

On Responsibility

By Sol Diana

On days when I feel like I don't possess the sun enough for myself,
I look up to the night sky and I pray
That it'll swallow me whole.
So that I too can become 5am sunrise.
Pure and untarnished by the sins
Of a long day prior.

I'm haunted.
I'm haunted by the promises that I've failed to deliver.
And at the brunt of this twisted dynamic I think I've let my ancestors down the most.

See, I've heard stories
Of how they have had to walk through pits of decapitated heads and fire.
Looking for loved ones during World War II,
Snuffing out inferno with the strength of callused toes
So that I do not have to.

What strength it requires to deliver on such a cosmic promise I may never understand.
And as such, responsibility, for me,
feels like I'm trying to lasso in the stars some days.

On this land that I was raised on but cannot claim ancestry to,
Land that I was raised on people that do not look like me
And hail from two oceans
Gone,
What my obligations are often elude me.

But I'm at a point in my life now
Where I can hear the stories of my ancestors just a bit more clearly
And the fragments of what they expect from me.

See, my toes are soft and pink.
For the fires that my people have had to walk through were put out before I could walk.
And these sacrifices are fire work splinters on my tongue.

I know that my voice is that of my two mothers.
Whose voices are that of my *Lola*.
Whose voice is that of my *Nanay*.
Whose voice is that of all the warriors who walked before her:
Anti-imperialist guerilla fighters, rice farmers, peasants,
Barrio.

I have an obligation to this land, I know,
Because my elders taught me to always know whose house I'm in.
To take my shoes off as I step off the welcome mat.

To help wash the dishes after a meal.
To align myself with the protocols of where I'm visiting.

So it goes that I have an obligation to the people
who have called this land home
longer than any of the timeline spines of Western history books.

And perhaps most importantly,
And above all else,
I know now that I am obligated to me.
Because I cannot love these lands, or its people,
or my people, or my history,
if I do not first learn what it means to look in the mirror
and know that I love him.
And most days, that is no easy task.
And it can be disheartening.

And that is why I am so infatuated with the night sky,
And that promise of 5am sun.
When the night becomes too dark,
A little too starless to maneuver,

I remember my mother.
Whose voice is that of her *Nanay*.
And I remember that she named me

Sol.
Named me after the sun,
for a reason.