Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Terhi K. Cherry: Two Poems

Terhi K. Cherry · Wednesday, February 24th, 2021

Driving Through Death Valley

strange happiness swept over him. Perhaps the angle of the sun cast a shadow off the sand dunes. and he recognized it as his own. Perhaps he got out of the car, wrestled his own body to the ground, tried to beat the truth out of it. Then walked away in surrender, dusted his arms. Back on the road, past the sculpted hills, a dip below sea level, he hit the lowest point and the hottest place at once, and thought of her. How the ground shone white, the way salt flats leaned against the Black Mountains. Her head had rested on his chest. Near Badwater Basin and the honeycomb shapes, he imagined her as a pillar of salt. How she had turned the other cheek and wasn't she always looking in the direction of going, while every lake dried up, and no rain sustained the heat? And wasn't she meant to be the body of water that carries life, and hadn't he

brought the fish then why are these godforsaken lands so full of beauty, so poisonous, no one would touch? Wasn't he lost, too, speeding through the badlands like Dante's Circles of Hell, unable to choose between good and evil, between gadflies and snakes, between the earth ruptured, and the heaven she'd built like a roof over his heart? Wasn't he a beast? Perhaps the sting he felt below the collarbone had been love. but these wilds were no place for a man to break down. Not over a woman. He stepped on the gas, as if the car could pull him out of the sea of her worry, shoot him up to the highest point at Dante's View where he could stand like a man, look down at the Inferno, count the miles back to her.

At Denny's

with a line from Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction.

I didn't grow up with guns.

I didn't learn to dodge a bullet.

I didn't know I would be sitting next to a Glock Model 19 at brunch, thinking what if someone pulls out a weapon?

I asked him, between candy colored shakes & pancakes, 'Do you

have a gun on you?' Because let's not kid ourselves there are more guns than people & some honey bunny could execute every mother fucking last one of us at the counter. 'I'm surgical', he said, but I saw how quickly his hand moved & sweat broke. They worry about the rights of good people, the screen time of children, the nightly intruder – but not the kid who gets a firearm easier than a job, who flashes cash for the camera & cocks a gun. While we reload our coffees, the kid enters the quad. Pulls a .45 from his backpack. Curls a finger, smiles.

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