

# The Taste of Coins from Treasure Troves

*by* Ethel Rohan

I hold a key to feel its pull, and follow where it leads. Once, because the moment, key, and direction felt so right, I ended up on the streets naked. A police officer threatened me with handcuffs. I laughed, mesmerized by the cuff's clink, their never-ending circles, and tiny, dull keys.

When someone keyed my car, probably the corner kids who call me names and throw stones, I wanted even those keys. Maybe one was *the* one. I question keys. They remain dumb. Yet the clothes in my closet wait to be brought to life; there's a village of memory in this apartment; and the bathroom mirror is a graveyard of faces and torsos. There are more to keys than dumb metal.

I sniff and lick the keys. One day I will eat a key, the key that most “speaks” to me. Who will I be with that key and all its memories and possibilities inside me? I take drawings of keys to the locksmith, and ask him to work his magic. He used to oblige me, but now just shakes his bald head and gestures to the door and says don't make me call the cops. His angry eyes are as deep-set as the cylinders in locks.

I cannot shake the belief that whenever I leave my apartment the keys I've left behind come alive: move, talk, eat, drink, touch, sing, dance, go through their ablutions, and make love. I wish the keys would come alive for me. I wish I was a key. More than want to find the key that will take me elsewhere, I want to be the key to elsewhere. I want to be held like a key, carried around like a key, necessary as a key.

I take armloads of keys to bed at night. Huddled together, I smell, taste, and touch my metal lovers. I sleep all the better surrounded by their care and protection, their promises. I am closer to swallowing the keys. For now I allow each key its time inside my

mouth, and insert the chosen one on my tongue before I go to sleep, take it out wet and warm in the morning. Keys that I imagine taste like the coins from treasure troves.

My fingers trace the outline of the keys, fingernails follow its grooves. I hold the keys to my ears, but unlike seashells and my exes, they withhold their noises. What could you spring open, I ask each and every one? Where oh where is the lock that you fit? Where is the country, city, town, village, home, or door into which I can insert you, where will you fit just right, turn and open?

I hold the key of the moment in my palm. Grip it until it's damp and hot, fevered, slippery. Until I cannot feel its hardness any longer. Until it's melted into my skin, its gold or silver dripped through my pores and flowing with my blood. Until I cannot tell where the key ends and I begin; where the unknown and all too known meet.

