
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Carlos Andrés Gómez: Two Poems

Carlos Andrés Gómez · Wednesday, March 24th, 2021

Poem about Death Ending with Reincarnation

after Matthew Olzmann & Tarfia Faizullah

Blood has its own democracy.
My father & I puncture steaks
& watch them ooze—deep maple
walls eavesdrop as steel teeth

scrape & claw the porcelain
we use to distract our manically
clenching jaws. I'm well-practiced
in this ritual: empty & fill, empty

& fill, until there's nothing.
Our filets gone, we sit & stare
at the eggshell table spread,
abdomens swelling like silence—

They found a mass.
She's having surgery next week.
I had always planned for him
to be first. Now the woman

fifteen years his junior, mother
to my twin baby siblings, is dying
or might be. I've been rehearsing
years for this talk, except it isn't—

my father, held only by the dim
lighting that shrouds his silhouette,
reduced to heaving. I envision
the stepmom it took me eleven years

to embrace being lowered carefully
 into the damp earth, an old man,
 flanked by two teenagers, watching,
 & I will be there too: an overcast

Tuesday that no one passing by
 will remember, & as usual, I won't
 be able to get the dimple right
 in my tie. For a second, although

we are nowhere near the mountains,
 I will smell the crisp air she so
 loved & remember the first time
 we walked without the heaviness

of that first encounter both of us
 carried for far too long. But on that
 unremarkable day for most, a light
 rain will interrupt the hike I am on

in my mind, a man will read overly-
 rehearsed words from a book she
 did not believe in, & we will stand
 like guards, numb. We will watch over

the sacred earth she spent an entire
 lifetime trying to protect, now her
 home, flanked by roots cross-stitching
 the rich soil, what becomes the promise

kept to those endless rows of buds
 ready to push through & that twisted
 symmetry just above, a dangled blade
 from a mouth chewing in first light.

*

Morning, Rikers Island

Physics and light
 pierce the hollow stench
 of the forgotten gymnasium
 stripped naked of clocks.

All the adolescent boys
 stop—offer their grief
 to each other like water,
 glancing out the only window
 they all share. A single ray
 unfolds its warmth

across the dusty belly
of the thudded parquet,
and here's the miracle:
the sun frees everyone
to sing.



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