

Of Her We Sing

Gang-raped in Nashville at age 16,
Jenna manned an Auto Works counter
in Columbus, three years later.
She leaned towards me,
her words a husky rush,
Hannah, you know,
after the hysterectomy,
I didn't want, I didn't think...
Then I met him down
at Radio Shack.
Our wedding's in August.

Of her we sing, daughter of napalm,
of the Mekong and one U.S. Marine.
She chose alabaster silk
and bird of paradise
for her own summer's day.

In the air around Marissa
bristled a veil of thorns,
mantled in ice. Her voice
drew a wire between us.
Adopted and incested
by a U.S. Sergeant,
she taught me the samba
behind the counter
of Sana Furs and Leather.
We sold skins together.

Of her we sing, daughter of the DMZ
of Seoul City and an unknown john.
We dance til dawn
at the Red Zone,
a club on Front Street.

My colleague Alisa wore
a blue-black sheet of hair;
in her dorm room
overlooking Harvard Square,
she wrestled and lost
against her first date.

Born in Cincinnati, she hammers
nails with Jimmy Carter,
building houses
with Habitat for Humanity.

Of her we sing, daughter of the bomb,

of Nagasaki and a Baptist minister.
Holding my niece, her godchild
at the christening, she wears
red plaid flannel, blue jeans,
and black army boots.

Of her we sing.
Hear the thunder of our feet
stomping pavement,
making slippers of blood blisters
as we march along
Pennsylvania Avenue.
Crushing cherry blossoms
beneath our heels, we take
a Yellow River Brick Road,
our fists raised in blasts of peony.
Our throats are alive
with unbidden music,
our anthem ringing,
Of Her We Sing.

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