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A THOUSAND CRANES OF SILENCE

Cierra Clark

cierraclark@gmail.com

Cierra is "a baby of all-water, all-fluid, all-malleability. Watch me change shapes." (Bobbi Kindred)
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A Thousand Cranes of Silence

Cierra Clark

My skin is paper thin, it folds like origami in the sunlight. 16 folds and I can become a crane flying high. They say if you can fold one thousand cranes, you can have one wish by God himself. Lord it ain't fair that you get to keep the wish and I done the folding. I'm the one that has contoured lifetimes in this body, forged by forgotten epochs, laden with frayed wings, welled with inaugural invocations from my ancestors that sound like mercy Lord. Mercy.

Mercy still.

I'm the one intoning the same psalms that taunt my freedom, being ever so gentle, almost mulish in demeanor, knowing that even incidental, I can be meeting my overseer. But Momo calls it faith, say I just gotta wait, say God is preparing me for the day my wings are white as snow. She don't know that ain't no angel ever been black. That I'm more dirt than sky. That this body carries the hum of negro spirituals. That my skin is the color of my ancestor's ashes.

She don't know cause she made out of silence.

She say she drink to loosen her soul. But she really drink to weigh it down. Cause if she go empty, she gone remember that this world ain't never seen her beauty. She gone remember that they ain't never seen the magic in black unless it's being pulled out of a hat. That she dismantled her tongue to make it easier to say their names, fearing her own mother-tongue afraid she gone summon demons. And so that fear fills the well in her throat, every intonation and inflection tossed in, wishing for some hope of wholeness.

And when she get real drunk you can hear it. You can hear her soul cry. The sound is just faintly louder than the beating of her heart. It wails out. Cause it knows we don't know the truth. We don't know that she used to have paper thin skin too. That God folded her to be our home. That God ain't never intend her to huff and puff the walls down with the ease of liquor slipping down her throat. He made her to be our safe place.

A place where we learn that we came from a lineage way before slavery. That our ancestors fought for the brown in our skin. That we were loved generations before us, shown through resilience and bravery. That the answer is in the we, not the I. A place where when we learn that a body that can not hold an imagination is a body that can not hold God. That we deserve to harbor in other things beside our hardships. That we do not have to cleave ourselves of these bodies to find what is whole or holy.

That black and safe can exist together.

But she don't tell us that, she don't never tell us nothing. So we got to learn it from the world. A world that teaches us that we must create our own dwelling using the master's tools in order to be sheltered, to be fed. That ain't no room for a black man in America unless it's in the ground or embalmed behind bars. A body that ain't nothing but sticks and stones, A body with no words. A body that is only a conduit of silence. That black women are posed to empty their well of love on the feet of others and keep their cups dry. That to earn divine providence we must be ceramic, sculptured in prayer, hands outreached, head bowed, eyes closed, insides hollowed.

That our very existence don't mean we gone live.

And we still would believe that if we weren't shown that a dream could build freedom. That we don't got to drink away the feeling cause God gone fold us into our own home. A place that we can weather the storms of life. But until then we got to deal with the floods and the rains.

8 folds and I can make myself a boat.