

Bianca Palmisano

Poetry Slam

Dear lover,
today I saw the baby version of you
spit a trans rainbow poem about Greek mythology
to a room full of queers
and I thought you'd want to know.

Because they cried in a language I've heard you speak
and I wanted the sound to reach across the night
to your dark garage in Flatbush
to ring through your kitchen and announce
that some of us still refuse to bow to shame.

I wish you had been there, lover,
to catch the echoes that queerness made
as it bounced around this conference hall
this kid telling a story about living narrow margins
that we know by heart.

Ok, maybe "kid" isn't fair
because we both know trans bois lose 10 years
under their eyeliner and button ups
but the "fuck you, I'm flying" of an undergrad essay
is still a beautiful, naïve thing to read
and hearing them sing I bet you would have loved it as I did
the fearlessness of taking space and making noise.

because compromise is still a paycheck away
and being angry is still celebrated
and I forgot that students get a printing budget
which must be why they write down all the things
rattling in my skull like more loose change gathered
than from all my poetry combined.

But lover, we have had this conversation so many times
while we counted out gas money on your crusty futon
and it was still beautiful to hear it from someone else
like a dear friend singing the second verse of a nursery rhyme.

I had forgotten that this was part of the story
that some people are not shoving their writing under dirty couch
cushions
on their way to a temp job that constantly misgenders them
Some people are singing their gender from rooftop tiki bars
and pushing cis people in the pharmacy line out of the way
because they have been waiting so many years to be this real.

And that boi's poetry, god, it made me miss you even more
the music we made together in our tiny trans opera
your mascara and my boyshorts, your marble calves and my
strap on
because even if we weren't shouting our truth from street corners
at least some small myth was written in our bedsheets
Caenis transformed out of grief, my own new name sweet on
your tongue.

Electrical Circuit

When you left,
I had to look up
"How does electricity travel"
through itchy fingers

a closed circuit
electrons gliding from one atom to another
source to output and back

My nails raking across your skin
your head light on my shoulder

Is it just the two of us
or does the circuit include everyone that has touched
us

The femme that taught me fire
The surgeon that carved your new chest
The gene that stretched and bent our joints
so that we might know each other's aching

Are we alone tonight?
or are there ancestors in the room
—all crutches and leather jackets—
celebrating
that we have found each other to caress