

5 (five) Poems

By Hikari Leilani Miya

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry editor Hezekiah writes... Hikari Miya is nothing but white hot, black art and gray matter. I admit I was tripping over her at first but once I started following the footprints I was learning a new dance step. This poet is empyrean out there: "I let literature crack / my agate-rusted mind," "Eb transmogrifies into D#" ("Serves me right for not being musical.") 'zero-sugar vitamin water fuel' has got to be at least as manic as you can imagine. And on, "dreamt last night I was sinking into mud like chocolate / cake batter, viscous yet lumpy with flour and innocence" Her words mix, mingle and meld with a heresy all her own: "and suddenly the naked trapeze of / adjectives on the page is asking me / for worker's compensation..." And things only get curiouiser and curiouiser...(Spacing and font size are poet's own.) HS*

please tell the dog to stop screaming

I let literature crack
my agate-rusted mind
resinous with hydroxyzine
& the wonders of men-
struation. hey shiba inu
with the vanilla frosty
round eyebrows, wanna
treat? here's one for you:
one day that hot dog
costume will become
unstitched & fuzzy-frayed,
so we'll give it to goodwill's
dumpster behind the home-
less tents. I pull a black
hair out from the spine
of charles dickens, lay
back & let the question
of *more more more*
ping around my stained
stones like hard plastic
mallets against the highest
Eb of a dented xylophone. I
go over my shelf of sealants:
two-hour naps, yellowing bam-
boo plant, purple hat from
a philadelphia art museum.
Eb transmogrifies into D# &
I think about humming swan
lake as I stack horizontally more
books I'll definitely read someday.

zero-sugar vitamin water fuel

it's true that I'm a clickity-clackity loud-mouthed typist,
tortilla chip salted fingertips tapping clumsily at silicone key covers
like those thick blank gummy orange ones from elementary computer class
so we wouldn't peek at the letters but I cheated sometimes and peeled it back
to find the x or z because I didn't do so well on those typing lessons

but now I'm glad I can type while just staring at words appearing on my screen,
I will them to be and there they are, just abort and re-birth
the red-underlined until they're able to ink themselves up straight
across the page and they're no longer black words but sharp blue mountains and
dun white goats teetering sure-footedly across sheer shale cliff faces spackled
with rough greens digested into intestine churned mush we forget about
until it mutates into fly-covered crap

and then the words hum and buzz, shake and soft-shoe in a-line color-block dresses
and then I get a reality migraine and all I'm making is annoying noise so I drown it out
and then there's sonata in C# minor flowing violet over all gray rain ticking
minutes away into slop and soon my stream of curiosity and verbose interest dull into
nothing left to type but the softness of the silence surrounding the slumps of songs

blooming in the mud

beneath peach stained swollen bellies
of clouds with no right to be so massively
painted in white and light and unfallen rain

I lean over the edge of my balcony, consider
the divine breath of air swishing my black bangs
to the left, far left, as if they'd leave my face

fly like V-shaped ravens made of threads.
regret wracks my tired mind, splits it like a bolt
of blue-white lightning kissing a supple almond tree.

ten whole months wasted on a supercilious smile,
ten whole months of hearing lies like saltwater spouting
from a whale's sleek vulnerable blowhole, nightmares

cut from the fabric of trauma and his underwear
green with Christmas lights and an early august afternoon
at the edge of a yawning rocky gorge, all of it is just

about to be over, like how he said to the panel
he ended us forever when it was really both
of us torn apart at the bloody seams

frayed by the exhaustion of our mistakes,
something I mistook for love. *these feelings
are normal for complainants going through*

this process, but talk with your therapist
and the divine beckons me over the green-rimmed
edge once again, only on the opposite coast

onto sidewalk and asphalt where there's
a tiny farmer's market bustling every Saturday
and people treading on my black blood assured

everything is organic. will there still be no goodbye?
will I still just be another picture saved in his google drive,
a prize of loss and shame, a thing no longer tolerated

because trauma is more than just a little fly buzzing past.
I dreamt last night I was sinking into mud like chocolate
cake batter, viscous yet lumpy with flour and innocence

untouched by heat's sleepy suffocating intensity,
my hands scrabbling through that frightening enigma
for something not green but crying, blooming in the mud.

it's the sky's fault

hey, is it still important that the child
within me bites her lip at bruising purples
of impending night? hey, is it still
important for me to feel that exhilarating
blush while I glare knives at my opponent
calling me *bitch* for dealing lethal damage
in a children's card game? hey, is it
still important that I take comfort in
the plush rainbow of adorable stuffed
animals strewn across my bed, soft
ears and solid black eyes stitched
tight and spotless, X's as small butts,
toothless smiles reflecting light in these
bizarrely lukewarm dreams of mine?

I'll admit that some days I just write
poems because I didn't write one the day
before, and suddenly the naked trapeze of
adjectives on the page is asking me
for worker's compensation and the right
to unionize. they don't seem to understand
my fears no matter what type of tea I give
them, but they won't follow me on twitter
or accept my challenges for a friendly
duel. so I give them my giant squishy
dragon and some water for their house-
plants. they stop complaining about
fleas in their beds, and my eyes water
as the sky glazes over like a ripe plum.

I thought about writing boys in this poem

but then I considered brown overweight single mothers
selling dollar-fifty churros at the monday sale

pastel parakeets crammed in white barred cages
piles of hamsters and baby bunnies huddled like stones

my elementary school teacher with the summer haze
hiding in her hair even in december fog as we called her ms

for spelling bee prep I taught her how to spell *hypochondriac*
though we didn't know what it meant I got a second place trophy

the police officer with a picture in her cap turned title ix investigator
who went from walking next to me strapped on a yellow stretcher

to asking me where exactly [redacted] made me
touch [redacted] and when and what we were wearing

I thought about my grandmother and how she remembers
the pink buttons on her dress they day she was taken

to jerome, arkansas living behind desert rusted barbed wire
while her mother rubbed and rubbed pieces of wood smooth

and my coworkers the summer after my freshman year
sweating in the catering dish washing room and the heat

of the machines was so intense it melted transparent plastic
gloves to our soft fingers as we stomached disgust at industrial

trash bins filled with cooked pasta, starched navy blue suits
snapping their fingers like we were stiff toy dogs

our boss keeping us right until 3am sitting pink-tied at the computer
as we shuffled around bins and baskets and armies of silverware

and there is so much more unspoken and unremembered
women that can fill books and billboards and murals

women that sleep and wake, live and die the lesser half
of a snowy dichotomy that threatens to melt us to our hips

with disgust of ourselves and our sex and our basic organs
and I realized there is no room for anything else in this poem

THE POET SPEAKS: *All of the poems have been inspired by different tarot cards in the standard Rider-Waite deck. My completed manuscript containing one poem for every tarot card, All the Beauty of the World, will hopefully see publication within the coming year. I find inspiration through all forms of art, nature, and my Japanese/Filipino American heritage.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Hikari Leilani Miya is a Japanese Filipina American, 2019 Cornell University English major graduate, and a current poetry MFA candidate at the University of San Francisco who identifies with the LGBTQ community. She is the assistant poetry editor for USFCA's literary magazine, Invisible City (formerly Switchback). She has one previous poetry publication (under Kari Miya) in Cornell's Writer's Bloc, and her poetry has appeared in the Johnson Art Museum at Cornell University.

She currently lives with her two snakes and visually impaired cat, but has a menagerie of other pets at home in the Central Valley of California. She is a pianist, percussionist, and music arranger, as well as a competitive card game player.