

Estonia

by Anah-Karelia Coates

Estonia wore a liver milagro charm on a thin piece of rawhide around her neck and slept with her teeth in a jar. She was dreaming as she often did of the four children she conceived in Mexico. They had been born in bright colors and dust. Her first child Nina thought her baby sister Lizette was a pig squealing in a blanket when they brought her out of the birthing room. When her third child Michelle was born both sisters understood that the magic package was part of the family; something they could eventually play with someone, that would have to be fed and protected. Her fourth child Tai was a son The girls thought he had a worm between his legs but accepted it quickly and loved him the best because he was the baby and otherly to them.

In her minds dreaming eye, Estonia's children were frozen in childhood like ornate dolls sleeping in her chest. She'd pull them out to look at them floating above her body and blow into them hoping to bring them to life but it was her own breath that fell back on herself. They just stared.

Better to live in her chest than be scattered like ashes over a vast grave of time

She would again put them back into her chest but not before singing them each their own song

*Little Nina
my pet star
twirling brightly from afar*

*Little Lizette
pumpkin face
smiling seeds
and wearing lace*

Little Michelle
by the wishing well
where you fell and I kissed your knees stinging like bees

Little Tai
my broken flower and only son
you died in a war we never won

This is how it had been for very long
Estonia sing -singing her grief into dawn

She was growing old now but still road her bicycle around town
and could sing in four languages for anyone who would listen
You could see her in The Plaza she'd wear paper flowers in her
hair and sit
under the shade of a tree and wait for a stray musician to
accompany her songs

Sometimes she spit on the tourists if they happened to run into
her
late on a Friday night after she'd been drinking wine at a series of
art openings
But, if she knew you then you might just get your own serenade of
madness and desire
and maybe a dance.
She'd pull up her skirt to expose her knees and smile at you like a
shipwreck
then spread her arms like seaweed and launch into notes
cascading wildly up and down
punching the air loudly then soft like the strange guttural cries of
a cat in heat
both sinister and sweet
This lone song loon could carry her tune into the trenches of
poverty and bliss

and emerge triumphant like a muddy kiss.

Other times when the town went quiet

you could

hear her voice piercing clearly through the air like a nightingale
and the wind would stir the trees and the sound would find you
with a brief caress and leave you feeling lonely, bruised and a
somehow blessed

