

REGINA JOSÉ AND I¹

By Kurma Murrain

I was born in the place of perennial petrichor
Where days drift like autumn leaves
Every leaf is a memory stuck on a roof
Or crushed under the feet of children
I talk about children
Because my womb is barren
Maybe by choice
Maybe I should have borne the pain of the fibroids for a while
Be pregnant for a while
Stayed married for a while
Be miserable for eternity

My mother left us
Twice as far as I can remember
Memories
Crushed under the feet of children
I never cried for her in public
(Except that one time during grief therapy)
The crying of my body is loud enough to alert a city
But no one listens
They all wander around with headphones and incandescent faces

I cut myself and wear long sleeves
Pain brings me comfort
Only a few understand this pleasure
But none of us talks about it
We hide inside our sleeves
We put strait jackets on our voices
We attempt to die a little
Enough to know that we could cross the threshold whenever we wanted to

I was a happy child until I was seven
When a so-called man carved the story of the birds and the bees inside my body
I suffer from headaches in my sleep
I feel paralyzed
Disgusted by the red stream between my legs

¹ Regina Jose Galindo is a Guatemalan artist who specializes in body art.

I love my friends though their parents look at me funny
They come up with “terms of endearment” and comments to put themselves at ease
“Blacky,” “Mulata,” “Beautiful black woman,” “I’d like to have a black woman’s body,” “At
least your skin is light and your lips aren’t too big”
It’s not a compliment if they refer to my race!
It would be nicer to hear “Girl,” “Gorgeous,” “I would like to have a body like yours”

I hate blood
The one that used to come out intermittently
As in Regina’s photographs
Others commit the injustices
Others touch little girls on the bus
Others kill peasants and rape their women
Others abuse their children to mute their spirit
But we both cut ourselves
To strip our voice off the strait jacket
And bear the scars others inflicted.