

# 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

