

Juanita Rey

MY FIRST REAL WINTER

My homeland rises
from that cranky boiler
two floors below
to fill the radiators
which, in turn,
supply the rooms with memory.

Familiar temperature
finds me seated on a parlor couch,
dispenses with the blanket
over my knees.

Even the country
that surrounds me now
melts a little of its window ice.

FLOR DEL ALMA

Down at the dock,
my mother steered her train
of children
past the trinket sellers
with a jerk of the nearest arm
but I was the caboose,
and a man selling books
at a makeshift table
caught my eye.

“Poetry,” he said softly.
“Would you like to buy one,
ginger eyes?”
Of course, I had no money.
And my mother was not about
to waste hers
on the wares of a man
with head draped in a variation
of Jamaican dreadlocks.
But, unlike the ones who
pushed their junk on passersby,
he was almost reticent,
embarrassed, to be selling
what he referred to as,
his flor del alma.

I was always the lingerer,
the one who sought out the worthy.
Like the harbor view
instead of the bustling grocery store.
The gull’s nest
and not the used car lot.

The edge, not the middle
where all the business got done.
My own flor del alma.
Or any place where I could wander.

A FOOL NO MORE

Cobbled together like anyone else
from the usual fusion of gametes,
Cried like a baby when I was a baby
and believed the myths
until it was time to disbelieve.
Picked up after myself,
embraced life's labor,
asked for only what others
were willing to give,
explored when I was curious,
fitted in when I wasn't,
was average on the scale,
twin ears, ten toes,
should have been easily lost
in the crowd
but somehow you found me.
And sat me in a chair.
And placed a pointed dunce cap
on my head.
In other words, we dated
for a while
and I figured all that you said to me
was sincere.
Two arms, a brain,
able to stretch out the former
on the advice of the latter.
So are you ready for this?
Here's your ring back.