

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Micah Tasaka: Three Poems

Micah Tasaka · Tuesday, January 18th, 2022

The TransPacific Cactus

My father dances around the cactus garden
regardless of what thorns might stick him
He tells me to water the trans cactus
he says “trans” and my body grows thorns
he dances around them
I say “trans” and mean the way
the Pacific shifted my gender each time I traversed it
to return to the true countryside
that pulled flowers from my skin
so I could wiggle my body
over a line in the ground
that becomes less significant each time I cross it

he says “trans” and means
the cactus we just dumped from the pot into the soil
but a feeling hangs in the air
like when you know
you said the wrong thing
but hope no one catches you
and isn’t that also a lesson

in planting
my dad turns the shovel towards the sky
pokes the handle into the dirt several times
says, “You have to pack it in like this.
I learned this on the ranch.”

and I’m thinking of the ways
he, too, has repotted himself
and how all transplants must feel awkward
as they reach towards the sun
from a new position

and aren’t we all a shifting

arch towards the feeling
of sunlight, letting it
and nothing else
lead our movements

whether we be vacant bodies or
a room incomplete without candlelight
a countertop drowning in piles of junk mail
my shoulder that pops less each day I do my stretches
there is no more space until we make some
so we dance
around the garden
with both arms lifted
praising this and every moment
that we allow ourselves to grow

*

a lost thing

when I finally landed / on this shore / a belly full of hope / and promise, / I found instead that / half
my body / dropped a bomb on / the other half my body / and parts of me are / still dying in the
aftermath / 3 generations later / my skin peels off / then regrows / every night / I cover my bed in
roses / for every dying cell / asking this land to / nourish me but / I / set fire to / my hometown / to
stand / against a red sun / that forgets me / me, a lost thing / still cleaning up the mess / left from a
diaspora / I didn't ask for but / one that granted me / an existence that / feels as if it's / expiring
every day / that I stay so land / locked on an island / floating on an ocean / 5,000 miles away / from

what is home / when I am rain
tossed by wind / showered on some
dry patch of dirt / that will never bear
any memory / my grandpa finally
told stories of the farm / on his deathbed
the harvest good / the air full
of orange blossoms / and cicada screech
he ate mochi / with his fingers
never spoke of / an ocean that
swallowed / the way back

while I'm caught / in a knowing / that my country / dropped a bomb / on the other half / of my
country

and I'm

/ standing on an ocean trying / to remember the sound / of my own name /

I wait to drown

*

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On this side of the water
I am freezing at the base where
Once the roots are severed
There is no trace of

Ask me where I come from
When I have no family branches
To tell the name of a town
Or the way it looked upon leaving

Behind me there is a shore
Begging my waves to crash
In the simplest grace to fill
The air with prayer again

But here I am the nameless
Last pen stroke full of
Dying ink and isn't that just
Like a poet to go off on tangents

When the tangible lives inside
A croaking frog's mouth
Hailing the coming spring
I have been waiting

To say my existence is
Something other than othered
Less a victim than a vicious
Storm caught in mellow weather

Watch me rain down
Watch me river into dreaming
And riptide all the words lost in
Language I am the unspeaking

foreigner who holds the chopsticks well
But can't construct complete
Sentences to explain the leftover
Feeling of being both away and home

Spun into a web that says I am not
Here I am not of here I am
Somewhere other than here
But I am here connecting

The splintered pieces of
A tree trunk after lightening
Hits and leaves all smoldering

I am touching the smoke and saying

It is real

(Featured portrait of Micah Tasaka from [the author's website](#))

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