

## 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

## IMMUNE SYSTEMS ARE STRONG

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











