

Poems

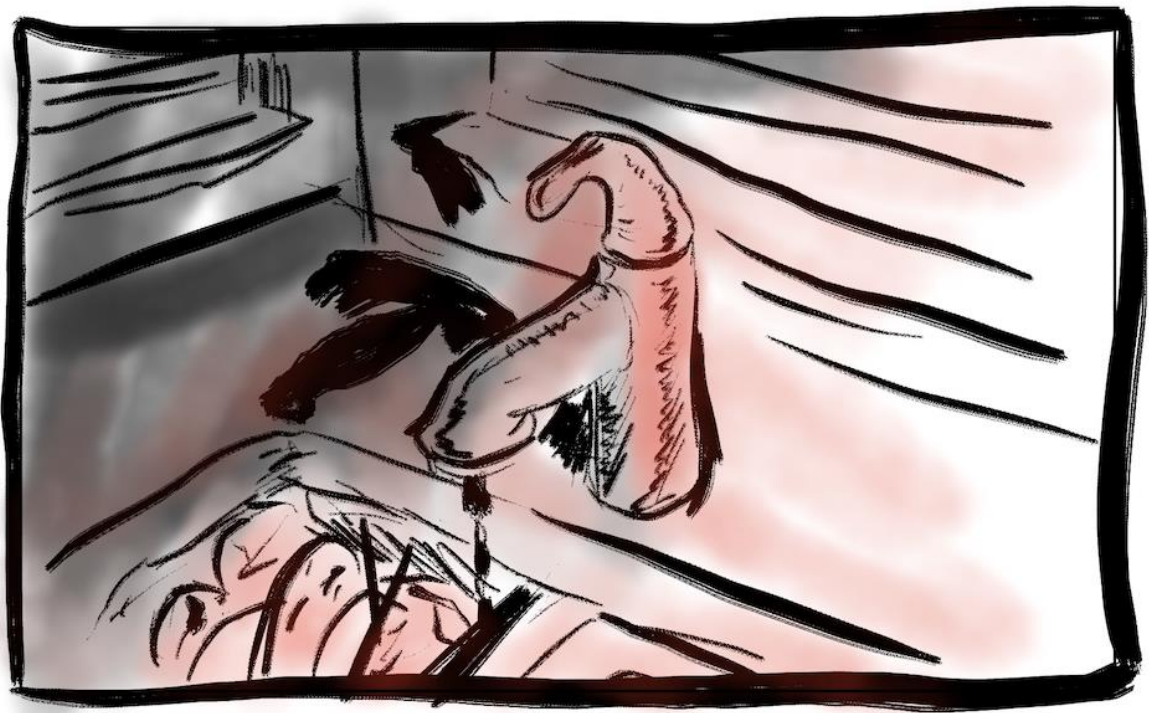
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Sink

The bright crescent
reflects on the window,
Under the never-ending trickling on
Stained dishes,
A stream of sound that would
Fill the room for us,
Silence the clattering of
Shattered dishes that sliced

bits and pieces
of our bodies

Apart.
I look at the window.
I had lost my skin, face, and my mother tongue,
To the drain.



Silence Caught on Film

Bang, Bang, Bang...
In the comfort of the dark,
Everyone stared with awe at the
Fireworks splattering on the walls
In kaleidoscopic fashion—
Letting each grace of its flickers
Tantalize the showing of our skin,
Indulge our ears in its crackles,
And let ooze our saliva as our hearts and lips
Begin to race.
Bodies on top of bodies
Clasp their hands together to the
Crackling's accelerando and the
Moaning's crescendo until the panting and sweating
Enters its climax—rest.
Out of breath, bodies lay quietly among
Each other as their sweat converges
Into a love that coagulates while
Losing its clarity as it drops
Into a pool of muddled wine
For the soulless.
Their bodies lie there faceless
As anyone's mother, father, or child.
They were alien to me.

I caught my breath under the light that
Returned us home together, but
became forever changed
With pledged condolences
On my face.

Same skin, same eyes, I ask my father
Of what's left of us, under our
Quaint suburban roof.

There is nothing left, but here.
You are not from there.
Vietnam is dead
With its head on a
Communist spike.
You are American.

I was lost in translation...



Ba and Me (Dad and Mom)

The caramelized, nutty aroma mixes
 With burnt gasoline of motorbikes
On top of damp fish on their side
 Looking up at the chartreuse sky.
Chatters and beers,
 Bright plastic stools, and leers
All live dear under the
 Cold steel of a serenade
From a guitar,
 Whose loose strings
Search for refuge
 In its case that it cannot
Fit in. Home is elsewhere.
 Home is in America,
Where all my brothers
 And sisters are now living in.
And so, I leave in search
 For my family.
And over there, I am met
 With a case dressed
In lustful regalia that fills
 My bark as I am beaten
Like a silly dog
 On its hind legs begging
To be petted
 Until I am nothing but
Splintered wood
 Full of spit for my dry eyes.
With nothing to
 Grasp, I strum each string
To remember
 My cadence of the past.
All I hear is the
 Hollow gape of my love story
Gnashing away to
 Their condescending eyes.
The only home I have
 Is with the children

*cà phê sữa đá translates to “Vietnamese coffee”
con translates to “Child; Son/Daughter”*

The warm laughter mixes
 With the bitterness of cà phê sữa đá
That drips slowly under
 The filters of sweetness and service.
Giggles and cheers,
 Empty drinks, and ogles
All live dear under the
 Blood and sweat
From a family,
 Whose tight-knit strings
refuge the lives
 of brother and sister
in arms. Home is here.
 But home could be in America,
Where all the told promises,
 And prosperity reside in.
And so, I leave in search
 For the promises from my lover.
And over there, I am met
 With his absence
Under tight-knit strings
 That choke my silhouette
Like a play doll
 On its last legs praying in silence
To be put down,
 Forever resting with
Ripped hair and
 Shallow eyes.
With nothing to
 Grasp, I hold my hands together
And bow
 To the Buddha who raises
His hand in grace to fill the
 Hollow gape of my love story
Gnashing away to
 Their condescending eyes.
The only home I have
 Is with the children

I carry.

I squeeze them tightly

Hoping Home will

Always be here for them.

Where no casket

Takes them and buries

Them alive.

No one can take you away,

Con

I carry.

I squeeze them tightly

Hoping Home will

Always be here for them.

Where no casket

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Them alive.

No one can take you away,

Con

