden.
Add one spoonful of truth.
Cook lies until they burn.

Stir ferociously
until I run away.

Stir ferociously
until I come home.

Mother Nature, I am sorry we humans have hurt you so.
I see you.
Lost Sunday Supper was created in collaboration by These are My Papers workshop participants Niesha Dayshaun Bentley, Liyen Chong, Laura Drey, Trinity Ho, Melody Yunzi Li, Jenah Maravilla, Jasminne Mendez, Laura Moreno, Michelle Maye Sanchez, Y. E. Torres, and Stalina Villarreal with the support of Virginia Grise.

The These are My Papers workshop series was held in conjunction with Virginia Grise: rasgos asiaticos, a site-specific, multisensory performance installation, created in collaboration with designer Tanya Orellana, that examines migration and displacement and unearths hidden histories in the confluence of China, Mexico, and the United States.

The poem was created as a way to honor the culminating performance and community meal of rasgos asiaticos, originally scheduled for Sunday, April 19, 2020, as part of CounterCurrent20, the UH Mitchell Center for the Arts festival of performance, installation and ideas. DiverseWorks looks forward to presenting rasgos asiaticos at a future date.

Cover image by Tanya Orellana.

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More information at diverseworks.org