

BE ALL

We dragged our bags into the night,
away from our tents,
shelter and security,
and into the unknown of the elements,
thanked God for His country.

The Milky Way was a dome over our heads,
holding us captive within the universe,
as willing members
unable to float away.

We didn't want to float away.

We wanted to float throughout.

Be all, see all.

Be the dawn.

Be the thunder.

Be the forest.

Be the heat.

Be the power and the beauty and the strength.

Partake in nature's communion.

Swallow her celebration.

Let it swirl within us.

The mountains became us
and we became them.

BORDER

We grew up in different worlds,
but I love yours
and you love mine.
Your holidays are family days
while mine lives 2,000 miles away.
But that's okay,
because you've met them anyway.

My grandma loves you,
says so in letters,
while yours told me *te amo*
when we had *milanesa*
and it took me by surprise,
shocked the Spanish out of me,
but I love her too.

My accent is as good as yours,
but you speak the language
that flows in your blood
and not mine.

Our minds have intertwined
and our steps have synchronized
and what's yours is mine.

We are two trees
from different soil,
grown so twisted together
we can never be untangled.
Borders divide countries
but the blood in our veins
cannot stop the growth
toward the home we have built
in each other.

CEREMONY

The rain came then,
in torrents,
like the breaking of a seal,
the trapped water
we had been denied all those months
aching for our earth.

My sister and I
heard the thunder from inside,
counted the seconds to lightning,
watched it flood our backyard
with white light.

The raindrops were percussion
bringing life
to the grass and the flowers,
to South Texas,
to us,
two girls in love with the unfamiliar.
Struck by childlike insanity,
sixteen and thirteen,
we went outside.

The rain continued,
washing over us,
drenching us,
painting us with the unfamiliar.
It called for dancing,
celebration,
ceremony.
Arms arching overhead,
swinging
circling
leaping
twirling
expanding
contracting,
the rain flowed into our pores,
found our bloodstreams,
reached our hearts,
and made us one with the water,

one with the storm.

We blossomed.

EMPOWERING IS

You know what I love?

When the bleeding stops
and I can say these things
and caress the scar
that used to stop me from living,
from loving.

Wasn't it weak
to hide it beneath long sleeves
and smiles
and lies?
Lying with light
and color
and all the good I could muster.
Wasn't it weak
to pretend the salt did not sting,
the sunsets kept their color,
the ocean kept her comfort,
to keep to myself
the hurt that was *mine*?
You can take so much,
but not what's in my mind.

You know what I love?

Feminine beauty and strength.
This is not about
skin or
sex or
choice.
Empowered women
empower women,
but if empowering
is stealing
and stripping away
the love,
the worth,
the security

of a woman who
dances just like you,
loves just like you,
makes music and
color and
beauty
just like you,
just like me,
just like ALL OF US
then why would I want a part of that?

Empowering
is respecting
is loving
is forgiving.

You did not empower me,
but it's my turn to empower you.

Do better.
I think you can be.
I think you are.
I think you are
beautiful and struggling and strong,
that you taste sunrises and
sing with the sea and
dance the dark places away
just like we all do.

I will never forget what you did
because it made me the woman I am today
and I hope the woman you are today is better.

Because empowered women
empower women.

Your turn.

ROAD TO HOME

The road unspools like an asphalt ribbon
as I trace the trail home
foot on the gas,
heart in the past,
Aventura on the stereo.

The green grass melts into brown,
the tall trees to brush.
Palm trees sprout along the roadside
and I erupt on the inside

with memories
that burst
bubble up
overflow into the physicality in front of me
so I can see my ghosts.

Down Combes Rio Hondo Road
I found myself
through sweaty summers
and campfire songs
along the Arroyo.

The Mile 2 West exit
takes me to the school
where I broke and rebuilt
the faith I had in the world
and in friends
and in men.

And finally
my exit:
a right past the hospital,
a left by the park,
and there rests home
with brick walls and
the big oak
and Christmas lights up year-round

There rests home,
waiting for me
to crack the armor I built
when away.

SILENCE

Silence has been filling,
dripping,
collapsing,
colliding,
into the crevices
I cannot complete
with the love of those around me.

I do not want to dissolve,
singing
beneath salty sea
as waves wash over me
and smother my songs,
as they stuff me up,
push me down,
wipe it all away.
Sand slips through wet hands.

I can see them
standing
shouting
screaming
on the shoreline,
as though they can bring me back
without getting wet.