

i've become the Angel's white
by Melis Gordem

i sit on top of a hill
that faces a meadow
covered with puke-toned daffodils
with an obnoxiously vivacious Aurora Borealis
hovering over the beautifully wretched petals.
i ponder,
little grey me,
if i am anything more than this shade.

this shade is what i've been associated with my entire life.
i am not as blue as the seven seas,
i am not as yellow as the sun that shines above us,
nor am i as red as the blood that flows in our veins,
i am just as grey as cigarette smoke,
since i am this color,
i know i do not serve any purpose.
i am nothing.
nothing special.
nothing worthwhile.
nothing tangible.
nothing at all.
i am nothing but a disappointment.

i gasp, re-entering the reality of where i sit.
i notice a cloud forming over my grey form,
thundering, crackling, scaring me enough to snap out
of my self-detrimental thoughts.
i look past the cloud,
back at the horribly luminous Aurora Borealis.
i squint and decide to trace my fingers
along the lines of its gloriously blinding figure.
it feels like i am painting, coloring its body so smoothly,
to the point where i have fallen into a trance.
i smile lazily, inhale deeply,
and decide to take a plunge into the grotesque meadow.
i engulf myself in the putrid smell,
in the golden color,
and feel the soft shape of the meadow.
i accept it slowly,
and i do the same with myself.
because despite of what others think of me,
what my Love thinks of me,
what i think of me,
i am everything but grey.
all i am is a bit
dusty,
rusty,
hidden
from my true potential.
i have been suppressed into this one shade,
oppressed in order not to feel any other.

i swim across these petals,
the daffodils' buds kissing both cheeks
and wiping off my glistening tears
caused by my astounding epiphany.
the grey that you see
is what hides my true shade.
my true shade is
gleaming,
lusty,
imperious,
tenacious even.
however, if i am stuck with this wrongfully assigned shade,
forever enslaved to this monochrome hue,
who is to say
that i can't bend the rules
to glow underneath
and even through this coat of wrath.

at the end of my voyage through this fair and accepting meadow,
i transform,
i transcend through my past
and expected self:
letting go of insecurities,
expectations,
and the normalities
of the cruel world i have succumbed to.
i don't deserve to be constrained,
i don't allow myself to be further abstained,
and i shouldn't be restrained
to this idle shade.
if i can't be blue,
yellow, or red,
at least i can shine.
i will break out of this shallow shell of grey
in order to be more than what i am supposed to be.

i will forever glow
and you can't stop me.

If My Fingertips Could Touch the Sky
by Keana Águila Labra

With lazy grays at both threes,
we rise with the pm and stretch
the light past the am back into the
dark.

This is how we were made,
from fireworks and tender
kisses underneath a faded
lampshade,

we burn with the
changing summer.

there is ignition in everything
by Ada Pelonia

the fallen leaves plummeted on the ground when its ends ignited
the act of unfurling from its roots. the uncapping of markers
and pens and bottles and wine was ignited thus the sound 'pop'
sizzling as its aftermath. the engines — from cars and motorcycles
and trains and yachts and boats and planes — started from ignition
creating a spark, momentary but lasting worthwhile. all these ignitions
& i wonder when ours will ever come.

Ada Pelonia is a writer from the Philippines.
You may check some of her works at adapelonia.weebly.com or on Twitter @_adawrites.

South Asian Uncles
by Sarosh Nandwani

I spend so much time with uncles, the ones who call me
sweetheart, who pull me in for hugs even if I know
they can feel me pull away. They put one hand on my shoulder, my back,
grab the hand I reach out to shake theirs with, and pull my small frame
into their bellies until I can feel their breath on my ear
and feel their face rustle my curls. I wonder if they can feel me
recoil.

I shake all their padded hands — hands that may not be respectful
when they need to be. I always wonder, when I meet one, Have you touched
your wife without permission? Conversely, do you pleasure her?

I speak until I am spoken over, and then
usually not at all. Would you like to sit? I ask them,
gesture to where my body had been moments before. I make
space.

They complain about their wives, their daughters, their sons, and I
listen, because who else is supposed to do the emotional labor? A breath
later, they brag about their accomplishments, their lives, their children,
and I tell them they are amazing. I tell them we are lucky to have them as role models. How o

Every gathering plucks me from the couch and drops me
unceremoniously back down into the kitchen. My father, my uncle,
an uncle, the male host welcomes in the guests, and leads the men to the
couches. They sit, and they talk, one ankle crossed onto the opposite knee, arms
spilling across the back of the couch. My mother, my aunt,
an aunty, is puppeteered around the kitchen island by the same
strings that placed me there. Were we created for this? The young
daughters are watching.

The men wait with their keen hands, and the women ask me, Can you please
bring them some chai? and I say yes, because what else is a woman
good for than to bring the uncles chai? Did you bring them the snacks too?
they ask. No, I will go do that now. Each time I pass an uncle, I hold back
from an accidental spill.

I grimace politely. I glare delicately. I retreat with my tray.
I know these uncles.