

# 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

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I am touching the smoke and saying

It is real

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

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